

# Providing background information

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL  
Upper-intermediate

NUMBER  
EN\_BE\_3204X

LANGUAGE  
English



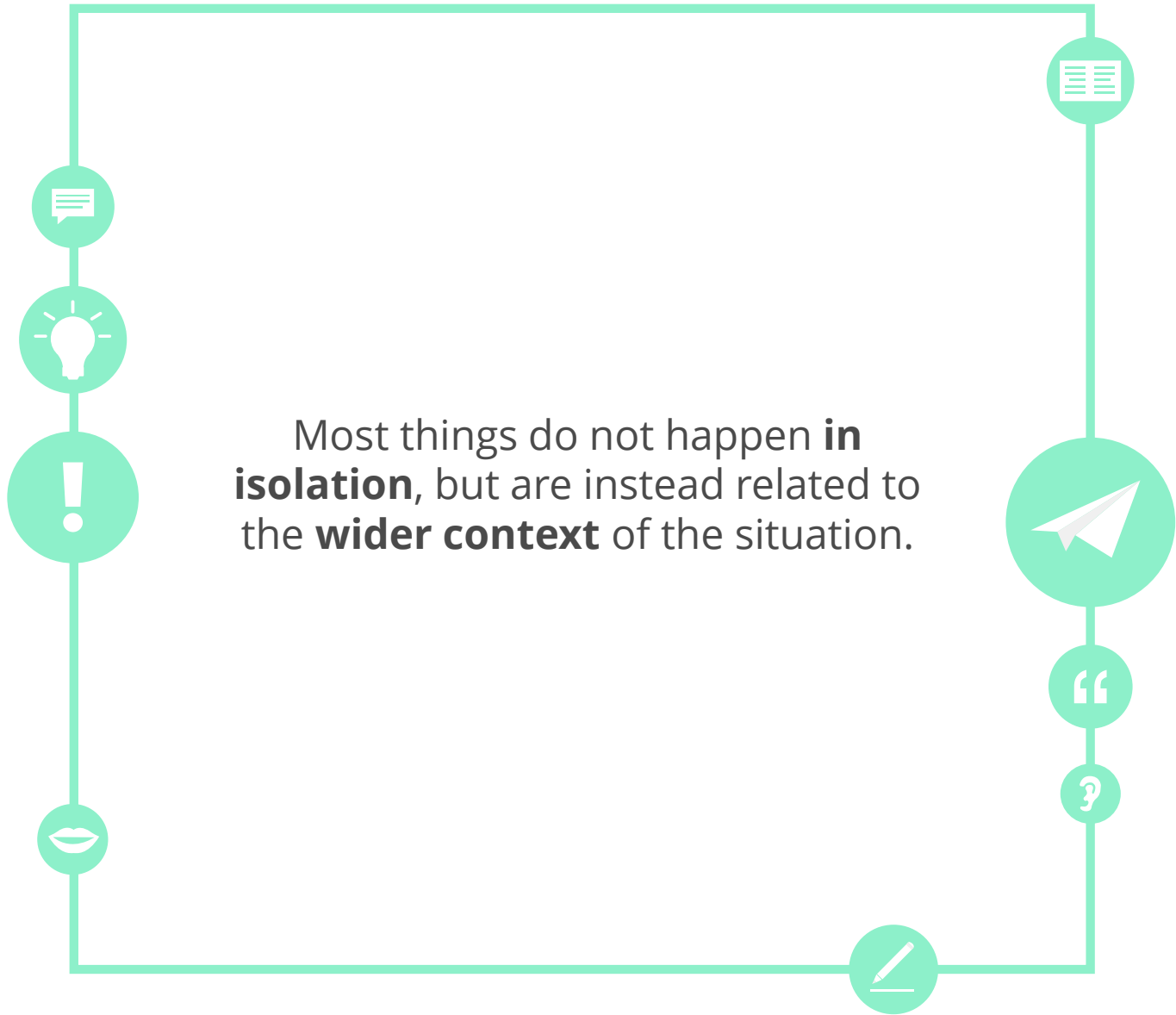


## Goals

- Can understand typical phrases for expressing cause and consequence in a business context
- Can clearly provide background information when discussing a business issue



Most things do not happen **in isolation**, but are instead related to the **wider context** of the situation.





## Background information

**What do you think it  
means to provide  
background information?  
When might it be  
necessary?**



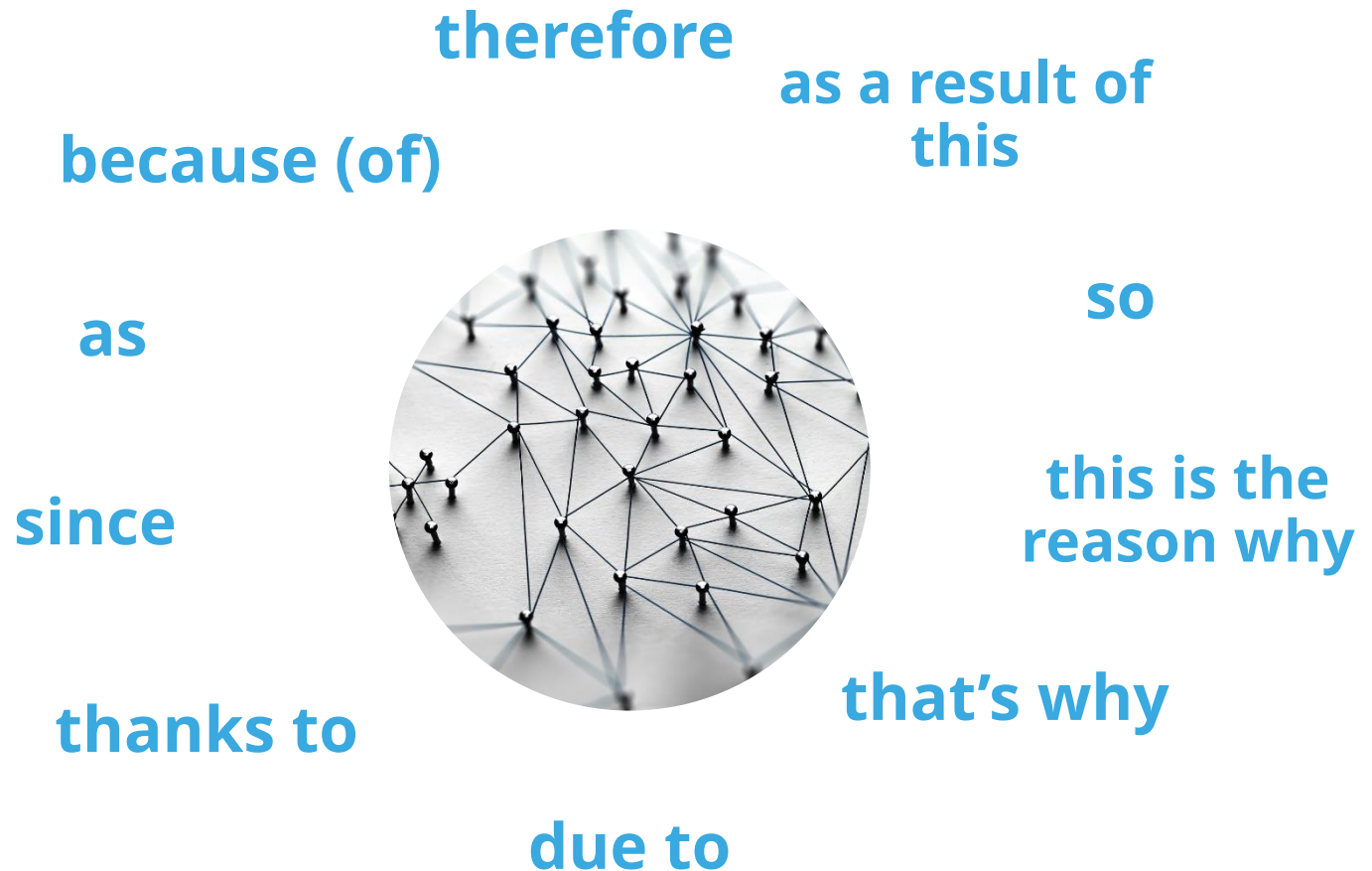
## Importance of context

Most of the time context is important. What kind of consequences do you think can occur when information is taken **out of context**?





## Useful vocabulary





## Expressing cause

- When you express cause, you are giving the **reasons why something happened**.
- You can put the linking word either **between** the two clauses or **at the very beginning**.
- If you **start** the sentence with the linking word, you will **need a comma** between the cause and what happened.

what happened	linking word	cause
We are not making a profit	<b>because</b>	sales are low.

linking word	cause	what happened
<b>Because</b>	sales are low,	we are not making a profit.



## Expressing cause

**because**

We are not making a profit **because** sales are low.

*because, as and  
since are  
conjunctions*

**as**

We're going to promote this book more **as** it is our bestseller.

**since**

**Since** it is a bank holiday tomorrow, we don't have to go to work.

**thanks to**

**Thanks to** changes in the company structure, our processes are now more efficient.

**because of**

We don't have to work **because of** the bank holiday.

*thanks to, because of  
and due to are  
causal  
prepositions*

**due to**

She became ill **due to** working too much.





## Expressing consequence

- When you express consequence, you are giving the **outcome** or **result of something**.
- These phrases **normally come at the beginning** of the clause containing the consequence.
- **Therefore** is an **exception** to this general rule. It can come at the beginning but is often also used in other positions in the sentence.

what happened	linking word	consequence
Sales are low.	<b>That's why</b>	we are not making a profit.

<i>therefore</i>		
Sales are low.	<b>Therefore</b> , we are not making a profit.	
Sales are low.	We are <b>therefore</b> not making a profit.	



## Expressing consequence

**therefore**

Sales are low. We are **therefore** not making a profit.

**that's why**

He worked extremely hard. **That's why** he got a promotion.

**this is the reason  
why**

I have to go into work on Saturday. **This is the reason why** I don't have to work next Monday.

**so**

They wouldn't let her take maternity leave **so** she left the company.

**as a result of this**

Our company is growing. **As a result of this**, we'll be hiring lots of new people soon.



## Transform the sentences from expressing cause to expressing consequence

1. I left the company **because** I didn't like my job.



I didn't like my job **so** I left the company.

2. We need to change it **since** it's out of date.



\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. He was late for the meeting **as** the trains were delayed.



\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. I worked overtime **because** I needed to prepare my presentation.



\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. We hired her **as** she impressed us in the interview.



\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Putting things into a wider context

Some things can only be understood when we put them into a **wider context**. That is, if we give **background information** or explain their **relation** to other things. It is difficult to understand things **in isolation**, and we should **therefore** explain a fact or our opinion **in relation to** relevant points that are connected to it.

Let's **put** that **into context**.



## Providing background information

- Below are certain phrases we can use when we want to provide more **background information** and therefore put things into a **wider context**.

In order to understand this, we need to understand where it comes from.

How did it come to this? Let's see how it happened.

In order to explain it, we need to outline its context.

This issue cannot be understood in isolation.

Let's explain this issue by putting it into a broader context.





## Providing background information

- The two examples below use some expressions from the previous slide.

- Young people are increasingly choosing to abstain from drinking alcohol. **In order to understand why, we must put this issue in a wider context.** People are leading healthier lifestyles in general... The price of alcohol is rising...
- Fewer and fewer British teenagers are choosing to learn foreign languages. **How did it come to this? Let's explain how it happened.** Firstly, the government ruled that languages are no longer a compulsory school subject. This led to...



## Read the dialogue

Read through the dialogue with your teacher. What problem is being explained?



Our company cannot find enough qualified people so that we can expand.  
People just aren't studying IT – **how did it come to this?**

Well, **we can explain it by putting it into wider context.** Starting from secondary school, people are taking fewer science-based subjects. There are therefore fewer IT graduates.



Yes, I suppose you're right. **We can't look at this issue in isolation.** I'm sure other science and technology industries are struggling too.

Absolutely. I think **it's related to the fact that** young people find science subjects too intimidating.





## What do you think?

Do you agree with the reasons suggested on the previous page?

Can you think of any other reasons why a company might have difficulties recruiting people?





## Providing background information

- Here are some more phrases that you can use to provide **background information**.

There is another topic underlying this issue.

In order to understand this, you need to see the bigger picture.

These two ideas mutually reinforce each other.

This can be traced back to...

Even if the connection does not seem evident, it's related to...





## Providing background information

- Here are some of the phrases from the previous page **in context**.

- **This can be traced back to** the government reforms enacted in 2004.
- **Even if the connection does not seem evident, it's related to** the redundancies made by the firm last year.





## Providing background information: dependence

- Very often, issues you talk about will **depend** upon each other. Below are some phrases you can use when this is the case.

Phrase	Example
This relies on (the fact that)...	<b>This relies on the fact that</b> taste is related to smell.
This issue builds upon...	<b>This issue builds upon</b> what was discussed earlier.
This is part of a bigger picture, namely...	<b>This is part of a bigger picture, namely</b> the weakness of the industry in general.
This depends on...	<b>This depends on</b> whether we look at it from an objective angle or not.
To rest on/to bank on/to lean on	<b>This banks on</b> Jones winning the election.



## Your reaction

**What is your initial reaction to the statement below?**

“

Globalisation is killing independent businesses. Nowadays every shop you see is a chain.

”



## Put that into context

**Now try to put that reaction into context.  
What kind of background is there to the issue?**



tax breaks for companies

advertising

production  
costs



## Email sample

-	□	×
To: johnkk@brightindustry.com		
Subject: Lack of applicants for job opening		
<p>Dear John,</p> <p>I'm pleased to send you my thoughts on why there have been so few applicants for the job opening we advertised last week.</p> <p>I believe it is part of a bigger picture in which this industry is seeing low numbers of applicants in general for all jobs. This may be due to the fact that both training and experience are requirements. Secondly, another reason underlying this issue is that our company did suffer in the economic downturn a few years ago and I believe people are wary of joining us. They therefore apply for other, seemingly more stable companies.</p> <p>Of course, we cannot consider the issue in isolation. I welcome any thoughts you may have on the issue and how we can resolve it.</p> <p>Kind regards, Pete</p>		

**Read through the text above. Can you think of an industry the email might be referring to? Explain your answer, making sure you provide some background information.**



## Why does this happen?

**A large number of people have left your company recently for other businesses in the same industry.  
Can you think of reasons why this might happen?**



uncertainty about  
the future

lack of  
prospects/support



## Productivity

**Productivity is down in your office and you have been tasked to find out why. Below are some of the issues you have come up with. Discuss with your teacher how each one might be connected with productivity.**

employees have  
complained about  
not having a  
space for breaks

some employees  
smoke cigarettes,  
while others do  
not

deadlines have  
been missed in  
the past with no  
consequences

there are no  
bonuses for  
meeting  
deadlines





## Write an email

**Write an email to your superior detailing your ideas on why productivity may be down in your office. Use your answers from the previous exercise along with some of the phrases from this lesson to put your ideas into context.**

The form is a light gray rectangle with a window-like border at the top containing three buttons: a minus sign, a square, and a red 'X'. Inside the form, there are three main sections:

- A text box labeled "To:" with a light gray border.
- A text box labeled "Subject:" with a light gray border.
- A large text area for the email body, containing ten horizontal lines for writing. The first line is shorter than the others, and the last two lines are also shorter.



## Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!







## Plan an email

lack of  
consumer  
confidence

company has boring image?

one big  
company  
eliminating  
smaller ones?





## Write your email

**Take the notes you made in the previous activity and write up a brief report on the broader context of the problem. Send it to your boss to make sure she knows what's going on.**

-□×

To: Martina Somers

Subject: Market share value

Dear Ms Somers,



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