



# COMMUNICATIVE STYLE BUILDER

МИНИСТЕРСТВО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ И НАУКИ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ

Нижегородский государственный университет им. Н.И. Лобачевского

# **АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ЯЗЫК ДЛЯ ДЕЛОВОГО ОБЩЕНИЯ**

Учебно-методическое пособие

Рекомендовано методической комиссией филологического факультета  
для магистрантов Института экономики и предпринимательства ННГУ,  
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Учебное пособие включает в себя разделы, в которых представлены задания на тренировку и совершенствование навыков устной речи в различных сферах деловой коммуникации (Business Socialising, Business Meetings). В пособии уделяется также внимание исследовательским проектам, посвященным проблемам делового общения. Учебно-методическое пособие предназначено для магистрантов Института экономики и предпринимательства ННГУ.

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# BUSINESS SOCIALISING

## 1. SUCCESSFUL CONVERSATIONS

### WARM-UP

1. Brainstorm some discussion topics typical in social English and Russian. Put your ideas into the mind map.

Brainstorm various situations in which people socialise in business context. Put your ideas into the mind map.



### READING

2.1. Work in groups of three or four. Each group reads two texts. Make notes about the typical features of British communicative style, using the questions below. You may not find answers to all the questions.

- a). What? Where? How? When? What for? Why? Behaviour? Communicative style? Features? Manner?
- b). Using your notes, tell your partner about the typical features of British communicative style.
- c). Now read the dialogue and single out linguistic characteristics of communicative style.

2.2. At the end of this activity make a table with the most remarkable features of British communicative style. Compare its features with Russian one putting your ideas into the table.

### Socialising

- ✓ Successful socializing depends on you being sensitive to the other person's culture.
- ✓ Both Americans and the British usually don't use titles when speaking to another person. They call each other by their first names.
- ✓ When making small talk, certain topics might be taboo such as family, religion or politics. You may have to avoid these subjects.
- ✓ You must be careful about your body language. Make sure you don't stand in close proximity of the other person. They might be offended by this.
- ✓ In any socializing situation, never stereotype the other person. Your ideas may be totally mistaken about his/her culture.

### Cultural Awareness: British style of disagreement

Generally, the British try to show that they are guided by reasonableness, compromise and common sense during meetings. It is rare that they will openly disagree. The British often seem to agree, but by qualifying their agreement it could well be a hidden form of disagreement. Look at the phrases like:

- 'That's a very interesting idea, but ...'
- 'We would certainly like to do that, however ...'

Other types of hidden disagreement include:

Vagueness in reply e.g. 'That depends on a lot of things.'

Understatement e.g. 'It might be tricky', 'I am inclined to feel that that it is important', 'The room is a little/ a bit overcrowded', 'We tend to overlook the importance of tests', 'The news somewhat shocked me'

Humour e.g. 'If only my name were Prince Charles.'

- I was wondering if we could meet again on the 24 th.
- That's not suitable. I want the 31st.
- As a matter of fact I'm afraid that might be a bit difficult as I have to contact one or two colleagues who I do know are out of the country at the moment so that wouldn't be very convenient. Perhaps we would give ourselves an extra week. It is quite important that I have a word with them. Wouldn't the following Thursday, the 31st, be better?

## LANGUAGE AND CULTURE AT WORK

- 3.1. Complete the rule for the cultural and linguistic peculiarities of communicative style. Fill in the gaps with the appropriate word or phrase.

Effective communication in socializing and meetings is partly a matter of knowing certain special features of culture and language.

### *Cultural and language features of communicative style*

Cultural features	Language features
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When making _____, certain topics might be taboo such as family, religion or politics. You may have to avoid these subjects.</li> <li>2. The English talk about the _____ all the time, that it is a national obsession or fixation....</li> <li>3. It [weather-speak] can be used: as a simple _____, as an ice-breaker leading to conversation on other matters, as a '_____', '_____' or 'displacement' subject.</li> <li>4. It is not considered entirely polite, for example, to _____ 'What do you do?'</li> <li>5. Types of hidden disagreement include _____, vagueness in reply, _____.</li> <li>6. Humour is used in numerous ways: to establish a positive atmosphere, to create a sense of _____, to bridge differences, to introduce _____, to criticise, to show _____ or _____ of a person.</li> <li>7. British people have a quite _____.</li> <li>8. Most people call their boss and other colleagues by _____ and tutors usually expect students to _____.</li> <li>9. Criticism should also preferably be voiced in an _____.</li> <li>10. You will have to _____ when you get the menu, _____ when you place the order, _____ when get your dishes, _____ when the waiter takes away the plates and even _____ when you</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using _____, _____ <i>might</i> to make what you say more tentative.</li> <li>2. Presenting your _____ view as not a statement.</li> <li>3. Using a grammatical negative (adding n't) to make a _____ more open and therefore more negotiable.</li> <li>4. Using an _____ to prepare the listener for your message.</li> <li>5. Adding _____ to make clear that you recognise the unhelpfulness of your response.</li> <li>6. Using words which qualify or restrict what you say to make your position more flexible (a _____ difficult, a _____ problem).</li> <li>7. Using not with a _____ ward instead of the obvious negative word (not very convenient, I don't agree).</li> <li>8. Using a comparative (better, more convenient) to _____ your message.</li> <li>9. Using a _____ form (I was wondering) instead of a simple form (I wondered) to make a suggestion more flexible.</li> <li>10. Using _____ as an important way of making the message more effective (It is important...).</li> </ol>

11. pay! British people even _____ if you stand on their toes!	
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3.2. Try to find equivalents in Russian culture and the language. Fix your ideas in the comparative table.

## SPEAKING

4. Practice the techniques mentioned in the texts. Follow the example.

4.1 *That is unacceptable – That would be unacceptable.*

*That doesn't meet our requirements – That would not meet our requirements.*

*We need further reassurance – We would need further reassurance.*

1. That is too late.
2. I prefer to meet before that.
3. We expect them to accept our proposals

4.2 *That is too late – Is that too late?*

*That would be too late – Would that be too late?*

1. Flying would have advantages.
2. Friday would be convenient.
3. We would need another meeting fairly soon.

4.3 *Isn't that too late?*

*Wouldn't that be too late?*

Change the other examples in the same way.

4.4 *Could I speak to Jack please?*

*I'm afraid he's out of the country at the moment.*

*Would next Tuesday be convenient?*

*I'm afraid I'm tied up all day.*

1. Can we meet again later this week?
2. Couldn't we ask the IMF to fund us?
3. Wouldn't it be a good idea to involve the Americans?

4.5 Add qualifiers as in the example:

*A slight misunderstanding*

*A little bit too early*

*A little more time*

1. That would leave me with a problem.
2. I have doubts about that.
3. We need more time.

4.6 *The hotel was dirty – The hotel wasn't very clean.*

*The food was cold – The food was not very hot.*

1. That's inconvenient.
2. That's unsuitable.
3. That's a stupid suggestion.

4.7 *Wouldn't the 31<sup>st</sup> be more convenient? It might be cheaper to go by air.*

1. It's appropriate to wait a few weeks.



2. An earlier delivery date is helpful.
  3. It's a good idea to take a long term view.
- 4.8 I tried to ring you yesterday.  
I *was trying* to ring you yesterday.
1. We intended to make new arrangements for next year.
  2. I wondered if you'd come to a decision yet.
- 4.9 Stress the words as in the example  
*It's rather a **large** house.*  
*It's **rather** a large house.*
1. We're quite interested in your suggestion.
  2. We were quite pleased with their proposal.
  3. We will be quite disappointed if we can't reach agreement today.

## FUNCTIONAL LANGUAGE

5. Match the following intentions with their functions.

Intentions	Function
1. Could you stick to the subject?	a) advice/suggestion/opinion
2. I was wondering where you stood on this question?	b) offer
3. I wish you wouldn't talk in terms of money.	c) request
4. I wondered if there was a telephone I could use?	d) asking for reaction/request
5. Let's get down to business, shall we?	e) directing
6. Suppose we might have an evening out?	f) opening/suggestion

6. Look at the phrases and decide how strongly the speaker is asserting his/her view. Put them in the appropriate box.

Strong	Neutral	Tentative
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What's your position on...?

Could I ask for a reaction...?

It's quite clear that...

As far as I'm concerned...

I think it would be fair to say that...

Perhaps Mr X would care to answer that.

Would you care to comment?

Well, if I could just sum up the discussion...

Would it be OK if we still finished at 11.00?

I'm afraid we can't pay any more.

Unfortunately, our warehouse isn't big enough.

## SKILLS PRACTICE

- Practice the techniques by the following scheme. Choose the topic from the list below. Remember you are practicing the important language of meetings and the subject is less important.

Ask for an opinion→Give a tentative opinion→Bring in to present→Give a neutral opinion→Ask for a reaction→Bring in to answer→Give a strong opinion→Summarize.

*Topics for discussion*, e.g. Increase in oil prices, Stock market crash, Inauguration etc.

## ROLE-PLAY

- Customers and suppliers are discussing a new order. Focus on price, quantity, delivery dates. Roleplay a situation in the most diplomatic way.

## 2. BREAKING THE ICE

### WARM-UP

- Have you ever had any experience of attending an event where almost all the attendees were strangers, for example:
  - a large conference;
  - an external training course (i.e. not one organised within a single company);
  - a formal party.If you have limited experience of such events, what events you might attend in the future careers.
- Discuss with your partner how easy / difficult it was/ would be to start conversations with strangers. Discuss also how it might be easier or more difficult to do this in English.

### QUIZ

**In pairs, look at the headline and answer the question.**

What is the meaning of the phrase *breaking the ice*?

**Do the quiz. Answer the questions. If you agree with none of the answers to a particular question, choose the answer that is closest to you. Explain your answer to your partner.**

### Quiz: Breaking the ice

1. You decide to attend an international conference. You have never attended such an event before. What is your main reason for attending?

Choose one option.

- a. I'm going to attend lots of presentations so I can keep up-to-date with developments in my industry.
- b. I'm hoping to meet lots of interesting people –maybe some of them will be useful for my future career.
- c. I have a target of twenty people that I want to meet, so I can persuade them to buy our products.

2. On the first evening, you attend a 'welcome party'. You arrive in a large hall filled with about 500 people. They all seem to be talking to each other in groups. There's nobody that you recognise. What do you do?

- a. Go up to one of the groups, introduce yourself and ask if you can join them.
- b. Go up to one of the groups and listen to the conversation. Maybe you can join in later.
- c. Find where the food is being served and try to start a conversation with someone in the queue.
- d. Walk around the hall, pretending to be looking for someone. Avoid eye contact with other people.
- e. Turn around and go home.

3. At the conference party, which of these problems would be worse for you?

- a. No-one wants to talk to you.
- b. A really boring person wants to talk to you ... and you can't escape from him/her.

4. Where is the best place to stand if you want people to talk to you?

- a. In the middle of the hall.
- b. By the wall.
- c. Outside.
- d. By the buffet / bar.

5. Which topics of conversation could you use to break the ice with someone?

- a. How much you hate parties like this.
- b. The conference.
- c. Your work.
- d. Sport.
- e. The weather.
- f. Politics.
- g. How bad the food is.
- h. Where you're from.

### READING

- 1) Read the texts and find which questions of the quiz are discussed in them.
- 2) Go through the quiz again and discuss which part of the text mentioned and what it said about them.

### 3) Do you agree with all the advice in the texts?

#### **Breaking the ice (part 1)**

Everyone knows that conferences are great for networking. Of course, you might also learn some new things at the presentations and workshops, but it's what happens during the coffee breaks and the evening events that make conferences such a good use of your time and money. Conferences are all about meeting people and, yes, making friends. Of course, some of those new contacts may become customers for your company too, but don't try to sell to them at the conference unless you really have to. Most of the people you meet won't want to buy from you – but they might be able to point you in the direction of some potential customers that they know. In other words, relax – don't try too hard. Just be yourself, and allow any business partnerships to appear naturally.

The most difficult part of networking is always breaking the ice: starting a conversation with a stranger and then keeping it going for those important first five minutes. It can be incredibly daunting to walk into a room full of people, all of whom seem to know each other and are involved in deep conversations. How on earth do you join in? Well, the most important thing to remember is that most of those people are in the same position as you. Half the people in the group conversations also don't know anybody and are nervously trying to get involved. The busy-looking people who are walking around the hall are probably just pretending to be busy so they don't have to admit that they're alone.

The best thing to do is to try to get involved in one of the conversations. It's polite to introduce yourself and ask if you can join the group, but there's nothing wrong with standing and listening for a few minutes first. Don't worry that the group are discussing top-secret business deals: they almost certainly aren't! And if they are, they should expect people to interrupt them from time to time – it's a networking event, after all.

The worst thing to do – apart from standing in the middle of the hall by yourself – is to walk around looking busy. This is like holding up a sign saying 'Please don't talk to me'. If you really feel too embarrassed to talk to strangers, perhaps you should go home and try to network at the conference tomorrow, where it should be much easier. A much better solution, though, is to move slowly around the room, make eye contact with people, smile and say 'hello'. That way, even if you're too nervous to start a conversation, other people will understand that they can start a conversation with you.

Sometimes, we're our own worst enemies: we feel bad when no-one wants to talk to us, but then when someone tries to engage us in conversation, we can't wait to get away. If someone has made the effort to come up to you, they deserve at least five minutes of your time, no matter how boring that person seems. Even if you decide at the end of that time that the person is too boring to talk to, perhaps they can introduce you to someone else who you can talk to.

And if you're lucky, perhaps more people will join your conversation group, and suddenly you'll find yourself in the middle of the action.

## Reading: Breaking the ice (part 2)

I don't smoke, and I don't intend to start, but I've noticed that smokers seem to have a natural advantage at networking events: they hang around outside, where it's quieter, there are fewer people and it's easier to talk, and they have an easy way to start a conversation (*Do you have a light? It's cold out here, isn't it?*). Of course, you don't have to smoke to get these advantages: you could simply step outside for some fresh air and try to strike up a conversation with someone who is standing alone out there. You may find that half of the 'smokers' aren't actually smoking, just taking advantage of the natural opportunity to start conversations.

Another natural place for starting conversations is the buffet or bar, even if the conversations are very superficial: *Do you know where I can find the spoons? Could you pass me the milk?* Of course, you need to be ready to follow up these ice-breakers with something much more engaging.

So what can you talk about? The obvious thing to mention is the party itself – but whatever you do, don't start moaning about how much you hate parties.

Nobody likes listening to moaners. Why not ask if the other person knows a lot of people at the party, or if they are enjoying the party. Another great topic is the conference: did you attend any good presentations today? Are you giving a presentation yourself? Have you travelled a long way to get here? Topics like sport and the weather are fine for keeping a conversation going, but might not be suitable as an opening discussion. The same goes for work: by all means find out what the other person does for a living, but perhaps try a little small talk about the party, the conference or the food first.

Finally, you may think that socialising in a foreign language would be harder than in your first language. In fact, in many ways it's easier. You've got a great topic of conversation which other people will always find interesting: where you're from. Many people will also treat you with more patience when they know you are a foreigner, and you are having problems with the language. Of course, you can't just walk up to someone and say "*Hi, I'm from Brazil*". It's always better to start with a question about the other person, rather than a statement about yourself. But by choosing the topic, you're making it much easier for the other person to follow up with a question about you: "*And what about you?*"

So don't hide, don't walk around looking busy, and don't try to escape from the first boring person who tries to talk to you. If you make an effort, you'll find the experience a lot more enjoyable – and successful for your professional career.

## VOCABULARY

networking	point sb in the direction of sth	a potential customer	daunting	pretend to do sth
admit sth	get involved in sth	polite	interrupt sb	embarrassed
your own worst enemy	engage sb in conversation	make the effort to do sth	deserve sth	
hang around	strike up a conversation	superficial	engaging	moan
patience	hide.			small talk

## USEFUL LANGUAGE

- 1) Work in groups and match the beginnings with the endings to make phrases for starting conversations. Note that many of the phrases are taken from the reading text. The first group to finish is the winner.
- 2) Which of the phrases/strategies would you choose to use in an international conference?
- 3) Work in pairs, one student reads the beginning of the phrase and another one gives the ending.

### Useful language: Ice-breakers

1. Excuse me. Do you ...	a. ... a long way to get here?
2. Hello. My name's XXX. Is it ...	b. ... for a living?
3. Are you here alone ...	c. ... good presentations today?
4. And what about you? ...	d. ... have a light?
5. It's cold out ...	e. ... have you tried it?
6. I just came out for some fresh air – ...	f. ... here, isn't it?
7. Sorry, do you ...	g. ... I can find the spoons?
8. Are you giving a ...	h. ... me the milk?
9. This salad's delicious – ...	i. ... mind if I join you?
10. Do you know many ...	j. ... morning's lecture?
11. Are you enjoying ...	k. ... OK if I join your group?
12. It's a great ...	l. ... or with a group?
13. Is this your first ...	m. ... party, isn't it?
14. Did you attend any ...	n. ... people here tonight?
15. Do you know where ...	o. ... presentation at the conference?
16. Did you enjoy this ...	p. ... round here?
17. Have you travelled ...	q. ... the party?
18. What do you do ...	r. ... there are too many people in there.
19. Are you from ...	s. ... time at the conference?
20. Could you pass ...	t. ... Where are you from?

## SPEAKING

### Leaving a conversation

1. Answer the questions.
  - 1) What strategies are used for leaving a conversation?
  - 2) Is it better to lie about your reason for leaving?
  - 3) Is it acceptable to simply walk away?
2. Complete the three short speeches using the words from the box at the side. Compare your answers with your partner.
3. Which of the three speeches or which combination of the sentences from the speeches—would you use?
4. Give a short leaving-a-conversation speech from memory.

<p>1. Well, I've just _____ someone that I need to speak to _____. It was very _____ meeting you. Let me give you my _____. I'll _____ you when I get back home, so we can stay in _____. Maybe we can have a _____ talk later in the conference. See you _____.</p> <p>2. I'm really _____, but I've just had an _____ SMS from my husband, so I need to go _____ and call him. _____ we'll have a _____ to talk later.</p> <p>3. Right, so if you'll _____ me, I _____ to go and talk to a _____ of other people. Do you _____ a business card _____ you? ... Great, thanks. And here's _____. Feel _____ to email me. Well, it was a _____ meeting you. Enjoy the _____ of the conference.</p>	<p>card chance couple email excuse free have hopefully later mine need nice on outside pleasure proper rest sorry spotted touch urgent urgently</p>
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## ROLE-PLAY

1. Write your name, job title and institution name on each slip. This could be real information or you could make up the information about yourself.

Name: Job title: Company: Institution:	Name: Job title: Company: Institution:	Name: Job title: Company: Institution:	Name: Job title: Company: Institution:	Name: Job title: Company: Institution:	Name: Job title: Company: Institution:
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2. Study the rules of the role-play very carefully.
  - There is a strict time limit of ten minutes – but you should not look at the clock or their watches all the time.
  - During the role-play, you should pretend you are strangers at a conference.
  - You should start conversations with the other people in the class, exchange business cards at an appropriate time, and leave the conversation politely in order to continue meeting people.
  - The aim is to talk to five different people and to collect exactly five different business cards from the people they have spoken to. If they collect too many

business cards, it means you are going too fast. If they don't collect enough, it means they are too slow.

- You can use the information on the business cards to help make conversation.
- The maximum group size is three people. If a fourth person joins, one member of the group needs to make an excuse and leave.
- You should try to make their conversations as natural as possible, and not simply treat it as a game.
- Pay attention to the accuracy of language and the effectiveness of ice-breaking strategies.

### 3. KEEPING CONVERSATIONS GOING

#### WARM-UP. CONVERSATION SKILLS QUOTES

##### VOCABULARY

would rather	grant a request	a bore	worthless	provided (that)	breath
pay sb a compliment	attend to sth	attain sth, an institute	realise sth	seek to do sth	charisma
be concerned about sth	a sure way to do sth	lively			

1. Work in pairs read the quotes aloud to your partner, who has a list of the eight missing words (Student A opens p.59, Student B opens 61). Your partner will suggest which word goes with which quote. Discuss the task together until you have completed all sixteen quotes.
2. Read one of their quotes aloud to your partner, saying 'blank' for the missing word. The partner then guesses which of his/her words completes the quote. If they are not sure, you may come back to difficult questions after you have completed the easier ones.
3. Do you know any similar quotes about conversation skills?

#### Conversation skills quotes (1)

1. "Many a man would rather you heard his \_\_\_\_\_ than granted his request." (Phillip Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield)
2. "The most basic of all human needs is the need to \_\_\_\_\_ and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them." (Ralph Nichols)
3. "Bore, n.: A person who \_\_\_\_\_ when you wish him to listen." (Ambrose Bierce)
4. "There is no such thing as a worthless conversation, provided you know what to listen for. And \_\_\_\_\_ are the breath of life for a conversation." (James Nathan Miller)
5. "You cannot truly \_\_\_\_\_ to anyone and do anything else at the same time." (M. Scott Peck)
6. "There's a big difference between showing \_\_\_\_\_ and really taking interest." (Michael P. Nichols, The Lost Art of Listening)
7. "The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my \_\_\_\_\_." (Henry David Thoreau)



8. "There are people who, instead of listening to what is being said to them, are already listening to what they are going to \_\_\_\_\_ themselves." (Albert Guinon)  
(Source: <http://www.leadershipnow.com/listeningquotes.html>)

### **Conversation skills quotes (2)**

9. "When people talk, listen completely. Most people never \_\_\_\_\_." (Ernest Hemingway)
10. "To listen closely and \_\_\_\_\_ well is the highest perfection we are able to attain in the art of conversation." (Francois de La Rochefoucauld)
11. "I only wish I could find an institute that teaches people how to listen. Business people need to listen at least as much as they need to talk. Too many people fail to realise that real \_\_\_\_\_ goes in both directions." (Lee Iacocca, Former CEO Chrysler Corporation)
12. "Seek first to \_\_\_\_\_, then to be understood." (Stephen R. Covey, 7 Habits of Highly Effective People)
13. "I would say that listening to the other person's \_\_\_\_\_ may be the most important thing I've learned in twenty years of business." (Heath Herber, Herber Company)
14. "When I left the dining room after sitting next to Mr. Gladstone, I thought he was the cleverest man in England. But after sitting next to Mr. Disraeli, I thought \_\_\_\_\_ was the cleverest woman in England." (A woman when asked her impression of the two English statesmen Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone after dining with them.)
15. "How can you have charisma? Be more concerned about making others feel good about \_\_\_\_\_ than you are making them feel good about you." (Dan Reiland)
16. "\_\_\_\_\_" On my television show, I probably use this word more than any other. It's the greatest question ever asked and it always will be. And it is certainly the surest way of keeping a conversation lively and interesting. (Larry King, How to Talk to Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere)

(Source of most quotes: <http://www.leadershipnow.com/listeningquotes.html>)

## **GRAMMAR. Types of questions**

1. Work in groups and match six types of the questions with the sets of examples and the comments about each type of question (Cards are on p.TYPES OF QUESTIONS63) Do you agree with all the comments?
2. Turn over all the cards, so they are face-down. Turn over one of the larger cards (with the comments) and read the comment aloud to your partners, who have to remember the type of question and the examples.

### **Making questions**

#### **1. Add question tags to these statements.**

- a. You work in marketing.
- b. The music's a bit too loud.
- c. The opening speech was very inspiring.
- d. The journey wasn't too bad.

- e. There's going to be a prize-giving ceremony at the end.
- f. You should tell the organisers that you want to go to the meal.
- g. You haven't been to one of these events before.

**2. Turn the statements from (1) into negative questions. What changes do you need to make? Which statement doesn't work as a negative question? Why?**

**3. Which statements from (1) could you say simply with questioning intonation? Which words would you stress?**

**4. Respond to these statements with a hypothetical question to keep the conversation going.**

- a. No, we're never going to relocate – at least, not while our children are young.
- b. I don't really have time for sports these days.
- c. I've thought about starting my own business, but I don't like the idea of the financial risks involved.
- d. My hobbies? Er ...work, cooking, cleaning and sleeping.

**5. Imagine you are talking to a stranger at a conference. Think of three questions you could ask about each the following topics.**

Work	Holidays	Hobbies	Family	Home

### Conversation patterns

1. Look at the following conversations. They both follow the same pattern. What is the speaker doing in each sentence 1–7?

A: So, do you have a family? Children?	1.	A: Do you have time for sports?
B: Well, I'm married, but we don't have children – yet.	2.	B: No, not really.
It's actually quite nice not to have children: it means we can see a bit of the world before we settle down.	3.	I used to like running, back when I was a student, but it's very time-consuming.
What about you?	4.	And you? Are you a sportswoman?
A: Yes, we've got two sons.	5.	A: Well, I'm not sure if I'm a sportswoman, but I try to keep fit.
They're wonderful, but I know what you mean about seeing the world: it's very difficult with children.	6.	I go to the gym a couple of times a week, and I also play tennis when I can.
So – which countries have you visited	7.	But tell me about your days as a runner. Were you good?

**2. Now match these descriptions to the sentences 1–7. You will need to use two descriptions twice.**

- a. The speaker bounces the question back to the other person.
- b. The speaker answers the question.
- c. The speaker picks up on something the other person said, and asks about that.
- d. Opening question.
- e. The speaker expands on the answer – one or two sentences.

**3. Now continue one of the conversations, following the same pattern.**

**GAME: KEEPING CONVERSATIONS GOING**

Use the questions you wrote earlier (Making questions, tasks 4 and 5) to have a conversation with a partner. Use the conversation patterns above to help you. Try to keep each conversation going for at least two minutes before you ask the next opening question.

**4. FROM CONTACT TO PARTNER**

**WARM-UP**

Discuss the three questions in pairs or groups of three. Be ready for discussion.

- 1) What can you do to turn a new acquaintance (e.g. someone you have met at a conference) into a long-term business contact or even a friend?
- 2) Why is this important?
- 3) Why can it be difficult?
- 4) How can you overcome these problems?

**READING**

- 1) Read the text and find suggested answers to the questions from the previous activity (Warm-up).
- 2) Discuss the answers in pairs before feeding back to the class.
- 3) Discuss plenty of the issues raised in the text.

**Turning new contacts into partners**

We meet dozens or even hundreds of people at conferences, and often find it difficult to remember faces to go with all the business cards we receive. For this reason, we need to do something different, to stand out from the crowd, to give the other person a better chance of remembering who we are and, hopefully, doing some business with us in the future.

The simplest approach is to follow up your meeting with an email or connect with them on a social networking site. This is much better than nothing, but it takes a long time to build a good working relationship with someone through typed messages. A much better approach is to try to build a relationship face-to-face. This may involve inviting the other person for a meal, offering them a lift (or even sharing a walk back to the hotel), or helping them in some way (e.g. buying them a coffee).

Easy, right? Well, actually, no. Inviting a person for dinner can be one of the most difficult things we have to do. For one thing, it may feel uncomfortably like flirting: showing that you are romantically attracted to someone. And even if you are not flirting, the other person may think you are. Or you may simply think that they think that you're flirting ...and it all gets very complicated.

More generally, by inviting the other person the chance to spend more time with you, it can be unpleasant for you if they turn down your invitation. They may even accept your invitation in order not to hurt your feelings, even if they don't want to spend time with you. This fear of rejection, or worrying about forcing the other person to do something they don't want to do, can make it very difficult to make the invitation in the first place.

So what can you do about these problems? One good way to show that you are not flirting is to invite several people at the same time, or at least to make it clear that the person you are inviting may bring a friend. There's an added bonus in this approach: the conversation will flow more freely if there are three or four of you, rather than just "dinner for two".

One way of dealing with the fear of rejection is to phrase your invitation in such a way that you can pretend later (even if only to yourself) that it wasn't really an invitation. For example, if you ask "What are you doing after this evening's meeting?", the other person could respond "Nothing, really. I was thinking of going to a restaurant. What about you?". Note the use of past tense ("I was thinking") – that's a signal that they're open to ideas, and you should continue with a more specific invitation. If they answer with some concrete plans (e.g. "I'm meeting up with some friends for a drink"), you can pretend all along that you were really just making small talk, and you could turn the conversation round to something else ("Oh, so you have friends here in the city?"). It's also important to signal that the other person can say no without being embarrassed. Something like "it's up to you" or "no pressure" is good for this.

Whatever you do, make sure you try at least. You'll find it gets much easier with practice, and you'll end up with some great new business partners – and maybe some good friends too.

## **SPEAKING. CONVERSATIONS**

- 1) Cut the worksheets (p.62) along the dotted lines to make sets of slips, which you can hold together with a paper clip. You should have three sets of slips per pair.
- 2) Put three conversations in order.
- 3) When you finish this activity, underline useful phrases from the conversations which they could use in real life.

## **FUNCTIONS AND PHRASES**

Look at these examples of phrases for a range of social functions. The gapped phrases all came from the dialogue. Without looking back at the dialogue, write one word in each space. Then check by reading the dialogue again.

<b>Asking about plans</b>	<b>Talking about your tentative plans</b>
---------------------------	---

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you doing anything after the conference?</li> <li>• So, _____ for this evening?</li> <li>• What _____?</li> <li>• What _____ tomorrow evening?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm not really sure. Perhaps I'll have an early night.</li> <li>• Well, _____ checking out one of the restaurants.</li> <li>• I _____ have a walk around the old town later.</li> </ul>
<b>Inviting</b>	<b>Testing whether an offer is serious</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you feel like going to a restaurant tonight?</li> <li>• I _____ you'd like to join me for dinner?</li> <li>• If you do decide to join me, you'll _____.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well, that's very kind of you, but wouldn't you prefer to be with just your friends?</li> <li>• Well, I _____. Possibly...</li> <li>• And _____ I can't pay for anything?</li> </ul>
<b>Suggesting</b>	<b>Allowing the other person to say 'no'</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perhaps we could split the bill 50/50.</li> <li>• There's _____ a really nice Italian restaurant near the old castle.</li> <li>• _____ seven o'clock?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel free to say no if you've got other plans.</li> <li>• No pressure at all.</li> <li>• OK, well, it's _____.</li> </ul>
<b>Politely refusing</b>	<b>Accepting</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'd love to, but I don't think it'll be possible.</li> <li>• No, no, I wouldn't _____.</li> <li>• No, I'm _____.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That will be very nice. Thank you.</li> <li>• You _____, I think I will.</li> <li>• OK, _____.</li> </ul>
<b>Offering help / kindness</b>	<b>Explaining why your kindness is 'no 'big deal'</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let me help you with your coat.</li> <li>• I'm just going to the cafe. Can I get you anything to drink?</li> <li>• You _____ if you can't find it.</li> <li>• Please _____ pay for tonight's meal.</li> <li>• Can I _____ anywhere?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can _____ company's invoice.</li> <li>• You were _____ invite me, so it's the _____.</li> <li>• No, no. It's not _____. It's really _____.</li> </ul>
<b>Insisting</b>	<b>Thanking</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You _____ at least buy you a drink.</li> <li>Please, _____</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OK, then that's _____ Thank you.</li> <li>That was a lovely meal. Thank you _____ me.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Making an excuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It's been a really long day and I've got an early start tomorrow.</li> <li>I've already arranged something with some friends from work.</li> <li>I think I'll walk - _____ exercise after all that food.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Dealing with a refusal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OK, that's fine. Perhaps another time.</li> <li>Oh, nothing. I _____ meeting up with some of my colleagues. But it doesn't matter.</li> </ul>

### ROLE-PLAY MAP (p.63)

Start in one of the squares with a star (★). Use the phrases from this lesson to role-play the conversations. The arrows (←, ↑, → and ↓) tell you which square to move to. There are usually several choices. When you get to the end of a conversation (•), swap roles and start again.

## 5. DIPLOMATIC AND TENTATIVE LANGUAGE

### WARM-UP

- How would explain the phrases '*diplomatic language*' and '*tentative language*'?
- Study the example and decide if it is diplomatic/tentative:  
*That will be very expensive.*
- What words/techniques do you know to make the language more tentative or diplomatic?
- Make this sentence more diplomatic as much as possible:  
*e.g. I think it might be quite expensive.*

### PRONUNCIATION

- Practise each pair of sentences. Say the sentences on the left in a strong, clear, direct way. Say the sentences on the right in a diplomatic /tentative, careful, thoughtful way: speak more slowly and use pauses.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. <u>Can</u> I go back to the point about timing? | <u>Could</u> I <u>just</u> go back to the point about timing? |
| 2. It's <u>very hot</u> in here.                   | It's <u>a bit hot</u> in here, <u>isn't it</u> ?              |
| 3. We have a problem.                              | It seems we have a slight problem,                            |
| 4. There'll be a delay.                            | There might be a small delay.                                 |
| 5. Can I interrupt for a moment?                   | Could I just interrupt for a moment?                          |
| 6. That'll be very expensive                       | That might be quite expensive.                                |
| 7. That'll be very expensive.                      | Won't that be a bit expensive?                                |
| 8. Can we meet again next week?                    | Perhaps we could meet again next week?                        |
| 9. Our competitors are expensive.                  | I'm afraid our competitors aren't very cheap.                 |
| 10. There's a problem with that.                   | I think there's a bit of a problem with that.                 |
| 11. It'll be better use Air Express.               | Wouldn't it be better to use Air Express?                     |
| 12. We can't do that.                              | To be honest, I'm not sure we could do that.                  |
| 13. There's a misunderstanding.                    | There seems to be a slight misunderstanding.                  |
| 14. That's going to be difficult.                  | I guess that could be a little difficult.                     |
| 15. That gives us very little time.                | Actually, that doesn't give us very much time.                |
| 16. The transport costs are expensive.             | The transport costs are a bit expensive, aren't they?         |

2) Underline all the words in the second column that make the language diplomatic/tentative. The first two have been done for you.

3) What are the advantages and disadvantages of using direct language?

In which business situations would you expect to hear diplomatic language?

## GRAMMAR

1. Complete the table below with the sentence numbers from the previous task. The first two sentence numbers have been done for you.

a. can > could	1	j. is → seems to be	
b. will > might		k. I think / I guess f a little / a bit (+ adjective)	
c. perhaps/maybe		l. phrase to introduce bad news	9
d. just		m. a slight / a bit of a (+ noun)	
e. seems/appears		n. negative question	
f. negative question			
g. a small/a slight (+ noun)			
h. a bit/quite (+ adjective)			
i. could/would			

- What do you think about this example? *I'm afraid there seems to be a slight problem.*

2. Rewrite these phrases so that they are more diplomatic. Use techniques from section 1 and your own ideas.

### Part 1

1. I want to make a change to the agenda. \_\_\_\_\_

2. It'll be better to ship the goods via Singapore. \_\_\_\_\_
3. We have a problem with our assembly line. \_\_\_\_\_
4. That will be difficult. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Can I finish what I was saying? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Your estimate for the total cost is too low. \_\_\_\_\_
7. That's very strange. \_\_\_\_\_
8. The project is running late. \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 2

Practise speaking your new phrases. Start like this:

1. To be honest, product X seems a bit expensive.
2. It's a little more expensive than product Y, but the quality is better.

Customer	Supplier
1. Product X is very expensive.	2. It's more expensive than product Y, but it's much better.
3. If we buy product X, what terms will you give us?	4. What do you mean?
5. Can we have more credit?	6. That will be difficult. You're over your limit.
7. We have a problem with our cash-flow.	8. Pay some of the money you owe us.
9. OK.	10. In that case we'll be more flexible.

## SPEAKING

1. Discuss:
  - In what situations would you expect to hear tentative language?
  - Do you use tentative structures in your own language?
2. One person in each situation below will use diplomatic language. Act out the situations with a partner.
  1. You are at the reception desk of a big company and want to see the President for a few minutes.
  2. You have to tell a customer that there will be a delay of 4 weeks with the goods.
  3. You are talking to a journalist who wants to write a story about your company's latest (bad) profit figures.
  4. You are talking to a customer who is complaining about the bad service of your company. Decide before you begin what the complaint is about.



## 6. SHOWING INTEREST

### WARM-UP

- 1) What ways of showing interest do you know?
- 2) What do you think 'echo' questions refer to?
- 3) Make echo questions.

*She went to Australia last year.*

*I can speak Japanese.*

*It's lunchtime now.*

Practise these mini-dialogues.

#### Student A

I've just come back from France.

Mary went into hospital again.

We're thinking about getting a bigger flat.

Michael's looking for a new job.

#### Student B

► Have you? France! Where did you go?

► Again? What a pity. I must go and visit her.

► Are you? Where are you moving to?

► Mhm. I'm not surprised.

Write examples of the techniques used by Student B to show interest.

Echo questions (repeating the auxiliary verb): *Have you?*

Echo words

*Wh-* questions

Making a personal response

The table below shows some techniques for showing interest.

<b>Showing attention Echo questions Echo words <i>Wh-</i> questions</b>		Right. Sure. Yes. Yeah. Yuh. Mhm. Uhuh.
		Did you? Are they? Was it?
		Five hundred? Six months? All over the world?
		So what happened? Why was that, then? How did you feel?
<b>Personal response</b>	1.	Really? That sounds interesting.
	2.	Really! Fantastic! Great!
	3.	Exactly. Of course. Sure.
	4.	How awful. What a pity. Poor you.
	5.	No! That's strange! Good heavens!
	6.	Mhm. I'm not surprised.

Complete the table by writing one of these words in each space 1-6.

<b>interest</b>	<b>surprise</b>	<b>no surprise</b>	<b>pleasure</b>	<b>agreement</b>	<b>sympathy</b>
-----------------	-----------------	--------------------	-----------------	------------------	-----------------

Write a response to these comments. Use ideas from section B and your own ideas.

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Response</b>
1. I saw Irina yesterday.	
2. I'm thinking about going to Brazil for my holidays.	
3. I was waiting all morning for the repair man.	
4. I went to see that new film last night.	

Work with a new partner.

**Student A** Tell a story about something that happened to you recently.

**Student B** Show interest.

## 7. REQUESTS

### WARM-UP

1) Look at the questions and try to explain the difference between the first and second sentences

2) Do you see any special grammar points with indirect questions?

Can you call me a taxi?

Do you think you could call me a taxi?

How old are you?

I wonder if I could ask how old you are?

Does she still work here ?

I'd be grateful if you could tell me if she still works here.

3) Formulate the rule for indirect questions.

With indirect questions the introductory phrase makes the question, so the rest of the sentence is like a normal statement with subject \_\_\_\_\_ verb and no auxiliary '\_\_\_\_\_ '.

### GRAMMAR

Use these beginnings to make indirect questions for situations 1-6 below. Write your questions.

#### Making a request (to someone else)

Could you possibly ...?

Do you think you could ...?

I'd be grateful if you could ...

#### Asking for permission (for yourself)

I wonder if I could ...?

Is it all right if we ...?

I wonder if it might be possible to ...?

1. Asking a policeman for directions	
2. Customer speaking to supplier	

3. Supplier speaking to customer	
4. Interrupting someone in a meeting	
5. Asking a colleague for a favour	
6. Asking your boss for a big favour	

Fill in the missing letters in replies 1-5 below. Then put the words in the right order in replies 6-10.

Notice that 1-5 are positive replies and 6-10 are negative.

(Agreeing to a request) 1 Yes, o _ c _ _ _ _ . 2 Yes, cer _ _ _ _ _ . (Giving permission) 3 Sure, g _ ah _ _ 4 Yes, pl _ _ _ _ d _ . 5 By a _ _ me _ _ s.	
6 I'm but sorry busy I'm little right a now.	I'm _ _ _ _ _ .
7 I'm afraid working not it's moment at the.	I'm _ _ _ _ _ .
8 Well honest be to bit inconvenient it's a.	Well, _ _ _ _ _ .
9 I'd didn't you rather actually.	I'd _ _ _ _ _ .
10 That's not possible really I'm afraid.	That's _ _ _ _ _ .

Work with a new partner. Change roles when you finish.

**Student A** Make the requests you wrote in section A.

**Student B** Give positive and negative replies.

Then invent and reply to other requests without using your notes.

Look at these questions with *mind*. Match the first part of the phrase with the last part.

Do you mind if I ... ... closing the window?

Would you mind if I ..... closed the window?

Would you mind ... ... close the window?

Questions with *mind* mean *Is it a problem for you?* How would you give permission and refuse permission to the question: *Would you mind if I smoked?*

Practise some more examples with *mind*.

## 8. MAKING SUGGESTIONS

### WARM-UP

- 1) Look at the functions and give your own examples that correspond to them

*Making a suggestion*

*Accepting a suggestion*

*Rejecting a suggestion*

- 2) Work in small groups (three or four) and make suggestions to the problem below.

*Problem:* you want to give all your customers an inexpensive but unusual gift next Christmas. It should be something that will continue to remind them of your company for many months. What do you suggest?

### GRAMMAR

1. **Underline the phrases used for making suggestions in examples below.**

1. Shall we postpone the launch of the new product until the spring?
2. Can I make a suggestion? Why don't we try a poster campaign on bus stops?
3. It's just an idea, but what about using an outside company to recruit and select our senior managers?
4. Let's go back for a moment, if that's OK. Perhaps we should rethink the whole project?

**Match the beginnings and endings below to make replies used for accepting a suggestion.**

- |                               |                       |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 5. OK, let's ...              | ...worth trying.      |
| 6. Yes, I think that would... | ... do that.          |
| 7. Yes, that might be ...     | ... what you mean.    |
| 8. Right. I can see ...       | ... work really well. |

**Now do the same for these replies used for *rejecting* a suggestion.**

9. I can see one or two ...	... about that, to be honest.
10. That sounds like a good idea, but I ...	... think so?
11. I'm not really sure ...	... don't think it would work.
12. Do you ...	...problems with that idea.

2. **Work with a partner. Student A read out each suggestion 1-4 above. Student B cover the second half of the replies 5-12 with a piece of paper and reply by accepting or rejecting. Change roles and repeat when you finish.**
3. **The rejecting phrases above are all quite diplomatic. Below is a stronger phrase. Add one more.**

*I'm sorry, I don't think that's a good idea.* \_\_\_\_\_

## SPEAKING

1. **Work with a new partner. Student A make suggestions (invent your own ideas). Student B reply by accepting or rejecting. If you reject the suggestion, add a reason.**
2. **Work in small groups. Choose one of the problems below. Make suggestions and decide on the best solution. At the end tell the class what you decided.**
  - 1) You live in a country with a lot of rainforest. Your company is a timber company (you cut down trees and export the wood). You contribute to the development of your country by providing jobs and paying taxes. Environmental groups are trying to restrict your activities.
  - 2) You work for a Sunday newspaper which is second in the market. Your newspaper is a good product, but the market leader has just cut their price and started a very aggressive advertising campaign. You need to think of a loyalty scheme to keep your readers.
  - 3) One of your main customers has not paid their last three invoices. They now owe you \$100,000. You have already sent a polite letter asking them to pay as soon as possible. They are a large company and you don't want to lose their business.
  - 4) One of you (decide who) has just inherited \$20,000 from a rich aunt. Suggest how to invest the money for long-term growth.

## 9. AGREEING AND DISAGREEING

### WARM-UP

- 1) Give comments to the following opinion  
*I think Brazilians are the best footballers in the world.*
- 2) Do your comments represent the techniques of agreement and disagreement?

### FUNCTIONS

*I think Italian food is fantastic.* Complete the table below using phrases from the box.

Yes, you're right. | Isn't it a little difficult to prepare? | Yes, it's marvellous. | I don't really agree with you. | Do you? | Especially pizzas.

#### Agreeing

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. Using a 'standard phrase' for agreeing on any topic | _____                           |
| 2. Using another word that means the same (a synonym)  | _____                           |
| 3. Making a general comment                            | Yes, all Mediterranean food is. |
| 4. Giving an example                                   | _____                           |

### Disagreeing

5. Using a 'standard phrase' for disagreeing on any \_\_\_\_\_  
topic
6. Yes, but... Maybe, but Thai food is better.
7. Asking an open question \_\_\_\_\_
8. Asking a negative question \_\_\_\_\_

### **TECHNIQUES OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT**

Below are more responses to the comment about Italian food. Write the appropriate technique number 1-8 from the previous task section A next to each response. The first one has been done for you.

- a. Well, it's OK, but I don't think it's as good as our food. 6
- b. Me too. I love Italian ice-cream. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Yes, it's absolutely delicious. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Really? Do you think so? \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Yes it is, isn't it. \_\_\_\_\_
- f. I'm not sure I agree with you. It's all just tomatoes and herbs, isn't it?  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Yes, but I prefer French myself. It's more varied \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Yes, I agree. It's one of the best in the world. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

### **SPEAKING**

First agree then disagree with these six opinions. Write your responses. Use techniques from task 1 (FUNCTIONS) and your own ideas.

- a. Cold in here, isn't it?
- b. This wine is very good.
- c. My Volkswagen is very reliable.
- d. I think we should cancel the whole project right now.
- e. I think Super Audit should audit our accounts next year.
- f. I think we should move production to a country where labour costs are cheaper.

Write an opinion about a topic of your choice. Choose something of general interest that will create a lively discussion.

*I think* \_\_\_\_\_

### **DISCUSSION**

Form small groups. Read out your opinion and continue the discussion. Remember to ask other people for their opinion (*What about you? What do you think, Hans?*).

## 10. DISAGREEING

### WARM-UP

Are you involved in any dangerous kind of sports?

Would you like to do dangerous sport like bungee-jumping?

### READING

Read the comment and replies about bungee-jumping.

*It must be great to go bungee-jumping.*

1. Well, I suppose so, but isn't it a bit dangerous?
2. To be honest, I'd be terrified.
3. I know what you mean, but what happens if the elastic breaks?
4. What about the cost? Frankly, it's not cheap.
5. I can see what you're saying, but wouldn't your family be worried?
6. Actually, I've heard that it's not very safe.
7. Don't you think you're a bit old for that?
8. Really? Do you think so?

In the previous section there are various techniques for disagreeing. Complete the table below with the sentence numbers section 1.

1. Normal question (to show doubt)	3 _____
2. Negative question (to show doubt)	1 _____
3. <i>Yes, but...</i>	1 _____
4. Introductory phrase (to prepare the listener)	2 _____

Read the following conversation about moving home from the city centre to the suburbs.

**A:** We're moving to the suburbs. We don't like all the noise and pollution.

**B:** Yes, but it will take you more time to get to work.

**A:** No, it takes 45 minutes from the suburbs.

**B:** You'll buy a bigger house, I suppose.

**A:** No. Houses in the suburbs are very expensive.

**B:** The children won't like it. They'll miss their friends.

**A:** No. They aren't worried.

Now rewrite it so that it is more friendly. Start like this:

**A:** We're thinking about moving to the suburbs. We don't really like all the noise and pollution.

**B:** I know what you mean, but won't it take you more time to get to work?

**A:** Actually, it only takes about 45 minutes from the suburbs.

**B:** \_\_\_\_\_

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_

**B:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**A:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **SPEAKING**

Write down a statement that other people will probably disagree with. Say it and see what reaction you get. Continue the discussion.

### **Examples**

*The planning department in this city works really well.*

*Soft drugs should be legalized.*

*Barcelona is the best football team in Europe.*

## **BUSINESS MEETINGS**

### **11.GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS**

#### **WARM-UP**

- 1) What do you know about 'small talk'? Give the definition to this phenomenon.
- 2) Work in teams (four teams of four). One team should come up with arguments in favour of allowing or encouraging small talk in business meetings; the other team should come up with arguments in favour of discouraging preventing small talk in meetings. Write down the arguments on a sheet of paper.
- 3) Choose one person who will to chair a meeting between the two teams to present and discuss their arguments and to decide on the best approach to managing small talk in meetings.
- 4) At the end, analyse the effectiveness of the meeting itself, e.g. how well did the chair manage to control the meeting or encourage creativity and compromise, did everyone contribute equally, or was the meeting dominated by the most confident speakers, etc.
- 5) Fill in the gaps.

*Small talk* refers to conversations about things which are not directly relevant to the current task we are doing or the situation we are in. Classic examples include discussions at \_\_\_\_ about the \_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_, TV programmes, family news, etc. Small talk is small in the sense that the conversations tend to be quite \_\_\_\_.

#### **READING**

- 1) Work in pairs to read the texts in order to see which points from the lead-in discussion they mention. One student in each pair should read the first text (Let's stop wasting time and get on with it!); the other should read the second text (Small talk is the cement that holds businesses together).
- 2) Summarise their texts to their partners, focusing especially on similarities and differences from the lead-in discussions.

#### **Text 1**

**Let's stop wasting time and get on with it!**



Did you know you can download a clock from the internet to calculate the cost of your meetings? All you need to do is type in the number of attendees at the meeting and their average hourly wage, and start the clock. As the seconds tick away and you see how much those seconds are costing your company, you'll start to appreciate what a terrible waste of time – and money – most meetings are.

So what can you do? Firstly, make sure everyone arrives on time. No excuses. If five people at a meeting are sitting around waiting for a sixth person to turn up, just think how much money you are throwing away.

Secondly, get most of the work done before the meeting. That means sending round detailed agendas, with clear instructions for all participants telling them what they need to do to prepare for the meeting. Again, accept no excuses if someone fails to prepare properly. That means the meeting itself can focus on problem-solving and decision-making rather than wasting time explaining the problem that needs to be solved or the decision that needs to be made.

Thirdly, stick to the agenda. Don't let anyone hijack the meeting by chatting about something irrelevant. If they want to talk about those things, let them call their own meeting. Don't let them take over yours.

Fourthly, set a time limit and stick to it. There's nothing worse than a meeting that goes round and round in circles with no decisions ever being finalised. A time limit can be a great way to focus everyone's minds on the purpose of the meeting and the need to achieve something concrete ...and then to go back to work and start implementing the decisions.

Of course small talk has its place, but that place is not a meeting.

## **Text 2**

Small talk is the cement that holds businesses together Did you know that 50% of business communication is actually small talk? Small talk is a vital part of working with other people: finding out what they're doing, what they're having problems with, and what they think they should be doing differently. Perhaps even more importantly, it's about getting to know your colleagues and business partners as people, not just as business machines. Business is very largely based on trusting people, helping and being helped by people and persuading people to do things. How can you achieve any of those things if you don't spend time getting to know each other?

When is this relationship-building supposed to happen? Outside of working hours? No, that's not right if we accept that relationship building is real work. When we're sitting at our computers or in our offices? No, that's when we might need to avoid interruptions and stay focused. So when, then? A lot of the best small talk happens accidentally: the classic situations are the queue for the photocopier, the coffee machine or the water cooler. But a much more systematic and effective way to build good relationships between people from different departments is to allow small talk to flourish in meetings.

Let's get a few things straight about meetings: the whole point of bringing people together for meetings is to generate discussion, to resolve misunderstandings, and to find solutions to problems that people couldn't find if they were working alone. If everything is carefully planned in advance, and the chair of the meeting sticks rigidly to the agenda, none of those things can take place. Of course, there's a time when it's appropriate for one person to talk and everyone else to listen and learn, but that's a presentation, not a meeting.

If you're serious about making your meetings more effective, you need to give the participants plenty of time to ask questions, take the conversation in new directions, say things which may or may not be relevant, and above all, get to know each other. Of course, you need to make sure things don't get out of control, but that means finding a sensible balance between small talk and getting down to business.

A company which does not tolerate small talk may get things done more quickly, but that doesn't mean it'll do things the best way, making full use of the skills and ideas of its employees ...and it may well find that it loses its best employees and its customers just as quickly.

## VOCABULARY

an attendee	tick away	appreciate sth	an excuse	turn up	fail to do sth	stick to
sth	hijack sth	(ir)relevant	take over sth	concrete	implement a decision	vital
trust sb	persuade sb to do sth	an interruption	a queue	a watercooler	systematic	flourish
get sth straight	a misunderstanding	rigidly	appropriate	tolerate sth		

## SMALL TALK PHRASES (1): QUESTIONS

**1. Complete these small talk questions by choosing the best form for each verb in brackets.**

Asking about current projects:

1. What \_\_\_ you \_\_\_ on at the moment?
2. How \_\_\_ it \_\_\_ (go) with your new assistant?
3. \_\_\_ you \_\_\_ (make) any progress with your big project?

Asking about recent events:

4. How \_\_\_ your presentation \_\_\_ (go) last week?
5. How \_\_\_ (be) your business trip? When \_\_\_ you \_\_\_ (get) back?

Asking about news:

6. What's new?
7. \_\_\_ you \_\_\_ (hear) back from that potential big customer yet?
8. What \_\_\_ you \_\_\_ (be) up to in your department?

Asking about plans and predictions

9. When do you think they \_\_\_ finally \_\_\_ (sign) the contract?
10. \_\_\_ you \_\_\_ (go) to the conference this weekend?

**2. Now match the questions (1–10) above with the answers (a–j) below.**

- a. A little, but it's very slow. We're still tied up with the financing side of things, so it doesn't feel like we're getting anywhere.
- b. Absolutely! I'm giving a presentation! I'm really nervous about it, actually.
- c. Ah, nothing, really. Nothing ever changes! Busy as usual.
- d. It was useful, but really exhausting. I just got back on Tuesday, so I'm still trying to get back on top of my inbox. But I'm glad I went. I made a few potentially useful contacts.
- e. Next week, hopefully, but they're still not happy with our service charges, so it might still all fall through.
- f. Not bad, actually. He's on a steep learning curve, but he's trying hard, and he's got a lot of potential.
- g. Really well. We had a good turn-out, and some people said nice things about it. Whether anyone actually buys the product as a result is another question!
- h. We're about to start working on the new marketing plan. It's not due to be launched for another two months, but it takes a really long time to get ready.
- i. We've been really busy preparing for next week's quality inspection. We're nearly ready, but there are still a few big jobs to finish.
- j. Yes, they emailed us this morning with an order for 500 units, so it looks like it's all going ahead. Very exciting.

## **12.GETTING THE MEETING STARTED**

**1. Look at this introduction to a meeting. What does the chairwoman mean by the phrases in bold?**

- 1. Right ...I think we should start now. Robert, Alice ...could you ...? Robert ...? Thanks.
- 2. OK, so, is everybody here? Who are we waiting for? Hmmm ...well, I think we'll have to **make a start without them**. We've got **a lot to get through** this afternoon.
- 3. Right, well, as you know, the purpose of today's meeting is to **see where** we are with the marketing plan, and to **work out what we still need to do** before the launch, which is now just six weeks away.
- 4. By the end of the meeting, we need to have a list of firm action points for the next month. Hopefully we'll then need only one more meeting next month to **tie up any remaining loose ends**.
- 5. Did everyone get a copy of the agenda I **sent round**? OK, good.
- 6. As I say, we've got a lot to get through, so please let's **stick to the agenda**. I've **set aside** two hours for this meeting, and we really can't afford to **run over**. Ideally, we can **cover everything** in an hour and a half. Does that sound reasonable?
- 7. Ah, Helena, come and take a seat. We started without you.

8. So perhaps we can **get the ball rolling** by **going through the list of action points** from the last meeting.
9. Borys, you were going to **look into** the costs of the various options that **came up** last time. Could you tell us what you found out?

**2. Now match the nine steps in the meeting introduction (1–9) to the descriptions (a–i). Can you think of other phrases for the nine steps?**

- a. Stating the desired outcome.
- b. Introducing the first point on the agenda.
- c. Getting people's attention, interrupting small talk
- d. Handing over to the first speaker.
- e. Dealing with non-attendees.
- f. Dealing with a late arrival.
- g. Explaining time limits and procedures.
- h. Stating the purpose
- i. Checking people have seen the agenda.

**3. Discuss these questions with a partner.**

1. What body language do you think the chairwoman used to interrupt the small talk? Why didn't she finish her request?
2. Why do you think the chairwoman decided not to criticise people for being late? Do you agree with her decision?
3. The chairwoman referred to action points for the next month and a meeting next month. What's the difference between the next month and next month?
4. Why didn't the chairwoman go through the agenda step-by-step? Do you agree with her decision?
5. Why did the chairwoman set both a maximum time limit and an ideal time limit?
6. What verb form did the chairwoman use to refer to an action point from the last meeting?
7. Do you think the chairwoman's language was too idiomatic at times?

**4. Without looking back at the chairwoman's introduction, match the beginnings and endings to make useful phrases for getting a meeting started.**

1. to make	a. aside X hours for sth
2. to have	b. the ball rolling by doing sth
3. to see	c. everything in X hours
4. to tie	d. into sth
5. to send	e. a lot to get through
6. to stick	f. over
7. to set	g. round a copy of the agenda
8. to run	h. a start without sb
9. to cover	i. sth out
10. to get	j. through a list of action points

11.to go	k. to the agenda
12.to look	l. up (at the last meeting)
13.to come	m. up any remaining loose ends
14.to find	n. where we are with sth

**5. Using the list of nine steps from task 2 above and the useful phrases from 4 above, take turns to practise starting your own meeting. You could use one of the topics below or your own ideas.**

- A new Health and Safety Procedure
- How to deal with our recent Public Relations crisis
- Finding new sources of income for our business

### **13.GETTING INVOLVED IN MEETINGS**

#### **WARM-UP**

- 1) Have you ever participated in meetings in English?
- 2) What problems with understanding and communicating did you have in meetings?
- 3) If never took part in meetings, answer the following question: what problems would you have in a high-level meeting in English?

#### **QUESTIONNAIRE: MEETINGS IN ENGLISH**

**Complete this questionnaire about meetings in English and keep a record of your answers. Explain your answers to your partner, using examples where possible. Be honest!**

1. You're at a brainstorming meeting in where everyone is speaking English. The other participants seem to speak much better at English than you. You have lots of ideas and opinions about others' ideas. What do you usually do?
  - a. I interrupt others frequently in order to express my opinions, even though I know I make lots of basic mistakes with my English.
  - b. I wait for my turn to present my opinions, and then try to express myself as clearly as I can.
  - c. I only speak if someone asks me for my opinion, and keep my answers short to avoid mistakes.
2. You're at a meeting in English where several participants are sitting silently and just listening. What do you do?
  - a. I ignore them – if they have nothing to say, they shouldn't be there.
  - b. I feel sorry for them – perhaps they are having problems with the language.
  - c. I do everything I can to involve them, by inviting them to speak and preventing others from interrupting them.
3. You're at a meeting where a junior colleague clearly can't speak English properly, and they keep making really basic mistakes like "it don't work". How do you feel?
  - a. Superior. My English is much better, and I'm glad I don't sound so

- b. stupid when I speak.
  - c. Irritated. If they can't speak English, they shouldn't be at this meeting.
  - d. Impressed. My colleague is demonstrating excellent self-confidence and determination to overcome a language barrier. And they're making lots of useful contributions to the meeting.
4. At your meeting, everyone is talking at the same time in English. You can follow their conversations, but you're a few seconds behind. By the time you've thought of something to say, and planned how to say it, the conversation has moved on. How often do you experience this feeling?
- a. All the time.
  - b. Quite often.
  - c. Rarely or never.
5. You are at a meeting in English where you understand about 60–80% of what you hear. What do you do?
- a. Keep interrupting to check what's going on. It's a bit embarrassing and frustrating for others, but it's important that I understand.
  - b. Participate actively in the meeting. From time to time I'll misunderstand the topic and my contributions will sound a bit stupid, but I'm prepared to take the risk.
  - c. Sit quietly and listen so as to avoid sounding stupid by talking about the wrong topic.
6. Who is responsible for overcoming your problems with English?
- a. Nobody. I make mistakes but it's not a problem. I'm paid for my professional skills, not for being an expert in English.
  - b. My employer. They should provide more English lessons and give me time to study. My teacher could also do more to improve my English. Also, the other people at meetings should try to help me more.
  - c. Me.

## ANALYSIS

**Check your score (on p.65) and read the analysis. Discuss with a partner whether you agree. Try to come up with some good advice for the three types of person.**

## STRATEGIES

**Now match these strategies with the type of person who needs them most, *perfectionists* or *risk-takers*. (Typical users would benefit from all of the strategies).**

- a. Record yourself speaking at a meeting in English (e.g. using a Dictaphone). Later, listen to your 'performance' (e.g. while travelling home from work) and try to correct some of the mistakes you hear.
- b. Learn a few "interrupting phrases" like *Can I just say something?* or *Sorry to interrupt, but ....* These phrases will give you time to plan what you're going to say. The best one-word interrupting phrase is *But ...*, or you could simply say the person's name.
- c. Learn hundreds of new words. Be systematic and organised – if you learn 10 new words per day for a year, you can increase your vocabulary by 3650 words! Think what that would do for your fluency and confidence.
- d. Actively try to involve less confident colleagues by asking their opinions frequently and listening patiently while they speak.

- e. Instead of simply presenting your opinions (*I think ...*), use questions (*What about if we ...?*; *Do you think ...?*) and question tags (*That would work, wouldn't it?*) to involve others.
- f. Go for it! Speaking English in public is like learning to ride a bike. If you analyse it too much, you'll convince yourself it's impossible. But once you've done it a few times, it'll feel more natural.
- g. Ask a colleague what bad habits you have with English grammar or pronunciation. Then try to correct yourself when you're speaking fluently. It'll slow you down a bit, but soon you'll notice it gets easier and faster to be accurate.
- h. Learn some phrases for checking understanding (e.g. *What exactly do you mean by X?*; *Sorry – I didn't catch that last word.*) and make sure you use them. Remember, there's no point in going to a meeting if you don't understand. It may feel embarrassing to keep asking for clarification, but it's worse to sit in silence, and worst of all if your misunderstanding leads to professional mistakes.
- i. If somebody interrupts you, give them a chance to speak, especially if you know that person isn't very confident about using English in meetings. If they hesitate, encourage them with phrases like *Go on* or *After you*.
- j. Don't let other people interrupt you too easily. Hold the floor with phrases like *Can I just finish my point?* or *I'll let you speak in a second*.

## USEFUL LANGUAGE

- 1) Cut the worksheets (p.66) along the dotted lines to make sets of slips
- 2) Work in groups to match the 26 useful phrases to the five functions.
- 3) Give more examples of useful phrases for these functions.
- 4) Test each other by reading the name of a function to give as many phrases as possible from their partners.

## PRACTICE

- 1) Work in groups of four or five. You are going to make the announcement on the slips of paper (Student A, Student B), inventing any additional details in order to make the announcement longer.  
Student A: turn to p.60  
Student B: turn to p.61
- 2) While listening to the announcement, you should interrupt the speakers in order to clarify the meaning of any words and phrases they do not understand.
- 3) Note that the phrases in bold are intended to be difficult or impossible to understand, and are therefore explained at the bottom. Of course, the listeners have no way of knowing which phrases are in bold and which are not, so you will have to be brave and ask about everything you are unsure of.
- 4) Did the listeners manage to ask about all the phrases in bold?

5) Repeat the activity where one student explains something technical from his/her own area of expertise (e.g. a hobby, a complicated procedure). The listeners have to interrupt regularly to ask for clarification.

## ROLE-PLAY

Role-play the two situations in groups of four or five. Ideally, you should work in mixed groups (i.e. perfectionists with risk-takers).

In the first role-play, the risk-takers try to dominate the meeting, the perfectionists try to interrupt, using the strategies from the lesson.

In the second role-play aim for all participants to contribute equally.

### Role-play 1

Your company wants to organise a **Work–Life Balance day**. The aim of the event is to get employees to see colleagues as people with real lives outside the workplace, and therefore to be more supportive, understanding and friendly towards each other. There is a very limited budget, and the event will take place on a normal working day, without dramatically reducing employees' productivity during that day. You and some other junior members of staff have been asked to plan the events for the day. Hold a brainstorming meeting to plan the event.

### Role-play 2

Your company wants to hold a **Staff Integration event**, to enable employees from different teams and work locations to get to know each other and build relationships. You and other senior managers meet to plan a budget for this event (in terms of cost per employee) and to brainstorm ideas for the event.

## 14.BRAINSTORMING AND EVALUATING

### WARM-UP

Discuss the questions in pairs and then share their ideas with the class.

- 1) Have you ever taken part in a brainstorming meeting?
- 2) How does brainstorming work? What are the rules?
- 3) When is brainstorming most effective? When would it be the wrong technique to use?
- 4) Are there any problems with brainstorming as a technique?

### VOCABULARY

prevent sb from doing sth	challenge sth, an assumption	work in practice	bother to do sth
selfish	praise	demotivating	sensible
encourage sth	contribute	judge sth	avoid doing sth
judgement	facial expression	slight	express an idea
get distracted	meet objectives	random	concrete criteria
assess sth			

### READING

1) Look at the following phrases. Four of them are the rules of successful brainstorming and six of them are important criticisms. With a partner, discuss which



phrases are rules and which are criticisms, and what each phrase might mean. Then read the text. Write one phrase in each gap.

- blocking
- combine and improve ideas
- evaluation apprehension
- focus on quantity
- free rider problem
- illusion of group productivity
- personal contribution
- social matching effect
- welcome unusual ideas
- withhold criticism

2) Finally, without looking back at the text, try to remember as much as you can about each phrase above. Discuss your ideas with a partner.

### **The problem with brainstorming**

Brainstorming is one of the most popular techniques used in meetings to generate ideas for solving a specific problem. Alex Osborn, the inventor of the term

‘Brainstorming’, established four rules.

- Firstly, it’s important to \_\_\_\_1\_\_\_\_. Write everything down, the more ideas, the better.
- Secondly, participants need to \_\_\_\_2\_\_\_\_. Never criticise another person’s idea during the brainstorming session, as it will prevent people from being creative. There’s plenty of time for criticism in the evaluation stage later.
- Thirdly, we should \_\_\_\_3\_\_\_\_. Try to challenge your assumptions and ask ‘what if ...?’ questions.
- Finally, try to \_\_\_\_4\_\_\_\_. This is the real power of brainstorming: person A’s crazy idea, which would never work in practice, may get person B thinking about a similar idea which might just work. Even better, person A’s crazy idea and person C’s crazy idea can be combined, taking the best parts of each. So instead of saying ‘no’ or ‘yes, but ...’ we need to train ourselves to say ‘yes, and ...’.

A successful brainstorming session can be really useful, but is it always as effective as it could be? Researchers have identified many possible problems, all of which suggest that it is far from perfect.

First of all, there’s the \_\_\_\_5\_\_\_\_. This comes from the idea of travelling by bus without a ticket. Why should I bother to buy a ticket when the bus is going anyway? From a selfish point of view, it’s in my interest to ride for free and let others pay for their tickets. The same goes for a brainstorming meeting: why I should I make the effort to be creative when all the benefits, and the praise for good ideas, go to the group? From a selfish point of view, it’s in my interest to let everyone else do all the work. Even if people don’t think in such simple terms, it can be demotivating to keep generating ideas when you know you will not be praised or rewarded personally for them, especially if you don’t have especially a strong sense of being part of a team.

A related problem is called the \_\_\_\_6\_\_\_\_. Observers have noted that we try to match our behaviour to the behaviour of other people in the room. So if everyone else is sitting silently, or focusing only on sensible ideas, we feel pressure to do the same. Of

course, the social matching effect can have the opposite effect, by encouraging quieter or less creative people to contribute as freely as other participants, but this positive effect tends to be weaker than the negative effect, for the simple reason that it's easier to contribute less.

There's also evidence that people are bad at judging the level of their 7 to a brainstorming session. In one experiment, for example, a group of four participants each believed they had contributed around 36% of the ideas at a recent brainstorming session, even though that it mathematically impossible.

A fourth potential problem is 8, or being worried about what other people will think or say about your ideas. It's one thing to avoid openly criticising other people's ideas, but it's much more difficult to avoid all signs of judgement. People may express criticism with a simple facial expression, a slight

laugh or even a pause between hearing an idea and responding. And even if nobody is negative in any way, it's still difficult to accept that nobody is thinking negative thoughts about your crazy idea.

A much more serious problem is called 9. This happens when only one person at a time is allowed to talk. If that person talks for too long, you may forget your own idea, or decide not to express it when you finally get your chance. This problem probably happens all the time: ideas come and go every second, but it is terribly easy to get distracted, especially when we are listening politely to a colleague expressing his or her own idea.

Finally, there is a problem called the 10, where participants think the meeting is more effective than it really is. For example, it can be very difficult to judge when the meeting's objectives have been met: how many ideas should be on the board? How many of those ideas need to be serious proposals, as compared to lists of random words and thoughts? Without concrete criteria for assessing success, groups tend to believe they've achieved their goal far too soon.

In other words, instead of making people more creative, the act of listening to each other's ideas may actually make them try less hard, withhold their own ideas and give up too soon.

## USEFUL PHRASES FOR MAKING SUGGESTIONS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This might sound crazy, but ...</li> <li>• Just thinking aloud for a moment, but ...</li> <li>• I've just had an idea.</li> <li>• It probably wouldn't work in practice, but ...</li> <li>• I haven't thought this through yet, but ...</li> <li>• You've just reminded me of something.</li> <li>• Just to build on that idea, ...</li> <li>• I wonder if we could combine your idea with something that was said earlier.</li> <li>• In an ideal world, ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why don't we ...?</li> <li>• I suppose we could ...</li> <li>• How about ...?</li> <li>• I think we should ...</li> <li>• We could always ...</li> <li>• I don't suppose we could ...</li> <li>• Wouldn't it be nice if we ...</li> <li>• What if we ...?</li> <li>• I wonder if it would be possible to ...</li> <li>• It might be possible to ...</li> <li>• Could we ...?</li> </ul>
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1. Look at the phrases in column A for introducing ideas in a brainstorming session. Which phrases would you use to introduce very unusual ideas? Which phrases would you use to relate your idea to previous suggestions?

2. Look at the phrases in column B. Which verb form comes after each phrase: an infinitive (e.g. try), an *-ing* form (e.g. *trying*) or a past tense (e.g. *tried*)? Which phrases suggest the speaker more confident or less confident about their ideas?

3. Work alone. Make five suggestions about how to improve brainstorming, based on the criticisms in the text. Use one phrase from A and one from B in each sentence (e.g. *This might sound crazy, but I wonder if it might be possible to ...*).

- \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_.

### PRACTICE

Role-play a brainstorming meeting on the subject of how to improve brainstorming meetings in your organisation. You can use your sentences from 5 to get you started, but hopefully you'll also get lots of new ideas during the meeting.

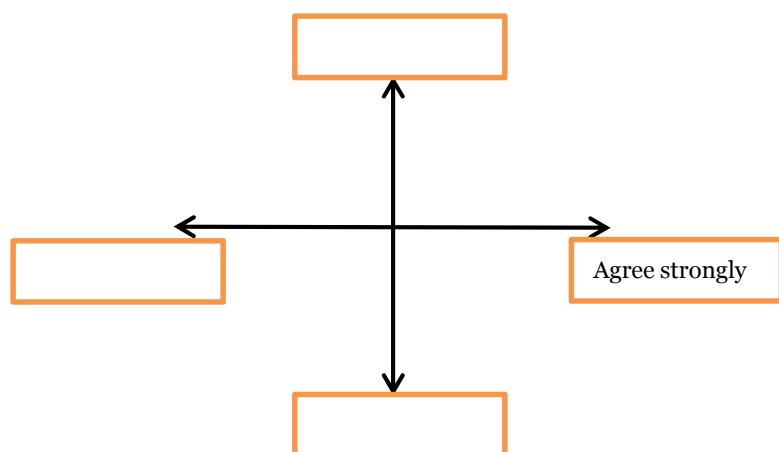
## USEFUL PHRASES FOR EVALUATING IDEAS

Look at these phrases for evaluating ideas.

- a. I don't think it would work.
- b. That's a brilliant idea.
- c. It might just work.
- d. Absolutely.
- e. Maybe. I'm not sure.
- f. No, I don't think so.
- g. I'm not keen at all.
- h. I'm not really convinced.
- i. I think it needs a lot more thought.

- j. That's not a bad idea.
- k. Yes, I think you're right.
- l. Are you sure?
- m. I'm really not happy about it.
- n. Well, I agree up to a point.
- o. Well, yes and no.
- p. This idea has potential, but it's not quite there yet.
- q. I think this is just what we need.

Decide on the best position on the graph for each phrase, as in the example.



## SPEAKING

- 1) Now use the phrases to evaluate the ideas you generated in your brainstorming session. Use the 'ideas' phrases for expressing your opinions, and the 'people' phrases to respond to other people's opinions.
- 2) Use the procedures you decided on in the first part to role-play a brainstorming meeting to solve one of the following problems:
  - What is the most effective way we can save £1 million from our costs?
  - What is the quickest way we can make £1 million from a new website?
  - What new product can we manufacture in order to make a fortune very quickly?

## 15.ACTION POINTS

### WARM-UP

Discuss the questions in small groups and then share their ideas with the class.

- 1) What must always happen by the end of a meeting?
- 2) What exactly are Action Points?
- 3) What steps can we take in order to make Action Points as effective as possible?

### READING

- 1) Read these extracts from a meeting about making the workplace more family-friendly. How many action points are there? Do the participants answer all of these key

questions for each action point? Compare your ideas with answers to the third question in the previous task.

### **The Five Key Questions for Action Points**

- What exactly does the action point involve?
- Who is responsible for performing the action point?
- Who will monitor that person's progress?
- What is the deadline?
- What will happen on that deadline? (How will it be checked and followed up?)

**Lara:** OK, so we've done really well today in terms of coming up with ideas. I think now it's time to firm things up a little and try to take some of these ideas forward as action points. Er ...we talked about setting up a crèche for employees' children, and I think we all agreed this would be something to investigate further. Arnie, you said there's a crèche in our Stockholm office. Can I task you with finding out as much as you can about it?

**Arnie:** Sure, no problem. I'll be seeing some of the reps from Stockholm in a couple of weeks, so I'll ask them about it when I see them.

**Lara:** Well, could you send them an email instead? I'd really prefer not to have to wait several weeks. I think we'd need an answer in good time for next month's meeting, where I'd like you to report back on your findings.

**Arnie:** OK ...that's fine. What exactly do you want me to ask in my email?

**Lara:** Great. Well, I suppose we'll also need to look into the legal aspects of having children in the building. I imagine there are all sorts of rules and procedures we need to know about. Would anyone like to volunteer?

**Sabina:** Yes, I can do that. I'll make a start today.

**Lara:** That's great. Roy, can you help Sabina out on that? It's quite a big job, I imagine.

**Roy:** Well, I could, but I'm really busy at the moment with my regular work. Don't forget, I don't have any hours allocated to this project.

**Lara:** OK, that's a good point. Would you like to be more involved? I mean, would you like me to speak to Niall about getting you some hours allocated to this project?

**Roy:** Well, perhaps at some stage in the future, but not for at least two months. I'm happy to attend these meetings and contribute ideas, but I've got to put my regular duties first.

**Lara:** OK, fair enough.

**Lara:** OK, and finally, we need to look into how popular this service would actually be. I suppose some sort of staff survey would be important here, you know, would you use the service, how much would you be willing to pay for it, that sort of thing ...

**Arnie:** So you want employees to pay for it? I thought it was supposed to be free ...

**Lara:** Well, someone's got to pay for it, whether it's the company, which effectively means all the employees, or only the employees that use it. But it's something we need to investigate.

**Kelly:** Would you like me to organise a staff survey?

**Lara:** Yes, that would be great.

**Kelly:** OK, so can I pick your brains at some stage on exactly how to word the survey?

**Lara:** Well, I think Rachel might be the best person for that. Rachel, can I delegate that job to you?

**Rachel:** Sure, no problem. We can have a quick meeting tomorrow morning, if you like.

**Kelly:** Great. That would be really useful.

**Lara:** Good. And Rachel, can I also ask you to oversee this survey, you know, in terms of making sure Kelly has all the tools she needs to get it done and reported in time for our next meeting?

**Rachel:** Yes, of course.

2) Discuss it is a problem that not all the key questions are answered for each action point.

## **USEFUL PHRASES FOR VOLUNTEERING AND DELEGATING**

Work in pairs and try complete the phrases without looking back at the dialogues. Give more examples of useful phrases for each function.

### **Starting a discussion on action points**

- OK, so we've done really well today in terms of \_\_\_\_\_ up with ideas.
- I think now it's time to \_\_\_\_\_ things up a little and try to \_\_\_\_\_ some of these ideas forward as action points.

### **Delegating and asking for volunteers**

- Can I \_\_\_\_\_ you with finding out as much as you can about it?
- Would anyone like to \_\_\_\_\_?
- Roy, can you \_\_\_\_\_ Sabina out on that?
- Would you like to be more \_\_\_\_\_?
- Well, I think Rachel \_\_\_\_\_ be the best person for that.
- Rachel, can I \_\_\_\_\_ that job to you?
- And Rachel, can I also \_\_\_\_\_ you to oversee this survey ...?

### **Accepting**

- Sure, \_\_\_\_\_ problem.
- OK ...that's fine.
- OK, that's a good point.
- OK, \_\_\_\_\_ enough.
- Yes, that would be great.
- Great. That would be really \_\_\_\_\_.
- Yes, of course.

### **Volunteering to help**

- I'll be \_\_\_\_\_ some of the reps ..., so I'll ask them about it when I see them.

- Yes, I can do that. I'll \_\_\_\_\_ a start today.
- I mean, \_\_\_\_\_ you like me to speak to Niall about ...?
- Would you like me to \_\_\_\_\_ a staff survey?
- We can have a quick meeting tomorrow morning, if you \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Instructing and setting deadlines**

- Well, \_\_\_\_\_ you send them an email instead?
- I'd really \_\_\_\_\_ not to have to wait several weeks.
- I think we'd \_\_\_\_\_ an answer in good time for next month's meeting, where I'd like you to \_\_\_\_\_ back on your findings.

### **Asking for clarification and advice**

- What \_\_\_\_\_ do you want me to ask in my email?
- OK, so can I \_\_\_\_\_ your brains at some stage on exactly how to word the survey?

### **Making an excuse**

- Well, I \_\_\_\_\_, but I'm really busy at the moment with my regular work.
- Don't \_\_\_\_\_, I don't have any hours allocated to this project.

## **ANALYSIS**

Discuss the five questions in pairs and be ready to make a short report to the class.

1. Which modal verb is most useful for delegating?
2. Which of the accepting phrases are for accepting a duty, and which are for accepting an excuse? Which are for accepting an offer?
3. What two verb forms are most often used for volunteering?
4. What do you notice about the verb forms for instructing and setting deadlines?
5. What is the most useful word for asking for clarification and advice?

## **ROLE-PLAY (1)**

Work in groups of around five people. Choose one person to chair your meeting. You all work for the same organisation. The managers from your head office have asked you to make your premises more suitable for disabled employees and visitors.

Some of the ideas that you brainstormed included:

- installing a lift;
- adding a wheelchair ramp to the steps outside the front door;
- replacing the traditional heavy front door with sliding doors;
- training reception staff how to communicate with deaf people;
- making the whole building easier and safer for blind people to explore;
- ensuring all safety procedures, including fire evacuation procedures, are designed with disabled people in mind.

Use these and your own additional ideas to plan a list of action points. Make sure the five key questions have been answered for each action point. Try to use some of the Useful Phrases from this lesson.

## 16.CLOSING A MEETING

1. In what order would you do the following at the end of a meeting?

- |                           |                                 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. AOB                    | d. Signal that people can leave |
| b. Invite final questions | e. Summarise the Action Points  |
| c. Plan the next meeting  | f. Thank people                 |

2. Read the end of the meeting on making the building more family friendly.

In what order does Lara go through the six steps (a–f)?

3. Underline the key phrases she uses for each step.

4. What do you notice about the verb forms for talking about Action Points?

Why is this different from the earlier part of the meeting?

**Lara:** OK, great, so I think that's about all for the action points, unless there's something I've missed? No? OK, so the last point on the agenda is Any Other Business. Is there anything else we need to discuss at this stage?

**Roy:** Well, obviously we'll need to think about budgets at some point.

**Lara:** Yes, you're right. But I think that's something for our next meeting, once we've got a rough idea of what's feasible. Is there something specific you feel we need to discuss now, or can it wait til we've got more information?

**Roy:** No, it's fine to leave it til next time, but I'm just worried about wasting a lot of time planning, and then thinking about budgets only as an afterthought, six months into the project.

**Lara:** OK, that's a good point. I'll add it to next month's agenda. Is there anything else? No? OK, so I just want to go through the list of Action Points. Arnie's going to email Stockholm this week, to find out about their crèche ...and you're going to report back to us at our next meeting. Is that OK, Arnie?

**Arnie:** Yes, that's fine. I'm going to email them tomorrow, in fact.

**Lara:** Good. Sabina's going to investigate the legal aspects. Again, you're going to report back to us in a month, Sabina?

**Sabina:** Uh-huh. Unless I find something really important, in which case I'll email everyone straight away.

**Lara:** Good idea. And Kelly's going to have a meeting with Rachel tomorrow morning, to plan the staff survey ...is that right?

**Kelly:** Yes.

**Lara:** Good ...and you're also going to report back at our next meeting. Wow, it's going to be a busy meeting. We're also going to start thinking about our budget and costs at that meeting. Is there anything I've missed? No? OK, so I'll send round a list of action points tomorrow morning, and a provisional agenda for the next meeting. I suppose we could fix a time and date for that meeting now. How about making it exactly a month from now? That's Wednesday the 11<sup>th</sup> at 10 o'clock. Is that OK? Excellent.

Right, so are there any final questions?

OK, so thank-you all very much. I think we've had a really productive meeting. Loads of really good ideas, and it really feels as if we're moving forward with this project. Please



do keep me informed if you have any problems with your action points. OK, so thanks again everybody, and have a nice day.

## ROLE-PLAY (2)

Work in pairs. One of you should be the chair of the meeting you held earlier. The other person should take all the other roles. Use the six steps (a–f) and the useful language you underlined to bring the meeting to a close. When you have finished, swap roles. The second time you role-play this situation, try not to look at the list of six steps.

## FINAL ROLE-PLAY

Role-play a meeting to plan how you will continue to learn English, and especially how you will make sure they remember and use the language and techniques from this series of lessons.

One volunteer reports back on the Action Points they have agreed using the model from exercise (Closing a meeting) and bring the lesson to a close.

## 17.GIVING AND ASKING FOR OPINIONS

### WARM-UP

Give examples of formal and phrases, put them in the table.

Giving opinions	
Informal/Direct	Formal/Careful
I think...	I think...

You don't need any special phrases to give an opinion. However, using a few opening words will:

- show other people that you want to start speaking (useful in a formal meeting)
- give you a few seconds 'thinking time' to decide what you are going to say
- show how strongly you feel

May I come in here? something?   Actually, ... you think that...?	Basically, ...   I reckon ...   I wonder if I could say Well, from my point of view ...   Wait a minute, ...   Don't
---	---

Write the phrases in the box in the appropriate column below.

Informal, direct language - for example in a discussion between two people	Formal, careful language - for example in a meeting with several people
<i>The point is ...</i> <i>Frankly, ...</i> _____	<i>I tend to feel that...</i> <i>It seems to me that...</i> _____

After giving your own opinion you need to ask other people for their opinions and keep the discussion moving. Write the phrases in the box in the appropriate column below.

What about you, Li? What's your reaction to that, Luca? Walter? Would you like to add anything, Ginta?

<b>An informal discussion</b>	<b>A formal meeting</b>
<i>What do you think, Harumi?</i> _____ _____	<i>How do you feel about that Pedro?</i> _____ _____

Do the following:

- 1 Work in pairs. Choose a topic from the 'General' list, and have an informal, direct discussion.
- 2 Then form a larger group, choose a topic from the 'Business' list, and have a more formal, careful meeting to discuss the topic.

### **General**

Violence on television  
The future of China (or Russia)  
Cars in cities  
Traveling abroad  
A current general news item

### **Business**

Doing business on the Internet Recruitment and selection techniques The impact of globalization Management: the latest ideas  
A current business news item

### **Discuss:**

- Did you notice any language differences between the discussion and the meeting?
- What language did you need?

## **18.CHAIRING: OPENING THE MEETING**

### **WARM-UP**

What is the meaning of word '*The chair/ chairperson*'?

*How* can the chairperson create a good atmosphere at the beginning of a meeting?

At the beginning of a meeting the chairperson has a lot to do. Put these tasks in a likely order. One has been done for you.

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| a. Asking somebody to introduce the first item | 1.                                   |
| b. Welcoming and thanking everybody            | 2.                                   |
| c. Explaining the objectives of the meeting    | 3. <i>Introducing new colleagues</i> |
| d. Introducing new colleagues                  | 4.                                   |
| e. Getting everybody's attention               | 5.                                   |
| f. Looking at the agenda                       | 6.                                   |

**Complete the table with words from the box.**

Right	purpose	get through	item	agenda	background	say a few words	at such short notice	facing	distribute
-------	---------	-------------	------	--------	------------	-----------------	----------------------	--------	------------

<b>Getting attention</b>	(1)_____, is everybody here? Good, I think we can start.
<b>Welcoming and thanking</b>	Well, good morning everyone. Do you all have a copy of the(2)_____? I'd like to thank you all for being here (3)_____
<b>Introducing new colleagues</b>	First of all, I'd like to introduce Hiroshi from our Tokyo office. Would you like to (4)_____ about yourself, Hiroshi?
<b>Explaining the objectives</b>	The main (5)_____ of this meeting is to ... The problem we're (6)_____ is that...
<b>Looking at the agenda</b>	You can see from the agenda that we have a lot to (7)_____ I've prepared some figures to help us compare the two options. I'll (8)_____ them now.
<b>Asking somebody to start</b>	Okay, let's move straight to the first (9)_____. Kim, would you like to kick off? Ana, would you like to begin by explaining the (10)_____?

**Write the opening comments for a real meeting that you are going to have (or recently had) in your job. Use real names and real agenda items. Consider these points:**

- Do you have to introduce anybody?
- Do you have to mention any 'housekeeping' points like arrangements for coffee, the finish time, where the bathroom is etc.?
- Do you need to explain the objectives of the meeting?

- Do you need to explain the procedure of the meeting (the structure, who will speak etc.)?
- Do you have to review any tasks done since the previous meeting?
- Do you need to give any background information?
- How are you going to move into the first item?

**Practise your opening comments. Start by reading them, then try without using your notes.**

## 19.PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS

Form small groups to have a discussion. Follow this sequence:

- a. One person choose a problem from the list and explain it in your own words to the others.
- b. Everyone think of possible solutions to the problem. Choose the best solution.
- c. Repeat for the other people in the group.

### ***Making suggestions***

How about... (+ -ing)?

Why not ... ?

It's just an idea, but why don't you ...?

Have you ever thought of... (+ -ing)

I know, maybe you could ...

### ***Agreeing***

That sounds like a good idea.

That might be worth trying.

Yes, I think that would work really well because...

### ***Disagreeing***

I'm not sure about that because ...

Don't you think a better alternative would be ... ?

I'm afraid I don't really like that idea.

1. You've been feeling very tired recently, although at bedtime you can't get to sleep. You seem to have little energy for doing anything at the moment.
2. You have a debt of \$3000 on your VISA card. You don't have much cash at the moment.
3. You feel that you are a little overweight. You have tried dieting and exercise many times but each time you give up after a few weeks.
4. Your son has recently been caught trying to break into a car and steal the radio. You can't understand it as he is normally so well-behaved. He refuses to talk about it.
5. A friend of yours has just lost her job at the age of 50 due to reorganization in her company. She was a Marketing Manager, and was successful in her work. She has applied for many jobs but never even gets an answer.

6. You have invited your boss for dinner at your house tonight and have prepared a beautiful meat dish. Suddenly you remember that your boss is vegetarian. He/She is due to arrive in 45 minutes. What dish can you prepare to impress him/her?
7. You've got to buy a present for your retired aunt. You don't have much money or much time to go looking.
8. Your mother-in-law lives in the same block. She often visits and usually finds something to criticize.
9. Your job is boring, badly paid and you don't really like your colleagues. Unfortunately new jobs are hard to find these days.
10. You want to improve your English but you have very little time and it is impossible to attend regular classes.

## DIALOGUE BUILDING

**Write a short dialogue using the model below.**

Person A		Person B
Give an opinion and develop your argument	↔	Ask a question
Reply	↔	Give an opinion and develop your argument
Disagree	↔	Check you understand/Ask for clarification
Reply and continue	↔	Agree and develop your argument
Check you understand/Ask for clarification	↔	Reply

### **Chairperson**

1. Open the meeting:  
welcome, explain objectives
3. Check understanding/Ask  
for clarification
5. Ask C for an opinion
10. Summarize the  
discussion

### **Person B**

2. Introduce an idea and  
develop your argument
4. Continue
7. Interrupt/Ask a question
9. Disagree

### **Person C**

6. React to B's opinion  
and develop your argument
8. Continue/Reply

## PROJECTS

### Project 1. ASK THE COMPANY

**Learning Focus:** Research, reading, summarizing information, writing.

**Technology Needed:** Web browser software and Internet connection.

**Instructions:**

It is customary for a company to include an email address on their website to facilitate communication. This email access is useful to find out additional information on a company.

**Task:** Locate the site of a company of personal interest. It may be a major competitor of your company; or a company you would like to work for someday; or, one that has been in the news recently. After reviewing the information provided on the site, you email the company for additional information they would like about the organization or about their products. Then write a one to two page memo with a brief description of the company and their product categories, including the email question and the response received.

**Helpful Hints:**

If deadlines are close, contact more than one company in case they do not get an immediate response from their first choice.

**More on this Topic:**

Examples of business memos are available from online writing labs such as: Online Writing Lab (OWL), Purdue University: Professional Writing Handouts and Resources. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/index.html>

### Project 2. LEARNING BY "LURKING"

**Learning Focus:** Reading, critical thinking, summarizing, writing.

**Technology Needed:** Email.

**Instructions:**

Hot topics and current events are often discussed and debated through public and professional email lists. They are also used on a daily basis to disseminate information and conduct planning internally in academic departments and business settings. This mode of communication has unique characteristics and can vary according to the "culture" of the profession or institution (e.g. when to type in CAPS, whether you post your reply above or below the original text in the body of an email message, the kind of information that merits a reply to the whole group vs. an individual). It is common practice for newcomers to a list to "lurk" (read silently and not respond) in order to become familiar with the topics under discussion and the customs or "norms" for communicating within that group. In this way newcomers can gauge whether or not it's a list that they want to belong to, and they can avoid irritating or offending longstanding list members. Some lists have very firm rules to this effect and do not permit newcomers to post at all for a given period of time.

**Task:** Select an email list and subscribe to it. The whole class can join the same list, groups can join lists together, or individuals can choose lists on their own. up and "lurk" (i.e. follow it) for a set period of time.

**Questions to consider:**

1. What topics or threads are under discussion?
  2. Track one or two of the threads over several days. How has the discussion evolved? How many postings were there each day?
  3. What seems to constitute a good (appropriate) posting?
  4. Were there any instances of misunderstandings or inappropriate posting?
  5. How would you describe the general characteristics of this group of people?
- After a discussion for five days, post your own messages.

**Questions to consider in summary:**

1. How was the your posting received (what kind of response did s/he receive)?
2. In your opinion, what are some of the strengths and drawbacks to this particular list?
3. Is it a list you would like to stay on; and, why or why not?
4. Are archives available for prior discussions? What are some pros and cons for maintaining archives?
5. Write a one to two page memo that sums up your lurking experience. Incorporate answers to the above questions.

**Helpful Hints:**

If the list is a busy one, you may want to use settings that allow them to receive posting just once a day in "digest" format. This information is usually made available through a web site affiliated with the list, as part of the welcome message that a subscriber receives when joining the list, or through help and command functions specific to the server that hosts the list. There are literally thousands of lists available. The instructor may want to recommend 5-10 particular lists for learners in order to make good use of course time and to help learners avoid lists that off-topic or less useful.

The 2005 article [The Language of Business E-Mail: An Opportunity to Bridge Theory and Practice](http://www.sdutsj.edus.si/ScriptaManent/2005_1/Gimenez.html) (http://www.sdutsj.edus.si/ScriptaManent/2005\_1/Gimenez.html), from Julio C. Jimenez, provides useful background and argues that "...business communication lends itself well to bringing theory and practice closer together. To this end, the article first identifies relevant features which have started to emerge from main studies in the language of business email, a vital component in business communication. It then explores different possible pedagogical applications of these findings in the BE class. The article discusses the SAE (Selecting, Applying and Evaluating) model which can be used to design and evaluate classroom activities. The article finally presents four activities which have been created following the main findings emerging from the research reviewed."

**More on this Topic:**

Professional organizations often host discussion lists, though membership may be required. For example: ThomasNet Community Forums. <http://www.thomasnet.com/> ThomasNet is a directory containing over 72,000 product headings and 170,000 U.S. and Canadian manufacturers. In addition to its Community Forums for lurking opportunities, you can search by product, company or brand name. Provides you with basic contact information as well as links to websites and e-catalogs. Free registration required for some features.



The following site may also be useful for finding professional public email lists to which learners can subscribe.

Tile.Net <http://www.tile.net/> A search engine for finding email lists.

### **Project 3. BUSINESS PRESENTATION STYLES ACROSS CULTURES**

**Learning Focus:** Reading, writing, business presentation guidelines, cross-cultural communication.

**Technology Needed:** Email, chat, discussion forum, or course web site.

#### **Instructions:**

**Overview:** Being able to communicate effectively is key to success in business. However, what is considered "effective" is culture-specific; acceptable practices vary across cultural boundaries – national culture, industry culture, and company culture. Audiences vary around the globe in their expectations for presentation content, organization, and delivery style. Ethnocentric presenters who assume the rules are the same overseas as in their home office may well be mistaken.

**Task:** In this project, research presentation styles in different cultural (national, industry, and company culture) contexts. Use a questionnaire (see a sample below) to interview an expert in their home country or elsewhere about presentation delivery in that national and workplace culture context. You can conduct the interview face to face or administer the questionnaire by email, chat, discussion forum, or course web site.

<b>Business</b>	<b>Presentations</b>	<b>Across</b>	<b>Cultures:</b>
<b>Sample Interview Questionnaire</b>			
1. What kinds of presentations do you have to give in your job?			
2. Describe one type of presentation. What is its purpose? Who is the audience (age, gender, position, etc.)?			
3. How do you prepare for the presentation? Do you work on it alone or with other people?			
4. How do you organize your presentation? What do you do first? Next? How do you conclude?			
5. Do you usually read the presentation, memorize it, or use notes? If notes, what format (e.g. cards), and why?			
6. Do you use any kinds of audio-visual materials in your presentation? If so, what are the most common?			
7. How do you deliver the presentation?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you stand behind a lectern or a table, or move around?</li><li>• What do you do with your hands when you are presenting?</li></ul>			
8. What is considered appropriate dress?			
9. Do you get nervous? If so, what do you do to help relax?			
10. What are one or two key pieces of advice for someone going to make a presentation in your field?			

**Expanded Options:**

- Use the same or a similar questionnaire to interview a business person in the local community, and then report on similarities and differences in presentation styles in the different cultural contexts.
- Examine the effects of using a questionnaire face-to-face vs. email vs. telephone. What is gained and what is lost in each instance? See links to guidelines for creating questionnaires for conducting market research below.

**More on the Topic of Business Research and Questionnaires:**

1. Designing Surveys & Questionnaire Design, A Tutorial from StatPac.  
<http://www.statpac.com/surveys/>
2. Free Survey Template Library, from Survey Console.  
<http://www.surveyconsole.com/console/showLibrary.do>
3. Market Research, Questionnaires, from BizHelp.  
<http://www.bizhelp24.com/marketing/market-research>
4. **More on the Topic of Business Presentations:**
5. Country-Specific Cultural Analysis Project, Resources  
[http://aei.uoregon.edu/esp/esp\\_20.html](http://aei.uoregon.edu/esp/esp_20.html)
6. Researching Companies and Creating Company Profiles.  
[http://aei.uoregon.edu/esp/esp\\_12.html](http://aei.uoregon.edu/esp/esp_12.html)

## **Project 4. THE CULTURE OF SELF-PRESENTATION AND RÉSUMÉ WRITING**

**Learning Focus:** Reading, writing.

**Technology Needed:** Web browser software.

**Instructions:**

The accepted way to apply for a job and compose an "effective" résumé varies widely across national cultures and in different professional fields. What is considered appropriate or inappropriate, and even legal or illegal, differs. This is certainly important cultural information for the company as well as the job applicant. Variations include:

- Content.
- Level of assertiveness/modesty when describing accomplishments.
- Formatting (now more standardized across cultures due to technology).

**Thinking ahead:** What are the guidelines for self-presentation in your culture? How do you "put your best foot forward" and make a good first impression in a résumé?

**Task:** Write a résumé that targets a specific type of job or industry.

1. Go to one of the web sites below that provide guidelines for writing a résumé. What similarities do you find with regard to résumé guidelines in your culture? What differences?
2. Choose a résumé web site that best fits your needs and preferences. Follow the steps they recommend in writing a résumé, using a template, if provided.
3. Give your résumé to another person for feedback.

**Résumé and Interviewing Resource Sites:**

1. CollegeGrad: Entry Level Resumes.  
<http://www.collegegrad.com/resumes/index.shtml>

2. Career Center, University of Oregon.<http://uocareer.uoregon.edu/> Visit this site for job search guides to résumés, cover letters, and interviews that you can download in PDF format.
3. eHow: How to Make Your Résumé Shine.[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_1367\\_make-resume-shine.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_1367_make-resume-shine.html)
4. Microsoft Templates (go to "Resumes and CVs").<http://office.microsoft.com/templates/default.aspx>
5. Your Resume: General Concerns, from OWL Purdue.  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResumeW/kind.html>

## COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES INFORMATION FOR STUDENT A

### CONVERSATION CODES

Any discussion of English conversation, like any English conversation, must begin with The Weather.

Comments about the weather are phrased as questions (or with an interrogative intonation) because they require a response. English weather-speak rituals often sound rather like a kind of catechism, ‘Cold, isn’t it?’, ‘Yes, isn’t it?’, and so on.

#### The Reciprocity Rule

##### The Context Rule

The English talk about the weather all the time, that it is a national obsession or fixation, but this is sloppy observation: in fact, there are three quite specific contexts in which weather-speak is prescribed. It can be used:

- as a simple greeting
- as an ice-breaker leading to conversation on other matters
- as a ‘default’, ‘filler’ or ‘displacement’ subject.

So another important rule of English weather-speak: always agree.

#### The Agreement Rule

The English have clearly chosen a highly appropriate aspect as a social facilitator: the capricious and erratic nature of our weather ensures that there is always something new to comment on, be surprised by, speculate about, moan about, or, perhaps most importantly, agree about.

#### The Guessing-game Rule

It is not considered entirely polite, for example, to ask someone directly ‘What do you do?’

Similar guessing-game techniques are often used to find out where people live, whether they are married, what school or university they went to, and so on. Some direct questions are more impolite than others. It is less rude, for example, to ask ‘Where do you live?’ than ‘What do you do?’, but even this relatively inoffensive question is much better phrased in a more indirect manner, such as ‘Do you live nearby?’, or even more obliquely ‘Have you come far?’

The most important ‘rule’ to remember is that irony is a constant, a given, a normal element of ordinary, everyday conversation. The English may not always be joking, but they are always in a state of readiness for humour (abridged from K.Fox “Watching the English” [Fox, 2005]).

### CONVERSATION SKILLS QUOTES (STUDENT A)

Here are the missing words from your partner’s quotes:

communication	emotions	I	listen	reply	themselves	understand	why?
---------------	----------	---	--------	-------	------------	------------	------

## STUDENT A (PRACTICE P.38):

Well, EHO have asked for a complete breakdown of our P and L figures. They want our inventory figures to be based on FIFO. We need that by the end of

Q2. Does that sound feasible?

- EHO = European Head Office
- a breakdown = an analysis of each part of something
- P and L = profit and loss, an important financial report
- inventory = the amount of goods we have in our factory
- FIFO accounting = first in, first out, i.e. in order to calculate costs and profits, accountants assume that the oldest stock is sold first
- Q2 = the second quarter of the year, i.e. April–June.
- feasible = possible, realistic

## INFORMATION FOR STUDENT B

### British culture

Here are some of the things that struck me as a Dutch citizen who lived in the UK for about four years. I do not claim to give a correct, complete and comprehensive picture of the British culture. Regardless of your nationality, however, you may find some of these observations useful.

#### Humour and understatement

Humour is the cornerstone of the British society. It is used in numerous ways: to establish a positive atmosphere, to create a sense of togetherness, to bridge differences, to introduce risky ideas, to criticise, to show appreciation or contempt of a person. British people joke about everything including the queen, politicians, religion, themselves and you! You'd better get used to that. Humour is often combined with understatement. Depending on the tone "Not bad" can actually mean "very good" and "not bad at all" might be the highest praise you ever get from a Brit.

#### Indirect communication

In contrast to for instance Americans, Germans and Dutch, British people have a quite indirect communication style. They will not usually "tell you just the way it is to get things in the open." You will have to read between the lines to understand what they really mean.

#### Informality

In spite of the fact that Britain is still well known for its class society, relationships in the workplace and in an educational setting are very informal. Most people call their boss and other colleagues by their first names and tutors usually expect students to address them by their first names as well. In general, tutors, are very approachable and will often join you for a coffee in the break.

#### "No complaints" & patient

Unlike the Dutch, who are professional naggers, British people are not very likely to complain. They will swallow bad service or bad food at a restaurant, because they

don't want to make a scene. They might therefore become very nervous if you try to voice your dissatisfaction. Criticism should also preferably be voiced in an indirect way. Otherwise it will only make your British counterpart very hostile and defensive and your criticism is unlikely to have any effect. Friendly

Although the British are generally seen as being reserved, you will find that in the North of England (where I used to live), people are usually quite friendly. They will appreciate it if you make a chat about the weather or take an interest in local affairs.

Polite & "quiet"

British are very polite. In a restaurant, you will have to say thank you when you get the menu, thank you when you place the order, thank you when get your dishes, thank you when the waiter takes away the plates and even thank you when you pay! You'll have to say "excuse me" if you want to pass someone and "I'm sorry" if you accidentally touch someone. British people even say sorry if you stand on their toes! They are also very "quiet" and keep to themselves. This can be hard if you want to make friends with them. It is a boon, however, if you are out with your own group or don't like noisy people.

(<http://www.harzing.com/ukculture.htm>)

## CONVERSATION SKILLS QUOTES (STUDENT B)

Here are the missing words from your partner's quotes:

Answer	interest	listen	questions	say	story	talks	understand
--------	----------	--------	-----------	-----	-------	-------	------------

## STUDENT B (PRACTICE P.38)

We've decided to conduct a complete overhaul of our QMS. Basically, VMA and her team in O and E want to aim for ISO 9001 accreditation, because they're convinced it'll help them clinch the Madax deal.

- an overhaul = a complete review and change to a whole system
- QMS = Quality Management System
- VMA = the head of the O and E department, Victor Mark Austin.
- O and E = Operations and Engineering, the name of a department
- ISO 9001 = a QMS standard published by ISO, the International Organization for Standardization
- accreditation = a process of assessment that may lead to an official certificate or licence
- to clinch a deal = to finalise a deal (= agreement, negotiation), to get the other party to accept it
- Madax = the name of a key client

## CONVERSATIONS

### Conversation 1

- a. B: You know what, I think I will. There's no point in both of us eating alone.
- b. B: Great. And here's mine.
- c. A: Well, I was thinking of checking out one of the restaurants. I don't suppose you'd like to join me for dinner?
- d. A: Great. Do you like Italian food? There's supposed to be a really nice Italian restaurant near the old castle.
- e. 1 A: So, do you have any plans for this evening?
- f. A: OK, well, it's up to you. If you do decide to join me, you'll be very welcome.
- g. A: Perfect. OK, so here's my business card – you can call me if you can't find it.
- h. B: Well, I don't know. Possibly ...
- i. B: Sounds great. Shall we say seven o'clock?
- j. B: Not really. I thought I might have a walk around the old town later. What about you?

### Conversation 2

- k. B: By the way, please allow me to pay for tonight's meal. I can put it on my company's invoice.
- l. A: Well, er, OK, then that's very kind of you. Thank-you. In that case, you must allow me to at least buy you a drink. What can I get you?
- m. B: No – I got here about five minutes early, but I've been admiring the view of the castle. It's spectacular, isn't it.
- n. B: Please, I insist. You were kind enough to invite me, so it's the least I can do.
- o. B: Just an orange juice for me, please. Thank-you. Now, you must tell me more about this project you mentioned earlier.
- p. A: It is indeed.
- q. 11 A: Ah, you're here already. Have you been waiting long?
- r. A: No, no, I wouldn't dream of it. I invited you.

### Conversation 3

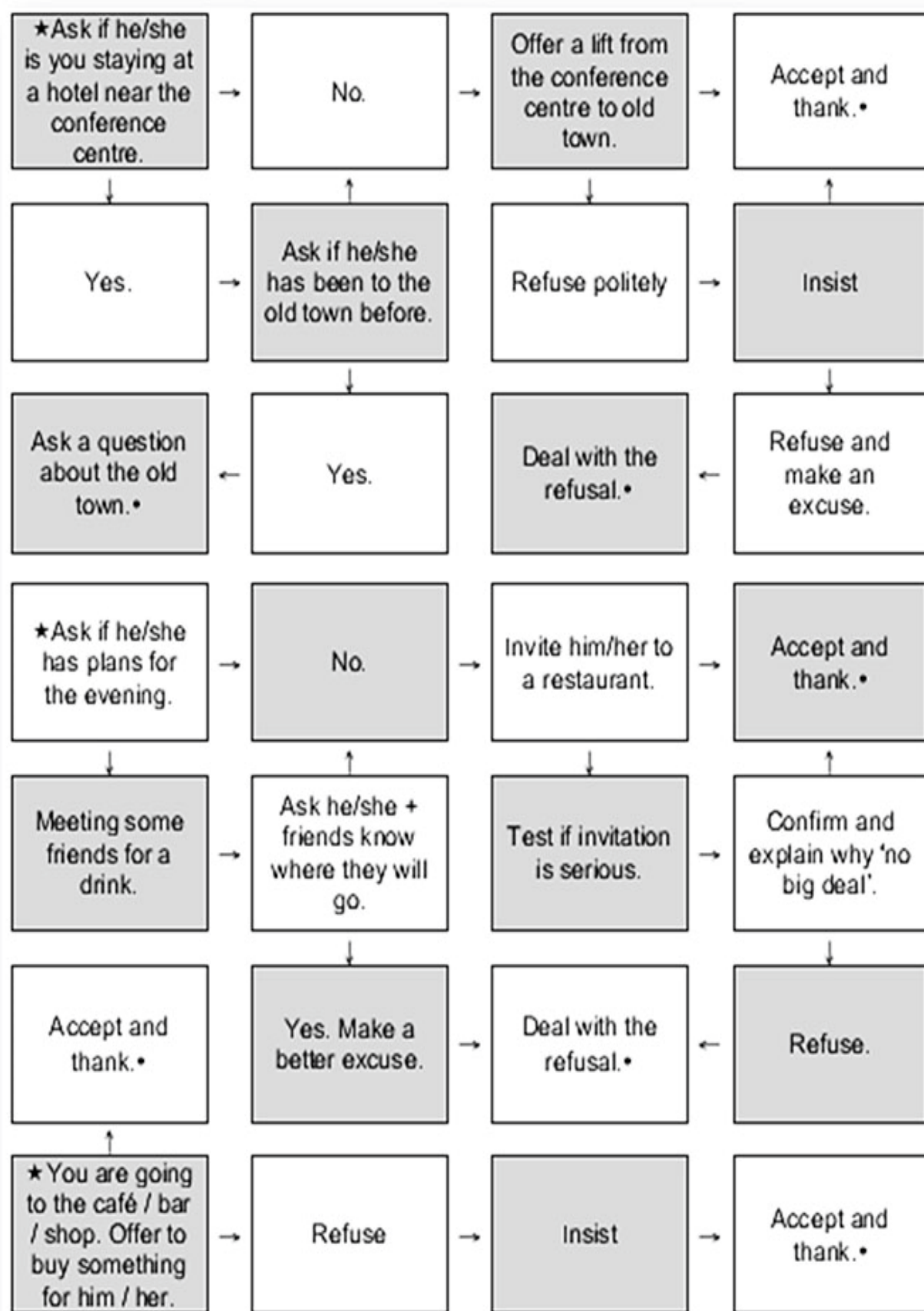
- s. B: No, I'm fine, thanks. I think I'll walk – I need some exercise after all that food.
- t. A: OK, fair enough. What are you doing tomorrow evening?
- u. B: No, no. It's not a problem.
- v. A: It's really my pleasure. And are you sure I can't pay for anything?
- w. B: I'm flying back tomorrow afternoon, I'm afraid. Why do you ask?
- x. A: Oh, nothing. I was just going to suggest meeting up with some of my colleagues. But it doesn't matter. I'm going to order a taxi back now. Can I offer you a lift anywhere?
- y. 19 B: That was a lovely meal. Thank-you again for inviting me.

## TYPES OF QUESTIONS

1. Open questions	Why didn't you come to this conference last year? Where did you go on holiday this year?	A. In theory, these are good for 'opening a conversation up', because there are many possible answers. In practice, questions with why or how are often better at opening up a conversation than questions with where or when, which can often be answered with a single word or phrase.
2. Closed questions	Have you had a holiday this year? Do you do any sports?	B. In theory, these 'close down the conversation', by allowing a one-word answer: yes or no. In practice, only a very rude person would answer with a single word, so they can actually be very effective for keeping conversations going.
3. Negative questions	Hasn't the weather been awful this summer? Shouldn't you wait for a better offer before you sell your house? Didn't you use to work in China?	C. These questions are useful when you want to express your opinion in a way that shows that you want to involve the other person. As these examples show, they can be used to turn an obvious statement into a discussion, to make an opinion seem less direct and to check a fact that you're not sure of.
4. Hypothetical questions	In an ideal world, what would your dream job be? So what if money were no object?	D. These questions typically include the word 'would', or sometimes might or could. It's also possible to start this type of question with 'what if + past tense'. Questions like this aren't great for starting a natural-sounding conversation, but they're very useful for keeping a conversation going when you have run out of other ideas.
5. Question tags	Your wife's a doctor, isn't she? It's been a great party, hasn't it.	E. These work in the same way as negative questions, by turning a statement into a question. These are often used to check something we are not sure of, as in the first example, which has rising (questioning) intonation, or simply to invite the other person to respond to your opinion, in which case there is falling intonation, as in a sentence.
6. Statements with questioning intonation	And there's nothing you can do about it? You work in pharmaceuticals? Really?	F. These are the easiest questions to make, but they can be a very effective way of checking information and encouraging the other person to expand something he/she said earlier. You can change the focus of the question simply by stressing different words.



## ROLE-PLAY MAP



### Score key (QUESTIONNAIRE: MEETINGS IN ENGLISH p.36):

q1: a: 10 b: 0 c: -10   q2: a: 10 b: 0 c: -10   q3: a: -5 b: -10 c: 10  
q4: a: -10 b: -5 c: 10   q5: a: 5 b: 10 c: -10   q6: a: 10 b: -10 c: 0

If you scored between -60 and -30, you are too much of a **perfectionist** to participate actively in meetings in English. This is completely normal – most people hate making mistakes and looking stupid in front of their colleagues. But your colleagues may think even worse of you if you say nothing at all. You should ...

If you scored between -25 and 25, you are a fairly **typical user** of English, with some good strategies for getting involved. However, there's always room for improvement. You could ...

If you scored between 30 and 60, you are a **risk-taker**. You have a lot of self-confidence, which means you can function effectively in English at work despite your problems with the language. However, you may be rather dominant in group discussions. Also, some people may see your care-free attitude to English as a reflection of your care-free attitude to work. You should ...

## USEFUL LANGUAGE (p.38)

### ALLOWING OTHERS TO CONTINUE CHECKING YOU'VE UNDERSTOOD / SPECIFYING THE PROBLEM INTERRUPTING INVITING OTHERS TO GET INVOLVED PREVENTING AN INTERRUPTION

- a. After you. .
- b. But ... .
- c. Can I just check I've understood you correctly?
- d. Can I just finish my point?
- e. Can I just say something?
- f. Can I just stop you for a second?
- g. Do you think ...?
- h. Go on.
- i. Hang on a second, can you let me finish?
- j. I'll let you speak in a second.
- k. I'm not familiar with the someone help me?
- l. I'm sorry, but this is really important.
- m. OK, I understood almost everything, but not the last bit. What are we voting on now?
- n. Sorry, but could you speak up a little. It's difficult to hear you
- o. Sorry – I didn't catch that last word
- p. Sorry ...I interrupted you. You were saying ...
- q. Sorry to interrupt, but ...
- r. Sorry, but I'm really not sure I've understood you correctly.
- s. Sorry, but you've lost me. What exactly are we talking about?
- t. Sorry, was that owe or own?
- u. Sorry, you were about to say something and I cut you off.
- v. That would work, wouldn't it?
- w. What about if we ...?
- x. What exactly do you mean by ...?
- y. Why don't we ...?
- z. Would you mind speaking a bit more slowly, please? I'm having trouble keeping up.

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