

Training: Professional English

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For the article:

Business etiquette classes boom as people relearn how to act at work

World and Press, 1st February issue 2025, page 10, 952 words (only 488 words used)

Topics: world of work • communication • digitalization • work models

Skills: comprehension • analysis • writing a professional email • making a business phone call • speaking • small talk • vocabulary practice (business expressions) • quiz (video meeting etiquette)

Classroom activities: pair work • classroom conversation • role-play

Answers: see pages 5 to 7

Language variety: American English



Training: Professional English

Preliminary Explanations

- **in-person work** – work model referring to working at an office and meeting your coworkers there
- **remote work** – work model including working from home or elsewhere but not in person
- **hybrid work** – work model including a mix of remote work and in-person work
- **Slack** – business communication tool that allows messaging, video and phone calls, file sharing, setting reminders, and other ways of communication
- **verbal communication** – communication that includes words, spoken or written
- **nonverbal communication** – communication that does not include words but facial expressions, body language, eye contact, etc.

Comprehension

Note 📖 For comprehension and analysis only read the headline, subhead, and paragraphs 3, 5, 6, 12, 13, and 15 (488 words in total).

1. List all forms and aspects of office communication that require good soft skills.
2. Point out what the younger and the older generation have difficulties dealing with in the post-pandemic world of work. Summarize your points in your own words in up to three sentences.

Analysis

Explain why a) the younger generation and b) the older generation have the difficulties pointed out in task 2 of the comprehension section.

Discussion

Think • Pair • Share: Think about aspects of today's working world. Note down three aspects that you would find challenging and three aspects that you think would be easy for you to handle. Exchange your thoughts with a partner, and give reasons for your choice. Share your thoughts with the class.

Training

1. Writing a business email

Scenario: You are working in the U.S. as part of the marketing team of a company that sells stationary such as pens, paper clips, or hole punchers. You are planning a marketing campaign in cooperation with a graphic design agency. It is the second time the agency will design adverts for you. These adverts are going to be published in several magazines.

The contact person you have worked with before has emailed you and has asked for further information. You reply with an email suggesting a video meeting to discuss further details (costs, time frame, your first drafts of the adverts that you want to show him or her, etc.).

- Include all expressions from the table below that are typical of office-related communication.
- Write approximately 150 words (without salutation and closing).
- Carefully read through the **Tips!** on the next page before you start.

Expression	Explanation
"I was wondering if you ..."	used in professional emails to politely ask for s.th.
to keep s.o. in the loop	to keep s.o. updated
to have a lot on one's desk	to be very busy
to be on the same page	to agree about s.th.
to get the thumbs-up for s.th.	to get the okay for s.th.
to look forward to doing s.th.	to be happy that s.th. is going to happen
to be convenient for s.o.	to be easy or handy for s.o.

Tips! 📧 A professional email (structure and phrases)

Subject	• Always fill in the email subject field. Don't send a professional email without a subject.
Salutation	• "Dear ..." is often used in professional emails. If you exchange emails with the person more often, you can also say "Hi ..." or "Hello ...". • If you know the addressee already, it is acceptable to use his or her first name. • If you contact someone for the first time, use "Mr." and "Ms." (with a period in American English; in British English "Mr" and "Ms" is used without a period.) • Use a comma after the name of the person. • If you don't know the name of the addressee, use "Dear Sir or Madam, ...".
First sentence	• If the person contacted you and you reply, start with "Thank you for your email." • If you contact the person first, you can start with "I hope you're having a good day." / "I hope this email finds you well." / "How are you?" / "I hope you're doing well." • Remember to capitalize the first letter of the first word of the first sentence even though the salutation before ends with a comma.
Body	• Use formal register in the body and the rest of the email. • Option for the last sentence of the body: "I'm looking forward to hearing from you."
Closing	• Typical closings are "Best wishes" or "Kind regards" before you add your name. • In American English, "Sincerely" or "Sincerely yours" is also appropriate for all professional situations. "Yours faithfully" is used in British English when the recipient is unknown to you.

2. Making a business phone call

Your email to your contact person (task 1) has bounced back – his or her mail inbox is full. You decide to give him or her a phone call to talk about what you wanted to write in the email. Read the instructions and the **Tips!** below about how to make a professional business phone call.

- **Pair work:** Find a partner, and write the phone call dialogue together.
- **Register:** You already know the person you are going to call in the scenario used. You can be a little casual but not too much. The register is still mostly formal to keep the call professional.
- **Introductions:** Introduce yourselves at the beginning. Include your name and company name.
- **Small talk:** Do some small talk before you start talking about the reason why you're calling.
- **Reason:** Say why you are calling. As for the scenario in question, first, mention that the inbox is full; then talk about what you wanted to write in the email.
- **Content:** Use points from your email from task 1 for your conversation. Write up your dialogue.
- **Role-play:** Find another pair, and act out your dialogues.

Tips! 📞 Phrases for a business phone call

Introduction	• Recipient: "Hello / Good afternoon (name of employer); this is (full name) speaking. How can I help you?" • Caller: "Hello, this is (full name) speaking from (company name). How are you?" • Small talk about how both of them are and how their week has been so far. Keep it light and positive.
Main part	• Caller: "Well, I'm actually calling because ... I was wondering if you ... Maybe we could ... What would be good for you ...? What do you think if we ...?" • Recipient: "That sounds great ... Yes, this would work for me ... That's not a problem at all... What about (date, time) ...? ... I'm afraid we won't be able to do that but let me see if I can find another ..."
Closing	• It's important for both to express appreciation and thank each other. • Options: "Perfect, that sounds great. Thank you very much ... I'm looking forward to it ... I'll send everything over to you in a moment ... Great, thanks ... My pleasure, thanks for taking the time ... See you next week ... I am looking forward to talking with you again ... bye."

Vocabulary: Business English



Online-Übung (auch als H5P) für Abonnent:innen in unserem [Kundenportal Digitales Lernen](#)

Business expressions: In professional English, using abbreviations like HR and acronyms like ASAP is common. Read the following ones before you complete the exercises a) and b).

ASAP	as soon as possible
FYI	for your information
CEO	chief executive officer
HR	human resources
SEO	search engine optimization
B2B	business-to-business
CMS	content management system
IMO	in my opinion

a) Match the abbreviations and acronyms with their German translations.

	zu Ihrer/deiner Information
	Geschäftsbeziehung zwischen Unternehmen
	m.E. (meines Erachtens)
	so schnell wie möglich
	Software zum Erstellen von Website-Inhalten
	Geschäftsführer(in)
	Personalabteilung
	Suchmaschinenoptimierung (Verbesserung der Suchergebnisse bei Google und anderen Suchmaschinen)

b) Fill in the gaps of the business email from one employee to a colleague with the abbreviations and acronyms given.

Hi Sam,

Sorry for the short notice but could you please send me your project description _____ ? I'm going to send out our newsletter to our _____ customers within the next hour.

And just _____, our _____ has asked me to improve our _____ so that our customers can find us better online. So, I will be busy with that and can't take on anything else for the rest of the week. Unfortunately, our _____ has been having some problems though, so let's see how these tech issues are going to play out for me ...

P.S. _____ is looking for a new person for our marketing team. Anyone you can think of? We should get someone with social media experience _____.

Thanks and best wishes

...

Quiz

Dos and Don'ts of a video meeting

What is the business etiquette for a professional video meeting? Find out in our quiz.

Activity	Do	Don't
1. Dress appropriately from head to toe.		
2. Check your technology beforehand: Test your camera and microphone.		
3. Mute yourself for the whole meeting.		
4. Place your laptop on your lap.		
5. Be on time. Click on the link five minutes before the meeting to avoid any tech issues.		
6. Join the meeting anywhere you like (e.g., cafés, shared kitchens, library halls)		
7. Mute yourself when you're not talking to avoid background noise.		
8. Answer the door for deliveries to your home.		
9. Learn how to share your screen.		
10. Let your boyfriend or girlfriend work next to you during the meeting.		
11. Let people finish to avoid overlapping speech.		
12. Also use nonverbal communication like nodding your head or giving a thumbs-up.		
13. You're working from home so you can look a bit untidy.		
14. Check the background behind you that people will see during the meeting.		
15. Turn on your camera.		

Answer Key

Comprehension

1. Sample points

- Para. 5: using a calendar, phone calls, sending texts, using Slack
- Para. 6: video meetings, in-person meetings
- Para. 12: verbal and nonverbal communication, eye contact, greetings, basic conversation
- Para. 13: emailing, networking, client dinners

2. Sample table

Younger generation	Older generation
• Traditional aspects from pre-pandemic, in-person working environments and how these aspects fit with the generation's preference for more casual working environments (paras. 3, 12)	• hybrid work (para. 5)
• verbal and nonverbal communication such as eye contact, greetings, basic conversation (para. 12)	• remote work (para. 5)
• formal communication style (para. 12)	• communicating through calendar (para. 5)
• writing emails (para. 13)	• deciding whether to call, text, or use Slack (para. 5)
• networking (para. 13)	• HR, managers, executives: difficulties with unprofessional employee behavior in video meetings (para. 6)
• client dinners (paras. 13, 15)	
• Both employee groups in general: acting professionally in video meetings (para. 6)	

Summary: The younger generation struggles more with the social skills and level of formality required at work. The older generation still has to learn to adjust to new ways of working while relearning the social skills that have rusted during the pandemic. (para. 3 and table above)

Analysis

Sample points

a) Younger generation

- Impact of the coronavirus pandemic: The pandemic did not give younger people the opportunity to develop enough in-person social and communication skills. They don't act professionally enough in video meetings and have insecurities about client dinners, networking, emailing, basic conversation, and nonverbal communication such as greetings and eye contact. (paras. 6, 12, 13, 15)
- They are very used to informal communication on social media and texting and prefer casual working environments. Therefore, it is a challenge for them to act appropriately at the office and adapt to traditional forms of communication and behavior that require formal style. (paras. 3, 6, 12, 15)

b) Older generation

- They have a lot more professional experience, especially regarding in-person office communication. Therefore, they struggle with learning new ways of working such as hybrid and remote work. In today's post-pandemic and digitalized world, they struggle with making a choice between the various forms of communication: using the calendar, phone calls, texting, or using tools like Slack. (paras. 1, 5)
- Because of their experience, managers, executives and HR staff have a greater level of professionalism and are frustrated with the lack of it during video meetings in the hybrid working world. (para. 6)

Discussion

Individual answers

Training

1. Sample email

Subject: New campaign: video meeting?

Dear (first name),

Thank you for your email! And, of course, thank you for **giving us the thumbs-up** for our project. This time our vision will be a little bit bigger than last time.

I was wondering if we could maybe schedule a video meeting to discuss further details. This would help to make sure that **we're all on the same page** in terms of costs, time frame, and the look of the adverts, of course. We have finished some drafts that I could show to you before we discuss further ideas.

What about sometime next week maybe? If you have **a lot on your desk** right now, that's no problem. We can also meet at a later point. Just let me know when it would **be convenient for** you.

I'll **keep you in the loop** about any new ideas we have.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

(146 words)

Best wishes,

(your first name)

2. Sample phone call with the scenario in question.

Caller	Recipient (contact person)
(dialing number)	Hello / Good afternoon (name of agency), this is (full name) speaking. How can I help you?
Hi, (first name of recipient), it's (your first name) from (name of your company). How are you doing today?	Oh, hi (caller's first name)! I'm doing great, thanks, how about you?
I'm fine, too, thanks. It's been a busy week but it's all going well. How is everything going at your end?	Yeah, same here, very busy. It's the beginning of the new year ... many projects are rolling in. But that's not a bad problem to have, is it?
No, absolutely not. We're also looking forward to working with you again this year.	Yes, so are we! It's great it has all come together again. What can I do for you?
Well, I actually wanted to reply to your email and discuss further steps with you about our upcoming project but your inbox seems to be full. My email came right back.	Oh, no, that's too bad. Thanks for letting me know! I wonder who else must have tried to reach me ... Guess I have to do some spring cleaning in there immediately! These tech problems can really drive me mad.
I know, it's such a hassle! Well, that's why I thought I'll just give you a quick call because I was wondering if we could maybe arrange a video meeting to discuss everything about the new campaign – the costs, time frame, etc., and I could also show you some of the drafts we've come up with.	Sure! I'd love to see them. And, yes, of course, we can have a video meeting about it all. What would be a good date for you?
I could still manage this week, but if you have a lot on your desk at the moment, that's fine. We could also meet at a later point. Whenever it's convenient for you.	Great. Yeah, this week is a bit hectic. But the beginning of next week is looking quite good. What about Tuesday, 11 o'clock?
That sounds great! I'll get the video link ready and send it over to you in time.	Perfect, thank you very much! I'm looking forward to it.
Me too, see you next week then. Have a great week!	Thank you, you too!
Bye.	Bye, bye.

Vocabulary

a) Solutions

FYI	zu Ihrer/deiner Information
B2B	Geschäftsbeziehung zwischen Unternehmen
IMO	m.E. (meines Erachtens)
ASAP	so schnell wie möglich
CMS	Software zum Erstellen von Website-Inhalten
CEO	Geschäftsführer(in)
HR	Personalabteilung
SEO	Suchmaschinenoptimierung (Verbesserung der Suchergebnisse bei Google und anderen Suchmaschinen)

b) Solutions

Hi Sam,

Sorry for the short notice but could you please send me your project description **ASAP**? I'm going to send out our newsletter to our **B2B** customers within the next hour.

And just **FYI**, our **CEO** has asked me to improve our **SEO** so that our customers can find us better online. So, I will be busy with that and can't take on anything else for the rest of the week. Unfortunately, our **CMS** has been having some problems though, so let's see how these tech issues are going to play out for me ...

P.S. **HR** is looking for a new person for our marketing team. Anyone you can think of? We should get someone with social media experience **IMO**.

Thanks and best wishes

Quiz

Activity	Do	Don't
1. Dress appropriately from head to toe.	X	
2. Check your technology beforehand: Test your camera and microphone.	X	
3. Mute yourself for the whole meeting.		X
4. Place your laptop on your lap.		X
5. Be on time. Click on the link five minutes before the meeting to avoid any tech issues.	X	
6. Join the meeting anywhere you like (e.g., cafés, shared kitchens, library halls)		X
7. Mute yourself when you're not talking to avoid background noise.	X	
8. Answer the door for deliveries to your home.		X
9. Learn how to share your screen.	X	
10. Let your boyfriend or girlfriend work next to you during the meeting.		X
11. Let people finish to avoid overlapping speech.	X	
12. Also use nonverbal communication like nodding your head or giving a thumbs-up.	X	
13. You're working from home so you can look a bit untidy.		X
14. Check the background behind you that people will see during the meeting.	X	
15. Turn on your camera.	X	

World and Press im Klassensatz: Sichern Sie sich Ihre Vorteile. [Jetzt hier bestellen!](#)

Hinweis: Die Zugangsdaten zu Ihrem persönlichen Abo dürfen Sie nicht an Dritte weitergeben.