



APEX ENGLISH · A2 BUSINESS

Unit A2-4B

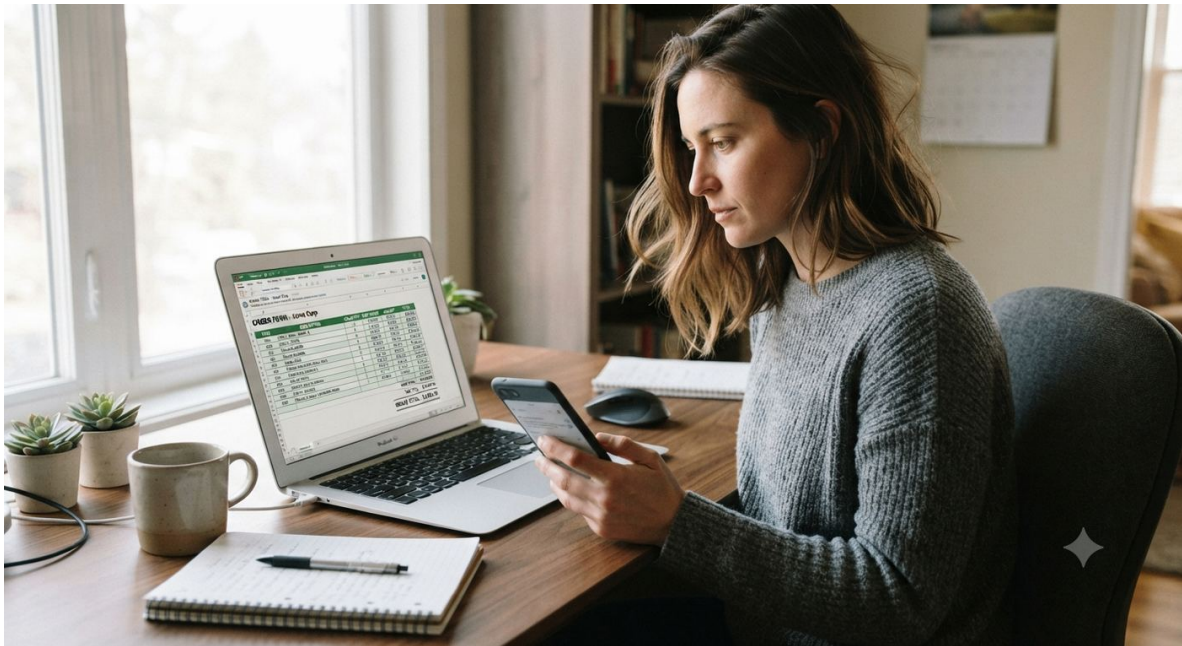
Placing and confirming a B2B order

Numbers, prices & orders

UNIT A2-4B

Placing and confirming a B2B order

Numbers, prices & orders · A2+ · 55-65 min · Business English



"A confirmed order is a promise on both sides."

— Supply-chain principle

Objectives

- Place a professional B2B order by phone or email, including quantity, price, delivery and payment.
- Confirm order details and spot potential problems before they escalate.
- Write a clear, well-structured order confirmation email (100-120 words).

Class Book

Warm-up · Quick starter

Solo · about you · 3 min

Think about a recent order you (or your team) placed at work. Answer in your head.

- Was it done by phone, email, or online portal?
- Did anything go wrong — wrong quantity, late delivery, wrong invoice?
- How was the problem solved — or not solved?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Lead-in · Would you rather?

Would you rather · choose one, defend it · 6 min

For each dilemma, choose A or B, then defend your choice in 2–3 sentences. There is no right answer — the point is to argue.

Reading · Why B2B orders go wrong

10 min

Ask any experienced buyer or supplier what causes most order problems, and you will hear the same three answers: unclear specifications, weak confirmation habits, and last-minute changes that are never put in writing.

The first problem — unclear specifications — happens when the buyer assumes the supplier already knows what they want. 'Send us the usual, but a bit bigger' is not a specification; it's a guess. Professional orders always include model, size, colour, quantity and unit price, even for repeat purchases.

The second problem is confirmation. Many orders are agreed on the phone and never confirmed by email. Six weeks later, when the wrong product arrives, nobody can prove what was really discussed. A one-line email — 'Just to confirm: 200 units of model X-42, at 18 euros per unit, delivery on the 15th' — solves 80% of these disputes before they happen.

The third problem is silent changes. The buyer decides they need 220 units instead of 200 and mentions it in a phone call. The supplier is not sure they heard 220 or 20. Nobody updates the confirmation email. The order arrives wrong, and both sides feel cheated.

None of these problems require expensive software. They require a habit: every important detail, in writing, before the goods leave the warehouse.

Comprehension check

1. According to the text, the MAIN cause of order problems is...

- ☐ A. software issues
- ☐ B. unclear specifications, weak confirmation and undocumented changes
- ☐ C. slow delivery times
- ☐ D. poor product quality

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2. 'Send us the usual, but a bit bigger' is presented as an example of...

- ☐ **A.** a professional order
- ☐ **B.** a clear specification
- ☐ **C.** an unclear, risky instruction
- ☐ **D.** a legal contract

3. The one-line confirmation email is described as solving about...

- ☐ **A.** 10% of disputes
- ☐ **B.** 50% of disputes
- ☐ **C.** 80% of disputes
- ☐ **D.** all disputes

4. The final paragraph argues that the solution is mainly a matter of...

- ☐ **A.** buying new technology
- ☐ **B.** hiring more staff
- ☐ **C.** changing personal habits
- ☐ **D.** signing longer contracts

True, False, or Not Given?

Base your answer only on the text.

1. The text says that repeat orders never need detailed specifications.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

2. According to the text, most order disputes could be avoided with a short written confirmation.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

3. The text recommends specific procurement software products.

- ☐ **A.** True
- ☐ **B.** False
- ☐ **C.** Not Given

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4. The article suggests that verbal changes are dangerous when they are not updated in writing.

- ☐ A. True
- ☐ B. False
- ☐ C. Not Given

Discursive writing · Reflect on the text (120-150 words)

Choose ONE prompt. Answer in a short discursive paragraph, using examples from your own experience where possible.

1. Do you agree that most order problems are caused by weak habits rather than by bad suppliers? Justify.

2. In your industry, is it realistic to always confirm orders in writing? What are the practical obstacles?

Vocabulary · Ordering and confirming

8 min

Roles

Term	Meaning
purchase order (PO)	the official document sent by the buyer to place an order
lead time	the time between placing an order and receiving it
specifications (specs)	the technical details of what is ordered
SKU / reference number	a unique code identifying a specific product
back-ordered	ordered but not yet available; the customer waits
advance payment / deposit	money paid before the goods are delivered

Smalltalk

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Term	Meaning
to place an order	to make the formal request
to confirm receipt	to say the goods / message arrived
to chase an order	to contact the supplier to check progress
to expedite	to speed up delivery
to cancel / to amend an order	to withdraw / to change it
shipping fee	the cost of transporting the goods

Practice

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

1. Please quote the ___ number when you contact customer service.
2. Our standard ___ for custom items is four to six weeks.
3. The client hasn't heard anything for a week — could you ___ the order?
4. We require a 30% ___ before we start production.
5. Model X-42 is currently ___, so you will receive it in mid-October.
6. For an extra fee we can ___ the shipment and get it to you in 48 hours.

Collocations · verbs that go with 'order'

Match each verb with the most natural completion.

Term	Meaning
raise / place	an order
confirm	receipt of the order
amend	the specifications
cancel	the order in writing
acknowledge	the purchase order

Odd one out — which word doesn't fit?

Choose the word that doesn't belong.

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1. PO · quotation · invoice · lunch break

- ☐ A. PO
- ☐ B. quotation
- ☐ C. invoice
- ☐ D. lunch break

2. expedite · speed up · fast-track · postpone

- ☐ A. expedite
- ☐ B. speed up
- ☐ C. fast-track
- ☐ D. postpone

3. spec · SKU · reference number · umbrella

- ☐ A. spec
- ☐ B. SKU
- ☐ C. reference number
- ☐ D. umbrella

Grammar · Determiners & polite offers for ordering

14 min

1. this / that / these / those in orders

this / these — the item near you or being pointed to: 'This model is the one we ordered last time.'

that / those — the item at a distance or referred to abstractly: 'Those units you delivered last week were fine, but these are damaged.'

2. Polite modals for placing / confirming orders

Could you send me a quote for...?

I'd like to place an order for...

Would it be possible to bring the delivery forward?

Just to confirm, we're talking about... — used to check details.

3. Some / any / a few / a couple of

Some — positive: 'We need some replacements.'

Any — questions & negatives: 'Do you have any in stock?' / 'We don't have any left.'

A few / a couple of — small countable amount: 'A couple of units are damaged.'

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise A — Complete with the correct determiner

Choose *this / that / these / those / some / any / a few*.

1. Could you check ___ boxes I just brought in? I think two are damaged.

2. Do you have ___ of the X-42 units left in stock?

3. We need ___ replacements urgently — at least ten.

4. Remember ___ order we placed back in June? It's still open.

5. ___ of the pieces are cracked, but the majority are fine.

6. Are ___ specifications final, or do you still want to change something?

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise B — Make it more polite / more professional

Reformulate each sentence using a polite modal or a softener.

1. Send me a quote for 500 units.

2. I want to change the delivery date.

3. Confirm the price now.

4. Cancel my order.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

Exercise C — Ask the right question to close the order

Write a natural business question that clarifies the missing detail.

1. (lead time / this model)

2. (payment terms / net 30 / net 60)

3. (delivery / included / price)

4. (amendments / possible / after PO)

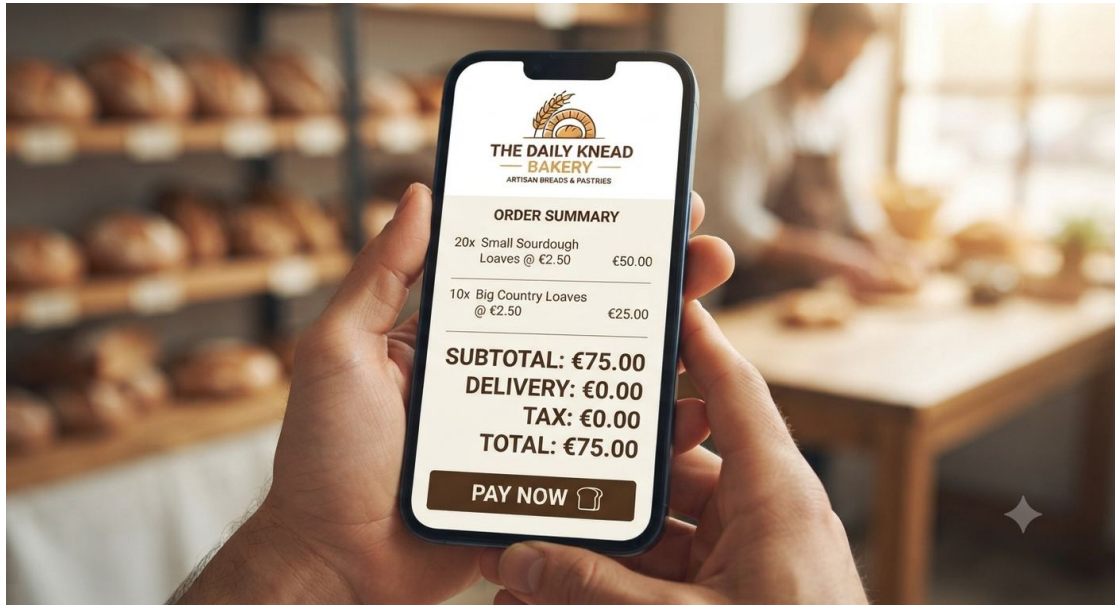
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Exercise D — Discursive writing (60-80 words)

Write a short paragraph describing your company's typical ordering process. Use at least ONE polite modal, ONE determiner (this/these/those), and ONE quantifier (some / any / a few).

1. Your paragraph:

Describe the picture



Look at the picture. Imagine you are the buyer just before sending this order. Write 5-6 sentences using the unit grammar (this/these/those + polite modals). Check quantities, confirm price, mention lead time and payment terms.

Target language: Could you confirm that these... · I'd like to place an order for... · Would it be possible to... · Just to confirm, this order is... · A few of these items...

Listening · Confirming an order that almost went wrong

10 min

Voice A (Nadia, hotel operations manager) is on the phone with Voice B (Rui, the bakery's account manager). They confirm tomorrow's order — and spot a mistake just in time.

Before you listen

- What details do you expect them to check?
- What kind of mistake do you think they will find?

Gist

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class

1. What is the main purpose of the call?

2. What mistake is discovered during the call?

Detail

1. How does Rui find the mistake?

2. What is the corrected order?

3. What does Rui promise to do immediately after the call?

Listen and complete

Complete with ONE or TWO words.

1. Nadia is calling to ___ tomorrow's delivery.

2. The correct number of small loaves is ___.

3. Delivery must be at ___, not 6.30.

4. Rui will send an ___ email in 15 minutes.

Useful confirmation phrases

Match each phrase to its function.

Term	Meaning
Just to double-check...	verify a detail
Bear with me a second.	ask for a moment to check
That's not quite what I have here.	politely flag a mismatch
Let me read it back to you.	confirm details by repeating them
I'll drop you an email to confirm.	promise a written follow-up

Speaking · Confirm, catch mistakes, close the deal

10 min

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Prepare a 60-second talk, then take part in a confirmation call role-play with your partner.

Writing · Order confirmation email

10 min (or homework)

Write a 100–120 word order confirmation email from supplier to client. Include: (a) PO reference number, (b) product model and quantity, (c) unit price and total, (d) delivery date, (e) payment terms, (f) a polite closing line inviting the client to reply if anything is incorrect. Use at least TWO polite modals and ONE 'just to confirm' phrase from this unit.

Workbook

Placing and confirming a B2B order — Workbook

1. Vocabulary in context

Complete each sentence with ONE word or phrase from the box. Two items are extra.

1. Could you send us a copy of the ___ number so we can track the invoice?
2. The standard ___ for custom parts is four to six weeks.
3. Model X-42 is currently ___ — you should receive it in mid-October.
4. We need this batch urgently — is there any way to ___ the shipment?
5. Please quote our reference when you ___ receipt of this order.
6. We haven't heard anything for a week — could you ___ our order with the supplier?

2. Determiners & polite modals

Complete each sentence with the correct determiner (this/that/these/those/some/any/a few) or reformulate as a polite modal question.

1. Could you check ___ boxes I brought in? I think two are damaged.
2. Do you have ___ of the X-42 units left in stock?
3. Remember ___ order we placed back in June? It's still open.
4. ___ of the pieces are cracked, but the majority are fine.

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5. (Reformulate politely) 'Send me a quote for 500 units.'

6. (Reformulate politely) 'I want to change the delivery date.'

3. Which sentence is more natural in an order call?

Choose the more professional / natural option.

1. You want to check details before closing the order.

- ☐ A. Just to double-check, is it 25 or 20 units?
- ☐ B. You sure 25 or 20?
- ☐ C. Repeat number please.

2. You want to politely flag a mismatch in the numbers.

- ☐ A. That's wrong.
- ☐ B. That's not quite what I have here.
- ☐ C. You are mistaken.

3. You want to buy 30 seconds to look up the details.

- ☐ A. Wait one moment yes.
- ☐ B. Bear with me a second — I'm pulling it up now.
- ☐ C. Stop, I look.

4. You want to promise a written confirmation.

- ☐ A. I'll drop you an email to confirm.
- ☐ B. I write later maybe.
- ☐ C. Confirmation on paper coming.

5. You want to propose a compromise on delivery time.

- ☐ A. Six is impossible; would seven work?
- ☐ B. Six no. Seven ok?
- ☐ C. No six, yes seven maybe.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. Can you confirm the reception of the PO?

2. How many time do we have before the deadline?

3. I would like place an order for 300 units.

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4. The delivery is at Tuesday morning.
 5. We have some units left, but there aren't some replacements.
 6. Please to send a confirmation email.
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5. Listening — a last-minute change to an order

Marta (buyer) calls Tomás (supplier) 24 hours before delivery to ask for a change. Listen (or read the transcript) and answer.

1. What TWO changes does Marta want to make?
 2. Which change does Tomás fully accept, and which does he only partially accept?
 3. What does Tomás ask Marta to send after the call?
 4. How would you describe the tone of the call?
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6. Writing — order confirmation email (100-120 words)

Write an order confirmation email from supplier to client for a repeat order. Include: PO reference, product model and quantity, unit price and total, delivery date, payment terms, and a polite closing line inviting the client to reply if anything is incorrect. Use at least TWO polite modals and ONE 'just to confirm' phrase from the unit.

7. Reading & discursive reflection

Re-read the classbook article 'Why B2B orders go wrong'. Then answer in 100-130 words.

1. The article claims that most order problems are caused by 'weak habits, not bad suppliers'. Do you agree? Justify with a concrete example from your work or industry.
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Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class
