



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 4 · B1·4A

Talking numbers and prices

Theme · Numbers, prices & deals

Unit 4 · B1·4A

Talking numbers and prices

Theme: Numbers, prices & deals

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Say numbers, prices, percentages and dates fluently and correctly in English.
- Compare products, suppliers and offers using comparatives and superlatives.
- Present a short price/quality comparison in 60 seconds.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Say the number

Read each number out loud, twice. Once quickly, once carefully. Time yourself: under 45 seconds for all six.

€14,750.30

1,250,000 users

a 12.5% increase

0.75 seconds

€1.4bn revenue

the 3rd quarter of 2026

Lead-in · Match the number to the situation

Match each number to where you'd hear it at work.

1. €4,500

2. +18%

3. 1 / 3

4. 24/7

5. Q4 2026

followUp: Which of these numbers would make you MOST nervous if it landed in your inbox?

Reading · The price is only half the story

When people compare offers, they usually look at the price first. That is the easy number. But the real cost of a product is almost never the price on the invoice. It's the total cost of ownership — TCO.

Imagine two printers. Printer A costs €200. Printer B costs €350. Printer A looks cheaper. But Printer A uses ink cartridges that cost €80 every two months. Printer B uses cartridges that cost €40 every four months. After one year, Printer A costs €680 in total; Printer B costs €470. The cheaper printer is actually the more expensive one.

A good buyer always asks three questions: 'What is the price?', 'What are the running costs?' and 'How long will this last?'. The best offer is rarely the lowest — it's the one with the lowest TCO over the life of the product.

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1. What does TCO stand for?
 - (A) Total cost of ownership
 - (B) The company's official price
 - (C) Total customer offer
2. After one year, which printer is more expensive in total?
 - (A) Printer A
 - (B) Printer B
 - (C) They cost the same
3. What is the best offer, according to the text?
 - (A) The one with the lowest price
 - (B) The one with the lowest TCO
 - (C) The one with the biggest brand

Vocabulary in context

Find these words in the text and match them to the meaning.

invoice — the bill you receive from a supplier

running costs — money you keep paying to use something

cartridge — the ink container in a printer

buyer — the person who chooses and pays a supplier

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. The price on the invoice is usually the real cost.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. Printer B's cartridges are cheaper AND last longer than Printer A's.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
3. Most buyers already look at TCO.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

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4. 'What are the running costs?' is one of the three key buyer questions.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
5. Printer A comes with a longer warranty than Printer B.
- (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly. There is no single correct answer.

1. In YOUR job, when have you (or your company) chosen the cheapest option and regretted it? What did it really cost in the end?

2. For which type of purchase is price the MOST important factor? For which is it the LEAST important?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. the bill from a supplier

2. the money you keep paying to use something

3. the total money you spend over the product's life

4. the person who chooses and pays a supplier

Vocabulary · Numbers, prices and money

quote / quotation — a written price proposal from a vendor

discount — money off the normal price

markup — how much you add on top of your cost

margin — the profit as a % of the price

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invoice — the itemised bill you issue or receive

deposit — money paid up front to reserve something

VAT (Value Added Tax) — sales tax added to the price

net / gross — before tax / including tax

in bulk — in large quantities, usually cheaper

unit price — the price of ONE item

lead time — how long from order to delivery

flat fee — one fixed price, no matter the quantity

practice

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the lists.

1. The ____ per box is €12; if you order 100+, it drops to €10.

2. Their price is €4,500 ____, or €5,535 including 23% VAT.

3. We can give you a 10% ____ if you pay within 7 days.

4. The supplier's ____ is 3 weeks — too slow for us.

5. Buying ____ saves us about 18% per unit.

6. We ask for a 30% ____ before we start production.

Collocations · price and money verbs

Match each verb with the noun it usually goes with.

request — a quote

issue — an invoice

offer — a discount

meet — a budget

beat — a competitor's price

pay — a deposit

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**Odd one out**

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

1. discount · rebate · price cut · deadline

(A) discount

(B) rebate

(C) price cut

(D) deadline

2. invoice · receipt · bill · headline

(A) invoice

(B) receipt

(C) bill

(D) headline

3. net · gross · VAT · asap

(A) net

(B) gross

(C) VAT

(D) asap

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to price → a ____

2. to discount → a ____

3. to quote → a ____

4. to negotiate → a ____

5. to invest → an ____

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Grammar · Comparatives and superlatives

1. Short adjectives (1 syllable) → -er / -est — • cheap → cheaper → the cheapest • fast → faster → the fastest • big → bigger → the biggest (double consonant)

2. Long adjectives (3+ syllables) → more / the most — • expensive → more expensive → the most expensive • reliable → more reliable → the most reliable

3. Two-syllable adjectives — most take more/most; adjectives ending in -y take -ier/-iest — • easy → easier → the easiest • happy → happier → the happiest • modern → more modern → the most modern

4. Irregular — • good → better → the best • bad → worse → the worst • far → farther/further → the farthest/furthest

5. Useful patterns — • ...er / more ... than: 'Printer B is cheaper than Printer A.' • the ...est / the most ...: 'This is the cheapest option we found.' • as ... as: 'Printer B is not as cheap as Printer A.' • much / a bit / slightly + comparative: 'much cheaper', 'a bit slower'.

Exercise A — Comparative or superlative?

Complete with the correct form of the adjective.

1. Printer B is ____ (cheap) than Printer A over one year.

2. This is ____ (good) offer we have received this quarter.

3. Their lead time is ____ (long) than ours.

4. It's ____ (expensive) laptop in the whole catalogue.

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5. Our new website is ____ (fast) than the old one.

6. Q3 was ____ (bad) quarter of the year.

Exercise B — Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with comparatives or superlatives.

1. This supplier is more cheaper than the other one.

2. It's the most best deal we've seen this year.

3. Their office is more bigger than ours.

4. Printer B is not as expensive than Printer A.

Exercise C — 'much / a bit / slightly' + comparative

Add ONE of: much / a bit / slightly (any of them can fit; use the one that sounds most natural for you).

1. Their price is ____ higher than ours — about 3%.

2. The new laptop is ____ faster — twice as fast, in fact.

3. This model is ____ heavier — only 200g more.

4. Their warranty is ____ better — 5 years vs our 1 year.

Exercise D — Write the sentence

Write ONE sentence comparing the two, using the form in brackets.

1. Supplier A: €12/unit · Supplier B: €10/unit (comparative — cheap)

2. Laptop X: 2.1 kg · Laptop Y: 1.4 kg (comparative — light)

3. 3 vendors: 4.2 / 4.5 / 4.9 stars (superlative — highly rated)

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4. Old website: 3.2s load · New website: 1.1s (comparative — fast)

Exercise E — About YOUR company / market

Answer each question with *ONE* full sentence using a comparative or superlative.

1. Who is your biggest competitor?

2. What is the most expensive tool you use at work?

3. Which of your products is the most profitable?

Exercise F — Complete the comparison mini-dialogue

Complete each answer with a comparative or superlative.

1. — How does the new plan compare to the old one? — It's ____ (good) — same features, 20% ____ (cheap).

2. — And of all the suppliers, which is your favourite? — Honestly, Nova is ____ (reliable) — their lead time is ____ (short).

Listening · Comparing two supplier quotes

Two colleagues in procurement talk through two quotes for the same office chairs. Notice how they use comparatives and superlatives to weigh the offers.

pre

When you compare two supplier quotes, what are the **FIRST** three things you look at?

Have you ever paid **MORE** on purpose because a supplier was more reliable?

gist

1. What product are they buying?

2. Which supplier has the lower unit price?

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3. Which supplier do they finally prefer?

detail

1. What is Alpha's lead time?

2. What is Beta's lead time and warranty?

3. What is the price difference in TOTAL?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. Are they under time pressure? How do you know?

2. Who is more risk-averse — Voice A or Voice B?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does in the call.

"Alpha is cheaper — by €25 a chair." — compares two options with a specific number

"Beta has the shortest lead time." — superlative — the extreme option

"Their warranty is much better." — 'much' + comparative — strong contrast

"It's not as reliable as Beta." — 'as ... as' — negative comparison

"That's the best combo overall." — superlative to close a comparison

Voice A: OK, chairs — 80 units. I got two quotes. Alpha is €140 a chair; Beta is €165.

Voice B: So Alpha is cheaper — by €25 a chair. What about lead time?

Voice A: That's the problem. Alpha is 6 weeks. Beta is 2.

Voice B: The new floor opens in 3 weeks. Alpha is already out then.

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Voice A: Right. And Beta has the shortest lead time in the market — nobody else is under 4.

Voice B: What about warranty? Alpha's chairs are much cheaper, but are they as good?

Voice A: Alpha's warranty is 1 year. Beta's is 5. So it's not as reliable as Beta on paper, either.

Voice B: €2,000 more in total. For 4 more years of warranty and 4 weeks less waiting — that's the best combo overall.

Voice A: Agreed. I'll issue the PO to Beta this afternoon.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the call.

1. Alpha is ____ — by €25 a chair.

2. Beta has ____ ____ lead time in the market.

3. Alpha's warranty is 1 year. Beta's is 5. So it's not ____ ____ Beta on paper.

4. That's ____ ____ combo overall.

Speaking · The 60-second comparison

Choose ONE of the situations below. Prepare a 60-second oral comparison. Use AT LEAST two comparatives and one superlative. End with a clear recommendation.

Scene: Two CRM tools your team could adopt

A: You: presenting the two options to your boss. Cover price, ease of use, integrations.

B: You: the boss — you have 60 seconds and one question at the end.

Scene: Two suppliers for the same raw material

A: You: procurement. One is cheaper but slower; the other is faster but pricier.

B: You: the operations manager — you care most about NOT running out of stock.

Scene: Two candidates for the same open role

A: You: hiring manager. One candidate is more experienced; the other is a better cultural fit.

B: You: HR — you push back on 'gut feeling' and want objective criteria.

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Discussion · how YOUR company decides

Choose 2 questions and speak for 30–45 seconds each.

When your company compares suppliers, who has the FINAL word?

What is the SLOWEST supplier decision you've ever seen? Why did it take so long?

What matters more to you in a supplier: the lowest price, or the best relationship?

Give an example of a time paying MORE turned out to be the cheaper decision.

Role-play · Defend the more expensive option

Read your role, prep 30s, run the conversation for 2–3 minutes.

Scene: Your CFO is pushing for the cheapest quote

A: You: the buyer. You believe the pricier supplier is safer. Prepare 3 concrete arguments and use at least 2 comparatives.

B: You: the CFO. You care about EBITDA this quarter. Push back on every soft argument ('better relationship', 'nicer people').

Scene: A client asks for a 15% discount on your quote

A: You: the account manager. You have 3% of margin to give — no more. Prepare a polite counter-offer and a comparison with a competitor.

B: You: the client. You have received 2 cheaper quotes from competitors and you want to hear a real reason to pay more.

Mini-presentation · 60-second 'the best purchase we made'

Deliver a 60-second talk about the SMARTEST purchase your team made in the last year. Follow the 4-beat structure. Time yourself.

Beat 1 (10s) — WHAT we bought and its headline price.

Beat 2 (15s) — What we COMPARED it to (at least 2 comparatives).

Beat 3 (20s) — Why it turned out to be the BEST choice (1 superlative + a number).

Beat 4 (15s) — What we would (or wouldn't) do differently next time.

sample: Last year we bought a mid-range project-management tool for €18 per user per month. We compared it to a free tool and to a premium one at €45 per user. The free tool was cheaper but much slower to set up, and the premium one had features we would never use. Our mid-range choice turned out to be the best decision of the year — we cut our project delays by 40% in three months. Next time I'd move faster: we lost two months debating between the three options.

Writing · A 5-line comparison summary for your boss

Write a 5-line email to your boss comparing TWO real (or realistic) options at your company. Include: subject with the decision, 1 line of context, ONE comparative sentence, ONE superlative sentence, ONE clear recommendation + deadline for the decision. Max 80 words after the subject.

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bonus: Bonus task — the same email, half the words. Then send both versions to a partner and ask which one they'd act on faster.

Wrap-up · What did we cover?

Say numbers, prices, %, and dates clearly — practise them out loud.

Comparatives (-er / more) and superlatives (-est / the most) — plus 'as ... as' for negatives.

TCO > price: always ask about running costs and lead time.

Boost comparatives with 'much', 'a bit', 'slightly' to sound natural.

Quiz

1. €14,750.30 is best read as:
(A) fourteen thousand seven hundred fifty and thirty
(B) fourteen thousand, seven hundred and fifty euros thirty
(C) one four seven five zero point thirty
2. 'This model is ____ than the old one — twice as fast.'
(A) much faster
(B) more faster
(C) the most fast
3. 'It's the ____ deal we've seen this year.'
(A) best
(B) better
(C) most best
4. 'Printer B is not ____ Printer A.'
(A) as cheap as
(B) cheaper than
(C) the cheapest
5. TCO stands for:
(A) Total Cost of Ownership
(B) Top Client Offer
(C) The Company's Offer

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Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary gap-fill

Complete each sentence with *ONE* word or phrase from the box.

Word bank: quote · discount · lead time · unit price · invoice · in bulk

1. Could you send me a written ____ for 200 units by Friday?

2. Buying ____ saves us about 15% per unit.

3. Their ____ is 4 weeks — too long for our timeline.

4. The ____ is €12; if you order 500+, it drops to €10.

5. We can offer you a 10% ____ if you pay within 7 days.

6. I'll send you the ____ this afternoon — please pay in 30 days.

2. Comparative or superlative?

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the adjective in brackets.

1. Printer B is ____ (cheap) than Printer A over one year.

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2. This is ____ (good) offer we've received this quarter.

3. Their lead time is ____ (long) than ours.

4. It's ____ (expensive) laptop in the whole catalogue.

5. Q3 was ____ (bad) quarter of the year.

6. Their warranty is ____ (short) than ours — only 6 months.

3. Say the number — which is correct?

Choose the correct way to say each number.

1. €1,450.30

- (A) one thousand four hundred fifty and thirty
- (B) one thousand, four hundred and fifty euros thirty
- (C) one four five zero point thirty

2. +18%

- (A) a rise of eighteen percent
- (B) a rise plus eighteen
- (C) a rise of eighteen per hundred

3. Q4 2026

- (A) question four of two thousand twenty-six
- (B) the fourth quarter of two thousand and twenty-six
- (C) quarter four twenty-six

4. €1.4bn

- (A) one point four billion euros
- (B) one point four euros
- (C) one comma four million

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with comparatives, superlatives or price vocabulary.

1. This supplier is more cheaper than the other one.

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2. It's the most best deal we've seen this year.

3. Printer B is not as expensive than Printer A.

4. Their lead-time is much shorter of ours.

5. Listening — three price openings

Three sales reps quote a price for the same product. Notice who is professional and who loses control of the deal.

1. Who sounds most PROFESSIONAL?

2. Who sounds WEAK / desperate?

3. Who sounds ARROGANT?

Voice A: So, um, the price is €980 a laptop. I know it's a bit high — I could probably do 5% off if you want.

Voice B: The list price is €980 per laptop. If you can sign this week, I can go to €900 — that's 8% off.

Voice C: €980. That's the price. It's non-negotiable.

6. Writing — a 5-line comparison summary

Write a 5-line email to your boss comparing TWO real (or realistic) options at your company. Include ONE comparative sentence, ONE superlative sentence, and ONE clear recommendation with a deadline. Max 80 words.

7. Case study reflection

Look back at the *Herdade dos Sabores* case. Answer briefly, in your own words.

1. Which supplier would YOU choose for the BioMarkt trial? Explain in 2 sentences.

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2. What is the biggest risk of choosing the cheapest supplier (BohemiaGlass)?

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Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in · Match the number to the situation

1. a monthly subscription fee for a big software
2. quarterly sales growth vs last year
3. share of customers who churn each year
4. how a support line describes its hours
5. when a product will launch

Reading · The price is only half the story

1. (A) Total cost of ownership
2. (A) Printer A
3. (B) The one with the lowest TCO
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (C) Not Given
4. (A) True
5. (C) Not Given
1. Model: we bought the cheapest CRM two years ago. Setup was fine but every new report costs us a paid consultant. TCO after 2 years is 3× what a mid-range CRM would have cost.
2. Model: for one-off consumables (office paper) price wins. For anything you'll use daily for 5+ years (laptop, car, ERP), price is almost the least important — quality and support decide.
1. invoice
2. running costs
3. total cost of ownership (TCO)
4. buyer

Vocabulary · Numbers, prices and money

1. unit price
2. net
3. discount
4. lead time
5. in bulk
6. deposit
1. (D) deadline
2. (D) headline
3. (D) asap
1. price
2. discount
3. quote / quotation
4. negotiation
5. investment

Grammar · Comparatives and superlatives

1. cheaper
2. the best
3. longer
4. the most expensive
5. faster
6. the worst
1. This supplier is cheaper than the other one.
2. It's the best deal we've seen this year.
3. Their office is bigger than ours.
4. Printer B is not as expensive as Printer A.
1. a bit / slightly
2. much

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3. slightly / a bit
4. much
1. Supplier B is cheaper than Supplier A.
2. Laptop Y is lighter than Laptop X.
3. The 4.9-star vendor is the most highly rated of the three.
4. The new website is much faster than the old one.
1. Model: Our biggest competitor is Bravo Consulting — they have twice our headcount.
2. Model: The most expensive tool we use is Salesforce — about €150 per user per month.
3. Model: Our online training course is the most profitable — the margin is over 70%.
1. It's better — same features, 20% cheaper.
2. Nova is the most reliable — their lead time is the shortest.

Listening · Comparing two supplier quotes

1. Office chairs — 80 units for the new floor.
2. Voice A's option — Alpha — at €140 per chair vs €165.
3. The more expensive one (Beta) — the warranty and lead time are much better.
1. 6 weeks.
2. 2 weeks and a 5-year warranty vs Alpha's 1-year warranty.
3. $80 \times €25 = €2,000$ more with Beta.
1. Yes — the new floor opens in 3 weeks, so Alpha's 6-week lead time is already impossible.
2. Voice B — she keeps returning to the warranty and the lead time; price is her secondary concern.
1. cheaper
2. the shortest
3. as reliable as
4. the best

Quiz

1. (B) fourteen thousand, seven hundred and fifty euros thirty
2. (A) much faster
3. (A) best
4. (A) as cheap as
5. (A) Total Cost of Ownership

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Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. quote
2. in bulk
3. lead time
4. unit price
5. discount
6. invoice

2. Comparative or superlative?

1. cheaper
2. the best
3. longer
4. the most expensive
5. the worst
6. shorter

3. Say the number — which is correct?

1. (B) one thousand, four hundred and fifty euros thirty
2. (A) a rise of eighteen percent
3. (B) the fourth quarter of two thousand and twenty-six
4. (A) one point four billion euros

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. This supplier is cheaper than the other one.
2. It's the best deal we've seen this year.
3. Printer B is not as expensive as Printer A.
4. Their lead time is much shorter than ours.

5. Listening — three price openings

1. Voice B — states the list price, then offers a specific discount tied to a specific action.
2. Voice A — apologises for the price BEFORE the buyer even reacts, and volunteers a discount unprompted.
3. Voice C — says the price is fixed 'take it or leave it', no room to negotiate.

7. Case study reflection

1. Model: CristalNorte. The unit price is close to target AND the 3-week lead time gives Mariana a real safety buffer — a broken glass batch would still leave 7 weeks to fix it.
2. Model: the 7-week lead time leaves only 3 weeks for delivery, quality checks and shipping to Germany. ONE mistake and the whole trial dies — and with it the 80,000-jar annual contract.

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