



B1-B2 • Business English

# The Language of Startups

## 1. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. What startup terms confuse people most?
2. How do you tell hype from substance?
3. What's a 'north star' metric in your view?
4. When should startups focus on profit?
5. What is your favorite startup story?

## 2. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

Match the words with their meanings:

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| ___ 1. runway     | a. durable advantage protecting a business |
| ___ 2. burn rate  | b. money spent per month                   |
| ___ 3. north star | c. customers who leave in a period         |
| ___ 4. pivot      | d. significant change in strategy          |
| ___ 5. MVP        | e. minimal product used to learn           |
| ___ 6. churn      | f. lifetime value of a customer            |
| ___ 7. cohort     | g. group of users with a shared start date |
| ___ 8. CAC        | h. months until cash runs out              |
| ___ 9. LTV        | i. single metric that guides decisions     |
| ___ 10. moat      | j. cost to acquire a customer              |

## 3. READING

### Beyond Buzzwords

Startup language compresses complex ideas. Runway and burn rate summarize survival; CAC and LTV estimate whether growth makes sense. An MVP isn't a cheap product; it's a learning tool. When cohorts churn, the north star metric should force focus, not spin a story.

Pivots aren't failures if they increase truth per dollar. A moat isn't just patents—it's habits, networks, and timing. Plain language beats buzzwords: say what's working, what isn't, and what you're changing next.

Product~~?~~market fit is less a moment than a slope: acquisition costs fall, retention stabilizes by cohort, and referrals rise. Growth can be bought or earned; efficient growth shows improving unit economics as scale increases. Plain dashboards beat buzzword decks: one page for runway, burn, CAC/LTV, churn by cohort, and one explicit bet for the next sprint.

## 4. COMPREHENSION

1. What do runway and burn rate indicate?
2. Why is an MVP a learning tool?
3. What do CAC and LTV estimate together?
4. When is a pivot not a failure?
5. What can a moat include beyond patents?

## 5. VOCABULARY REVIEW

Fill in the blanks with words from the vocabulary list:

1. We have 12 months of \_\_\_\_.
2. Our \_\_\_\_ is too high; we must cut costs.
3. The \_\_\_\_ metric keeps the team aligned.
4. We might \_\_\_\_ to a different customer segment.
5. Ship an \_\_\_\_ to learn faster.
6. Lower \_\_\_\_ or retention will suffer.
7. Analyze each \_\_\_\_.
8. Reduce \_\_\_\_ to grow efficiently.
9. Increase \_\_\_\_ to justify spending.
10. Our network effects form a strong \_\_\_\_.

## 6. WORD FORMATION

One cell is blank in each row. Complete the missing form.

Verb	Noun	Adjective
_____	retention	retained
grow	_____	growing
compete	competition	_____
_____	investment	invested
analyze	_____	analytical

## 7. COLLOCATIONS

Match the words that go together:

- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. north-star     | a. economics   |
| 2. product-market | b. fit         |
| 3. unit           | c. metric      |
| 4. customer       | d. acquisition |
| 5. growth         | e. loop        |

## 8. ERROR CORRECTION

Find and correct the mistakes:

1. We don't knew our CAC and the spend are random.
2. There is many buzzwords but little data.
3. If cohorts would churn less, LTV increase.
4. Runway have been reducing quickly.
5. She are pivoting every week without reason.

## 9. GRAMMAR REVIEW

Complete the sentences:

1. If CAC \_\_\_\_ (fall), we can spend more on growth.
2. Only after the cohort \_\_\_\_ (stabilize) did churn drop.
3. Had we \_\_\_\_ (define) a north star, priorities would align.
4. If runway \_\_\_\_ (be) short, cut the burn rate.
5. They celebrated because the moat \_\_\_\_ (strengthen).

## 10. PASSIVE VOICE TRANSFORMATIONS

Change to passive voice:

1. Investors track the burn rate closely.
2. They will present the cohort analysis.
3. We changed the north-star metric.

## 11. DISCUSSION

1. Which startup terms are most useful?
2. How do you avoid buzzword inflation?
3. When should a startup pivot?

4. What really creates a moat today?

## 12. CRITICAL THINKING

Explain a startup you like in 150-200 words using plain language—no buzzwords—and one clear next step.

### Answer Key

Vocabulary Preview: 1-h, 2-b, 3-i, 4-d, 5-e, 6-c, 7-g, 8-j, 9-f, 10-a

Vocabulary Review: 2. runway; 3. burn rate; 4. north star; 5. pivot; 6. MVP; 7. churn; 8. cohort; 9. CAC; 10. LTV; 11. moat

Word Formation: retain/retention/retained; grow/growth/growing;  
compete/competition/competitive; invest/investment/invested; analyze/analysis/analytical

Collocations: 1-c, 2-b, 3-a, 4-d, 5-e

Error Correction: We didn't know our CAC and the spending was random. | There are many buzzwords but little data. | If cohorts churned less, LTV would increase. | Runway has been shrinking quickly. | She is pivoting every week without reason.

Grammar Review: 2. falls; 3. stabilized; 4. defined; 5. is; 6. strengthened

Passive Voice: 1. The burn rate is tracked closely by investors.; 2. The cohort analysis will be presented.; 3. The north-star metric was changed.