



English for business

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All of our lessons are designed around functional skills for business learners and can be used to complement your course curriculum, giving students an opportunity to develop their English language and skills in motivating and enjoyable ways. Written by business English language teaching experts from around the world, our lesson plans are easy to use and aim to give your students the skills and confidence they need to enjoy learning English.

Choose a lesson plan

[Meetings 1: Getting down to business](#)

The beginning of a meeting presents a major dilemma: is it better to get straight down to business, or is it important to allow or even encourage small talk? The texts in this lesson present arguments from opposing viewpoints, which may help students to question their own assumptions. The lesson goes on to introduce useful language for both small talk and getting down to business, with practice in the form of role-plays.

[Negotiations 1: Building relationships](#)

When we think of negotiations, we tend to focus on the hard negotiating skills connected with bargaining. In fact, many professional negotiators will confirm that the most important skill is effective relationship building.

[Socialising 1: Breaking the ice](#)

For many people, the idea of walking into a room full of strangers and trying to socialise with them can be terrifying, especially if you have to use a foreign language. The barriers to 'breaking the ice' in a situation like this are just as much psychological as linguistic, which is why this lesson aims to get students thinking about the situation (through a quiz-based discussion and jigsaw reading) as much as speaking and practicing the skill of starting conversations with strangers.

[Meetings 2: Getting involved in meetings](#)

Many learners of English worry about their mistakes and allow their insecurities to prevent them from participating in meetings fully. This lesson provides reassurance that such insecurities are very common and normal. It also presents some strategies for increasing their confidence and ability to participate actively in meetings in English. The lesson also warns students that they themselves are responsible for overcoming this barrier to communication. There is also some guidance for learners with the opposite problem: overconfidence and dominance. It is suitable for a wide range of professional contexts, not just businesspeople.

[Socialising 2: Keeping conversations going](#)

After struggling to break the ice, the next obstacle is to keep the conversation going beyond the initial conversation. For this reason, this lesson aims to provide students with a bank of around 15 questions that they would feel comfortable asking in a conversation with a new acquaintance. They will also learn more general techniques involving different types of questions and the skill of turn-taking. Finally, they will practise all the skills from the



lesson in a role-play game.

Meetings 3: Managing a meeting

This lesson focuses on two important aspects of managing a meeting: setting up the meeting with a series of emails, and keep the meeting under control. Two other important parts of managing a meeting, introducing the meeting and closing the meeting, are covered in lessons 1 and 5.

Negotiations 2: Positions and interests

The key to successful negotiation is preparation and research. This means finding out exactly what you want from the negotiation, and why you want it. This lesson includes a discussion, vocabulary input, a reading activity, useful language for negotiation, team problem solving and a role play in pairs.

Meetings 4: Brainstorming and evaluating

Since its development in the 1950s, brainstorming has become one of the most common techniques used in meetings to generate ideas. However, despite its clear benefits, the technique has its faults and many improvements have been suggested and analysed. This lesson aims to provide practice of brainstorming at the same time as exploring possible improvements. The second half of the lesson focuses on the necessary follow-up to brainstorming: evaluating ideas. This means the lesson covers two of the key language functions of meetings: making suggestions and agreeing/disagreeing.

[Negotiations 3: Questioning and clarifying](#)

In a negotiation, it's very important to know when to speak, when to ask and when to shut up and listen. In this lesson students rank and discuss the stages of negotiation, do a reading activity and look at negotiations vocabulary, examine question types, then finish with a role play to practise clarifying, summarising and responding.

Choose a lesson plan

[Socialising 3: Social networking](#)

Why is it that when you go to a conference or business gathering, everyone else seems to know each other already? At least part of the answer to the puzzle seems to be social networking: getting to know business contacts online first, so that by the time you meet face to face for the first time, you already have plenty to talk about. For many people, social networking is seen as something to do instead of work. This lesson emphasises that social networking is real work. The lesson introduces useful language and techniques, building up to a large social networking simulation at the end.

[Negotiations 4: Bargaining](#)

For many people, negotiating is all about bargaining, the give-and-take between two sides. In this lesson students discuss bargaining in small groups, do a reading activity, focus on conditional structures and useful language then finish with a team role play.



[Socialising 4: Active listening](#)

Perhaps the most important skill connected with socialising is to 'shut up and listen'. In practice, it can be very difficult to resist the temptation to turn every conversation into a conversation about what we consider the most interesting thing in the world, i.e. ourselves. The most skilful active listeners include nurses, social workers, psychotherapists and counsellors, so this lesson focuses especially on the techniques studied and used by these professionals.

[Socialising 5: From contact to partner](#)

While it is natural to focus on the challenge of starting conversations with strangers and keeping these conversations going, the real purpose of socialising is to turn these contacts into partners or even friends. Even a simple task like inviting a person out to a restaurant can cause embarrassment and stress. For this reason, this lesson includes discussions of why such situations are difficult, as well as plenty of practice.

[Negotiations 5: Clinching the deal](#)

The final stages of a negotiation don't always go smoothly. This lesson deals with a number of common events and situations from these closing stages. Students do a light-hearted quiz, a reading activity, a matching activity focusing on useful language and then finish with a role play.

[Meetings 5: Action points](#)



For many people, a meeting is only as successful as the Action Points it produces. Action Points are essential for moving things forward between meetings, and provide a focus both for the closing of one meeting and the opening of the next meeting. This lesson looks in some detail at what makes a successful Action Point. There is also a focus on the various steps involved in bringing a meeting to a successful close.