

# THE Language Key

Business English Training

1994



2014

in  
HONG KONG

## INSIDE!

- ◆ Editing your Business Documents
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# THE Business English Training Language Key

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### WHY SELECT US?

- 1 The Language Key Ltd has been delivering successful language training programs for 100s of Hong Kong companies since 1994.
- 2 We use experienced business English trainers who have a understanding of the language learning needs of Hong Kong professionals.
- 3 We provide online learning support for all courses and workshops, and free continuous learning through our online training platform.

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## THE Language Key

### Welcome Back!

to enhancing your business English and communication skills.....

Dear Readers

#### Editing your Business Correspondence

Producing a clean, error-free business document isn't easy. Yet when errors occur often, they undermine the writer's authority and confuse communication.

To edit well, it helps to know the basics of grammar and punctuation, but equally important are good editing practices. You'll need to be patient and attentive to detail. Here are a few suggestions to improve your editing.

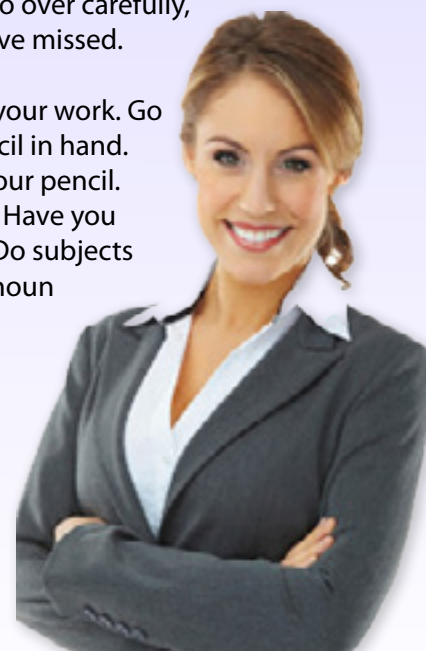
Firstly, you should know what you're looking for. What types of errors do you tend to make most often? Do you have problems with subject/verb agreement or with tense shifts? Look for patterns in your errors and focus on cutting out the more serious and higher frequency errors first. Then check for less obvious problems.




Secondly, edit the printed copy. If you're writing at the computer, check your work quickly on the screen and run a spell-check. Then print out a draft to go over carefully, looking for anything you may have missed.

Thirdly, you should actively edit your work. Go through your draft carefully, pencil in hand. Actually touch each word with your pencil. Look especially at word endings. Have you dropped any 's' or 'ed' endings? Do subjects and verbs agree? Does each pronoun have a clear antecedent?

A clean, well-edited final draft makes a good impression. It shows that you care about your writing, and when readers sense you care, they'll care, too.

Rebecca Williams  
Editor – The Language Key



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### Is the Housing Bubble about to Burst?

According to Barclays, home prices in Hong Kong will go down at least 30% from their current levels by the end of 2015. If Barclays is correct, the fall could return home prices to what they were in October of 2010.

**Record** low interest rates and a **lack of** available housing are helping to increase prices in Hong Kong. Also, mainland Chinese buyers are looking for places to park their money - so property is **treated** more like an **investment asset**.

For cities like Singapore and Hong Kong, there's another **attraction**. Neither city has **capital gains tax**. That's **appealing** also to foreigners. It's why Hong Kong has new taxes. Foreign buyers now pay a tax equal to 25% of the purchase price. Prices are **cooling** a little as a result, but are still high.

Is there a **housing bubble**? House prices in Hong Kong are **overvalued** by about 30-40% - one of the highest overvaluations in the world. Based on the IMF estimate of the price-to-rent **ratio**, it's 33 times more expensive to buy a property in the city than to rent.

When the last bubble **burst** in 1997 during the Asian financial crisis, Hong Kong's property prices fell by more than 60% and continued to decline for six years. Now, house prices are 13 times the average salary - even higher than during the last bubble.

So the question everybody is asking is when will the bubble burst? Many analysts believe it is **imminent**.

#### Key Vocabulary

**Record** (adj.) the best, longest, tallest, etc  
**a lack of** (phrase) not enough  
**treated** (verb) considered something in a particular way  
**investment asset** (phrase) an asset that is intended to achieve a long-term objective, such as accumulating money for education or retirement  
**attraction** (noun) something that you are drawn to because you like it  
**capital gains tax** (phrase) a tax levied on profit from a property sale or investment  
**appealing** (adj.) describes the quality in something making it attractive or enjoyable  
**cooling** (verb) if something is cooling, it is not growing or increasing as fast as before  
**housing bubble** (phrase) describes a situation in a property market where prices are so high they can't last and need to decrease by a significant amount  
**overvalued** (verb) put too high a value on something  
**ratio** (noun) the relationship between two amounts, expressing how much bigger one is than the other  
**burst** (verb) if a property bubble bursts, prices decline suddenly and by a lot  
**imminent** (adj.) coming or likely to happen very soon

### Concerns about Domestic Helper Abuse

An Indonesian maid **allegedly abused** by her Hong Kong employer has returned to the city for a medical examination.

Erwiana Sulistyaningsih, 23, was reportedly abused over a period of eight months while working and was **in a critical condition** on her return to Indonesia in January.

One of her doctors there said at the time the **mistreatment** included having her head **smashed** repeatedly against a wall.

The case has led to concern, including from the Indonesian President, about the **treatment** of domestic helpers in Hong Kong.

Thousands of domestic helpers held public **protests** in January to demand **justice** for Erwiana. Her **former** employer, 44-year-old Law Wan-tung, has been charged with causing **grievous bodily harm** to Sulistyaningsih and to her two previous Indonesian domestic helpers.

Hong Kong is home to nearly 300,000 maids, mainly from Indonesia and the Philippines, and **criticism** from rights groups over their treatment is growing.

Last year a Hong Kong couple were jailed for **assaulting** their Indonesian domestic helper, including burning her with an iron and hitting her with a bicycle chain.

Amnesty International recently criticised the "**slavery-like**" conditions faced by thousands of domestic helpers in Hong Kong.



#### Key Vocabulary

**allegedly abused** (phrase) caused harm or pain to someone although not yet proven  
**in a critical condition** (phrase) describes someone who has very dangerous or serious medical issues and who maybe close to death  
**mistreatment** (noun) bad or cruel behaviour towards someone  
**smashed** (verb) hit a hard object or surface with a lot of force  
**treatment** (noun) the way you deal with or behave towards someone or something  
**protests** (noun) occasions when people show that they disagree with something by

standing somewhere, shouting, carrying signs, etc:

**justice** (noun) behaviour or treatment that is fair and morally correct:  
**former** (adj.) happening, existing, or true in the past but not now  
**grievous bodily harm** (phrase) serious physical injury inflicted on a person by the deliberate action of another  
**criticism** (noun) the act of saying that something or someone is bad  
**assaulting** (gerund) attacking someone violently  
**slavery** (noun) having people who you legally own and work for you

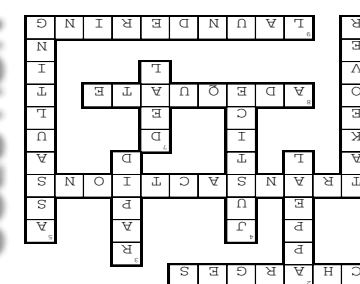
Complete the sentences below and right (including the crossword) using the highlighted vocabulary from the three articles. Remember to use the correct part of speech and verb tense. You'll find the answers below.

- Global coffee prices are at a \_\_\_\_\_ high at the moment.
- The police \_\_\_\_\_ the man for using abusive language in a public place.
- The office manager \_\_\_\_\_ all his staff in the same way.
- Mary lives in an \_\_\_\_\_ condominium overlooking the beach.
- The cost of our \_\_\_\_\_ 1-bedroom serviced apartment is HK\$79,000 a month. It's one of the best in town.
- Thousands of students took to the streets to \_\_\_\_\_ about the increase in university tuition fees.
- The government has come under \_\_\_\_\_ for its treatment of refugees from Africa.
- The announcement of the Flexcorp IPO is \_\_\_\_\_.
- If you believe the apartment is \_\_\_\_\_, put in a low offer.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ between men and women in the city is 3:1.
- My \_\_\_\_\_ employer is now the CEO of a big multinational company.
- Unemployment rates are high because of \_\_\_\_\_ job vacancies.

#### ANSWERS:

- record
- charged
- treats
- upscale
- luxury
- protest
- criticism
- imminent
- overvalued
- ratio
- former
- a lack of

#### SOLUTION

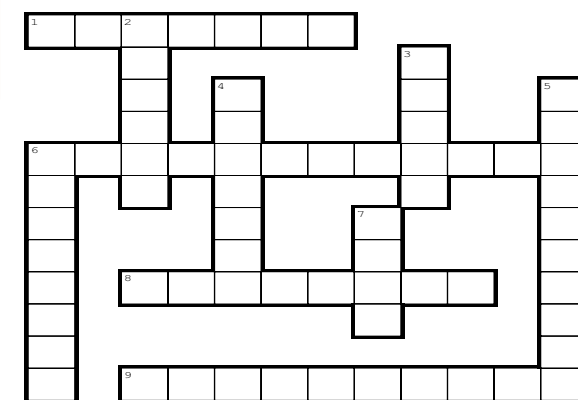


#### Across:

- She was arrested on \_\_\_\_\_ of stealing documents from the company.
- Could you give me details any \_\_\_\_\_ on my account on 12 May?
- We didn't prepare an \_\_\_\_\_ presentation. Therefore, it had little impact.
- Casinos are often considered money \_\_\_\_\_ operations.

#### Down:

- A merger with KCS doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ to most of the company directors.
- The company has experienced \_\_\_\_\_ growth since the introduction of a new CEO last year.
- The family of the teenager shot dead by the police are determined to get \_\_\_\_\_.
- The man was found guilty of \_\_\_\_\_ a police officer.
- They are expected to receive a \_\_\_\_\_ proposal from a US-based multinational.
- Stannard bought the company in a £20 million \_\_\_\_\_.



### Carson Yeung Jailed for Money Laundering

Carson Yeung, 54, whose rise to **wealth** ended in the **takeover** of the British football team Birmingham City has been sent to prison for six years for **laundering** nearly US\$100 million.

During his trial, Yeung failed to **adequately** explain how millions of dollars ended up in his bank accounts.

"He did not care where the money came from, and he did not bother to ask," Judge Douglas Yau said, adding that Mr. Yeung had lied throughout his **testimony**. "He was just **making it up** as he went along."

Yeung came to the public's attention in 2007 when his company, Grandtop International Holdings, paid US\$30 million for a 30 percent share in the Birmingham City Football Club. Grandtop paid an additional US\$94 million for the rest of the club in 2009.

Mr. Yeung came from a poor Hong Kong family, the son of a vegetable stall operator, and got his start as a hairstylist in the 1980s.

His life changed **rapidly** in the years leading to the Birmingham **deal**. The court heard how Mr. Yeung had paid US\$6 million a Maybach



**limousine** and US\$49 million for a **luxury yacht**. In January 2005, he paid US\$70 million for a half-share in a home in Hong Kong's **upscale** Victoria Peak neighbourhood, and in 2007 he bought a house in London for US\$8.37 million.

The money laundering **charges** focused on hundreds of **transactions** that took place between 2001 and 2007, totalling US\$93 million. Those transactions included US\$62 million in cheques issued by a Macau casino operator that had been deposited into Mr. Yeung's accounts.

#### Key Vocabulary

**wealth** (noun) a large amount of money or valuable possessions that someone has  
**takeover** (noun) a situation in which a company gets control of another company  
**laundering** (noun) hiding an amount of money that has been made illegally by putting the money into legal bank accounts or businesses  
**adequately** (adv.) enough  
**testimony** (noun) a formal statement about what someone knows or believes is true, especially in a law court  
**making it up** (phrasal verb) saying or writing something that is not true  
**rapidly** (adv.) very quickly  
**deal** (noun) a business agreement  
**limousine** (noun) a large, expensive car, usually for rich or important people  
**luxury** (adj.) describes something of great comfort and quality  
**yacht** (noun) a large boat with sails used for pleasure or in races  
**upscale** (adj.) expensive and used by people who are rich and from a high social class  
**charges** (noun) formal police statements saying that someone is accused of a crime  
**transactions** (noun) the buying or selling of something, or the exchanges of money



# Common Errors with Verb Tenses

People often use the wrong verb forms for various tenses. Although an occasional error may be overlooked in conversation, such mistakes stand out clearly in written communication. They lower the tone of your message and may cause the reader to question the accuracy of other parts of your communication. Here are some common errors:

## EXAMPLE 1

- ✗ He **has went** to check last week's records.
- ✓ He **has gone** to check last week's records.

## Comments

⇒ Most tenses formed with auxiliary verbs use either the present or past participle of the main verb. *Gone* is the past participle of the verb *to go* and is the correct form. *Went* is the past tense of the verb and is incorrect.

## EXAMPLE 2

- ✗ We **done** it yesterday and handed in the report.
- ✓ We **did** it yesterday and handed in the report.

⇒ The action takes place in the past and requires the past tense. *Did* is the correct past tense of the verb *to do*. *Done*, the past participle, is incorrect.

## EXAMPLE 3

- ✗ We **are studying** the effects of inflation and **use** the Friedman model.
- ✓ We **are studying** the effects of inflation and **are using** the Friedman model.

⇒ The action is on-going in the present – the present continuous. *Are* is the auxiliary verb for both main verbs. Both verbs must be in the present participle form for the present continuous tense. This is referred to as parallel structure.

## EXAMPLE 4

- ✗ We **have mailed** the questionnaire, **wrote** to the personnel managers of the companies and **gave** each company a code.
- ✓ We **have mailed** the questionnaire, **written** to the personnel manager of the companies and **given** each company a code.

⇒ The action was taken and completed in the present – the present perfect, formed by the auxiliary verb + past participle. *Have* is the auxiliary verb for each main verb in the series. Therefore, the past participle *mailed*, *written* and *given* are correct. *Wrote* and *gave* are the past tense forms and are incorrect.

## EXAMPLE 5

- ✗ We **looked up** the information, **reported** to the sales manager and **hand in** our findings.
- ✓ We **looked up** the information, **reported** to the sales manager and **handed in** our findings.

⇒ Another common error in written English is mixing verb tenses in the same sentence or paragraph. When the action or state of being takes place in the same time frame, the verb tenses must be consistent.

⇒ In Example 5, the actions all take place in the past. The present tense confuses the time frame.

## EXAMPLE 6

- ✗ We **received** the customer's order on Friday. We **give** the order to the sales department, although I **was** sure that there **is** an error in the part number. I **have been filing** these orders for a long time and the number **looks** strange to me.
- ✓ We **received** the customer's order on Friday. We **gave** the order to the sales department, although I **was** sure that there **was** an error in the part number. I **have been filing** these orders for a long time and the number **looked** strange to me.

⇒ The paragraph refers to a sequence of actions in the past. The verb tenses must be consistently in the past tense and must not confuse past and present.

## EXAMPLE 7

- ✗ The report **is** ready for the committee to study. It **showed** that sales **were increasing** over the past six months.
- ✓ The report **is** ready for the committee to study. It **shows** that sales **have been increasing** over the past six months.

⇒ References to the report should be in the present tense. The present perfect tense refers to something occurring in the past and continuing into the present such as the increase in sales.

## Let's Rewrite! Good vs Bad Documents

Here is a business letter from a bank to one of its customers. Read our general comments on the letter and then our more specific comments about the language, organisation, tone and style of different sections of the letter. You'll find the rewritten letter below.

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Dear Mr Leung

original

**Subject: (1) Banking facilities**

(2) Reference to the facility letter dated 25th May, 20xx and our recent discussion with your Mr. Chan. (3) I wish to con?rm our agreement to revise the terms of the banking facilities to the extent that the Overdraft Facility of up to HKD3,000,000.00 and trust receipt loan / discounting D/A export bills facility of up to USD1,000,000.00 shall be used solely by ABC Co. Ltd. and DEF Co. Ltd. shall not be eligible for utilizing the banking facilities stated herein from the date of acceptance of this letter.

(4) All other terms and conditions of the banking facilities shall remain in full force and effect.

(5) Kindly signify your acceptance to the above and arranging the relevant parties to con?rm the above arrangement by signing and returning to us the attached copy of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Kenneth Choi  
ABC Bank Ltd

**Rewrite:** The Overdraft Facility of up to HK\$3m and trust receipt loan / discounting D/A export bills facility of up to US\$1m can be used only by ABC Co. Ltd. In addition, DEF Co. Ltd. cannot use the banking facilities stated here from the date this arrangement is accepted.

- 4) 'remain in full force and effect' is a redundant phrase. Replace with 'remain in force.'

The use of 'shall' in this context is out-of-date.

**Rewrite::** All other terms and conditions of the banking facilities will remain in force.

- 5) 'Kindly' is out-of-date. Replace with 'please.'

'Signify your acceptance of' is a wordy and unnecessarily complex way of saying 'if you accept.'

The sentence contains two separate points: 1) sign if you accept the arrangement; 2) inform the other parties about it. To make this clear, divide the sentence into two and put one point in each sentence.

**Rewrite:** If you accept the above arrangement, please sign and return the attached copy of this letter to us. Furthermore, please inform the relevant parties about it.

## The rewritten letter:

- uses a simpler sentence structure
- uses clear, concise, up-to-date words and expressions
- is correctly structured and organised into appropriate paragraphs
- is more businesslike, using a consistent style throughout

Consider these points when you read the letter.

- The letter reference is not clear.
- Some paragraphs contain more than one point.
- Some sentences are too long and need to be divided.
- The letter includes a number of redundant and out-of-date phrases.
- The letter is over-official, cold and impersonal.

- 1) The subject heading is inappropriate. It is too general. It needs to be more specific.

Also, all main words in the heading should be capitalized.

**Rewrite: Revision of Terms of Banking Facilities**

- 2) This sentence is not complete. It does not have a subject or verb.

This paragraph should make a reference to the previous letter and state that the bank agrees to revise the terms of the banking facilities. The details of the revision should be placed in the second paragraph.

The date is in the incorrect format. In modern business writing we would write '25 May 20xx.'

'Your Mr. Chan' is out-of-date. Refer to someone's full name so it is clear who you are talking about, e.g. Joseph Chan.

**Rewrite:** We refer to the facility letter of 25 May 20xx and our recent discussion with Joseph Chan.

- 3) This sentence is far too long (70 words). Sentences should not exceed 35 words. Break the sentence down into two shorter sentences.

The verb 'wish' when used to mean 'want' is out-of-date in this context. Use 'would like' instead.

Replace 'USD1,000,000.00' with 'USD1 million.'

'Shall not be eligible for utilizing' is a wordy and complex way of saying 'cannot use.'

'Herein' is out-of-date. It has no real meaning so just omit it.



Dear Mr Leung

rewrite

**Subject: Revision of Terms of Banking Facilities**

We refer to the facility letter of 25 May 20xx and our recent discussion with Joseph Chan.

Further to this, we would like to confirm our agreement to revise the terms of the banking facilities. The Overdraft Facility of up to HK\$3m and trust receipt loan / discounting D/A export bills facility of up to US\$1m can be used only by ABC Co. Ltd. In addition, DEF Co. Ltd. cannot use the banking facilities stated here from the date this arrangement is accepted.

All other terms and conditions of the banking facilities will remain in force.

If you accept the above arrangement, please sign and return the attached copy of this letter to us.

Furthermore, please inform the relevant parties about it.

Yours sincerely

Kenneth Choi  
ABC Bank Ltd





## Questioning Techniques



Good questioning technique is the key to good communication on the telephone. Here, we are going to briefly examine the different types of questions that can be used to clarify details and handle enquiries on the telephone.

Customers and colleagues call you with questions. To answer their questions or to address their needs, you need to ask questions, too. But all questions are not created equal; to get the kind of response you want, you need to know how to choose the appropriate type of question to ask.

Using effective questioning techniques allows you to get information you need. It also helps you stay in control of the conversation.

Also, when you are confronted with difficult situations, the use of different types of questions will help diffuse the situation.

Here are five of the different types of questions you can ask and the various situations where these questions are appropriate:

### ? Open Questions

An **open question** requests information in a way that requires a fuller answer than a simple fact or "yes" or "no." As a result of asking open questions, we should be able to gain enough information to give the caller a solution to a particular problem, or at least be in a better position to offer help. Here are some examples:

### ? Specific Questions

Use **specific questions** to clarify points. There are two types of specific questions - those that request a piece of information, and those that simply require a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

### ? Closed Questions

**Closed questions** usually produce a "yes" or "no" answer. They can be useful in the closing minutes of a conversation to confirm all the small details and to make sure that you have covered everything.

### ? Alternative Choice Questions

**Alternate choice questions** provide choices for the caller to choose from. These questions are useful when dealing with difficult callers. Ask the callers what they would like you to do for them, but provide choices that suit you too.

### ? Leading Questions

When you want to control your call lengths, **leading questions** help speed up interactions. At times we seem to deal with people who find it difficult to make a final decision. **Leading questions** help your caller confirm the information in an easy way.

How may I help you?  
 What information were you given by my colleague when you spoke with him yesterday?  
 Please tell me exactly what happened, and when?

Who did you speak with yesterday?  
 What is your daytime phone number?  
 Can you always be reached at this telephone number?

Have you confirmed this with Mr Ng?  
 Is there further information you need from me at this time?

I could find this out for you and call you with an answer later or would you prefer me to fax the information later in the day?  
 Would you like me to get our supervisor, or would you like to give me an opportunity to try to help first?

You would like to receive the catalogue updates on a monthly basis, then?  
 So you would agree on a delivery on Thursday, if I can get you a discount?

Now read the telephone conversation between a sales person and a customer making an enquiry. When you come to a question, think which type of question is being used and why it is being used at that particular stage of the conversation.

### DIALOGUE

**Salesperson :** Good Morning. 321 Mobile. *How may I help you?*<sup>1</sup>

**Customer :** Hello. I'm interested in finding out more about your mobile phone offer advertised on the television today.

**Salesperson :** Yes, our new mobile phone offer. My name is Winston. *May I have your name please?*<sup>2</sup>

**Customer :** George Lam

**Salesperson :** Thank you, Mr Lam. Firstly, I just need to ask you a few questions.

**Customer :** Okay.

**Salesperson :** *How often do you think you would be using the mobile phone?*<sup>2</sup> *And, would it be for personal or business use?*<sup>4</sup>

**Customer :** It'd be for personal use. I need to keep in touch with my family when I am away from home.

**Salesperson :** *Do you think you would need to use your phone for more than 15 minutes a day?*<sup>3</sup>

**Customer :** No, I don't think so.

**Salesperson :** Okay, that is fine. I'd recommend the prepaid phone because there is no monthly fee. *Have you had a mobile phone before?*<sup>3</sup>

**Customer :** No, Never.

**Salesperson :** Okay, that is fine. We have a customer help line. If you have any technical questions or questions about our call rates, you can phone us anytime.

**Customer :** That's great.

**Salesperson :** *Do you have any questions about prepaid phones?*

**Customer :** Yes. *Are there any hidden costs?*<sup>3</sup>

**Salesperson :** None at all.

**Customer :** Okay.

**Salesperson :** So, *when would you like to start using the phone?*<sup>2</sup>

**Customer :** As soon as possible.

**Salesperson :** Right, I will send it within 48 hours. You should be able to start using it the same day. *Would you like me to arrange that for you now?*<sup>3</sup>

**Customer :** Yes, please.

1. OPEN    2. SPECIFIC    3. CLOSED    4. ALTERNATE CHOICE    5. LEADING

**Final note:** we use various types of questions to gather information, clarify information, confirm information and lead calls to a successful conclusion. Careful consideration of question types will help you to get the most out of every business conversation you have.

## Executive Coaching

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- ✓ Flexible schedule with regular reports and guidance;
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## Which Question Type?

- a. Would you like to take a seat?
- b. Can I get you something to drink?
- c. How do you like your coffee?
- d. Have you just arrived in Hong Kong?
- e. How do you find Singapore?
- f. Which date each month would you like your statement to be sent?
- g. Would you need the gold or silver plan?
- h. Is there anything I can do for you?
- i. When would you be able to complete the work?
- j. Would you be able to give me the details now or shall I call you back later?
- k. Do you offer any discounts?
- l. You'd be happy for me to call you back in two weeks, then?
- m. Do you need any help with filling in the form?
- n. Would this be for your use or your spouse's use?
- o. Would you sign up now if I give you an upgrade to our premium plan?

a.3 b.2 c.1 d.3 e.1 f.2 g.4 h.1  
 i.2 j.4 k.3 l.5 m.3 n.4 o.5

**BULATS**  
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 (852) 2893 6134







## Banking Crossword

Solve the “banking vocabulary” crossword by solving the clues below the crossword. You’ll find the solution below the crossword.

Across

2. money lent by a bank and that must be repaid with interest.
3. the local office of a bank.
6. change money from one currency to another.
8. an arrangement with a bank to keep your money and take it out when you want.
9. bank account deficit caused by taking out more money than is paid in.
13. a person employed in a bank to receive and pay out money. (UK)
14. a bank employee who receives and pays out money. (US)
15. a sum deducted from a bank account (also called a withdrawal).
17. a record of transactions in a bank account (often produced monthly).
18. a number that expresses the value of a coin or bill.

Down

1. money paid for borrowing money.
4. fake money made in order to deceive.
5. an amount of money placed with a bank.
7. cash earnings minus outflows for fixed- and working-capital investment.
10. written order to a bank to pay the stated sum from one's account.
11. the difference between credits and debits in an account.
12. money that is used by a country.
16. the state of owing something especially money.



Across  
16. debt  
12. currency  
5. deposit  
14. cashier  
13. teller  
3. branch  
9. overdraft  
2. loan  
10. cheque  
11. balance  
4. counterfeit  
1. interest  
7. cashflow  
18. denomination  
15. debit  
8. account  
6. exchange

## The Key to Perfect Business Writing FREE SEMINAR FOR HR AND L&D PROFESSIONALS

Creating effective English writing to a consistently professional standard is sometimes a challenge. As an HR/L&D professional, you are probably required to write a number of documents to a range of different audiences. You can reduce the time and frustration spent on writing by learning a few of these key aspects.

By planning, by understanding your audience, by using the most appropriate language structures, by selecting an appropriate level of formality and choice of vocabulary will allow you to communicate with ease and clarity, avoiding the many pitfalls people experience when communicating through writing.

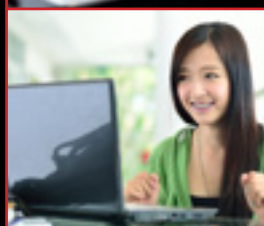
This **free seminar** for HR and L&D professionals allows participants to polish their writing skills so that any document meets its aim first time around. This will save you time, brain power and frustration!

You will learn:

- Organisation and planning tips;
- Using tone & style to your advantage;
- Modernising your English writing vocabulary;
- Structural techniques for clear writing; and
- Achieve your writing goals.

**Book your Free Place Today!**

THE Business English Training  
Language Key



### Seminar Information

Date: 27 June 2014  
Time: 13:00 – 17:00  
Place: HKMA, Causeway Bay

### Speaker

Lachlan Robertson  
Director of Training

### Agenda

13:00 – 13:30 Registration  
13:30 – 14:00 WETE Demo  
14:00 – 15:00 Seminar  
15:00 – 16:00 Refreshments  
16:00 – 17:00 Seminar

### Who Should Attend?

HR and/or L&D Professionals

### For registration, please feel free to contact:

Kana Law  
2893-6134  
kanalaw@languagekey.com

A businessman on his deathbed called his friend and said, “Bill, I want you to promise me that when I die you will have my body cremated.”

“And what,” his friend asked, “do you want me to do with your ashes?”

The businessman said, “Just put them in an envelope and mail them to the Income Tax Department. Write on the envelope, “Now, you have everything!”



The boss returned from lunch in a good mood and called all the staff in to listen to a couple of jokes he had learnt.

Everybody but one girl cried with laughter.

“What’s the matter?” grumbled the boss. “Haven’t you got a sense of humour?”

“I don’t have to laugh,” she replied. “I’m leaving on Friday.”

A man was complaining to his neighbour at the pub, “Yesterday, I thought I’d solved all my problems. I thought I’d found a way to forget my mother-in-law. I went to the pub and got drunk.”

“Did it work?”

“No, when I got home I found two of her waiting.”

## Learning English Apps



**How to Speak Real English I** (iphone . android . free)  
[www.http://ds-t-modern-english-studio.android.informer.com/](http://ds-t-modern-english-studio.android.informer.com/)  
Beginner to advanced levels (+ business English). It currently includes 20 lessons. Listen, learn phrases, and practice.



**Idioms in English** (iphone . android . free)  
<http://www.amideast.org/testing/toeic-usaenglish4success/idioms-english-mobile-app-itunes>  
As well as learning new idioms, this app will help you improve vocabulary, listening comprehension & English pronunciation.



## Questions answers and tips with Dr English

If you have any questions that you would like to have answered by Dr English then email us:  
[editor@languagekey.com](mailto:editor@languagekey.com)

**Q** Could you tell me in which cases would I use “among” and “between”? I always get confused between the two.

**A** Use **among** when referring to a group of more than two. Use **between** when referring to a group of two. For example: **The seven shareholders shared the company profits among themselves.** And: **John Ho and Alice Tung share a sales bonus of HK\$100,000 between themselves.**

**Q** What is the difference in usage between “due to” and “because of”?

**A** **Due to** modifies nouns and is generally used after some form of the verb **to be** (**is, are, was, were**, etc.). For example: **Jan’s success is due to talent and confidence (due to modifies success).** **Because of** modifies verbs: **John resigned because of poor health (because of modifies resigned).**

**Q** Is their a preferred or best way to write a date in English? There appears to be a number of options.

**A** It is much clearer to your reader if you write the date out in full, including the day, month and year. If you are replying to a letter or email in the same month that the initial letter or email was written, it’s not necessary to include the year.

Here are the three commonly accepted date formats: **15 November 20xx, November 15, 20xx or November 15th, 20xx.** The first of these is by far the most common format since it avoids the use of

any punctuation and is therefore easier for you to write.

Avoid **15/11/20xx** or **11/15/20xx** as these can be potentially confusing. In British English, the order is date, month, year. In American English, the order is month, date, year.

**Q** My boss keeps telling me to use British English. Which is better, American or British English?

**A** Neither variety of English is better. It depends on which English you will be most exposed to. If you are moving to the US then learn American English. If you’re going to work for a British company then learn British English. If you’re going to work for an American company, learn American English. Also, if you’re already working for a company that is neither British nor American, check with the HR department which variety of English they prefer.

The important thing is to be consistent in whichever variety of English you use. Don’t mix up the two varieties, particularly spellings of words, in the same document.

**Q** Is there any difference in meaning between the two auxiliary verbs “shall” and “will”?

There is no difference in meaning between the two words. In the past, people commonly used **I shall** or **we shall** to refer to the simple future, not **I will** or **we will**. But **will** has since replaced **shall** as the people’s choice. **Shall** can still be used with **I** and **we** in an offer or a proposal: **Shall we go now?**

## Getting Native Speakers to Slow Down

One of the biggest problems is speed. Native speakers, especially business people, tend to speak very quickly on the telephone. Here are some practical tips to get native speakers of English to slow down!

### Immediately ask the person to speak slowly:

- Could you speak more slowly, please?
- Would you mind speaking more slowly, please?
- Would you slow down a little, please?

### When taking note of a name or important information, repeat each piece of information as the person speaks:

- So, you say you can give us a discount of 10%?
- OK, you are willing to extend the warranty to 30 days, right?
- Your number is 2718 3892 and your email address is.....
- Let me just confirm that. Your name is Andy Johnson.
- Let me just repeat what you have said.
- I’d just like to confirm what you’ve just told me.

This is an especially effective tool. By repeating each important piece of information, or each number or letter, you automatically slow the speaker down.

### Do not say you have understood if you have not. Ask the person to repeat until you have understood:

- I’m sorry, I don’t understand what you’re saying.

- I’m afraid I don’t know what you mean.
- I sorry, but I don’t follow you.
- Would you mind going over that again?
- Could you repeat that, please?
- Could you explain what you mean?

Remember that the other person needs to make himself/herself understood and it is in his/her interest to make sure that you have understood. If you ask a person to explain more than twice they will usually slow down.

### If the person doesn’t slow down, begin speaking your own language!

A sentence or two of another language spoken quickly will remind the person that they are fortunate because THEY do not need to speak a different language to communicate. Used carefully, this exercise in humbling the other speaker can be very effective. Just be sure to use it with colleagues and not with a boss.

# TIPS



English Advice





## Workplace English Training **E-Platform**

Workplace English Training E-Platform (WETE) is a self-study e-Learning website offering online business English training to non-native English speakers. WETE is aimed specifically at the corporate market and for adults working in business. HR and training managers are welcome to contact us to arrange a **FREE CORPORATE TRIAL**.

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