

***CONFIDENT  
BUSINESS  
ENGLISH***

# **11 BUSINESS ENGLISH QUICK WINS TO HAVE ON *AUTOPILOT***

***REFLECTIONS FROM  
A NEUROLANGUAGE COACH®***



## 1. INTRODUCE YOURSELF CORRECTLY, FIRST TIME

You would be surprised how many professionals cannot introduce themselves without hesitating or making mistakes.

Your introduction is the first impression. It's worth making it perfect.

It will help you feel more confident during that first initial interaction.

Practice it until it's automatic and you don't need to think about it anymore.

All you need is to put your information into a sentence combination such as:

### Example 1

Hello, I'm.../My name is....

I'm a/an...

I work for/at...

### Example 2

Hello, I'm/My name is...

I'm a/an.....in the X  
industry/sector.....for + company

## COMMON MISTAKES

- **Not pronouncing "I'm" properly** – your lips need to touch to complete the sound
- **Missing out the a/an** – In some languages (Like Spanish) you don't need the indefinite article, but in English you do
- **Saying your role is your degree** – Imagine you studied economics but now you are a financial director. In English we wouldn't say I am an economist. I would say I'm a financial director. When speaking in English, respond with your role, not the title of what you studied. Unless of course that is your actual profession now. Does that make sense?
- **Not getting your role or industry right** –if you aren't sure what your role is in English, make sure you check. Ask your boss, HR team, Google it, ask Chat GPT etc.

## 2. INTRODUCE OTHERS CONFIDENTLY

I've heard so many people use the classic mistake of introducing someone saying "~~She is/He is/They are...~~"

All you need to introduce someone is:

**"This is...."**

That works for both phone and in-person.

## Examples

This is Sarah, she is\* the global marketing lead.

This is\* Micheal and Sarah. They are from our IT team.

This is John, he is the project manager on our team.

## GOOD TO KNOW

We use the subject **after** we have used "This is John. **He** is a marketing manager."

We don't say "These are" even talking about two people. Always "This is..."

## 3. PERFECT THE MEET AND GREET

This is such a common interaction yet so many can't respond to "It's nice to meet you." in the right way.

Here are 3 ways you can respond. You don't need to know any more. No need to reinvent the wheel.

1. It's nice\* to meet you, too.
2. **You** too.
3. Likewise.

Done!

\*You can change nice to lovely, great, fantastic etc.

## COMMON MISTAKES

- Saying "Me too." This sounds like you are saying "Yes, it's nice to meet **me** too." See what I mean?
- From my experience I've heard a lot of strange responses using **pleasure**. It is common to say "It's a pleasure to meet you.", however, be careful. I've heard things like "I have all the pleasure inside to meet you." Let's just say it sounds very enthusiastic...  
To avoid a potential embarrassment, avoid the word pleasure. Easy.

## 4. SAY GOODBYE LIKE A PRO

When I finish a session a client session I often hear "See you!"

This is just one of those little things that isn't right and is easy to correct.

In English there always has to be something **after**.

### Examples

See you **later**

See you **next time** (not the ~~next day~~)

See you **next week**

See you at **the next conference**

See you **tomorrow**

See you in **the next meeting**

See you **soon**

## 5. HAVEN'T SEEN YOUR COLLEAGUE IN A LONG TIME? SAY THIS!

I've heard various ways to express this that are common mistakes like:

~~How long, no seeing you, What a long time without seeing you~~

Understandable but the correct phrase is:

***Long time, no see!***

I know, it's weird. It's very short and doesn't really make sense but, it's right.

We would often follow it up with one of these questions:

*Long time, no see! How are you?*

*Long time, no see! How is everything?*

*Long time, no see! How's it going?*

### EXCEPTION

The only exception is if you are in a formal situation. In that case, I would recommend: **I haven't seen you for a long time, how are you?**

## **6. ANSWER THE PHONE PROFESSIONALLY**

So many people stress about phone calls.

I get it but let's try and at least get you confident with the first sentence when you answer.

There is one simple sentence you use again and again when someone calls you at work:

**Hello, (Your name) speaking.**

It's professional, natural and works every time. No need for anything else.

**Examples with variations:**

- Hello, Anna speaking.
- Hello, Sarah speaking. How can I help?
- Hello, John in HR speaking. (if you wanted to make it more specific)

## **7. NAIL COMMON QUESTION TYPES**

From experience many find asking questions really difficult.

You have to intervene in the middle of a conversation. And what if they don't understand you?

The problem is, we spend all day asking questions at work. Therefore, it's a skill that is worth feeling comfortable with.

There here are 3 core types of business questions you should aim to be confident in.

### **1) Asking for permission to do something**

Can I...? Could I...? May I....?

**Can I** add something?

**Could I** speak to you after the meeting?

**May I** leave for a moment?

\*May I is the most formal.

## 2) Asking someone to do something

Can you...? Could you...? Would you mind...?

Can you send me the agenda in advance?

Could you share the document with me?

Would you mind speaking\* to the client?

\*You have to use the verb in gerund after mind.

## 3) Making a suggestion

Shall I...? Shall we...?\*

**Shall we** have a catch-up next week?

**Shall we** discuss it in the next meeting?

**Shall I** share my screen?

\*Shall can only be used in the **1<sup>st</sup> person**. You can't say Shall he? Shall she?

## BONUS POINT

Perhaps I could add another core business question to the list, which is asking someone if they want something or inviting them to do something:

**Would you like + noun?**

**Would you like + to do something**

### Examples

Would you like to add something?

Would you like a coffee?

Would you like to start?

Would you like to explain further

## 8. STRUCTURE YOUR POINTS CLEARLY

I often hear people talk perfectly fine but there is no structure to what they are saying and it's hard to follow.

Never underestimate the power of simple phrases to structure your points clearly.

Trust me, your colleagues will thank you.

I believe it's really important to be confident with a basic set of phrases such as:

- |                 |            |               |
|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| • Firstly,      | • One      | • Point one   |
| • Secondly,     | • Two      | • Point two   |
| • Thirdly,      | • Three    | • Point three |
| • In conclusion | • To recap | • To sum up   |

I know it seems simple but a good command of these will help you in SO many ways.

Choose a set you like and reuse them again and again. No need to reinvent the wheel.

## 9. BE CONFIDENT ASKING FOR CLARIFICATION

You might fear being in a meeting and not understanding something.

Well, I have to be honest. It's not a question of if, it's a question of when. There will likely always be a time when you don't understand something.

For me, it comes down to two things:

- 1) Knowing the right question in terms of vocabulary
- 2) Having the confidence to ask.

To help you with the first point here are a few ways you can ask if you don't understand.

Let's keep it simple with combinations of "I'm sorry..." You could also add a phrase with could or didn't.

### Examples

Sorry but could you clarify that?	I couldn't hear you
Sorry but could you say that again?	I didn't understand
Sorry but could you repeat that?	I didn't catch it.

For the second point, it's more about mindset.

**Let me remind you that communication is 50/50.**

Both involved in the conversation are responsible for making sure everything has been understood. If your colleague isn't expressing things in a clear way and you don't understand, you should feel confident to ask them to clarify.

**Ask the question.**

## 10. INTERRUPT POLITELY

You want to interrupt your colleague but you don't want to sound rude.

All you need is this one sentence that you can repeat forever:

**"I'm sorry to interrupt but..."**

Yes, there are other ways to say "interrupt" but if you really want to keep it simple, that is your go-to.

**Other ways to say it**

*Sorry to cut you off but...*

*Sorry to jump in but...*

## 11. HOLD A BASIC CONVERSATION

I know you are praying there is no one else on the Teams so you won't have to make conversation but you need to be prepared to hold at least a basic conversation.

In English we call this phenomenon - small talk.

What can I say, small talk **is** hard.

There is a lot of variation in terms of questions, it depends on the day, time of week, formal or informal, how much you know that person etc.

However, there are questions you can come back to time and time again.

If you know at least some of these questions on autopilot, it will make you feel more confident and take the pressure off when you might be nervous anyway.



Here is my long list of basic conversation starters for different topics you can combine:

## **Work related**

- What do you do?
- What is your role?
- How long have you been working there?
- Do you travel a lot for your job?
- Do you work at the office or do you work from home?
- What projects are you working on at the moment?

## **How questions**

- How are you?
- How was your weekend?
- How was your holiday?
- How was your Christmas/Easter/New Year?
- How is your day going?
- How is your week going?
- How is the quarter going?
- How is the year going?
- How is the project going?

## **Activities**

- What did you do at the weekend?
- What are you doing this weekend?
- What did you do over Summer/Christmas/Easter?
- What are your plans for Christmas/Easter/your birthday?

## **Global trends and news**

- Have you heard about...?
- Did you see on the news yesterday that...?
- Have you read that...?

## **Face-to-face meeting – Imagine you are talking to someone visiting you from**

- How was your trip?
- Did you have a good flight?
- Is it your first time in...?
- What are your plans while you are here?
- Do you plan to go sightseeing?
- Are you going to go to.....?
- How long are you staying here?
- When are you going back to...?

## Weather

- What's the weather like in PLACE?
- Is it rainy/sunny/windy/hot/cold where you are?

## More personal questions

- Where are you from?
- Where do you live right now?
- Where were you born?
- Where did you study?
- What did you study?
- Are you married?
- Do you have a partner?
- Do you have any children?
- What do you like to do in your free time?

## TOP TIP

I had a client who went to a dinner and had to small talk in English. It was going well until the group started to ask her a lot of questions and it was overwhelming.

Even though this sounds counterintuitive, if you want to stay more in control, **ask the questions**. You have more control over the conversation and the focus is on them, not you.

I really hope you found those quick wins useful.

Would you like more of my Business English tips?

**Sign up to my weekly newsletter**

**See you there!**

Anna

