

READING

# Office language

**LEVEL**

Upper-Intermediate  
(B2)

**NUMBER**

EN\_B2\_2024R

**LANGUAGE**

English



## Learning outcomes

- I can read and understand the main points of a text about language at work.
- I can use common business terms and phrases to talk about my job.



## Warm-up

**How formal is  
your workplace?**

**Share your answer with the  
rest of the class!**



# The language of work (1/3)

1. **Read** the first part of the text.
2. Then **answer** the questions below.

You might feel pretty confident in your English skills. However, you might feel differently if you were dropped into a corporate environment, where even native speakers feel like they're speaking a foreign language!

The working world has its own language of buzzwords and acronyms. You'd understand if someone told you they had a new, affordable technological product to help solve a problem. However, you might stare blankly if they told you they had a cost-efficient, cutting-edge tech innovation. These two phrases are more or less the same, but the second uses the language of the working world. Once you learn to recognise certain buzzwords and the tone of the business world, corporate communication—whether in a small enterprise or a huge corporation—will be a breeze.



What is communication like at your workplace?

Do you talk and write differently at work than you do at home?

How often do you use English at work?



Once you recognise certain buzzwords, corporate communication will **be a breeze!**

If something **is a breeze**, it is easy to do.

*The exam **was a breeze!***

*After having managed a restaurant for 20 years, handling a staff of two **is a breeze!***



# The language of work (2/3)

1. **Read** the second part of the text.
2. Then **answer** the questions below.

The level of formality in an office depends on the industry and type of workplace. A start-up, for example, tends to have a flat hierarchy and as a consequence, there tends to be less formality between leadership and employee. They might have more flexible ideas about inter-office communication and roles. Employees might be cross-functional, taking on responsibilities from different projects and departments.



Does your company have a flat hierarchy?

Would you like to work at a start-up? Why or why not?

Are you cross-functional at work?

# After a meeting about growth strategies...

You receive this email that summarises the discussion.

**Complete** the sentences with the correct word. Translations into everyday English are provided in parentheses!

Good afternoon, team!

Thanks for your \_\_\_\_\_1.\_\_\_\_\_ (**creative**) thinking at our meeting today. It was great to discuss possible \_\_\_\_\_2.\_\_\_\_\_ (**ideas**) \_\_\_\_\_3.\_\_\_\_\_ (**all together**). We decided to explore \_\_\_\_\_4.\_\_\_\_\_ (**new**) markets for our unique housewares and cookware brand. Jonas will explore the most \_\_\_\_\_5.\_\_\_\_\_ (**affordable**) options for expanding into the Japanese market. He'll \_\_\_\_\_6.\_\_\_\_\_ (**share**) the information he finds by next week. Our goal is to develop sensible \_\_\_\_\_7.\_\_\_\_\_ (**plans to grow**) while still focusing on our \_\_\_\_\_8.\_\_\_\_\_ (**friendly to customers**) values.

- a. out-of-the-box
- b. cost-efficient
- c. disseminate
- d. customer-centric
- e. emerging
- f. initiatives
- g. growth strategies
- h. collaboratively



# Categorise these business terms

1. **Read** the sentences. 2. **Categorise** the highlighted phrases into one of the two boxes.

1 I wanted to **touch base** about your phone call with the Japanese firm.

2 Can we **put our heads together** for 15 minutes this afternoon?

3 We can **check in** on your progress so far.

4 Would **you loop me in** to any email communication you have with them?

5 Can we get a **ballpark figure** on how much it would cost?

Phrases I've heard before

Phrases I've never heard before







# Discuss

Answer the questions below.

**How often does your boss check in on your work?**

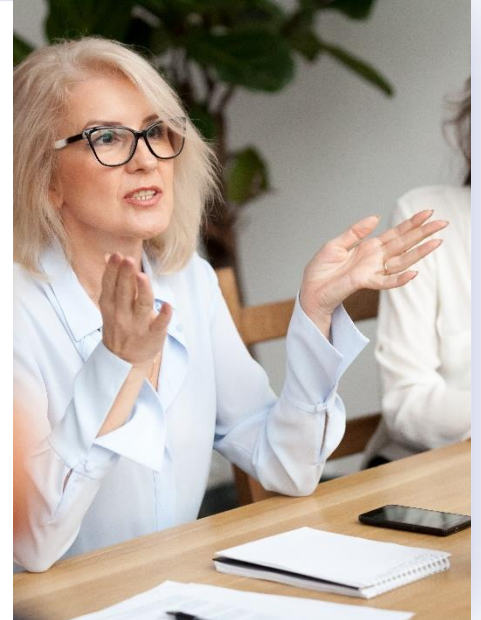


**When was the last time you had to loop someone in about something?**

# The language of work (3/3)

1. **Read** the final part of the text.
2. Then **answer** the questions below.

What's the best way to learn business-speak? If your manager says something confusing like, *I focus on performance-based leadership*, use the polite language of the workplace—*could you clarify that for me?* When you touch base with your boss, you'll find out this phrase means that they will judge you and guide you based on your personal performance. You've shown that you're a curious and open employee, and you've learned a new buzzword: it's a win-win!



How often do you ask for clarification at work?

Do you find it difficult to communicate with your boss? Why or why not?

What buzzwords do you know that haven't been mentioned in the lesson?



# Discuss

In breakout rooms or together as a class, **answer** the questions below.

**Why do you think the business world uses different words and phrases?**



**What other groups in society have their own special language?**



# End of the lesson

Idiom

***same boat***

**Meaning:** to be in the same difficult situation as someone else

**Example:** I know this project is difficult, but we're all in the same boat, so let's try to work together on this.



# Additional practice





# Discuss

1. **Brainstorm** what some of the job responsibilities of the people below might be.
2. **Answer** the questions on the next slide!

**Skylar Edwin**

VP-Public  
Relations  
Chase Political  
Group

**Elliot White**

CTO  
Whiggins  
Investment Bank

**Dr. Jane Gillings**

R&D Head  
Horizon Health  
Sciences

**Johanna Benson**

CEO  
GoodWorks  
Building and  
Development

**Cameron  
O'Dowd**

CFO  
Holiday Cruise  
Lines, Inc.

**Fred Lincoln**

VP of HR  
Capital Staffing  
Co.



# Who is the expert?

Use the information from the previous slide to find the correct answer.

- 1** The Chief Technology Officer is responsible for improving and managing a company's technology. Who would you call to learn about this job?

<b>a. Elliot White</b>	<b>b. Dr. Jane Gillings</b>	<b>c. Skylar Edwin</b>	<b>d. Fred Lincoln</b>
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- 2** Who probably has a great deal of experience managing a company's money?

<b>a. Skylar Edwin</b>	<b>b. Dr. Jane Gillings</b>	<b>c. Cameron O'Dowd</b>	<b>d. Fred Lincoln</b>
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- 3** VP most likely stands for \_\_\_\_\_.

<b>a. Vice Principal</b>	<b>b. Vice President</b>	<b>c. Virtual President</b>	<b>d. Very Polite</b>
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- 4** Johanna Benson is the CEO of her company. This means she \_\_\_\_\_.

<b>a. is the highest-ranked employee</b>	<b>b. is probably paid quite well</b>	<b>c. has a lot of responsibility</b>	<b>d. all of these</b>
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# Clarify the sentences

The statements on the left use business jargon. **Match** each one to a simple statement on the right that has the same meaning.

1 Our cross-functional footwear company will revolutionise the shoe world, while providing customer-centric service.

2 We're launching an innovative solution to your transportation needs.

3 Let's touch base and think about how we can collaborate on this initiative.

4 We hope to move the needle on global issues by forming a collaborative network of partners.

a We are starting a new transportation project that will help people.

b Let's talk about how we can work together on this project.

c We've made multi-purpose shoes and will focus on customers.

d We want to improve global problems by working together.

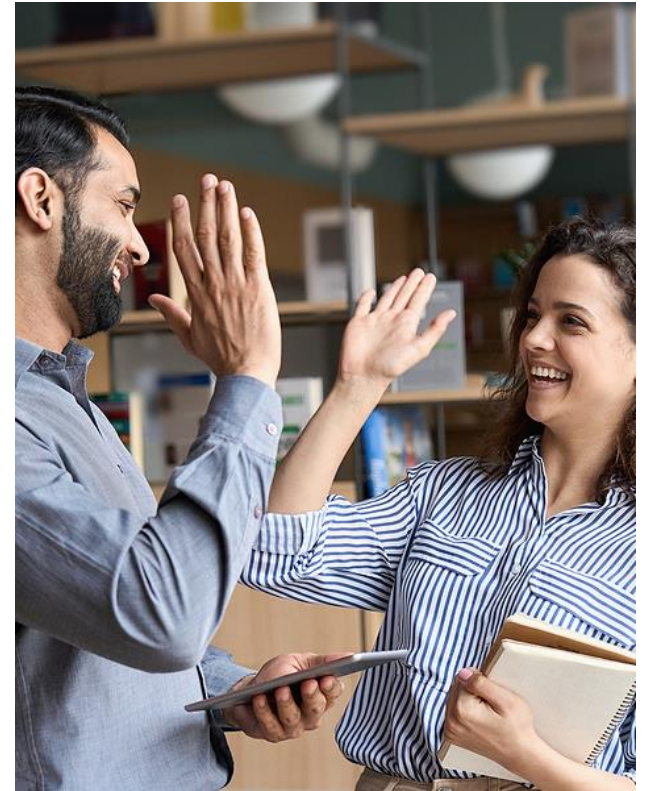


# Discuss

**Answer** the questions below.

**How do you address  
your boss?**

**Your co-workers?**





# Email

1. **Read** the email. 2. **Answer** the questions.

← → ↺ www.email.com

**Subject: Presentation not ready!**

To: developmentmanager@goodworks.co.uk

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Hey Jamie,

What's up? So...the presentation thing you asked me to do isn't done yet. Sorry! I was going to finish it yesterday but I went to lunch with the team instead. Oops! I want to present on Friday instead of today. Hope that's fine! It's going to be amazing though. I promise.

Rosie  
xxx

▼ | 📎 🖼️ 😊 🔍 Send

In your opinion, is this an appropriate email for a more formal workplace?

What would you do if you received such an email?

Identify some places where Rosie could change or improve her tone.



# Answer key

**P.7:** 1.) out-of-the-box 2.) initiatives 3.) collaboratively 4.) emerging 5.) cost-efficient 6.) disseminate 7.) growth strategies 8. customer-centric

**P.16:** 1.) a 2.) c 3.) b 4.) d

**P.17:** 1.) c 2.) a 3.) b 4.) d





# Summary

## Office language

- *to be a breeze; to touch base; to put your heads together; to check in; to loop sb. in; ballpark figure*
- *Corporate communication will **be a breeze!***
- *Let's **put our heads together** and come up with some ideas.*



# Vocabulary

to be a breeze

to touch base

to put your heads together

to check in

to loop sb. in

ballpark figure



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Handwriting practice lines consisting of 15 horizontal blue lines on a white background.

