



Corso di Lingua inglese
Esercitazioni
Livello: *intermedio superiore*

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS AND OFFICE PURPOSES

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Instructions for the use of the exercises

The materials herein simulate the section of the Business English Certificate (BEC) offered by the University of Cambridge ESOL exams commission (U.K.). The linguistic level is that of the Vantage exam – or level B2 on the Council of Europe scale.

However these materials are less ‘neutral’ in their style (i.e. reference is made herein to no-global protests and employee reassignment within a firm which has undergone a merger).

Thus the present materials are slightly lengthier and more difficult to approach than the standard BEC exam material. This fact makes the materials more appropriate to a University course for students of economic and business and should help students somewhat over-prepare for the actual BEC Vantage test, if they indeed choose to prepare for it.

WRITING EXERCISES

PART ONE (A)

Question 1

- You are currently involved in a work project; it was scheduled for completion by the end of next week, but there has been a delay.
- Hand-write a message to your project supervisor:
 - Apologising for the delay
 - Explaining what caused the delay
 - Explaining that you need another 10 days to complete the project.
- Your message should be 40-50 words long.
- Write your message below.

PART TWO (A)

Question 2

- Read the extract of a letter below from Dr. Smith, the director of a Master's degree Course at a local University.

Our Master's Degree course is trying to locate firms interested in taking students for a brief job placement experience. Would your company possibly be interested in taking two students for a two-month period, so that they can become more familiar with the work world? It would not be necessary to pay the students, of course.

Thanking you for your time and looking forward to hearing from you,

*Yours faithfully,
Dr. Sybil Smith
Director*

- Write a letter to Dr. Smith
 - Saying that you can take *from one up to three* students.
 - *Briefly* explaining the type of work your firm does and the type of work the job placement students will do.
 - Explaining that she should telephone you next week to arrange the final details together.
- Write 120-140 words.
- Write below, sign your own name and do not include any postal addresses.

PART ONE (B)

Question 1

- You are a top supervisor in a small eyewear design firm that has just concluded negotiations to merge with a much larger firm in the sector, LuxuryOptics, Ltd.
- Write an email message to all employees:
 - Informing them of the merger.
 - Explaining that no employees will lose their jobs as a result (indeed, some will receive promotions).
 - Asking employees to send a C.V. to the Human Resources Division, to allow the re-assignment of jobs within the new company.
- Your message should be 40-50 words long.
- Write your message below.

PART TWO (B)

Question 2

- You work in the Public Relations department of a large multinational firm that is currently considering entering the Pakistani market.
- Look at the letter below, offering you a video and manual on how to diplomatically deal with protesters who fear that globalisation always damages the world economy.

To whom it may concern,

Please find enclosed some informational material and prices relative to our latest video and manual entitled:

“Understanding and Neutralising No-Global Protests against Your Firm”

These materials were developed with considerable in-put from social forum participants, as well as leading workplace psychologists, so that you can understand the concerns of No- Global protesters. This information can help you begin peaceful, fruitful talks with protesters concerning the advantages that your firm’s presence can bring to local economies around the world.

Looking forward to receiving your order, and remaining at your disposal for any additional information that you may require,

Sincerely,

*William Willis
CML Publications
San Francisco,
CA
U.S.A.*

- Write a letter to Mr Willis
 - Saying that you are interested in the materials.
 - Asking him for a list of names of other multinational firms that have already adopted this approach.
 - Explaining that, if you are satisfied, you will purchase numerous copies for all of your firm’s world offices (tell him how many there are).
- Write 120-140 words.
- Write below, sign your own name and do not include any postal addresses.

PART ONE (C)

Question 1

• You are the Vice-Director of a bank with sixteen small branch offices which are geographically rather far from one another. The bank's Board of Directors has just decided that all window clerks must attend IT lessons, so that they can better deal with customers' frequent questions about using the new online banking system.

- Write a memorandum to all the bank branch Managers:
 - Informing them of the Board's decision.
 - Explaining *why* the Information Technology teacher will travel around the different branches during the upcoming month (instead of holding classes at the bank headquarters).
 - Asking the managers to gather information about the best days for the course at their branch, and then email the information to you a.s.a.p.
- Your message should be 40-50 words long.
- Write your message below.

PART TWO (C)

Question 2

- You are the owner of a small ice cream factory that employs 200 people.
- Look at the letter below, in which a woman living in the neighbourhood close to your production site complains about the noise generated when workers leave the plant after the late shift.

Dear Ms/Mr [your name],

I am writing to express my irritation about the loud voices of your workers as they leave the plant after the 1:00 a.m. shift. Honestly, you'd think it was mid-day the way they shout "good-night!" to one another before getting into their cars!

I am a former schoolteacher and a pensioner and already have trouble sleeping at night, so you can imagine how frustrating this situation is for me.

Therefore, I am expecting to hear from you as soon as possible, and particularly in learning how you intend to solve this problem.

*Yours Sincerely,
Mrs Edna Simpson*

P.S. : I do occasionally enjoy a dish of your ice cream. It's delicious, I must admit!

- Write a letter to Mrs Simpson
 - Apologising for the disturbance.
 - Saying that you were not aware of the problem (your firm recently received the "Good Business Neighbour" award from the Neighbourhood Association in which it is located).
 - Promising that you will speak to the workers about the problem and take other steps to keep the noise level down (give one example of such an additional measure).
- Write 120-140 words.
- Write below, sign your own name and do not include any postal addresses.

READING EXERCISES

PART ONE

Questions 1-12

- Read the passage below about regional development.
- Choose the best word A, B, C, or D below to fill each gap.
- For each question 1-12, place an X next to one letter (A, B, C, or D) which corresponds to the correct answer.

The Role of Finance in Regional Development

The financial sector is probably one of the areas where regional and global changes are clearest. Due to globalization many countries increasingly face problems in implementing the right financial tools (example)C.... to boost their growth. An example is provided by Japan's long-lasting problems in resolving its financial (1)..... using traditional tools.

Because of this increased complexity of the financial world areas must (2)..... more attention on certain key elements:

1. The correct financial infrastructure. A solid network of banks and financial institutions is necessary to (3)..... strong and balanced growth. In fact, in order to sustain both technology and human capital investments it is (4)..... to guarantee easy access to financial resources (5)..... the territory concerned. Despite the increased importance of electronic transactions and Internet banks, the (6)..... of physical infrastructures is still necessary. This is particularly true in (7)..... areas of the world.
2. Local networks (8)..... be integrated with regional and global ones, in order to support the needs of (9)..... numbers of multinational companies.
3. Regional financial markets should have clear regulations in order to facilitate access (10)..... foreign capital.

In closing, financial markets, or rather 'obtaining access to financial resources', can no longer be (11)..... a "support" activity in regional development. Indeed, many areas with considerable growth opportunities (12)..... fail to realise their potential due to the underdevelopment or the collapse of their financial systems.

Example:			
A requested	B advised	C needed X	D prescribed

Part one exercise

1	A troubles	B upsets	Cangers	Dtantrums
2	A provide	B give	Cundermine	Dfocus
3	A support	B hold	Cprop	Dbind
4	A needed	B necessary	C required	Dasked
5	A throughout	B through	Cinto	Dacross
6	A exist	B reasons	Cfact	Dpresence
7	A constructing	B developing	C renew	Dreducing
8	A should	B need	C have	Dcouldn't
9	A biggest	B dilated	Cenlarging	Dgrowing
10	A into	B to	C inside	Dfrom
11	A hypothesized	B projected	C considered	Danalysed
12	A will	B have	Care	Dwere

PART TWO

Questions 1-6

- Read the statements below and the information about the different trade organizations in the boxes beneath those statements.
- Which trade organization (A, B, C or D) does each statement 1-6 refer to?
- For each statement 1-6, mark one letter A, B, C or D next to it.
- You will need to use some of these letters more than once.

- 1 Upon its foundation some of the member countries of this trade organization already belonged to a pre-existing trade group. _____
- 2 This trade organization does not impose restrictive conditions on potential new member countries. _____
- 3 In the future the member states of this trade organisation will be part of a new country. _____
- 4 The main objective of this trade organization is to ensure free trade throughout a huge geographical area around which the member countries border. _____
- 5 This trade organization aims to realize free trade amongst its members, but in two separate time frames. _____
- 6 It is conceivable that this trade organization will one day speak with a single political and foreign policy voice. _____

A

APEC. The Asian Pacific cooperation group was founded in 1989. Its general goals have been to help the development of its diverse areas and to organize economic cooperation among its members. However the main objective of the group remains to assist the development of totally free markets in the Asian Pacific Area. The projected date for this objective is 2010 for the more developed countries (Japan, Korea, the United States and Canada) and 2020 for the remaining countries.

B

MERCOSUR. The Southern Common Market was founded in the early 90s' with the union of different local agreements involving diverse South American countries such as Venezuela, Brazil and Argentina. Its objective is to implement free markets for the majority of member country products. Another characteristic of the MERCOSUR is that, generally speaking, any country can easily join this organization.

C

EU. The European Union is an agreement among different countries to increase collaboration in order to create a unified market that will eventually become a "single nation".

D

NAFTA. The North Atlantic Free Trade Area was founded in 1993 in order to increase the commerce of goods and services among member states. Another interesting point is that NAFTA was—*ex post*—partially integrated into other agreements like the APEC.

PART THREE

Questions 1-5

- Read the article below about a new series of self-help books for managers.
- Choose the best sentence or paragraph from the section below the article to fill each of the gaps.
- For each gap 1-5, mark one letter (A-G) in the spaces provided for the missing sentence or paragraph.
- Do not use any letter more than once.
- There is an example at the beginning, (0).

Helping Yourself Become a Better Manager

A range of books has just been published to help newly appointed managers avoid common office situations that typically inspire worry. (0).....G....

The books' author, Kathleen Hamilton, is an experienced occupational psychologist who owns a consultancy firm in London. (1).....

Management knowledge *can* be learned, even without experience

One of the reasons Hamilton wrote these guides was that she knows that not every business is able to invest a great amount of time and money in training. (2).....

The difficulty, especially for small businesses, is that 'People who are professionals are somehow just expected to naturally *pick up* management skills. (3).....

Expect to face unexpected situations

Ms. Hamilton realizes that managing is especially difficult if a person is not used to communicating effectively or delegating authority to others. (4)..... 'But, besides being a financial analyst or an engineer, for example, it is not always easy to gain enough management experience to become good at it right away' Hamilton admits. (5).....

Patience, patience!

Hamilton's number one advice to managers in all sectors is to maintain professional behaviour in all situations.

(6)..... 'So when your staff members come to you as their manager, they don't want to know about your problems, they want you to solve *their* problems' she concludes.

A

In the business world 'others' may be clients, your own workers, suppliers, etc.... But in any case, when unexpected events do occur, managers should ideally have a range of strategies to choose from.

B

‘If you have ever managed people before you know that you cannot let yourself become totally impatient with situations and people.’

C

However, it is worth the effort to train oneself about human resource management, she notes.

D

Ms. Hamilton believes that The Management Guides series satisfies the current work market’s need to create a positive professional environment for all members of a firm, from the bottom of the company hierarchy up to the Board of Directors.

E

She continues ‘Managing areas of your job over which you have control is not generally a problem—the real challenges in management come up when you must deal with situations in which other people do things that could not easily be foreseen

F

‘Therefore, these books fill that gap, as they are a low-cost source of information which new managers can access whenever they have the time’ Hamilton affirms.

G

The Management Guides are in particular aimed at familiarizing professionals who are working in small British companies with the basics of staff management.

PART FOUR

Questions 1 – 4

- Read the piece below about a world-famous IT firm.
- Then choose the best answer, A, B, C or D for questions 1-4, and mark an X next to your choice.

Work Life at Microsoft

Introduction

Famous for its *Windows* operating system and its *Office* personal computer package, Microsoft is the World's No. 1 software company. With sales of over \$3 bn., it is growing fast but the firm's individual corporate culture remains strong. What's it like to work there?

Hard Work

Complaining about how hard you work at Microsoft makes as much sense as complaining about the constant rainy weather in Seattle, the city which hosts the company's headquarters. Everyone at the company is overworked. Microsoft deliberately under-staffs its product teams because it saves money, helps communication and encourages the fighting spirit.

Fun

Microsoft encourages individuality, and there are many eccentric people on the staff. For example, some staff members even bring their (small) pets to work, like software engineer Alistair Sutherland, who keeps his pet snake 'Zsa Zsa' in his office. There is even a recreation area in which staff can "play" during breaks. Furthermore, there is a coffee bar area where employees can get *café latte* and other energy-boosting drinks to help maintain their concentration during the workday.

Tough

Microsoft employees are well informed, logical and thick-skinned. They have got to be able to defend themselves from criticism from their bosses, as debate is encouraged within the company.

Frugal

The pay may be good but there are no fancy expense accounts at Microsoft. Mr. Bill Gates, the company C.E.O., is one of the richest men in the world, but he still books economy class plane tickets for his trips to Japan.

Challenging

Authority is present at almost every level of the firm's hierarchy; this is due to the fact that Microsoft recruits and hires graduates from the elite universities and finest business schools in the world, and gives these people a lot of responsibility straight away.

Competitive

Microsoft has been beaten in some markets by more sharply focused competitors, but the firm keeps fighting. Its top management may make mistakes sometimes, but its corporate culture encourages employees to never give up.

Comprehension Questions

- 1 According to the article, which of the following statements *best* describes Microsoft's company culture?
 - a Employees should like rainy weather; they should be willing to work hard; they should be willing to fly economy class to Japan.
 - b Employees should expect to only obey the C.E.O.; they should be very interested in computers and not worry about general affairs in the world; they should be hypersensitive to criticism from their bosses.
 - c Employees should enjoy a competitive work environment; they should be tolerant of individual opinions and differences in the workplace; they should be willing to work hard; they should be tenacious.
 - d Employees should be less tolerant of individual opinions and differences in the workplace; they should expect benefits from the firm like a nice company car; they should expect to receive authority several years after they have been hired.

2. According to the article, is it useless for Microsoft employees to express dissatisfaction about their long work hours and heavy workload?
 - a. Yes; overworking its employees is one of the main characteristics of the Microsoft Corporation.
 - b. No; the firm listens to its employees' complaints attentively.
 - c. Yes; employees who complain about long work hours will be criticized by their bosses.
 - d. No; the firm expects its employees to have strong individual opinions and share them with others in the workplace.

3. According to the article, which of the following professional characteristics must Microsoft employees have in order to be hired?
 - a. They should: have a superior preparation in mathematics and philosophy, be interested in the world around them, appreciate and respect authority at all levels and have a distinct personality.
 - b. They should: demonstrate the characteristics of a computer expert, be

obsessed with Internet applications, and be unattached to monetary benefits of the job such as fancy expense accounts.

- c. They should: have a superior preparation in mathematics, enjoy recreational activities with other coworkers during breaks and listen to their personal intuition when making business decisions.
 - d. They should: have a superior educational background, be interested in the world around them and appreciate receiving authority and respect it at all levels.
4. Which of the following statements does the author NOT make in the passage?
- a. That Microsoft teaches its employees to adapt to competition by accepting that sometimes the firm will not be “Number 1”.
 - b. That executives at Microsoft are not encouraged to spend a lot of company money during travel for work.
 - c. That young employees who have just been hired often receive considerable decision-making power and autonomy in their work.
 - d. That Microsoft is proud of and encourages originality in the personalities of its employees.

PART SIX

Questions 1-20

- Read the following article about C.E.O.s who leave their corporate jobs to become entrepreneurs.
- In most of the lines 1-20 there is one extra word. It is either grammatically incorrect or does not fit in with the meaning of the text. Some lines, however, are correct.
- If a line is correct, write CORRECT in the space to the right of that line.
- If there is an extra word in the line, write the extra word in CAPITAL LETTERS on your answer sheet.
- The exercise begins with two examples, (0) and (00).

0	CORRECT
00	INTO

0	Being a top company manager gives one a high salary, an expensive company	CORRECT
00	car, various other benefits and the security of knowing that one is into a valued	INTO
1	employee. However, a certain number of managers or a C.E.O.s leave their safe	
2	jobs each year in order to set up over their own companies. A recent U.K. survey	
3	found that there are three main reasons for the decision to become an entrepreneur.	
4	Although at first most entrepreneurs cannot afford to pay themselves still the	
5	amounts they used to earn as managers working for others, having a much high	
6	salary is not the only factor that draws people to setting up their own company.	
7	Probably the most important factor which pushes former managers in Britain to	
8	become entrepreneurs is the prospect of being in complete over charge of one's	
9	business. In the U.K. people want to do make all the decisions themselves when	
10	they start up a company. On the other hand, moreover in the U.S. total	
11	ownership and control is less important to entrepreneurs than, for example, the	
12	happily prospect of making a million dollars. Surprisingly, many former managers	

13	who start their own businesses do so simply because their old job was not worse	
14	challenging enough for them. For example, mid-level managers who criticise the	
15	usual ways of doing things in an office and propose changes are often disliked by	
16	the both their bosses and their colleagues. These innovative thinkers often	
17	become bored with their jobs when they see that of their new ideas for products	
18	and services are ignored. The boredom and frustration which come with not	
19	being listened to drive many company employees to become their own boss.	
20	Finally, the challenge of her taking risks and wanting to 'win big' is also	
	a common feature of many entrepreneurs.	