

ABAX Ltd.

Business English: Meetings

Classroom Exercises and Activities



**ABAX
BUSINESS ENGLISH**

Preview

1. When we meet someone in a business setting for the first time we use their:

first name	e.g. Arthur
family name	e.g. Buttle
first name + family name	e.g. Arthur Buttle
title + first name + family name	e.g. Mr. Arthur Buttle
title + family name	e.g. Mr. Buttle

2. Which of the following does the chair usually do at the beginning of a meeting ?

read through the agenda point by point.

ask people in the meeting if they wish to change anything on the agenda (eg. add something, change the order etc).

introduce all the members of the meeting to each other.

explain what the purpose of the meeting is.

3. Each sentence has a missing word. Put the missing word in the correct place in the sentence.

Let's get.

Perhaps we start the meeting now.

Let's get to business.

I think we are all.

Let's begin, we ?

down	shall	can	here	started
------	-------	-----	------	---------

Video

First Viewing

1. Check your answer to Preview 1 by listening to how people in the video introduce themselves and other people.

2. Look at Preview 2. What does Mary Peterson do ?

read through the agenda point by point.

ask people in the meeting if they wish to change anything on the agenda (eg. add something, change the order etc).

introduce all the members of the meeting to each other.

explain what the purpose of the meeting is.

3. Which expressions from Preview 3 do you hear ?

.....
.....
.....

4. What kind of meeting is this?

- a. Internal - all participants are in the same company
- b. External - participants are from different companies

How do you know?

Video **Second Viewing**

1. Complete the following:

John is going to talk about _____.

Eric is going to talk about _____.

Michael is going to talk about _____.

2. What does it mean when someone suggests "tabling" an issue?

- They think they should pass out handouts to everyone seated at the table.
- They think they should sweep the whole issue under the table and ignore it.
- They think they should wait until they have more information before they discuss it.
- They think the data should be displayed in a table to make it easier to understand.
- They think they should bring the issue to the table and introduce it for discussion.

Circle either True or False

3. Eric and Michael are friends. T / F

Give reasons for your answer.

4. John Townsend respects the business practice of Victoria Springs. T / F

Give reasons for your answer.

Culture

Why have an agenda?

- To avoid any unexpected changes in the planned conduct of the meeting.
- To prevent new business matters from slowing down the meeting discussion.
- To have subordinates take some responsibility for making presentations.
- To outline the goals of the meeting, so participants know what to expect.

Discuss

- How often do you attend meetings?
- Do you like going to meetings?
- Are meetings sometimes a waste of time?
- Why do we hold meetings?
- What are the responsibilities of the participants?
- How long should good meetings last?
- What factors make meetings productive?

Language Notes

Change the following statements. Make them more positive.

I don't want to discuss the specifics of the plan.

I can't give you that information this week, because the data hasn't come in yet.

Expressions

Indicate whether the following statements are formal (F) or informal (I).

Hello, my name is Gerald Simms. Please call me Gerry.

Hi, I don't think we've met. I'm Jackie. I work in accounting.

Hi Maury. This is Rajiv, from the new quality control team.

I would like to introduce you to someone, Bob. This is Mr. James Whitfield.

Business Documents

Check the items that you are likely to find on a copy of a meeting agenda.

- Charts and graphs detailing the data to be presented.
- The names of who will give the presentations.
- The suggested order in which things will be discussed.
- Background information on the company.
- A statement of corporate goals and philosophy.
- The time and place of the meeting.

Review Quiz

1. Handshakes are important in North American culture because they indicate sincerity.
T / F

2. What sort of order are meetings usually arranged in ?

.....
.....
.....

3. "Good to meet you" is used for people meeting for the first time, between friends or both ?



Introduce yourself to other members of the class. Use the phrases from pgs./22/3 of the main text. Use the forms of address as described above.



Roleplay. Choose a role. Choose between: the person chairing the meeting, clients, internal staff and so on. Role play opening a meeting. Imagine different scenes:

- a meeting at a record company for young pop artists,
- a meeting at an academic publishing company,
- a meeting of national leaders,
- a meeting of high school students, (e.g. a student council)

Previewing

1. What do you remember about the relationship between Avalon and Victoria Springs?

Avalon is going to acquire Victoria Springs.
Victoria Springs is going to acquire Avalon.
Victoria Springs is going to merge with Avalon.

2. Are Victoria Springs and Avalon are in the same business? Yes / No

3. Did Avalon approach Victoria Springs or did Victoria Springs approach Avalon ?

4. What are some advantages to a small business of merging with a larger company?

more customers
higher wages, bonuses and better perks
increased sales

Video

First Viewing

1. Which of the following are true ?

Both sides are generally optimistic about the deal.
Avalon thinks the deal will work, but Victoria Springs doesn't.
Victoria Springs is much more optimistic than Avalon about the deal.
Both sides have serious doubts about whether the deal will work.

2. There are no problems regarding the proposed deal. T / F.

3. Victoria Springs doesn't need outside support to grow. T / F.

Video

Second Viewing

1. Complete these sentences:

a. Last year Avalon _____ the number of new clients by _____.

b. Avalon's projected _____ will increase by _____.

c. Avalon focuses:

mainly on getting new customers.
mainly on keeping existing customers.
on both getting and keeping customers.

5. What are some of the reasons Mary gives for recommending the deal.

.....
.....
.....

6. Which of these concerns has been raised about the deal?

- Victoria Springs has been losing clients too fast.
- Avalon will have to pay a high rate of interest on loans to close the deal.
- Victoria Springs will not be able to continue growing.
- Many clients are unhappy with the service Victoria Springs has provided.

Culture notes

7. Which of these statements best describes an effective business presentation?

- A presentation is an opportunity to pass the views of management down to the staff.
- The only thing that is important in a presentation is the data.
- As long as a presentation is interesting, the actual content isn't that important.
- A presentation gives everyone the information they need to make good decisions.

Language notes

8. Check (✓) which of the following statements is more precise?

- Sales have decreased some since last year.
- Sales revenues have decreased 13% in the last three quarters.

The Board will appoint a task force to give recommendations for the selection of a new CEO.
Management will ensure that a good decision is made in the hiring of a new CEO.

Expressions

9. Mark where the following expressions is likely to be found during a presentation, during the introduction (I), main body (M) or conclusion (C).

- As a result, we have concluded that
- Before we get into the details
- The next point we need to consider is
- Let's take a look at what this data tells us
- I'd like to give you a brief overview of the situation first
- Therefore, we recommend that

Business Documents

10. What is the purpose of a presentation outline?

- To give more detailed information than the presenter has time for.
- To inform those who were unable to attend the meeting.
- To provide an overview of the main points of the presentation.
- To provide the company with a documented history of the meeting.

Visual Aids

11. Check (✓) all of the points that you think are positive features of the bar graph.

- It provides detailed picture of minor changes over time.
- It is a powerful way to visualize numbers.
- It requires careful analysis to be understood.
- It is rarely used in the business world.
- Comparisons can be made easily with a bar graph.

Body Language

Check (✓) which of the following is true of North American business culture.

- During a presentation, you should avoid eye contact with the audience.
- You should use gestures to help the audience understand your presentation.
- The pace of your presentation should be slow that everyone can follow easily.
- You should include lots of detailed information in your presentation.

Quiz

Quiz

1. Complete the following:

- i. Today we will _____ at
- ii. I'd like to _____ by
- iii. This _____ us to the next _____
- iv. Let me _____ you an example
- v. A case in _____ is
- vi. On _____ whole
- vii. Let me end by _____



Role Play

Prepare a presentation on a topic regarding your work. Some suggested topics are:

- a current project.
- the structure of your company.
- how your company / department / section could be improved.
- the recent performance of your company / department.
- what your company does

Include the points made in the quiz above and use the expressions from the main text p 030 & 031.

Previewing

1. Read the following statement:

"Mergers are good for business."

Now look at the four points. Write 'A' if the point supports or *agrees* with the statement, 'D' if it *disagrees* with the statement.

- Companies can reduce production costs
 - There can be confusion in the market
 - Company morale can suffer
 - Companies can increase sales
-

2. Check which of the following statements suggest disagreement.

Normally, I would tend to agree with you.
I think it's sound.
I'm not entirely convinced.
I have reservations.

3. What do the following sentences have in common ?

- a. That's true up to a point.
 - b. On the surface, it seems...
 - c. I'm not entirely convinced.
 - d. Yes, but on the other hand...
-

Video

First Viewing

1. What do Eric and Carl disagree about?

going ahead with the merger
incentives
telemarketing

3. Which of the phrases from 3 above can you hear and in which order ?

That's true up to a point.
On the surface, it seems...
I'm not entirely convinced.
Yes, but on the other hand...



Second Viewing

1. Fill in the missing words. NB. At least one word refers back to the previous comment. What does it refer back to ?

Eric: Well, I have reservations about Avalon's incentive package.

Carl: Oh, I _____ .

Carl: I disagree. I think that competition between sales agents usually increases sales.

Eric: On _____ , _____ but when you look at the facts you have to agree...

- 2. a) Which part of the sentence does 'it' refer back to in the following sentence ?
- b) Which part of the sentence does 'be' refer to ?

Person A: "Competition between departments is healthy for sales and for developing the company."
 Person B: "Yes, I think that it can be, but..."

Culture Notes

1. What are the major differences between meetings held in the office and those held in restaurants?

Restaurant meetings are more casual and aren't taken seriously.
 Restaurant meetings are held mainly to exchange secret information.
 Office meetings are merely formal exercises of decisions made informally.
 There are no major differences.

Language notes

1. Change the following sentences to gender neutral form.

- i. The chairman will be giving a speech before the meeting begins.

- ii. There is an opening for a salesman in the overseas division.

- iii. If you need anything, just ask the stewardess.

- iv. The cleaning women will be coming in after we leave.

Expressions

1. Convert the following to expressions of opinion.

This is the best deal we are going to get.

The price will not drop any farther.

Mr. Jennings is absolutely the best man for the job.

Business Documents

1. Check () which of the following statements is characteristic of a good memo.

It is short and clear.

It gives much detailed information.

It sticks to just one point.

It explains the background.

Visual Aids

1. Which of these best describes the virtues of a line graph.

It shows the reasons behind the results.

It gives detailed data.

It shows the trends over time.

It allows comparisons of many different points.

Body Language

1. Mark whether the following gestures indicate agreement (A) or disagreement (D).

..... Leaning forward slightly

..... Leaning back

..... Raising your eyebrows.

..... Frowning.

..... Nodding your head

..... Looking away.

Quiz

Quiz

1. Label the following expressions MD (mild disagreement), D (disagreement), A (agreement), MA (mild agreement), SA (strong agreement), or O (giving an opinion).

- As far as I can tell
- That can't be right
- That's true
- I agree up to a point
- I couldn't agree more

2. Complete the following expressions.

- i. We're in basic _____ .
- ii. I agree in _____ but
- iii. That _____ be right.
- iv. I'm _____ I don't agree.



Role Play

The class should divide into two groups and think of pros and cons for the following arguments:

1. "Shorter working hours make workers more productive."
2. "Flex-time makes workers more productive."
3. "Working at home is more efficient than working in an office."

Previewing

1. Put the following into the appropriate section below.

- Sorry to interrupt, but...
- Sorry, I don't quite follow you.
- If I could continue please.
- Before we go any further..
- Can I answer that at the end.
- You lost me there.

Clarifying a point

Adding a point

Keeping on topic

2. Before developing a new product or design what should a company do? Add to the following list:

- a) do a customer survey.
- b) do....
- c.)
- d.)
- e.)



First Viewing

1. The main topic of the meeting is:

- how much money to spend on a new container design.
- whether the company needs a new container design or not.
- what sort of design the container should be.
- the strategy for a new container design.

2. What is the outcome of the meeting ?

- the project is postponed.
- the research team is going to produce a new design.
- the marketing team is going to do a new survey.
- a development team is going to take over the project.

Video

Second Viewing

1. Which of the following statements are true ?

- Currently, Victoria Springs offers several container models. T / F
- Victoria Springs did a customer survey three weeks ago. T / F
- The main problem with the containers is the weight. T / F
- There is very little money for R&D. T / F
- Eric and Michael are going to put together a development team. T / F

2. Tapescript Activity: Look at the tapescript and answer the following:

(i) What phrase did you hear someone use in the dialogue to clarify a point?

(ii). What phrase did you hear someone use in the dialogue to add a point?

(iii). What phrase did you hear someone use in the dialogue to keep on topic?

Culture notes

1. Which of the following best describes brainstorming?

- (A) A method of eliminating ideas that are not feasible or practical.
- (B) A way of discussing the ideas for further consideration.
- (C) A group exchange intended to carefully evaluate ideas.
- (D) A rapid and free exchange of suggestions, meant to generate new ideas.

Language notes

1. Convert the following statements to passive structure.

The sales department isn't meeting its quotas for the quarter.

Paul Rodgers didn't submit his report in time to be reviewed.

The caterer spilled coffee on the slides for the presentation.

Ms. Jenkins left the only copy of the speech in a taxicab.

Expressions

1. Mark whether the following expressions would be used to interrupt to clarify a point (C), interrupt to add a point (A) or to keep on topic (T)

- Sorry, I'm not following you.
 - As I was saying,
 - I'd like to comment on that.
 - If I could just finish.
 - I didn't catch that last part.
 - That reminds me of another important point.
-

Business Documents: Resumes

1. What is the primary purpose of a resume?

- To provide potential employers with a list of references.
- To present the applicants relevant work skills and experience.
- To list every job the applicant has ever done in the field.
- To account for all of the skills the applicant has acquired.

2. What information should you include on a resume.

- name and address
- political beliefs
- educational background
- work history
- qualifications
- religious beliefs
- medical history
- personal interests

3. Write your own resume. Include all relevant information.
-

Body Language

12. Check (✓) which of the following is acceptable in North American business culture?

- Raising a hand with the palm facing another person.
- Raising your index finger.
- Remaining silent during a discussion.
- Interrupting during a brainstorming session.



Quiz

1. Complete the following sentences.

- 1. Sorry I didn't quite _____ that last point.
- 2. Sorry, _____ you say that again please?
- 3. I beg your _____ .
- 4. If I could make a _____ here.
- 5. Do you _____ if I say something here?
- 6. Before we go any _____ can I point out
- 7. _____ I continue please?
- 8. Would you _____ if I continued?

2. Change these sentences. Make them into passive sentences.

- 1. Someone broke the fax machine.

- 2. The Accounts department didn't pay this invoice.

- 3. They signed the contract yesterday.



Brainstorm the following problem:

Your company's personnel costs are too high - many departments are overstaffed, salaries are high, a lot of staff are only busy for part of the year, productivity is low relative to the size of the work force.

Previewing

1. You want to convince your company to adopt a 'flex-time' system. What reasons can you think of to help persuade them?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Which of the following expressions can be used to persuade someone not to worry:

Rest assured that we fully understand your concerns . . .
I'm afraid you're right.
I personally guarantee . . .
I don't understand your worries
We share your concerns

Video

First Viewing

1. Generally, the meeting: was a success / was a failure / produced no definite outcome.

2. What are the two main issues which concern Victoria Springs ?

.....

Video

Second Viewing

1. What types of customer service do Victoria Springs offer ?

.....

2. What guarantee does John Townsend make regarding customer service ?

.....

3. John Townsend is successful in reassuring them on:

- the first issue.
- the second issue.
- both issues.
- neither issue.

4. What will happen to Victoria Springs staff ?

- Most of them will be made redundant.
- They will be offered training and support in finding a new job, if necessary.
- Relocating is likely for a lot of the staff.

Culture notes

1. Check (✓) which of the following are true of North American persuasion strategies.

- Opinions are more important than facts for most North Americans.
- Supporting evidence makes an argument more persuasive.
- If an offer is refused, it is rude to continue trying to persuade.
- It is important to put an offer in terms that are personally relevant.
- A general offer, without troublesome specifics, is sufficient in most deals.

Language notes

1. Convert the following from "I" statements to "You" statements.

I'm happy to say that I offer the best prices in town.

We offer excellent support to our customers after the sale.

I'm happy to answer any questions that might come up.

Our sales reps can custom design the right system for anybody.

Expressions

1. Mark whether the following expressions express reassurance (R) or doubt (D).

- Have you fully considered whether....
- I'm sure we can meet your concerns about.....
- I have some concerns about.....
- You have my word that.....
- I guarantee we will be able to....
- The plan looks good, but.....

Business Documents

1. What is the purpose of a follow-up letter?

- To suggest additional ideas for discussion at a later date.
- To negotiate further improvements in the terms of a deal.
- To remind everyone that they must live up to their end of the deal.
- To make a clear record of what was decided so there are no later misunderstandings.

Visual Aids

11. Which of these best describes an attribute of the pie chart.

- It shows clearly how data relates to the big picture.
- It gives the detailed numerical data in relation to the subject.
- It describes changes in trends over the whole time.
- It allows comparisons to be made between different times.

Body Language

1. Finish the following statements regarding body language.

For North Americans it is important to maintain eye contact because.

Gesturing with an open hand.

Maintaining eye contact for a long period of time.

Raising your eyebrows suggests.



Quiz

1. Finish the following points regarding body language:

1. For North Americans it is important to maintain eye contact because

2. Gesturing with an open hand

3. Maintaining eye contact for a long period of time

4. Raising your eyebrows suggests

2. Complete the following:

1. We've covered all the _____ .

2. Rest _____ that we understand

3. It's in our best _____ as well as yours.

4. We will _____ all your concerns.

5. We can definitely _____ all your requirements.



Role Play

Work in teams, two groups of two. Try and persuade the other group to:

Switch from a Windows computer system to an Apple computer system

Begin a series of compulsory English lessons for all staff employees

Relax the dress code in the office

Previewing

1. Match the phrases on the left with the responses on the right.

We're in a position to make you a good deal.

I'm afraid that's out of the question.

We're prepared to make you an offer of \$35,000.

We can't improve on the price.

This is our last and best offer.

I think we can accept that.

Let me see what we can work out.

Let me think about it.

Well, let's talk terms

I'm listening.

It's still too high.

It's a deal then.

Video

First Viewing

Which of the following items were mentioned?

- length of the contract
- price
- penalty clause
- delivery dates
- length of trial period
- number of units
- repairs of damaged goods

2. What are the main items to be negotiated ?

.....

Video

Second Viewing

1. Fill in the details of the deal.

	Original offer	Final offer
No. of coolers	_____	_____
Cost per unit	_____	_____
Length of contract	_____	_____
Trial period	_____	_____

2. Generally, who do you think gets the best deal, Lorraine or Eric? Why?

.....

.....

Culture notes

1. Finish the following statements.

North American negotiators rely more on impersonal analysis of facts and figures than

North American negotiators rely on lawyers to

During negotiations, North Americans address problems, in order to

Language notes

1. Change the following statements to a focus on positive conditions.

We won't be able to cut our price unless you make a substantial order.

Unless the completion deadline is moved back, We can't agree to the deal.

Without a firm deal on future price increases, we can't extend the agreement.

Expressions

1. Mark whether the following statements sound like: Getting started (S), Making an offer (M) or Responding to an offer (R).

..... I'm sorry, but your price is still too high.

..... Shall we take a look the proposal?

..... That sounds like a reasonable deal.

..... The best deal we can offer, I'm afraid.

..... If you'll agree to extend the contract, I think we've got a deal.

..... We can offer you the entire package for \$20.00 a unit.

Business Documents

1. What is the purpose of a letter of agreement?

To present negotiation points for later discussion.

To announce an agreement to discuss terms and conditions.

To present the terms and conditions that have been agreed to.

To show that an agreement may be possible under some conditions.

Visual Aids

1. Complete the following statement about 3-D column charts.

The column chart is useful for

Body Language

12. Check (✓) which of the following indicate confidence and self-control to a North American businessman in serious negotiation.

Very formal dress

Smiling and laughing

Calm and relaxed posture

Loosening ties and rolling up shirt sleeves

Long quiet pauses

Direct eye contact.

Dramatic gestures and mood swings.

Quiz

Quiz

1. Fill in the gap with a reference word - 'it', 'they', 'that', etc.

We can offer you \$35 per unit.

_____ is too much.

This is a nice place.

Yes, _____ is.

\$32.50 is our lowest offer.

Make _____ \$30 and we've got a deal.

The cups are included in the deal.

But _____ only make up 5% of the total.

100,000 units come to a total of \$3,500,000.

I'm afraid I can't accept _____ without a trial period.

Quiz

Quiz - cont'd

2. Which of these are true?

In a negotiation, North American business people:

- like to talk about personal matters first and gradually start talking about business.
- do not refer to concrete facts and figures during the negotiation - they usually leave them till later.
- do not openly disagree but try to think of a neutral response.
- usually take their time before coming to an agreement.
- end a deal by signing a contract.

3. Complete the following:

1. Shall we get _____ to business?
2. Let's get _____ .
3. We're in a _____ to make you a very good deal.
4. We are _____ to make an offer of
5. Our original offer still _____ .
6. What's the bottom _____ ?



Role Play

Company A - you want to lease 1 or 2 new photocopiers for your very busy office. Decide what type you want (colour or black & white, high or ordinary quality etc.), how much you want to spend per month, how long you want to lease it for, if you want a trial period, how much per piece of paper, what kind of back-up service you want.

Company B - you lease photocopiers. Make a list of the models you have (colour or black & white, high or ordinary quality etc.), the cost per month, lease periods, if you offer a trial period, how much per piece of paper, what kind of back-up service you offer, other customer benefits. Negotiate a deal using the expressions from p. 68 of the main text and the ideas you discussed in pre-viewing 2 above.

Previewing

1. Put the following expressions in order.

- This is set for the tenth
- We've decided to look into new warehousing facilities
- Also, Tony is to update our inventory system.
- Finally, a reminder to all to get in any ideas for this year's Christmas party.
- It that's it then
- To recap the main points then
- He'll submit a plan at next month's meeting.
- And Jon, you're in charge of this

2. Look at the scrambled dialog again. Underline three phrases which show the meeting is coming to an end.



First Viewing

1. What clues did you see in the video that the meeting was coming to an end ?

.....

.....

2. What did Mary do to close the meeting ?

.....

.....

Video

Second Viewing

1. Are the following true or false ?

The container design will be ready on time. T / F

The merger is still under discussion. T / F

2. What three decisions does Mary review in her summary of the meeting?

3. In the next Victoria Springs meeting next month,

i. What will Avalon and Victoria Springs discuss ?

ii. What will the Victoria Spring management team be looking at ?

Culture notes

1. What are the three main responsibilities of the chairperson in a North American business meeting?

i. -----

ii. -----

iii. -----

Language Notes

1. Put the following statements in a grammatically parallel structure

First, we will hear their proposal and then the proposal will be discussed.

It's very important that we cut our distribution costs and our labor costs are much too high.

Just to review, we have decided to renew our contract with our distributor and the proposal to accept other bids for the contract was voted down.

Expressions

1. Mark whether the following statements would signal the conclusion of a topic (T) or of the meeting (M).

- I think that's everything we need to cover today.
- OK, moving right along, I'd like to discuss.....
- Now that the issue is decided, let's wrap this up.
- I'd like to meet again next week.
- The final point we need to cover today is.....
- We need to hear Jennifer's presentation now before we decide.

Business Documents

1. What are the five main types of information that are recorded in the minutes of a meeting?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Visual Aids

1. Why is the radar chart likely to confuse some North American businessmen?

- Radar charts don't display data very well.
- They may not be familiar with this type of chart.
- Radar charts aren't a good way of comparing figures and information.
- This type of chart is configured differently in North America.

Body Language

1. Check () which of the following indicate that a meeting is coming to a close, or that someone wishes a meeting to come to a close.

- sitting back in your chair
- closing a folder
- rubbing your chin
- loosening your tie
- putting down a pen or a pencil
- knocking your hand on the table three times

Quiz

Quiz

1. A chairperson can be chosen:

- in rotation
- by alphabetical order
- depending on the main topic of the meeting
- according to rank

2. A chairperson should:

- let people speak whenever they have a point to make.
- always introduce guests to rest of the people in the meeting.
- let the direction of the meeting go whichever way the discussion is going.

3. Complete the following:

1. Moving _____ to number three on the agenda
2. I think we've _____ everything.
3. It's been good _____ business with you.
4. Let's call it a _____, shall we?
5. I'm afraid we've run _____ of time.
6. I'd like to _____ the meeting to a close.

**Role Play**

The main item on your agenda is the end of year party. Choose a chairperson. First of all brainstorm the topic ie. the location, what kind of food and drink, etc. The chairperson should control the meeting and close the meeting as described above.