

A Basic Business Course Outline

You may be asked to come up with an outline course plan (either by your students, the organisation you are working for, or your DOS). This can be done quite quickly, based on the information you already have. Essentially, you need to take all the elements that we have considered up to this point, including the current ability level the students, an idea of what they need to achieve and the duration of the course. Think about key or strategic times that may be important for them (such as an upcoming meeting or important telephone call).

Then consider the main areas that have to be covered, the timeline you need to work to and the materials available to you. As you begin to plan, think about the number of lessons you will need to adequately deal with each subject. Also consider the time you have for each individual lesson and the number of sessions per week.

Remember that we do not have to start and finish a particular subject in one lesson. Have a look at the following suggestion for dealing with a subject over 2 lessons.



The 2-lesson Strategy

When it comes to course design and planning lessons for business students or other groups, it is sometimes useful to develop a 2-lesson strategy. That is, prepare enough material on a related theme to last 2 lessons (or more if necessary). Project work is often conducted across 2 or even 3 lessons and your lesson on a particular theme of subject may need greater time to cover it properly. The first lesson is generally a preparation lesson and the next is the task itself.

Quite often the preparation itself is almost as important as the main event. Actively planning-in preparation time allows you to concentrate on key areas and focus on the language requirements in a manageable way.

The final task is only a bringing together of all that preparation to produce a more polished result. More importantly it will give the students a sense of achievement. With thorough preparation behind them they are more likely to succeed in the task itself.

This strategy also ensures that you make time for some language input, such as tense revision. Indeed, general English cannot be ignored for it is the foundation on which all other language work is built. For example, your students will not be able to talk about the 4% company growth

objective for next year if they have not mastered the future forms. So grammar will be important, from beginners right through to your advanced level students.

Look at the following example of a 2-lesson strategy, which incorporates language work with a related topic.

A Sample 2-lesson Plan

Imagine that, as part of the Needs Analysis, your students have indicated that they need to communicate in English about their company when meeting representatives of other organisations. To help them begin to achieve this objective, you could develop a 2-lesson strategy so that by the end of lesson 2, they are able to talk more confidently about the history of their company. You could plan your 2-lesson strategy as follows:

Lesson 1

In lesson 1, conduct a grammar lesson on the present and past tenses. Their level will dictate what can be realistically achieved – if, for example, your students have never been exposed to past forms then some very basic verbs will need to be learnt to ensure that they can achieve the planned objective. This may be either a thorough introduction of the past tenses or simply a revision.

Make some of the study tasks business related and write relevant present tense statements for them to transform into the past:

You write:

1988 – John Barnet forms XYZ Ltd.

1995 – XYZ Ltd. Moves to new premises

Your student writes:

John Barnet formed XYZ Ltd. In 1988

XYZ Ltd. Moved to new premises in 1995



Bring out any language that may be needed – in particular names, dates and key activities in the company's history. Put the words on the board and ensure that your student has a good idea of meaning and usage. Ask your student to bring in a company brochure (preferably in English) and draw your key information from this. Make a note of what has been covered and give your student some homework to learn the target language. In the meantime, you now need to do some homework as well. Take some of the language covered and put it into phrases about their company which you wish them to produce in the second lesson.

Lesson 2

In lesson 2, write some of the key dates in their company's past on the board and have your students tell you about their company's history, using the date as a prompt. Practise so that they become comfortable with the phrases, language and pronunciation. Support this with the handout that you created after lesson 1 so that your student can see what they have achieved.

This stage is going to be very important and you should expect that your students will be very interested in getting it correct – it is, after all, one of the real tangible benefits of their English lessons with you. If your students can reproduce the phrases successfully then you have achieved your primary objective. They will be satisfied that they are able to communicate in the target language, and you will feel good for helping them achieve what they set out to master.



Follow up

However, don't just leave it here. Get your students to write a brief introduction to their company, using the language and dates covered over the 2 lessons. Have them bring this in to the next lesson and do a summary before moving on to cover the next subject. Then, a little further down the line, come back to this area and see if they can remember the language. Ask if they have had to use the language in their work. Were they successful or do they feel that they would like a refresher lesson? If so, plan it in at a suitable point in the future.

This strategy can work well for a number of different activities. Planning is important, as is knowing when to introduce themes and in what order. Your approach to this will depend largely on the following:

- **The difficulty of the language.** It is logical to introduce themes that are likely to make use of the present simple, before say, passives. Such present simple topics may include meeting and greeting, describing the company, booking hotel reservations, telephoning and leaving messages and the student's role in their company. Start with tasks requiring more simple language and work up.
- **Their priorities in English.** It is possible that your student uses the phone frequently and needs a lot of early work in this area. Or they may have a series of meetings abroad coming up where English will be used by all parties and so some immediate work on numbers/negotiation is needed. They will also need to develop further listening skills. Again, having conducted a thorough Needs Analysis, you will be able to work out a series of lessons with relevant language points and topics.

- **Activity mix.** You will need to build in some form of revision, consolidation and possibly testing for your students. You should look to vary the activities, providing a mixture of reading/writing/speaking and listening tasks.

Knowing when and how to introduce themes and associated grammatical areas may be difficult to achieve until you know the business course books well and have found relevant materials that practice these skills. However, it is just as well to have them at the back of your mind when planning, so that you make sure you incorporate a balance of skills and language across the course.

For this next task, we would like to put you in the position where you have to try to design your own course.

Imagine you have just had the first lesson with a businesswoman. Her language assessment test indicates that she is of a pre-intermediate level and she seems to be fairly confident and motivated to learn. Her Needs Analysis shows she needs English in the following 7 areas:

- Formal Introductions
- Language for Meetings
- Language for Socialising
- Language for Telephoning
- Past Tense Revision
- Formal and Informal English
- Responding to emails and faxes from suppliers and customers

She is going to follow a 24-hour English course at your school, and you have been asked to put together the course, tailored to her needs, by your Director of Studies.

4 one-hour lessons a week have been arranged for each of the next 6 weeks, as follows:

Monday, 10.00 a.m.

Tuesday, 10.00 a.m.

Thursday, 10.00 a.m.

Friday, 6.00 p.m.

However she has pointed out that she has an important meeting with potential new customers from overseas after week 3 and after that there may well be follow-up contact to clarify whether a deal can be made between the two organisations.

Using the **Course Outline Template** in the Answer Booklet (also enclosed in the photocopiable worksheets pages 19 and 20) plan a course for this businesswoman. You may use the notes in this section and the Business Focus course book to assist you with material for the subject areas she has highlighted. Think carefully about the order in which you would cover them. Remember that you can use the 2-lesson strategy for the key requested areas. You can cover other subjects if you think them relevant, but you must ensure that her primary needs are met. Also think about how you would go about testing her on the work that has been covered and think about the timing of the lessons as you plan – for example – what activities are going to be more suited to a 6.00 p.m. time slot on a Friday?

After you have planned your course – please write a brief (200-250 word) summary in the Answer Booklet, explaining the order in which you are proposing to tackle the subjects requested.

GO TO ANSWER BOOKLET, QUESTION 23 (25 marks)

While it is obvious there is no course design to suit all needs, the good news is that with experience, the bespoke plan will become easier to create. You will discover enough generic material to suit most levels and needs. Simple modifications will help create a tailor-made course. You will also find that quite often students ask for similar areas, such as speaking for socialising, English for meetings and the other areas you covered in the Functional Language section of this course.

But in the meantime, use the links in this section to familiarise yourself with some of the material available to you and think about how you would plan a course if you were asked to do so. The results are sure to pay off later.

In the next part of this section, we will look at how to approach the staging of Business English lessons.

