

Finding out about objects and places - BULATS Speaking Part Three

Part One - Describing objects

Your partner works for a manufacturer of office equipment and stationery. You are a retailer who is thinking of selling one of their products in your shops. Ask them about at least three of the things below, leading the conversation.

Price	Payment terms
Dimensions	Weight
Appearance	Functions
Power consumption	Guarantee/ Warrantee
Servicing/ After sales service	Green?/ Ecologically friendly?
Reliability	Special features/ Unique selling points/ USPs

Choose one of the objects below to ask questions about:

A hole punch	Post its	A Dictaphone (= voice recorder)
A ruler	A notice board	A headset
A paper clip	Thumbtacks	An ashtray
A laptop	A wastepaper basket	A mouse pad
A stapler	A drinks machine	A fire alarm
A box of staples	A vending machine	A smoke detector
A calculator	A ballpoint (pen) = A biro	Pot plants
A pair of scissors	A fountain pen	Lockers
An A4 ring binder	Bookends	A coat rack
A ream of photocopy paper	Bookshelves	A projector screen
A diary	A cubicle	An umbrella stand
A date stamp	An intercom	An automatic pencil
An address book	A mobile phone	A (permanent) marker
A photocopier	A fax (machine)	A picture frame
A mouse	A monitor	A projector
An answer machine	Sellotape	A video cabinet
An eraser	Blinds	A glue stick (= a Pritt stick)
A rubber band	An electronic dictionary	A box of tissues
A printer	An instruction manual	A whiteboard marker
An envelope	A clipboard	A briefcase
A (postage) stamp	A desk calendar	A light switch
A desk lamp	A business card holder	A plug
A filing cabinet	A key ring	A socket
A cupboard	A partition	A security badge
Some drawers	A board room table	A coat hangar
A tube of glue	A swivel chair	A button
A water cooler	A notepad	A bulb
A fire extinguisher	A first aid box	A fluorescent light

Do the same, but this time without knowing what product they are talking about. When you have finished the conversation, try to guess what thing they were thinking of.

What could the questions for each of the things at the top be? Try to think of at least two options for each type of question, including one not using the words above.

Now discuss this question together:

What are the most important factors when choosing office equipment and stationery?



Part Two - Describing places

Your partner is someone from the trade promotion agency of a city. You are thinking of setting up a new R&D facility somewhere. Ask about at least three of the things below, leading the conversation.

Population/ Size	Economic growth
Availability of suitable staff	Other businesses, including R&D
Quality of life/ Standard of living	Prices/ Costs
Available premises	USPs
Transport connections	Location of city

Choose one of the places below to answer questions about:

Cologne	Munich	Bruges	Brussels
Florence	Geneva	Venice	Rome
Paris	Athens	Naples	Turin
Milan	Moscow	Beijing	The Hague
Prague	Seville	Kiev	Warsaw
Belgrade	Guangzhou/Canton	Shenzhen	Leicester
Hamburg	Antwerp	Chernobyl	Copenhagen
Porto	St Petersburg	Sarajevo	Strasbourg
Stuttgart	Tbilisi	Valencia	Vatican City
Versailles	Vienna	LA	Yogyakarta
The Big Apple	Havana	Quebec City	Seattle
Vancouver	Edinburgh	Jakarta	Jerusalem
Kolkata/ Calcutta	Kyoto	Tokyo	Osaka
Kuala Lumpur	Mumbai/ Bombay	Singapore	

Do the same again, but this time without knowing which city they are talking about. When you have finished, try to guess what place they were thinking of.

What could the questions for each of the things above be? Try to think of at least two options for each type of question, including one not using the words above.

Now discuss this question together:

What are the most important factors when choosing the location for a business premises?

Where are the places above? What are the differences in pronunciation between English and your language?



Suggested answers

Describing objects

Price – How much does it cost?/ What is its usual price?

Payment terms – What are the payment terms?/ When do we have to pay?/ Can I get credit to buy this?

Dimensions – How thick/ long/ high/ tall/ wide is it?/ What are its dimensions?

Weight – How much does it weigh?/ What is its weight?/ How heavy is it?

Appearance – What does it look like?/ What colour is it?

Functions – What can it do?/ What are its functions?/ How can I operate it?

Power consumption – How much power does it use?/ Is it power efficient?

Guarantee/ Warrantee – How long is it guaranteed for?/ Does it come with a warrantee?

Servicing/ After sales service – How can I get it fixed if it breaks down?/ Is there a service plan available?

Green?/ Ecologically friendly? – Is it good for the environment?/ How is it greener than other products?

Reliability – Is it likely to break down?/ Can anything go wrong when I use it?

Special features/ Unique selling points/ USPs – How is it different from similar products?

Describing places

Population/ Size – Is it a big city?/ How many people live there?/ What is the population?

Economic growth – Is the local economy doing well?/ Are local businesses doing well?/ What's the local economy like?

Availability of suitable staff – Can we recruit from local universities?/ Are there lots of qualified people?/ What's the unemployment rate?

Other businesses, including R&D – What are the largest local companies?/ Are there any similar companies in that area?

Quality of life/ Standard of living – Is it a good place to live?/ Are there many green spaces?/ Is it a good place to bring up a family?

Prices/ Costs – What is the cost of living?/ What are rents like?/ How much would it cost to...?

Available premises – Is there much empty office space?/ Is there an industrial estate?

USPs – Is there anything special about this place?/ How is this city different from others?

Transport connections – Is there an international airport nearby?/ Is it easy to get to...?

Location of city – Where is it?/ How far is it from the capital?