

# **English for Business Communication Skills**

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# CHAPTER 1

## WORK AT FULL STRETCH

### Pulling your weight

- 1.1. Projects under way
- 1.2. Modern office environment
- 1.3. Management styles
- 1.4. Office jargon







## 1.1. PROJECTS UNDERWAY

### Task 1.

Take a look at the words below, and match them with their synonyms.

run | conceive | launch | finish | finance

plan ➔	_____	} PROJECTS
set up ➔	_____	
fund ➔	_____	
carry out ➔	_____	
complete ➔	_____	

Now, try to answer the question below. Use the words you have just learnt.

How would you define the word PROJECT, considering the activities you perform at work?

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### Task 2.

Imagine that your manager has called a meeting to discuss the project you are going to work on over the next four months. Analyze the following eight stages your project might go through, and match them with the corresponding sentences used to describe project development. Put down the sentences (a–n) below the project stages (1–8).

1. Our supervisor has already **given the green light** to the project.
2. The project is not going well, so we need to **go back to the drawing board**.

3. We are **on the last / final lap** with all our projects.
4. After a year of working on the project, we need to **go back to square one**.
5. I trust that you are **making headway** in our core projects.
6. The project is **up and running**.
7. The future of the project is still **up in the air**.
8. We are **getting** a new project **off the ground** next week.
9. The project is **on track**.
10. We are **on the starting blocks** with the next project.
11. Yesterday, the project was finally **given the go-ahead**.
12. The project has been **in the pipeline** since Monday.
13. We need to **get the ball rolling** on this project soon.
14. The project has been **in full swing** for a week.

STAGE 1. The project **requires permission**.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

STAGE 2. The project **is being planned**.

- \_\_\_\_\_

STAGE 3. The project is **starting / commencing**.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

STAGE 4. The project is **going well and progress is being made**.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

STAGE 5. The project **is fully developed**.

- \_\_\_\_\_

STAGE 6. The project **requires rethinking**.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

STAGE 7. The project **is not certain or is undecided**.

- \_\_\_\_\_

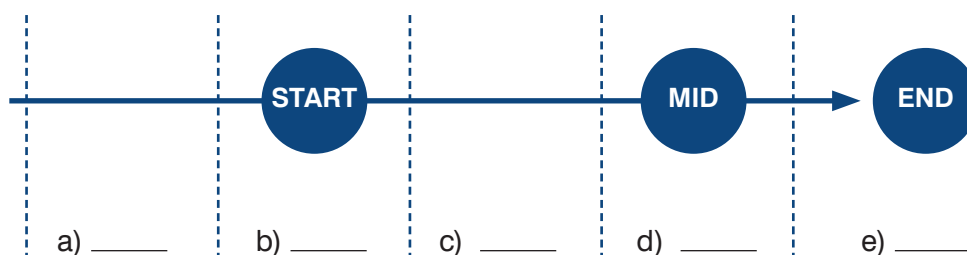
STAGE 8. The project **is finishing**.

- \_\_\_\_\_

### Task 3.

Complete the following project timeline with the phrases selected from Task 2. Then, use them to describe a project that is:

- a) being planned at the moment
- b) just starting
- c) progressing
- d) fully developed
- e) finishing



### Task 4.

Connect each phrase from column A with its synonym from column B.

#### A

- 1. give the green light
- 2. go back to the drawing board
- 3. be up and running
- 4. get the ball rolling

#### B

- a) go back to square one
- b) get (a project) off the ground
- c) give the go-ahead
- d) be on track

### Task 5.

Complete the definitions below with the following prepositional phrases.

up in the air | on the last / final lap | in the pipeline | on the starting blocks | on track | in full swing

- 1. in process, under way ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. at the beginning of an activity ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. on schedule, progressing as planned ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. at the peak of an activity ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. uncertain, not settled ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. at the end of an activity ➡ \_\_\_\_\_

### Task 6.

Practice the phrases used to describe projects you have already learned, and complete the sentences below with one correct word.

- 1. The company has been given the go-\_\_\_\_\_ to launch a new marketing campaign.
- 2. His managerial studies finish next month, so he is on the last \_\_\_\_\_ now.

3. We will have to go back to \_\_\_\_\_ one if the investor decides to stop our funding on this project.
4. The proposal to increase our performance-related bonus across the board is still up in the \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. After a month-long break, we have finally made \_\_\_\_\_ in the negotiations with the Swedish contractors.
6. We are pleased to announce that our new business development project is officially up and \_\_\_\_\_ .
7. Over 100 accounting procedures have been implemented, and there are nearly 50 more in the \_\_\_\_\_ .
8. After a slow start, the project is now in full \_\_\_\_\_ .
9. There are several things we are supposed to discuss. Who would like to get the \_\_\_\_\_ rolling?
10. Since our assumptions appear to have some fundamental flaws, we need to go back to the \_\_\_\_\_ board on this project.

#### Task 7.

Work with a partner, and answer the questions using the phrases you have learnt so far.

1. Are you getting any new projects off the ground at the moment?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Is there any project you are on the last lap with?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Have you given a green light to any projects recently?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Is there any project that has recently been given the green light in your department?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What would you expect if you hear from your manager that some big changes in the company are in the pipeline?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Are any proposals in your department up in the air due to your tight team budget?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Have you ever had to go back to square one because of negotiations breaking down?  
\_\_\_\_\_



## 1.2. MODERN OFFICE ENVIRONMENT

### Task 1.

What does workplace wellbeing mean to you? Define this concept using the phrases below, and share with the group what your company does to retain healthy and satisfied employees.

- make sure employees are safe, healthy, satisfied and engaged at work
- make the workplace a more decent and satisfying place
- drive employee productivity, engagement and retention
- provide a robust suite of wellbeing programs
- link productivity and the well-being of the workforce
- determine an organization's long-term effectiveness

### Task 2.

Analyze the following elements of a modern office environment, and tick those that your company has implemented. What makes a good workplace in your opinion?

paperless office	
stress free office	
dress down Fridays	
upskilling employees	
corporate wellbeing prioritized	
artificial intelligence (AI)	
rooftop garden	
open work space	
welcoming reception area	
breakout spaces	
mood-boosting elements (plants, art, etc.)	
standing desks	
glass enclosed conference rooms	
office parties	
table football	





**Task 3.**

Working from home has become a benefit that employees receive as part of their remuneration packages. Look at the following statements regarding this concept, and decide whether you agree or disagree with them using the phrases below.

1. People work harder and are more productive and effective in the absence of workplace “distractions”.
2. Full-time home workers would miss out on the atmosphere, interaction and the opportunities to talk through ideas face-to-face in the workplace.

**PHRASES FOR AGREEING AND DISAGREEING**

I couldn't agree more.  
 That's exactly how I feel.  
 That's true to some extent.  
 I entirely agree with you on this issue.  
 I have mixed feelings about this issue.  
 I'd say the exact opposite.  
 I beg to differ.

**Task 4.**

Read what people think about working from home, and decide whose opinion is the closest to yours. Remember to justify your choice.

**John**

I enjoy the idea of being truly independent. Getting down to work in my pajamas simply appeals to me and helps to develop greater self-discipline and concentration. On top of that, I get more work done and I don't waste time stuck in traffic.

**William**

I personally believe that telecommuting is more productive than working in a traditional office environment. I'm fed up with typical office annoyances, such as my colleagues chit-chatting, interrupting me or listening to the radio. And also, web meetings can easily substitute standard ones.

**Catherine**

When telecommuting, I feel like I'm always at work. In addition, our management is divided into those advocating the idea of working from home and those raising objections. Besides, my colleagues accuse telecommuters of slacking or not pulling their weight.

**Paul**

Working from home makes me miss the office life and feel out of the loop. I really enjoy all the interactions, the brainstorming sessions and even the water-cooler talk. I'm convinced that, for sociable people like me, teleworking evokes a feeling of isolation and loneliness.

**Task 5.**

Complete the following sentences with the phrases from Task 4 in the correct grammatical form.

slack | water-cooler talks | (be or feel) out of the loop | pull (your) weight | (to be) fed up (with sb or sth)

1. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ my managers setting unrealistic deadlines and calling unnecessary meetings.
2. You'll be in trouble if you're caught \_\_\_\_\_ on the job.
3. The others had complained that my colleague wasn't \_\_\_\_\_ his \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I've been \_\_\_\_\_ since I changed my department. I didn't realize that you had left the company.
5. My company merged with an IT giant, which fueled countless \_\_\_\_\_.

**Task 6.**

You are going to listen to an article about working from home. Before you listen to it, match the following terms with their definitions below.

- |                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. to shirk    | 6. to lark around |
| 2. to slouch   | 7. to hold true   |
| 3. tedious     | 8. to barrage     |
| 4. to chatter  | 9. canny          |
| 5. industrious |                   |

- a) to talk for a long time about unimportant things ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
- b) to bombard sb with questions, complaints, etc. ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
- c) to continue to be correct ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
- d) clever and smart ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
- e) to behave in a silly way because you think it is funny ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
- f) to avoid work, or an instance of avoiding work ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
- g) hardworking ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
- h) to sit or stand with your shoulders and head bent so that you look tired or bored ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
- i) boring ➡ \_\_\_\_\_

**Task 7.**

Listen to the recording, and decide whether the statements below are true or false.

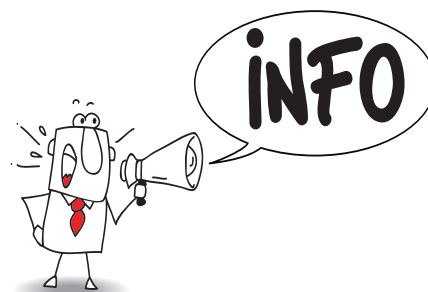
1. Teleworking and telecommuting both refer to the same concept. **T/F**
2. Most people believe that working from home is shirking. **T/F**
3. According to the report by the London Business School, teleworkers are more disadvantaged than those present in the office. **T/F**
4. Employees in the office are regarded by managers as hardworking and diligent. **T/F**
5. Larking around on Facebook is what employees mostly do at work. **T/F**
6. Employees telecommute on Monday or Friday to extend their weekend. **T/F**

**Task 8.**

What is your view on telecommuting? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this solution? Answer these questions using the following phrases for expressing opinions.

**PHRASES FOR EXPRESSING OPINIONS**

From my point of view, ...  
From my perspective, ...  
I'm of the opinion that ...  
I'd like to point out that ...  
My impression is that ...  
In my view, ...  
I am convinced that ...  
As far as I am concerned, ...  
Speaking for myself, ...  
Personally, I believe ...  
It seems to me that ...





## 1.3. MANAGEMENT STYLES

### Task 1.

What is the difference between a leader and manager? Put the following ideas in the correct column of the table below.

- supervising people and tasks
- planning details of work
- focusing on people
- focusing on processes and procedures
- facilitating decisions
- making decisions
- caring about numbers
- caring about people
- inspiring and influencing people
- leading towards the future
- setting the direction of work
- being responsible for planning and executing

LEADER	MANAGER

### Task 2.

Analyze the character traits of a manager, and classify them as qualities or flaws.

decisive | sulky | bossy | immature | cooperative | malicious | incompetent |  
 tenacious | diligent | industrious | productive | likeable | impartial | thoughtful |  
 sneaky | clumsy | resilient | honest

MANAGER	
QUALITIES	FLAWS

### Task 3.

What makes a good and bad manager? Use the adjectives from Task 2 to answer this question.

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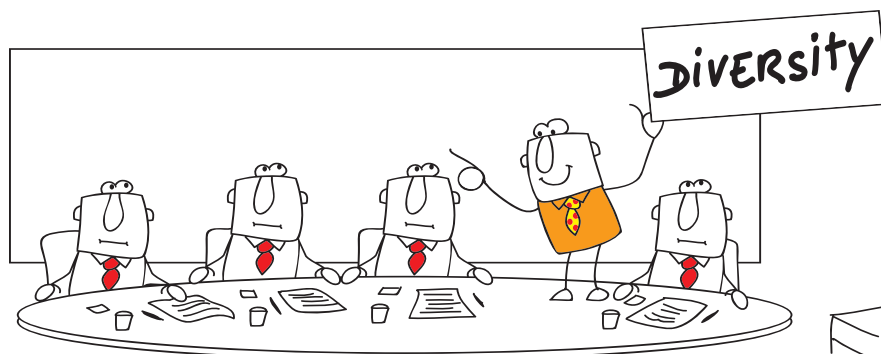
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**Task 4.**

Analyze three basic management styles summarized in the table below, and discuss them with the group. Which style prevails in your company?

	IDEA	PROS	CONS
<b>AUTOCRATIC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>managers take important decisions, give orders, and closely supervise employees with no real involvement on their part</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>quick decision-making process</li> <li>effective when employing many low-skilled workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no two-way communication</li> <li>'them and us' attitude between managers and workers</li> </ul>
<b>PATERNALISTIC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>managers consult employees, listen to their feedback, and take decisions in their best interests, as they believe employees still need their supervision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more two-way communication</li> <li>more motivating</li> <li>social needs of workers addressed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>slower decision making</li> <li>still quite a dictatorial or even autocratic style of management</li> </ul>
<b>DEMOCRATIC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>managers trust employees, empower them, encourage them to take decisions, and listen to their advice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>authority delegated to employees</li> <li>useful when complex decisions are required that need specialist skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>longer to reach a decision</li> <li>mistakes more likely when employees are not skilled or experienced enough</li> </ul>

**Task 5.**

Look at the three key levels of management in a business, and compare this structure with the organization of your company. Describe the functions of each managerial level.

**Senior Management**

- Board of Directors
- setting corporate objectives & strategic direction
- the board responsible to shareholders; led by the CEO

**Middle Management**

- accountable to senior management
- running business functions and departments

**Junior Management**

- supervisory role, accountable to middle management
- monitoring & controlling day-to-day tasks, managing teams of workers

**Task 6.**

Analyze the situations below, and decide what you would do if you were a manager.

Ivy is a talented salesperson and exceeds her monthly sales targets. However, she doesn't get on well with her team members. She was given feedback regarding her interpersonal skills and proper teamwork, but she keeps behaving as usual, ignoring her colleagues, missing office parties and gossiping about other people.

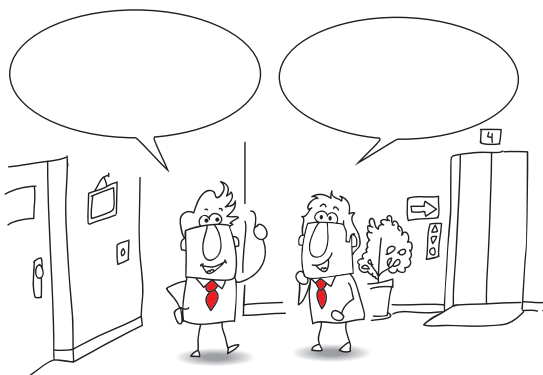
Your team has just completed an important project. Due to serious personal issues, you were not able to supervise the final part of this project. Now, the client is calling you to complain about the quality of the work done and is threatening to terminate the contract. Your team is panicking about the situation since it is your top client.

For some time, you have been noticing that Jack is isolating himself from the team. He used to be an active team member coming up with new ideas and solutions. Now, he seems to be tired, avoids interacting with colleagues and has lost interest in the activities he used to enjoy. As a manager, you have talked with him about the situation, but with no results.

**Task 7.**

Answer the questions below. Brainstorm your ideas, or write them down.

1. Do you have any managerial qualities?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you have to be a born leader, or can you be taught to be a good one?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the most challenging part of managerial duties?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Would you prefer your manager to be strict and in complete control, or rather relaxed and taking things easy?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. If you became a manager in your company, what changes would you implement?  
\_\_\_\_\_



## 1.4. OFFICE JARGON

### Task 1.

Look at the following labels, and decide what all these terms have in common?

business / management speak

office / corporate / business jargon

corporate lingo

corporatese

office / business buzzwords or clichés

office / business soundbites

### Task 2.

Office jargon, when applied reasonably and sparingly, helps you to articulate your ideas in business. However, people tend to overuse it, even without a clue what they are really saying. Look at the examples of typical office jargon, match the terms with their definitions, and then discuss those you most commonly hear in your workplace.

- |                      |                            |                              |
|----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| a) bottom line       | f) bells and whistles      | k) to be in the driving seat |
| b) benchmark         | g) to get the ball rolling | l) to brainstorm             |
| c) to circle back to | h) best practices          | m) win-win                   |
| d) ASAP              | i) to streamline           | n) to touch base             |
| e) no-brainer        | j) to drill down           | o) to think outside the box  |

1. without delay ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
2. to suggest a lot of ideas very quickly ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
3. to make sth begin / happen ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
4. to examine sth in detail ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
5. to think creatively using new ideas ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
6. to communicate with sb ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
7. to come back to ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
8. amount of money a business makes or loses, OR the most basic fact in a situation ➡ \_\_\_\_\_
9. result that is good for everyone involved ➡ \_\_\_\_\_



10. the best and most effective way to do sth ➔ \_\_\_\_\_
11. level of quality used as a standard when comparing things ➔ \_\_\_\_\_
12. additional features that make sth attractive to use or look at ➔ \_\_\_\_\_
13. to improve a business, organization or process by making it more efficient ➔ \_\_\_\_\_
14. to be the person who is controlling a situation ➔ \_\_\_\_\_
15. question or problem that is very easy to deal with ➔ \_\_\_\_\_

### Task 3.

Use the phrases from Task 2 to complete the following sentences.

1. Please reply \_\_\_\_\_
2. It's illegal to drink and drive. That's a \_\_\_\_\_
3. To complete this project well, you'll need to \_\_\_\_\_
4. In this company, women are \_\_\_\_\_
5. Flexible working hours are a \_\_\_\_\_ situation for employers and employees.
6. Manufacturers still build luxury cars with all the \_\_\_\_\_
7. The company identified \_\_\_\_\_ that have led to more successful product development.
8. Leading organizations use software to \_\_\_\_\_ their workflow.
9. We have to \_\_\_\_\_ on this project soon.
10. I just wanted to quickly \_\_\_\_\_ with you. Did you get an email from my assistant about the meeting?
11. The \_\_\_\_\_ is we don't have enough IT professionals.
12. We need to produce this report by Monday, but first try to \_\_\_\_\_ through financial data.
13. I actually wish to \_\_\_\_\_ to how our company has improved the recent sales figures.
14. Employees are encouraged to \_\_\_\_\_ and develop unconventional solutions.
15. There is a plan in our company to set a new \_\_\_\_\_ for managerial salaries.





#### Task 4.

Listen to the survey results of top executives who were supposed to indicate the most annoying buzzwords in their workplaces. Find out what they responded, and discuss with the group the most infuriating phrases overused by your colleagues.

#### THE TEN MOST ANNOYING BUSINESS BUZZWORDS

The workplace is overwrought with clichés, buzzwords and industry jargon, often leading to a ‘disconnect’ between coworkers (i.e. you have no idea what they’re saying, but you nod and smile anyway). Nearly everyone uses buzzwords from time to time, but professionals are evaluated increasingly on their ability to communicate. Avoiding overused terms, particularly in formal communication, can help workers convey their message more effectively. In a poll of 150 senior US executives from the country’s 1,000 largest companies, executives were asked, “What is the most annoying or overused phrase or buzzword in the workplace today?” Their responses included:

1. **Leverage** (as a verb): As in, ‘We intend to leverage our investment in IT infrastructure across multiple business units to drive profits.’
2. **Reach out**: As in, ‘Remember to reach out to customers impacted by the change.’
3. **It is what it is**: As in, ‘The server is down today, and clients are irate. It is what it is.’
4. **Viral**: As in, ‘Our video has gone viral.’
5. **Game changer**: As in, ‘Transitioning from products to solutions was a game changer for our company.’
6. **Disconnect** (as a noun): As in, ‘There is a disconnect between what the consumer wants and what the product provides.’
7. **Value-add**: As in, ‘We have to evaluate the value-add of this activity before we spend more on it.’
8. **Circle back**: As in, ‘I’m heading out of the office now, but I will circle back with you on this later.’
9. **Socialize**: As in, ‘We need to socialize this concept with our key stakeholders.’
10. **Interface** (as a verb): As in, ‘My job requires me to interface with all levels of the organization.’



**Task 5.**

Analyze the following office dialogues, and decipher the meaning of the bolded expressions.

**Thomas:** Come in. Oh, it's you, Maria. What can I do for you?

**Maria:** Well, you know ... I was wondering ... err ... whether I could ...

**Thomas:** Maria, could you please **get straight to the point**?

**Maria:** I'm not sure if I should attend this meeting, if my skills and experience are ...

**Thomas:** For goodness sake Maria, stop **beating about the bush**. What exactly do you mean?

**John:** How did the negotiations go?

**Susan:** Even better than we'd expected, thank you.

**John:** Good news! I told you it would be all right.

**Susan:** That's true. In the beginning, they kept asking some tricky questions. However, after I had answered all of them and presented strong counterarguments, it was **plain sailing**.

**John:** No more difficulties?

**Susan:** None, it **went like clockwork**.

**Rob:** Monica, I wouldn't transfer Alex to Michael's team.

**Monica:** Why not? Michael **has a head for figures** and great **eye for detail**.

**Rob:** That's not the problem. I've noticed that Alex and Michael frequently argue about projects, meeting schedules and even about our corporate procedures. They don't **see eye to eye** with each other about anything.

**Monica:** I see ... they are not **on the same wavelength**.

**Martin:** Our IT project seems to be getting more and more unprofitable.

**Andrew:** I even think that our director is going to **pull the plug** on it.

**Martin:** I'm not sure. He realizes there are more important things going on right now, but this IT project is relatively important, so I think he is going to **put it on the back burner** for a while.

**Justine:** Peter, I'd like you to meet Jack, our new office assistant.

**Peter:** Nice to meet you Jack, I'm Peter. How is your first day at work going?

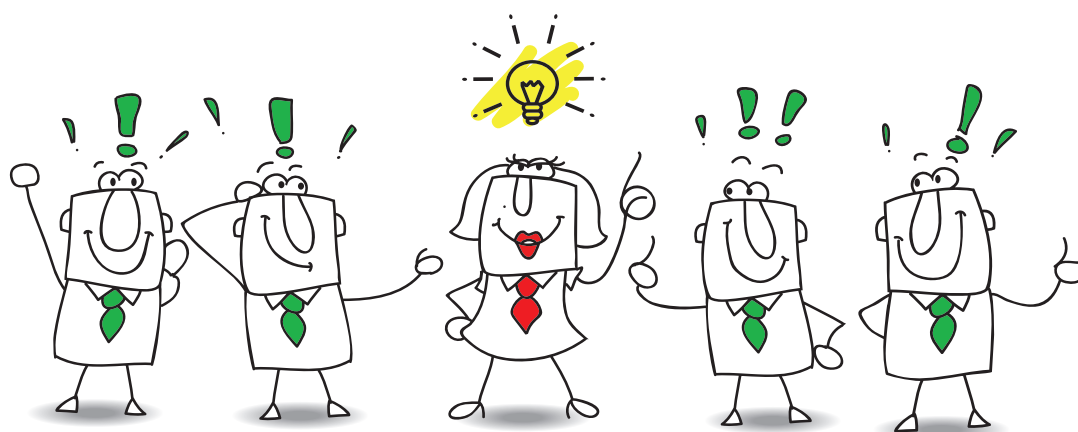
**Jack:** Hello Peter. Nice to meet you. I really enjoyed my onboarding and I'm sure I'm going to **find my feet** here quite quickly.

**Justine:** Ok, Jack. I'll leave you in Peter's hands. He is now responsible for **showing you the ropes**.

**Task 6.**

Analyze the meaning of the bolded phrases you might hear in the office, and then answer the questions below.

1. What can your company do to **be ahead of the pack**?
2. Could you give a **ballpark figure** of your yearly team budget?
3. What happens when you **lose sight of the big picture**?
4. Is it important that you do everything **by the book** at work?
5. Do you know anyone who is a **diamond in the rough**?
6. Have you recently **got** any project **off the ground**?
7. What happens when your **hands are tied**?
8. Do you **have a lot on your plate** at the moment?
9. Is there any project in your company **in full swing**?
10. How much time did it take you to **learn the ropes** of your profession?
11. What is the difference between a **safe bet** and a **long shot**?
12. Can you list all your family's birthdays **off the top of your head**?
13. Are you **on top** of the latest changes in your industry?
14. What happens when people **play hardball** to get what they want?
15. Do people **rock the boat** in your department?
16. Do you use **snail mail** to communicate with your clients / partners?
17. Do you rely on **word of mouth** while choosing products or services?
18. When would you need to **go back to the drawing board** at work?
19. Have you recently **come up short** on any project?
20. Does your company **raise the bar** for the entire industry?
21. Is **cutting corners** a good way to save time or money?
22. What companies serve clients **round-the-clock**?
23. Do you always **hit the nail on the head** while solving problems?
24. Was it difficult for you to **get a foot in the door** while launching your career?
25. What happens when a company **goes broke**?
26. Do you **touch base** with your colleagues after work hours?
27. Have you ever **severed ties** with a difficult client or business partner?
28. What happens when a business relationship **starts off on the wrong foot**?
29. Do you believe people should **think big** to succeed at work?
30. Are you always willing to **go the extra mile** at work?



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