APEX ENGLISH
Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 10 · B1·10A

If we launched next month…

Theme · Planning ahead

Unit 10 · B1·10A

If we launched next month…

Theme: Planning ahead

B1 · Business English

Learning objectives

- Talk about hypothetical business plans using the 2nd conditional ('If we hired two people, we'd double output').
- Read and write a one-page annual plan around three anchors: goals, bets, and one number per bet.
- Use six high-frequency planning nouns and verbs (roadmap, milestone, KPI, target, forecast, prioritise).

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Class Book

Warm-up · The one plan you never wrote down

Think of ONE thing you've been meaning to plan properly at work (a launch, a hire, a rebrand). Answer three questions in one sentence each.

What is it?

Why hasn't it been planned yet?

If you had 30 minutes today, what would you write down first?

Lead-in: predict the year

Six 'what if' predictions about the next 12 months in a typical mid-sized company. For each, decide LIKELY or UNLIKELY, then reveal.

kind: predictions

1. **claim:** If we ran ONE product launch per quarter instead of three, revenue would grow faster. · **vote:** LIKELY · **explain:** Focus beats volume. Fewer, better launches outperform many mediocre ones for most B2B companies under 200 people.

2. **claim:** If we froze hiring for six months, our operating margin would double. · **vote:** UNLIKELY · **explain:** It usually improves margin 5–15%, not 100%. Hiring costs are rarely the biggest line item; wrong pricing usually is.

3. **claim:** If we cut our meeting hours by 50%, our shipped-feature count would go up. · **vote:** LIKELY · **explain:** For engineering-heavy teams, meeting time is the single biggest predictor of throughput. The correlation is well documented.

4. **claim:** If we raised prices 10%, we would lose more than 10% of customers. · **vote:** UNLIKELY · **explain:** Most B2B companies under-price by 15–30%. A 10% raise typically loses 2–5% of customers — net revenue up.

5. **claim:** If we opened a second office in a new city, communication problems would DOUBLE overnight. · **vote:** LIKELY · **explain:** Distributed teams pay a real coordination tax in the first 6–9 months. Companies that plan it (docs, rituals) absorb it; companies that don't, don't.

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6. **claim:** If we asked our top 10 customers what they'd pay for, half our roadmap would change. · **vote:** LIKELY · **explain:** This is the classic 'we should have done it earlier' finding — 60–70% of surveyed roadmaps do shift after real customer interviews.

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followUp: Which answer would you most like to test at your own company? Explain in one sentence.

Reading · The one-page plan

Every company has too many plans. A five-year vision. A three-year strategy. An annual budget. A quarterly OKR document. A weekly sprint. Somewhere between the five-year vision and the weekly sprint, the actual work goes missing.

The one-page plan is the fix. It has three sections, no more. Section one: THREE goals for the year, written as verbs ('grow revenue to €5M', 'ship v2 of the platform', 'hire a Head of Sales'). Section two: THREE bets — the things you'll do that you can't yet prove will work. Section three: ONE number per bet — the single metric that will tell you, in six months, whether the bet is working.

If you can't fit it on one page, it's not a plan; it's a wish list. Everyone knows this and almost nobody does it, because writing down THREE goals means saying no to fifteen others. That's the whole exercise. The one-page plan is not about writing. It's about deleting.

The best time to write the one-page plan is the last week of December, in a quiet room, on paper. The second-best time is now. If you started it this afternoon and finished it by Friday, you'd already be ahead of most of your industry.

1. How many sections does the one-page plan have?
   - (A) Two
   - (B) Three
   - (C) Five
2. What is section three?
   - (A) A budget breakdown
   - (B) One number per bet
   - (C) A list of hires
3. Why do most people not write a one-page plan, according to the text?
   - (A) It takes too long
   - (B) It means saying no to other things
   - (C) The template is hard to find

Vocabulary in context

Match the phrase to the meaning.

a bet — an action you take without proof it will work

a metric that will tell you — a specific number you can measure later

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

a wish list — many things you want, without priorities

on paper, in a quiet room — away from screens and distractions

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text.

1. A one-page plan should include exactly three goals.
   (A) True
   (B) False
   (C) Not Given
2. The plan should include the CEO's biography.
   (A) True
   (B) False
   (C) Not Given
3. The exercise is really about deleting, not writing.
   (A) True
   (B) False
   (C) Not Given
4. Most companies write a proper one-page plan every year.
   (A) True
   (B) False
   (C) Not Given
5. The best time to write it is January 1st.
   (A) True
   (B) False
   (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly.

1. In your company, is 'the plan' one page, or fifty?

2. What's harder for you: writing goals or deleting the ones that don't fit?

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Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. an action you take without knowing it will work

2. many things you want, without priorities

3. the specific number that tells you the bet is working

Vocabulary · Six planning nouns and verbs

a roadmap — a visual plan of what ships when

a milestone — a checkpoint on the way to a bigger goal

a KPI (key performance indicator) — the number you track weekly

a target — the specific number you're aiming for

a forecast — your best estimate of a future number

a bottleneck — the one friction point slowing everything else down

to prioritise — to decide what comes first

to deprioritise / drop — to move something OFF the plan

to forecast — to estimate a future number

to hit a target — to reach the specific number

to miss a target — to fall short of the number

to revise the plan — to change it based on new information

practice

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

1. Our Q3 ___ is €1.2M in new bookings.

2. The single biggest ___ right now is finance approvals — everything waits on them.

3. We need to ___ mobile over desktop for the next two quarters.

4. The ___ shows three launches, one hire, and one integration.

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5. We're going to ___ the plan after the July numbers come in.

6. We ___ the target by 4% last quarter — small miss, real one.

Collocations · planning phrases

Match the verb with the noun.

set — a target

hit — a milestone

revise — the forecast

own — a KPI

drop — a project

unblock — a bottleneck

Odd one out

Choose the word that does NOT belong.

1. target · KPI · forecast · notice period
   (A) target
   (B) KPI
   (C) forecast
   (D) notice period
2. roadmap · milestone · bottleneck · onboarding
   (A) roadmap
   (B) milestone
   (C) bottleneck
   (D) onboarding
3. prioritise · deprioritise · revise · resign
   (A) prioritise
   (B) deprioritise
   (C) revise
   (D) resign

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

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1. to plan → a ___

2. to prioritise → a ___

3. to forecast → a ___

4. to invest → an ___

5. to decide → a ___

Grammar · 2nd conditional (light) for hypothetical plans

1. Form: IF + past simple, WOULD + verb — • If we hired two engineers, we would ship v2 by June. • If prices went up 10%, we'd lose about 3% of customers.

2. Use: an unreal / hypothetical situation you're THINKING about — • 'If we launched in September, we'd have three months of feedback before year-end.' • 'If I had one more week, I'd rewrite the landing page.'

3. WERE (not was) with 'if I' in careful business English — • ✓ 'If I were the CEO, I'd cut the roadmap in half.' • Both are fine in speech, but 'were' is safer in writing.

4. Contrast: 1st vs 2nd conditional — • 1st (real / likely): 'If we hit €5M, we'll open a second office.' • 2nd (hypothetical / less likely): 'If we hit €10M, we'd open a US office.'

5. Softening: 'would' + verb makes plans sound less pushy — • Direct: 'We need three more people.' • Softened: 'If we had three more people, we'd move twice as fast.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — put the verbs in 2nd conditional

Use IF + past simple, WOULD + verb.

1. If we (hire) a Head of Sales, we (double) pipeline in six months.

2. If prices (go) up 10%, we (lose) about 3% of customers.

3. If I (be) you, I (drop) that project.

4. If we (launch) in Q4, we (have) proper data before the board meeting.

5. If we (rewrite) the pricing page, conversion (probably improve) 20%.

6. If we (freeze) hiring, margin (rise) but growth (slow).

Exercise B — find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

1. If we would hire two engineers, we would ship v2.

2. If I was the CEO, I will cut the roadmap in half.

3. If prices go up 10%, we would lose 3% of customers.

4. If we had more time, we solve it properly.

Exercise C — 1st or 2nd conditional?

Choose the more natural form based on how LIKELY the situation is.

1. Realistic Q3 plan: 'If we (hit) €1.2M, we (open) a Porto office.'

2. Wild scenario: 'If we (grow) 10× in one year, we (need) a new CFO.'

3. Board question: 'If competitor A (buy) competitor B, what (we do)?'

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4. Team question: 'If Sofia (get) the promotion next month, who (take over) her role?'

Exercise D — your own hypothetical plan

Write ONE 2nd-conditional sentence about YOUR job or company.

1. A cost you'd cut.

2. A hire you'd make.

3. A launch you'd delay.

Exercise E — your one-page plan opener

Write your own 3-sentence opener to a one-page annual plan. Sentence 1: your #1 goal as a verb + a number. Sentence 2: your #1 bet, phrased as a 2nd conditional ('If we did X, we'd…'). Sentence 3: the ONE number that will tell you it's working. Max 90 words.

1. Prompt: you run marketing at a Portuguese B2B SaaS. €2M ARR today, targeting €3M by December.

Listening · Three founders present their one-page plan

A pre-seed accelerator's demo day. Three founders each get 90 seconds to walk through the one-page plan for the next 12 months. Listen and decide which one you'd invest in, which one you'd give feedback to, and which one you'd politely pass on.

pre

In your own job, if you had 90 seconds to explain next year's plan, could you?

What is the ONE number about your work you check most often?

gist

1. Which founder has a real one-page plan (three goals, three bets, three numbers)?

2. Which founder pitches a vision without a number?

3. Which founder has too many goals to be credible?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

detail

1. What specific numbers does Founder B mention?

2. What is Founder B's biggest bet, in one line?

3. What is the ONE metric that will tell Founder B the bet is working?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. What has Founder C likely NOT done yet?

2. Why does Founder B's plan sound more credible than Founder A's?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

"Our #1 goal is to grow ARR from €800k to €2.4M." — states the top goal with two numbers

"If we replaced sales-led with self-serve, we'd cut CAC in half." — 2nd conditional to describe the biggest bet

"The one number that will tell us it's working is…" — names the single metric that proves the bet

"We want to become the leading platform in Europe." — vague vision — no number, no bet

"…and also community, and events, and a podcast, and a book club." — wish list — no priorities

Founder A: Hi. So, we're building something really exciting. Our vision is to become the leading platform in Europe for small businesses. We're passionate about design, we care deeply about our users, and we've been iterating really fast this quarter. Next year we want to grow a lot, hire great people, and build the best product on the market. Thank you.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Founder B: Three goals this year. One: grow ARR from €800k to €2.4M. Two: ship v2 of the platform by end of June. Three: four hires — one per quarter — starting with a Head of Growth. Our biggest bet: if we replaced our sales-led motion with a self-serve free trial, we'd cut CAC in half and open the SMB market that we currently can't afford. The one number that will tell us it's working is free-trial-to-paid conversion above 4% by end of Q2. If we hit it, we double down. If we don't, we go back to sales-led.

Founder C: OK, so for next year we're doing a lot. We're growing the team, launching in France, redesigning the app, starting a podcast, moving to a new office, hiring a Head of Everything, exploring the Middle East, doing three big launches, and also community, and events, and a book club, and, um, some AI features. It's going to be a very busy year.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the audio.

1. Our #1 goal is to grow ARR from €800k to ___.

2. Ship v2 of the platform by end of ___.

3. If we replaced our sales-led motion with a self-serve free trial, we'd cut CAC ___.

4. Free-trial-to-paid conversion above ___% by end of Q2.

5. It's going to be a very ___ year.

Speaking · Pitch your own 90-second plan

Prepare and deliver YOUR own 90-second annual plan. Three sentences: #1 goal with a number; #1 bet as a 2nd conditional ('If we did X, we'd…'); the ONE number that will tell you it's working. Then role-play the investor's / boss's first follow-up question.

Scene: Role 1 — you run marketing at a €2M-ARR Portuguese B2B SaaS

A: You: the marketing lead. Deliver the 90-second plan. Then answer: 'Why not just increase ad spend?'

B: You: the CEO. Push on the number: 'What happens if the bet doesn't work by Q2?'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Scene: Role 2 — you run operations at a 30-person e-commerce brand

A: You: the ops lead. Deliver the plan. Then answer: 'What's the biggest thing you're deprioritising?'

B: You: the founder. React — challenge the drop, defend a project you love.

Scene: Role 3 — you're the founder of a 12-person agency, pitching to a lead investor

A: You: the founder. Deliver the plan. Then answer: 'What would make you double the bet in Q3?'

B: You: the investor. React — probe the assumption behind the ONE number.

Class discussion

Discuss briefly.

In your company, does the annual plan actually fit on one page?

Is a 'bet' respected in your culture, or seen as a risk to punish?

What's the ONE number you'd add to your team's weekly review starting Monday?

Role-play · the 'if we had…' conversation

Student A raises a hypothetical resource ('if we had X'). Student B (the boss / CFO) reacts. Both use 2nd conditional at least once.

Scene: 'If we had two more designers, we'd ship the whole roadmap by September.'

A: Student A: the design manager. Make the case with ONE number.

B: Student B: the CFO. React — trade-off with hiring freeze.

Scene: 'If we dropped the German launch, we'd save €120k and finish v2 six weeks earlier.'

A: Student A: the head of product. Argue the trade.

B: Student B: the CEO. Push back — Germany is the CEO's personal bet.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Workbook — home practice

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

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

Word bank: roadmap · milestone · KPI · target · forecast · bottleneck

1. Our Q3 ___ is €1.2M in new bookings.

2. The biggest ___ right now is finance approvals — everything waits on them.

3. The ___ shows three launches, one hire, and one integration.

4. We track weekly active users as our main growth ___.

5. The Q2 ___ says €880k — 12% below plan.

6. Shipping v2 by end of June is our first big ___.

2. 2nd conditional — put the verbs in the right form

IF + past simple, WOULD + verb.

1. If we (hire) a Head of Sales, we (double) pipeline in six months.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. If prices (go) up 10%, we (lose) about 3% of customers.

3. If I (be) you, I (drop) that project.

4. If we (launch) in Q4, we (have) proper data before the board meeting.

5. If we (rewrite) the pricing page, conversion (probably improve) 20%.

6. If we (freeze) hiring, margin (rise) but growth (slow).

3. 1st or 2nd conditional?

Choose the more natural form based on how LIKELY the situation is.

1. Realistic Q3 plan:
   (A) 'If we hit €1.2M, we open a Porto office.'
   (B) 'If we hit €1.2M, we'll open a Porto office.'
   (C) 'If we hit €1.2M, we'd open a Porto office.'
2. Wild 10× scenario:
   (A) 'If we grew 10× in a year, we need a new CFO.'
   (B) 'If we grow 10× in a year, we would need a new CFO.'
   (C) 'If we grew 10× in a year, we'd need a new CFO.'
3. Hypothetical board question:
   (A) 'If competitor A buys competitor B, what will we do?'
   (B) 'If competitor A bought competitor B, what would we do?'
   (C) 'If competitor A would buy competitor B, what would we do?'

4. Which one-page-plan sentence is stronger?

Choose the version that a serious investor or CEO would take more seriously.

1. Goal:
   (A) 'Grow the business a lot next year.'
   (B) 'Grow ARR from €800k to €2.4M.'
   (C) 'Become the leading platform in Europe.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

2. Bet:
   (A) 'We're going to do content and community and events.'
   (B) 'If we replaced sales-led with self-serve, we'd cut CAC in half.'
   (C) 'We're passionate about growth.'
3. Number:
   (A) 'A lot of new users.'
   (B) 'Free-trial-to-paid conversion above 4% by end of Q2.'
   (C) 'Whatever we can get.'

5. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake.

1. If we would hire two engineers, we would ship v2.
2. If I was the CEO, I will cut the roadmap in half.
3. If prices go up 10%, we would lose 3% of customers.
4. If we had more time, we solve it properly.

6. Listening — three founders, one demo day

Three founders pitch a one-page plan in 90 seconds. Who gets funded, who gets feedback, who gets a polite pass?

1. Which founder has a real one-page plan?
2. Which founder pitches a vision without any number?
3. Which founder has too many goals to be credible?

Founder A: Hi. Our vision is to become the leading platform in Europe for small businesses. We're passionate, we care deeply, and we've been iterating really fast. Next year we want to grow a lot, hire great people, and build the best product. Thank you.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Founder B: Three goals. Grow ARR from €800k to €2.4M. Ship v2 by end of June. Four hires — one per quarter. Biggest bet: if we replaced sales-led with a self-serve free trial, we'd cut CAC in half and open the SMB market. The one number that will tell us it's working: free-trial-to-paid above 4% by end of Q2.

Founder C: For next year we're doing a lot. Growing the team, launching in France, redesigning the app, starting a podcast, moving offices, hiring a Head of Everything, exploring the Middle East, three big launches, community, events, a book club, some AI features. Very busy year.

7. Writing — your own one-page plan opener

Write a 3-sentence opener to a one-page annual plan for your job. Sentence 1: your #1 goal as a verb + a number. Sentence 2: your #1 bet, phrased as a 2nd conditional. Sentence 3: the ONE number that will tell you it's working. Max 90 words.

8. Case study preview

Before Case Study 10, answer briefly.

1. You're planning next year for a Portuguese family business. What's the SINGLE biggest hypothetical decision you'd stress-test with a 2nd conditional?

2. How do you politely disagree with the founder's Q1 priority in front of the team?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Answer key — Class Book

Reading · The one-page plan

1. (B) Three
2. (B) One number per bet
3. (B) It means saying no to other things
1. (A) True
2. (C) Not Given
3. (A) True
4. (B) False
5. (B) False
1. Model: fifty — a deck, a Notion, a spreadsheet, and nobody knows which is current. The one-pager would be a real change.
2. Model: deleting. Writing feels productive; deleting feels like losing.
1. a bet
2. a wish list
3. one number per bet

Vocabulary · Six planning nouns and verbs

1. target
2. bottleneck
3. prioritise
4. roadmap
5. revise
6. missed
1. (D) notice period
2. (D) onboarding
3. (D) resign
1. plan / planner / planning
2. priority
3. forecast (also: forecaster)
4. investment / investor
5. decision

Grammar · 2nd conditional (light) for hypothetical plans

1. hired · would double
2. went · would lose
3. were (or was) · would drop
4. launched · would have
5. rewrote · would probably improve
6. froze · would rise · would slow
1. If we hired two engineers, we would ship v2. (no 'would' in the IF clause)
2. If I were the CEO, I would cut the roadmap in half. (2nd conditional needs 'would' not 'will')
3. If prices went up 10%, we'd lose 3% of customers. (both clauses must match hypothetical)
4. If we had more time, we would solve it properly. ('would' missing)
1. hit / will open (1st — the target is realistic)
2. grew / would need (2nd — 10× is hypothetical)
3. bought / would we do (2nd — hypothetical)
4. gets / will take over (1st — realistic near-term)
1. Model: 'If I cut our SaaS-tools budget by 20%, we'd save €4,000 a month with almost no impact.'
2. Model: 'If we hired a designer, we'd stop losing a day per week to Canva work.'
3. Model: 'If we delayed the mobile app by six weeks, we'd ship it without the bugs we currently have.'
1. Model: 'Our #1 goal this year is to grow ARR from €2M to €3M. Our biggest bet is a switch from paid ads to content: if we published two deep pieces per week and hired one content lead, we'd cut CAC by 30% and open a lasting channel. The one number that will tell us it's working: organic-source pipeline at €150k by Q3.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Listening · Three founders present their one-page plan

1. Founder B — clean structure, verbs, numbers. Ninety seconds, no fluff.
2. Founder A — 'we want to become the leading platform in Europe' but no specific goal, no metric.
3. Founder C — nine goals in 90 seconds. That's not a plan.

1. 'Grow ARR from €800k to €2.4M. Ship v2 by June. One hire per quarter — total four.'
2. 'If we replaced our sales-led motion with a self-serve free trial, we'd cut CAC in half and open the SMB market.'
3. Free-trial-to-paid conversion above 4% by end of Q2.

1. The 'deleting' part of the plan. Nine goals means no priorities.
2. Verbs and numbers beat adjectives. 'Grow to €2.4M' beats 'become the leading platform'.

1. €2.4M
2. June
3. in half
4. 4
5. busy

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. target
2. bottleneck
3. roadmap
4. KPI
5. forecast
6. milestone

2. 2nd conditional — put the verbs in the right form

1. hired · would double
2. went · would lose
3. were (or was) · would drop
4. launched · would have
5. rewrote · would probably improve
6. froze · would rise · would slow

3. 1st or 2nd conditional?

1. (B) 'If we hit €1.2M, we'll open a Porto office.'
2. (C) 'If we grew 10× in a year, we'd need a new CFO.'
3. (B) 'If competitor A bought competitor B, what would we do?'

4. Which one-page-plan sentence is stronger?

1. (B) 'Grow ARR from €800k to €2.4M.'
2. (B) 'If we replaced sales-led with self-serve, we'd cut CAC in half.'
3. (B) 'Free-trial-to-paid conversion above 4% by end of Q2.'

5. Find and fix the mistake

1. If we hired two engineers, we would ship v2. (no 'would' in the IF clause)
2. If I were the CEO, I would cut the roadmap in half.
3. If prices went up 10%, we'd lose 3% of customers.
4. If we had more time, we would solve it properly.

6. Listening — three founders, one demo day

1. Founder B — three goals, three bets, three numbers.
2. Founder A — 'become the leading platform in Europe' with no metric.
3. Founder C — nine goals in 90 seconds is a wish list.

8. Case study preview

1. Model: 'If we stopped selling to restaurants and only sold direct-to-consumer, what would happen to margin and to volume?' — the answer usually reshapes the whole plan.
2. Model: '(Founder), I'd rather we tested the direct-to-consumer bet before we invested more in restaurants — if we did that, we'd know by end of Q2 which channel deserves next year's money.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class