

Business communication needs analysis and instant personalised practice

Ask questions to fill the boxes below with as much detail about your partner as possible, including things like:

- where/ situation
- who with (position, nationality, 1st language, English level, new or known, etc)
- way of communicating (telephone, online chat, email, face to face, etc)
- functions/ actions (apologising, demanding action, requesting, enquiring, etc)
- topics (new products, reorganisation, etc)
- levels of formality
- difficult parts (and maybe less difficult parts)

Partner's name:			
Topic	Present	Past	Future
Work			
Using English at work			
Using English outside work (travel, friends, movies, etc)			

Topic	Present	Past	Future
English classes			
Other English studies (self-study, exams, etc)			
English priorities/ goals/ weak points/ difficulties			

Use these topics to add more to the forms, asking your partner and telling them more about yourself (“I forgot to say...”, “I didn’t mention...”, “I also have to...”, etc).

Ways of communicating

- (Individual/ Group) email
- (Face to face/ Internal/ External/ Online) meeting
- Message board
- Online chat/ Instant messaging
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, etc)
- Teleconference/ Video conference/ Online meeting (Zoom, Teams, Skype, etc)
- Telephone call
- Text message (= SMS)

Situation

- Cold calling
- Conference/ Trade fair/ Trade show
- Going to someone’s desk or office (without having arranged it)
- HQ/ Headquarters/ Head office
- Hotel
- Interview
- (Arranged) meeting
- Meeting by chance
- Presentation
- Restaurant
- Shop/ Market
- Social situation (drinking, dinner, sporting event, etc)
- Speech
- Tour
- Training
- Transport (taxi, plane/ airport, bus/ bus station, etc)

Formality

- (Very) formal
- Medium formality
- (Quite/ Very) casual/ informal/ friendly

People

- Colleague (= Workmate = Co-worker)
- Customer/ Client
- (Direct) boss/ (Line/ Top) manager/ Directors/ CEO
- Help desk staff
- People in other branches/ departments/ divisions/ sections/ teams
- Subcontractors
- Supplier/ Vendor
- The authorities (civil servants, politicians, customs, etc)
- The general public (= ordinary people)

Functions (= what you or the other person does)

- Advice/ Feedback/ Recommendations/ Suggestions
- Apologising/ Responding to complaints
- Arrangements/ (Re)scheduling
- Bad news (e.g. announcing delays)
- Booking/ Making reservations
- Changing/ Cancelling
- Checking progress/ Chasing up/ Reporting progress/ Updates
- Checking/ Clarifying/ Confirming
- Chit chat/ Small talk
- Commands/ Demanding action (= Telling someone to do something)
- Comparing/ Explaining (different) options/ Weighing up (different) options
- Complaints
- Contacting many people (about new rules, official announcements, reminders, etc)
- Contacting people/ Meeting people (for the first time/ again)
- Correcting (mistakes, wrong information, etc)
- Dealing with conflict/ Dealing with disagreements
- Dealing with problems/ Troubleshooting
- Describing (products/ services, company, job, figures/ trends, etc)
- Enquiries (= Inquiries)/ Asking and answering questions/ Giving information
- Forecasting/ Predicting
- Giving reasons
- Instructions (on how to use something/ how to get somewhere)
- Introducing yourself/ Introducing other people
- Invitations
- Joking/ Using humour/ Being light-hearted
- Negotiating/ Persuading
- Offers (offering help etc)
- (Asking for/ Giving) permission/ (official) approval
- Purchasing/ Ordering
- Quotations/ Estimates
- Requests (asking for help, etc)
- Sales/ Selling (cold calling, sales presentations, etc)
- Socialising/ Networking (being a host, being a guest, etc)
- Talking about figures (= data = numbers)
- Thanking (e.g. acknowledging receipt of something)

Topics

- Changes
- Customer service (after sales service, etc)
- Contact details
- Planning
- Price/ Payment
- Sales and marketing
- Timing

Instant personalised practice

Choose one of the common situations which you described to your partner, e.g. a regular Zoom meeting with your boss in Singapore or an email exchange with a possible new client. Explain that situation using the same kind of language, then roleplay it with you as yourself and your partner as the other person or people. If you don't have a typical situation to speak English, think of a possible future one or choose something that you usually do in your own language. Each time start from the very beginning (e.g. greetings) and go to the very end. If you are roleplaying an email exchange, say what you would write in each email, and continue until the natural end of the email exchange.

Brainstorming stages

Together write phrases that you could have used in such email roleplays in the boxes below, starting with the most useful.

Underline the most useful phrases for you.

Compare with the suggested answers, including the most useful underlined phrases.

Do the same for the most useful of the other sections, including underlining the most useful phrases.

Compare the most useful phrases for you with someone else. Note that they will often be different for different people due to the level of friendliness or formality which you need to use, etc.

Compare your phrases as a class or with another group, starting with the most useful phrases.

Email phrases brainstorming**Starting emails****Opening greeting**

Dear Sir/ Madam

Opening line

Thanks for your quick reply.

Body of the email**Referring to information elsewhere (attachments, etc)**

Please see below for...

Highlighting important information

NB...

Ending emails**Closing line**

Thanks.

Closing greeting

Sincerely yours

Name at the end

A.M. Case (Mr)

Email phrases brainstorming suggested answers

Very common/ useful phrases are underlined. Rare phrases are in brackets () and italics.

Starting emails

Opening greeting

Dear Mr/ Ms + family name

Dear + first name

Hi + first name

Dear Sir/ Madam

Dear Sir or Madam

Dear all

Hi everyone

To: All...

Hi

(Dear customer/ Dear customers)

(To whom it may concern)

(Dear Madam X)

Opening line

Thank you for your email (about...)/ for meeting me last week/ for...

Thanks for your quick reply.

Thanks for your help with...

I'm writing (to you) about/ to/ because...

How's it going?/ How are you doing?

Hope you had a good...

It was great to meet you/ see you again...

I am writing to you concerning/ regarding/ with regards to/ in order to/ due to...

Just a quick note to say that...

(My name is.../ This is...)

(I hope this email finds you well).

Body of the email

Referring to information elsewhere (attachments, etc)

Please find... attached.

... is attached.

I have attached...

Here is...

Please see below for...

Please click on this link for...

Highlighting important information

Please note that...

NB...

Please pay particular attention to...

I'd like to draw you attention to...

Ending emails

Closing line

I'm looking forward to hearing from you (soon).

Looking forward to seeing you then.

I look forward to hearing from you.

(I'm waiting for your reply.)

(I expect to hear from you soon.)

(I look forward to hearing from you by Thursday/ ASAP X)

If you have any more questions, please (feel free to) contact me.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

If you need any more info, just let me know.

Any more questions, just drop me a line.

Thanks.

Thank you in advance.

Cheers.

Thanks again.

Thank you for your understanding.

Thank you for your patience.

(Thank you for your cooperation).

I hope that is acceptable with you.

Sorry I couldn't be more help.

Once again, please accept our apologies for...

(Hope you) have a good day/ weekend/ trip/...

I hope that helps

(Take care)

Closing greeting

Best regards

Sincerely yours

Sincerely

Yours sincerely

Your faithfully

Yours

Best wishes/ BW

All the best

Best

Name at the end

A.M. Case (Mr)

Alex Case (Mr)

Alex Case

Alex

(A)

Meetings/ Teleconferences/ Video conferences phrases brainstorming

Starting meetings

Meeting people (for the first time or again)

(We've emailed many times but) it's so nice to finally meet you (face to face).

Good small talk questions at the beginning of a meeting

Did you have any trouble getting here?

Ending the small talk and getting down to business

So, you must tell me more about that later, but we have to finish by 12, so let's make a start, if you don't mind.

Polite and friendly language at the beginning of a meeting

Thanks for coming all this way on such a cold day.

Introducing the topic of the meeting

As I wrote in my email, the main reason for this meeting is...

Body of a meeting

Turn taking (interrupting, stopping interruption, getting others to speak, etc)

If I can just (interrupt) (for a moment),...

Checking/ Clarifying/ Dealing with communication problems

So, in other words, what you're saying is...

Changing topic/ Moving on

Okay, we've still got a few points to get through, so shall we turn our attention to...?

Ending meetings**Checking agreement (by everyone/ about everything)**

Are we all agreed?

Summarising what you have discussed and agreed, and responding to that

So, to summarise our discussion, (*name*) agreed to...

Checking there's nothing left to talk about, and replying to that

Is there anything else that we need to discuss before we finish?

Smoothly finishing (giving reasons for finishing etc), and responding to that

Well, I'm afraid I have a meeting in 5 minutes, so we'll have to stop there, if that's OK.

Polite and friendly language at the end of a meeting

That was really productive. Thanks for all your great ideas.

Talking about future contact

As I said, I'll check with my boss and get in touch...

Good small talk questions at the end of a meeting

Do you have many more meetings today?

Telephoning phrases brainstorming**Starting phone calls****Answering the phone (receiver)**

Good morning/ afternoon/ evening. ABC Ltd. Alex Case speaking. How can I help you?

Saying who you are (caller)

This is Francis Cripps, from JUPG PLC.

Small talk/ Being friendly at the beginning of the phone call

I heard that the weather there is much cooler (now/ than here).

Being polite at the beginning of the phone call

Sorry to phone so early in the morning (but...)

Ending the small talk/ Smoothly getting down to business/ Moving towards the topic

Anyway, have you got a minute (to talk)?

Talking about the reason for the phone call

I'm returning your call.

Asking to speak to someone

I'd like to speak to someone about replacing our photocopiers.

Body of a phone call**Connecting the caller to the right person**

Of course. I'll just check if he's available.

Negative answers to requests to speak to someone

I'm afraid he's on another line.

Taking messages/ Taking dictation

Shall I ask her to call you back?

Asking people to wait

Please hold the line. I'll connect you to a member of our customer service staff.

Ending phone calls**Checking that the other person has finished, and responding to that**

Okay then, was there anything else?

Talking about the next contact between you/ Talking about the future

Please call again if you have any other questions.

Polite and/ or friendly language at the end of the call

Thanks for all your help.

Functions/ Body of the communication phrases brainstorming**Requests (asking for help, etc)**

We would be very grateful if you could...

Enquiries (= Inquiries)/ Asking and answering questions/ Giving information

In answer to your question about ..., ...

Arrangements/ (Re)scheduling

I'm afraid I have a meeting with a client then. Can we make it the same time on Friday?

Complaints

Unfortunately, ... did not meet the standards that I was expecting.

Apologising/ Responding to complaints

We were very sorry to hear about your issues with... This was due to...

Checking progress/ Chasing up

How are we getting on with...?

Instructions (on how to use something/ how to get somewhere)

First of all, you need to...

Advice/ Feedback/ Recommendations/ Suggestions

Personally, I would suggest that...