

ETpedia™

Business English

500 ideas
for Business
English teachers

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Series editor: John Hughes

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ENGLISH
TEACHING
professional

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Introduction

10 reasons for using this resource

1. Everything in one place

Business English teachers can find supplementary resources, teaching ideas, activities and tips in many different places. If you work at a language school, the shelves of your teachers' room might have many different publications, resource books and folders full of materials created by your colleagues. If you are a teacher who travels to different companies to teach English, then perhaps you rely more on websites offering lesson plans and worksheets. The amount of materials for teachers these days can be overwhelming and also time-consuming to search through. The aim of this resource book is to bring together a collection of ideas, tips, tools and techniques in one place for faster reference.

2. Clearly organised

This resource contains 50 units covering everything from preparing and planning your Business English course, activities for different business topics and a range of ideas for developing business communication skills. Each unit always has 10 points. Why 10? Well, if you're new to teaching Business English, reading our 10 tips on carrying out needs analysis will mean you can plan your course. Having 10 activities for practising the language of sales will help most teachers prepare a lesson on the topic. And knowing the 10 criteria that make an effective presentation will allow you to give detailed feedback.

3. New to Business English teaching

If you are teaching Business English for the first time ever, then this resource will provide you with all the basics to help you effectively plan a course and teach students who are in work or students who are planning future careers in business.

4. Experienced teachers

Perhaps you have been teaching Business English in companies or in universities or colleges for some time. Hopefully you'll find some ideas in this book that are familiar or which remind you of activities you haven't used for a while, and it'll also give you some fresh ideas to give your lessons a boost.

5. Supplementing your coursebook

If you are following a coursebook or a set of materials for a defined syllabus, then this resource can support that content with ways to lead into topics, expand the range of activity types, and suggest how to adapt the material to match learners' needs and interests.

6. Studying for a Business English qualification

Perhaps you are taking a formal qualification in teaching Business English such as the Certificate in International Business English Training (Cert IBET) or the LCCI First Certificate for Teachers of Business English. Or perhaps you are focusing on developing your business English skills as part of an MA qualification or the DELTA or Diploma in TESOL. For any teacher involved in this kind of ongoing professional development, this resource is an excellent reference with the lists of 10 acting as useful study tools.

7. Teacher trainers

If you are a teacher trainer or someone who needs to deliver staff training in the area of Business English, then use the checklists of ideas that this resource offers as a means to preparing your sessions.

8. Course planners and materials writers

Business English ETpedia includes information on needs analysis, planning and lists of business topics and skills with suggested exercise types. This means that course planners and writers will find it helpful in the development of course programmes.

9. Additional materials

As well as the resources offered in this resource, you will also find additional photocopiable worksheets in the Appendix. These worksheets relate to units in the resource and offer instant classroom activities.

10. More time

The one thing most teachers need is more time; more time to plan, more time to search for resources, more time to reflect on their teaching, and more time to develop their skills and knowledge for the Business English classroom. We hope that by offering you this collection of accessible ideas, you'll have more time to spend on developing your teaching in the way you would like.

“ETpedia saves hours of planning time and opens opportunities for variation, adaptation and even creating my own materials inspired by the ideas it offers.”

Ayat Al-Tawel, teacher of Business English, Egypt

10 ways to use this resource

This book has been written for different teachers at different stages of their Business English teaching career. It can be read and used in different ways according to your level of experience, need or interest.

1. Cover to cover

You could start at the beginning and read to the end. If you are finding out about teaching Business English for the first time, then the book will work as an introductory text to the subject.

2. Read a section

The contents page will direct you to different sections. In each section you will find units containing 10 ideas, tips, activities, questions or thoughts on a particular aspect of teaching. Some of the sections might not be immediately relevant to your context so you can leave these for later (when you might need them) and some sections will help you with immediate interests, concerns or questions.

3. Teacher's block

Just as writers sometimes have days when they can't write (a condition commonly referred to as 'writer's block'), there are days when teachers search desperately for ideas to help them come up with a lesson, but can't think of anything. We can call this 'teacher's block', and we hope this book will offer you some help with it. Open the book at any page and see if the 10 ideas on that page give you a new idea.

4. Teaching a new area of business

One reason that teachers enjoy Business English is that they are constantly coming into contact with students from different business backgrounds who need different types of English. This book suggests ways to learn about the new area of business and how to approach teaching the English needed.

5. Write in the book

Maybe you've tried one of the activities in the book or found an idea you liked. Make notes in the margin about why it worked or how you adapted it, so you can refer to it again later.

6. Helping colleagues

If you work with other teachers, then you've probably experienced a situation where a colleague is desperately searching for something to help improve their lesson. Perhaps you can help them out by suggesting they manage a lesson on meeting skills by using some of the ideas in Unit 31 on page 90. Or if they'd like to make more use of authentic materials, then show them the tips in Unit 47 on page 130.

7. Last-minute lessons

Most teachers have experienced the day when a colleague is off sick and they have been asked to teach a class at very short notice. You probably won't have much time to prepare, but you'll find enough ideas in Section 'Activities for business topics' (see page 39) to help you teach a complete and useful lesson.

8. More practice

Many students require extra practice on specific areas of English. For example, they might ask you for more speaking practice in your lesson (see Unit 24 on page 69) or perhaps you have noticed that a class needs more time to work on business writing (see Unit 41 on page 114).

9. Develop yourself

If you're at the stage of your teaching career where you feel you are ready for more of a challenge, you'll find some ideas in Unit 50 on page 137.

10. Write your own 10

Teaching is always evolving, developing and changing. More ideas can be added so why not visit the www.myetpedia.com. You can read blog posts from other teachers suggesting their own set of 10 ideas and you are invited to suggest your own 10 (see p173).

"I frequently use the ideas in ETpedia as a kind of checklist when preparing."

Mario Lecluyze, teacher trainer, Belgium

10 facts about the authors

John Hughes ...

- ▶ taught his first Business English class in Poland in 1993. He then worked as a Business English teacher at language schools, in universities, and for companies including Gucci, Deloitte and Fiat.
- ▶ has managed Business English departments in Poland and Italy, carrying out language audits and needs analyses, course design and assessment.
- ▶ has trained many teachers from all over the world to work in the field of Business English, including training courses leading to the LCCI First Certificate in Teaching Business English qualification.
- ▶ has been the author or co-author on many Business English course books, including *Business Result*, *Successful Presentations*, *Successful Meetings* (Oxford University Press), *Success with BEC Vantage* (Summertown/Cengage Learning), and *Telephone English* (Macmillan).
- ▶ regularly gives talks and presentations on different English Language Teaching topics at international teacher's conferences and in online webinars. He also writes for journals including *English Teaching Professional* and *Modern English Teacher*.

Robert McLarty ...

- ▶ taught his first Business English class at International House, Hastings, in 1979. Since then he has worked as a Business English teacher in Paris and Oxford.
- ▶ has run Business English schools in Paris, Hastings and Oxford, designing courses, recruiting and training teachers and developing new products.
- ▶ has co-authored Business English books including *Business Basics*, *Quick Work* and *Business Focus* (Oxford University Press).
- ▶ has conceptualised and published a wide range of Business English coursebooks including *Business Result*, *Skills for Business Studies*, *Business one:one*, *Successful Presentations* and *Successful Meetings* (Oxford University Press).
- ▶ regularly gives talks on Business English, writes materials and articles, edits *Modern English Teacher* and is Principal Tutor at the Oxford Teachers' Academy.

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What is Business English?

This section begins by defining what Business English is and looking at its position in relation to English language teaching in general. Anyone new to teaching Business English will find this section a useful introduction, and more experienced teachers will find it helpful as a summary of the key areas that go to make up Business English.

The first few units explain what Business English is and why students choose to take this kind of course in contrast to a more general English course. Unit 4 also addresses some of the typical concerns that teachers have who are new to Business English. So if you are the kind of teacher who never imagined you'd be teaching 'business', then this unit should allay any fears you might have.

Units 5 to 7 focus much more on some of the typical contexts in which Business English is taught. For example, you might be teaching one-to-one or in small groups. Often these kinds of lessons take place on company premises and away from the typical language school setting. On the other hand, there is a growing demand for Business English to be taught at college or university level to young adult students. In this context, classes can be large and your students won't have much personal experience of the world of work or business to draw upon.

If you are totally new to teaching Business English, then it's probably worth reading the whole of this section from beginning to end in order to give yourself a thorough introduction. For teachers with more experience of Business English, then you'll want to dip in to those units which provide you with additional ideas and support.

10 aspects of Business English

Most people picking up this book will be familiar with the terms ELT (English Language Teaching), TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). They all refer, in very broad terms, to the world of teaching English to people who need the language for a whole variety of reasons.

However, one of the main reasons why many adult students learn English is because they want to get a job, build their career, or extend their professional skills. So many language teachers often find that they are teaching a type of English that is linked directly to the world of work and business; what is often referred to as *Business English* or *English for work*. Interestingly, when you ask different teachers to give you a single definition of what Business English is, you'll find a wide variety of views and comments. Here is a selection of definitions based on 10 different viewpoints which, when read together, provide a very useful introduction.

1. English for your job or the workplace

In Business English you are teaching students who don't necessarily need a general course in which they try to move up a level; instead they want English that will help them to do their current job or their future job more effectively. Some of these students won't be involved in private business necessarily. They might work in the public sector or for a charity, for example. But the term 'Business English' is often used generally to refer to anyone trying to work effectively using English, whether that means by reading legal documents, writing commercial terms, handling phone-calls and emails or dealing with international clients.

2. Time-effective English

Many business people are very busy and don't want to spend time studying every area of English. Business English is often concerned with the English that students need now and how they can learn it in the most time-effective (and cost-effective) way.

3. Business topics

Some students will need key vocabulary to talk about specific areas of business. For example, someone working in Human Resources might need specific vocabulary to talk about what it is they do or to carry out aspects of their role such as recruitment. Similarly, if you are teaching pre-work students in a university setting, you might teach English within the context of different subjects ranging from marketing to logistics, to environmental ethics. You won't necessarily teach the actual subject, but you will sometimes use texts about these topics.

4. Communication skills

Unlike general English, Business English includes helping students to communicate in certain ways that are common to business. These communication skills include giving presentations, participating in meetings, socialising and networking and writing business correspondence. Many business people take special training in communication skills in their own language so your job might be to provide the English they'll need. However, sometimes Business English teachers also need to give help with aspects of communication such as effective body language and using visual aids.

5. Communicative competence

In Business English we are usually more interested in whether a student can communicate effectively to complete a task rather than how much grammar or vocabulary they know. For example, a student with a lower level of English can sometimes be a more engaging presenter or a more effective negotiator than a student with advanced English. In other words, they use the English they have to its greatest effect along with the other personal skills they possess.

6. Training more than teaching

Some Business English teachers prefer to call themselves 'trainers'. It might be that the term 'trainer' sounds more professional in the business world, but it also reflects the fact that in Business English we often focus on helping the students to be better at what they do with the English they already have. (Note that throughout this book we use 'teacher' and 'trainer' interchangeably.)

7. Businesslike as well as about business

Given that many of your students will be professional people working in company environments, the term Business English often implies a certain expectation that the teacher will be equally professional and businesslike. This influences every aspect of the job, from how you present yourself to the appearance and quality of the teaching materials you use.

8. Client and colleague English

Business English is also about the type of people that your students will need to communicate with. Typically, we think of business people talking to clients and customers who are interested in buying and selling. But in today's international world, your students will also need English to communicate with their colleagues and counterparts in other countries.

9. Specific and general English

Sometimes you'll meet a teacher working with business students and they'll say, 'We don't really do business English; my students want general English.' What they often mean is that their students aren't interested in reading and discussing texts about, for example, the stockmarket. Instead they want to talk about everyday topics. The point is that Business English can include being able to discuss general subjects when making conversation with colleagues and clients. After all, a large part of doing business is about relationship-building and social English.

10. English for travel

Many Business English students will take your course because they travel and use English in different parts of the world. They might need English to check in, to order food, or to take a taxi. It's all part of the content and approach that forms what we call Business English.

10 reasons why students choose Business English

There is a wide range of reasons for people studying Business English. Why they have chosen this course, or had it chosen for them quite often, will have a huge impact on how you plan and deliver the courses.

1. Aspirations

Many teenagers and young adult students soon realise that English is vital if they plan on having a career in skilled industries. In some countries, when students go to colleges to study technical courses, English lessons might be included as part of their programme.

2. International businesses

With so many businesses relying on international trade, employees often find that they have to be able to use some English as a medium of communication with colleagues and clients in a variety of countries. Note that these won't just be with people from countries where English is the first language, but also from countries where English is commonly used as a lingua franca.

3. Promotion

Anyone who is keen to get promoted will often need to develop more skills or to improve existing skills. Being able to communicate effectively in English is often one of those skills and may be necessary for anyone trying to move up the career ladder.

4. Changing jobs

As with getting promoted, some of your students might be on your course with the aim of gaining a level of English that will help them apply for jobs with other companies.

5. A reward for good performance

Some companies offer the incentive of training as a reward for good work or even for loyalty.

6. A specific job to do

One of the best teaching situations is when the participant needs training to fulfil a specific role. The needs will be clear, motivation will be high and all stakeholders will be pushing for a successful outcome.

7. Documentation in English

As globalisation continues, more and more employees find themselves surrounded by reporting and administrative systems in English. The spread of IT has been a real driver of growth for the English language and a lot of back-office employees are finding themselves having to deal with data in English. They might not ever need to speak English, but they still need to improve their reading, writing and vocabulary.

8. The company language

We often think that English is used only in business for external communications with people overseas, but for many companies English is also the internal company language. For example, a company in Italy could be taken over by a multinational with branches and divisions all over the world – in this situation, the new 'parent' company might insist that all internal communication, especially documentation, is now carried out in English.

9. University studies

Students at university often study subjects such as business or finance which require a good level of English. This might be because lectures are given in English and the fact that so much of the academic literature for these kinds of course will also be in English.

10. Lots of other reasons or none at all

You will also find that a large number of students simply take the course because it is there. The company offers it and staff members accept it without necessarily having a real and tangible need. A careful balance of English for work, travel and socialising is often necessary in these cases.

“Choosing Business English (instead of general English) ensures the language focus is relevant and that the topics and tasks prepare professional people for the specific situations they will encounter in their working lives, while making the most of their limited time.”

Hannah Murphy, Principal, OIE Oxford, UK