

COMMUNICATION

# Overcoming challenges in life

**LEVEL**

Intermediate (B1)

**NUMBER**

EN\_B1\_3033X

**LANGUAGE**

English

## Learning outcomes

- I can use a range of vocabulary and phrases to describe how I overcame a challenge.
- I can accurately use the prepositions 'despite' and 'in spite of' in a sentence.



# Warm-up

**Match** the items (1-5) to the correct definition (a-e).

**Discuss** the questions in the yellow box.



1 nerves

2 investor

3 to consider

4 hesitation

5 to proofread

a to check (a written document) carefully for mistakes

b feelings of anxiety or fear

c to think about something

d a pause, usually when you are unsure about something

e a person or group that invests money in something

1. Have you ever had to give an important presentation at work?
2. Do you find it easy or difficult to speak in front of a crowd?



# Reading (1)

**Read** the text below and **answer** the questions in the boxes.

Danny, 28, software developer

From a young age, I've had a fear of public speaking. Then, a few months into my first job, I was asked to give an important presentation in English to our investors. Despite speaking English quite well, I was worried that my nerves would get the better of me, and that I would make lots of silly mistakes. At first, I considered making up an excuse to not do it. But deep down, I knew that I had to get over my fear.

What was Danny afraid of from a young age?

What were they asked to do in their new job?

Is Danny good at English?





I was worried that my nerves would **get the better of me...**

Choose the correct definition:

***to get the better of (you)***

...to make it difficult to do something, or prevent you from doing something

*or*

...to make something easier to do



# Discuss

Option: use **breakout rooms**. Then, **share** your group's suggestions in the main class.

**What would you do in  
Danny's situation?**



**What steps could he  
take to get over his fear  
of public speaking?**



## Reading (2)

**Read** the rest of Danny's story and **answer** the questions in the boxes.

In the weeks leading up to the presentation, I found lots of tips online for improving public speaking skills. I realised that nerves are normal, and that all I could do was prepare my materials well, and practise loads.

I asked a colleague to proofread my notes. I practised in front of a mirror, and then in front of a few close friends. Soon, I could deliver it without any hesitation or mistakes.

But in spite of all my preparation, things didn't go so smoothly on the day.

What did Danny realise before the presentation?

What did Danny do to prepare for the presentation?

What do you think could have happened on the day of the presentation?



# Match the verb phrases from the text

**Match** the verb phrases from the text below.

1      **to make up**

2      **to make**

3      **to get**

4      **to get over**

5      **to have**

a      a fear (of)

b      an excuse

c      mistakes

d      (your) fear

e      the better of (you)



# despite and in spite of

**Read** the sentences below. **Note** what follows the prepositions *despite* and *in spite of*.

1



**Despite speaking** English quite well, I was worried that my nerves would get the better of me.

2



On the day, **in spite of my** preparation, things didn't go so smoothly.

3



**Despite the fact that** Sarah is an excellent student, she didn't do very well in her exams.

4



We managed to catch our flight, **in spite of the fact that** our train was delayed.

# Using *despite* and *in spite of*

Match a sentence with *despite* and *in spite of* (1-5) to the correct structure (a-e).

1 **Despite** speaking English quite well, I was worried that my nerves would get the better of me.

2 On the day, **in spite of** my preparation, things didn't go so smoothly...

3 **Despite** the fact that Sarah is an excellent student, she didn't do very well in her exams.

4 We managed to catch our flight, **in spite of** the fact that our train was delayed.

5 I had a great time at the picnic, **despite** the rain.

a followed by a noun

b followed by a possessive adjective + noun

c followed by a gerund (-ing form of the verb)

d followed by *the fact that*

e at the start of the second clause



## Reading (3)

**Read** the end of Danny's story and **answer** the questions in the boxes.

I had technical issues with my laptop and I forgot to mention a key piece of information. But I managed to get to the end of the presentation and the next day, my boss said that he was very impressed by how professionally I had handled the situation.

The presentation didn't go quite as planned, but I was glad that I had faced my fear. I know that the next time won't be as scary – practice makes perfect, after all!

What issues did Danny have on the day?

Was the presentation a success overall?

How did Danny feel afterwards?



# Discuss

**Complete** the steps below to describe a challenge you have overcome.

- 1** Think of a time when you had to deal with a challenging situation – at work, or in your personal life.
- 2** Describe the situation. How did you feel beforehand? What steps did you take to overcome the challenge?
- 3** What did you learn from your experience? What advice could you give to someone in a similar situation?







# End of the lesson

Idiom

***to bite the bullet***

**Meaning:** to do something unpleasant that needs to be done, or that you are nervous about doing.

**Example:** I've been thinking about dying my hair for ages... I guess I just need to bite the bullet!



# Additional practice



# Transform the sentences

Transform the sentences below using *despite* and *in spite of*.

1 The presentation didn't go quite as planned, but I was glad that I had faced my fear.



**Despite the fact that** the presentation didn't go as planned, I was glad that I had faced my fear.

2 The weather was awful, but we had a fun time.



3 I wasn't a very good student in high school, but I loved university.



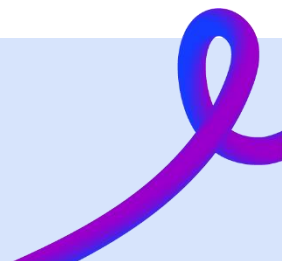
4 My friend had an unhappy childhood, but she is one of the most joyful people I know.



5 He didn't know anyone when he moved to Rome, but he made friends quite quickly.



6 I was very successful, but I wasn't very happy.





# Multiple choice

1 I overslept and I was going to be late. I called my boss and made \_\_\_\_\_ an excuse.

a. up

b. over

2 I didn't get the job. I am upset, but I'll get \_\_\_\_\_ it.

a. up

b. over

3 When I told my boss, she didn't mind. She told me that we all \_\_\_\_\_ mistakes

a. get

b. make



# Fill in the gaps

Fill in the **gaps** with the words in the red box.

- 1 She gave a very strong presentation after a little \_\_\_\_\_ at the start.
- 2 For a moment, I thought that \_\_\_\_\_ were going to get the better of her.
- 3 She was talking to some very important \_\_\_\_\_, so I think she was quite nervous.
- 4 She had been up late the previous night to \_\_\_\_\_ her presentation and remove any mistakes.
- 5 But in the end, the presentation went very well. I hope she will \_\_\_\_\_ it a success!

investors  
consider  
proofread  
nerves  
hesitation





## Discuss



**Have you ever  
made up an  
excuse?**

**What was the reason?**





# Discuss



**Monique**

**I avoid  
challenging  
situations to keep  
my life easy**

**How boring! You  
will never  
succeed if you  
don't challenge  
yourself!**



**Carl**

Do you agree with  
Monique or Carl?

Use phrases from  
the lesson to discuss  
your answers.

Talk about your own  
experiences.

Ask your classmates  
follow-up questions.



# Answer key

**P.3:** 1. (b) 2. (e) 3. (c) 4. (d) 5. (a)

**P.4:** 1. Public speaking 2. He was asked to give a presentation in English to his company investors 3. Yes

**P.7:** 1. He realised that nerves are normal 2. He asked a colleague to proofread his notes; practiced in front of a mirror and close friends

**P.8:** 1. (b) 2. (c) 3. (e) 4. (d) 5. (a)

**P.10:** 1. (c) 2. (b) 3. (d) 4. (e) 5. (a)

**P.11:** 1. He had technical issues with his laptop and forgot a key piece of information 2. Yes 3. He was glad that he had faced his fear

**P.17:** 1. a 2. b 3. b

**P.18:** 1. hesitation 2. nerves 3. investors 4. proofread 5. consider



# Summary

## Challenges and achievements:

- We all face challenges in life. It is how we overcome them that counts! When we overcome a challenge, this is an achievement.
- It is very easy to *let nerves get the better of you*. This means that nerves can prevent you from achieving what you want.

## Despite and in spite of:

- + **gerund** = *Despite/In spite of speaking English quite well, I was worried*
- + **noun** = *Despite/In spite of the rain, we enjoyed the party*
- + **the fact that** = *Despite/In spite of the fact that we argue, I work well with my team at work*
- + **pronoun** = *Despite/In spite of my nerves, I presented very well*



# Vocabulary

nerves

investor

hesitation

to proofread

to get the better of (you)

to make up (an excuse)

to get over (your fear)

to have (a fear of)

to make (mistakes)

despite

in spite of

to consider



