

# THE MOST COMMON BUSINESS ENGLISH MISTAKES



# Misusing Prepositions

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Small preposition errors are very common but can significantly affect clarity and professionalism. Many learners translate directly from their first language or rely on instinct, which often leads to incorrect combinations.

## ✗ Discuss about

Wrong: We will discuss about the proposal tomorrow.

Correct: We will **discuss** the proposal tomorrow.

☞ “discuss” does not take “about”

## ✗ Responsible of

Wrong: She is responsible of the project.

Correct: She is **responsible for** the project.

☞ “responsible” is followed by “for”

## ✗ Different than

Wrong: This version is different than the previous one.

Correct: This version is **different from** the previous one.

☞ “different from” is standard in business English

## ✗ Arrive to

Wrong: The package arrived to the office yesterday.

Correct: The package **arrived at** the office yesterday.

☞ “arrive” = at (place), in (city/country)

## ✗ Explain me

Wrong: Can you explain me the process?

Correct: Can you **explain the process to me**?

☞ “explain” = explain something to someone

## ✗ In Monday / in Friday

Wrong: The meeting is in Monday.

Correct: The meeting is **on** Monday.

☞ days of the week = on

## ✗ On 10:30

Wrong: The call is on 10:30.

Correct: The call is at 10:30.

☞ “on” is never used for clock times

# Misusing the Present Perfect Tense

The present perfect tense is one of the most commonly misused verb forms in English, and this is often because many languages do not use a direct equivalent, so learners either avoid it or replace it incorrectly with the past simple.

The present perfect connects the past with the present. It is used when the exact time is not important, or when the result or relevance is still true now.

Here is how the present perfect should be used:

**1. Life experience (no specific time)** - We use the present perfect to talk about experiences without saying exactly when they happened.

- I have worked in international teams.
- She has visited five different countries for business.
- We have implemented this system before.

☞ *The focus is on experience, not the time.*

**2. Recent actions with a present result** - We use it when something has just happened and the result is still important now.

- The manager has approved the budget. (*so we can proceed now*)
- I have sent the email. (*you should have it now*)
- They have completed the report. (*it is now finished*)

**3. Unfinished time periods** - We use it when talking about a time period that is not finished yet (today, this week, this month, this year).

- We have had three meetings this week.
- She has worked on the project today.
- I have spoken to two clients this morning.

**4. With “for” and “since”** - We use the present perfect to talk about duration from the past until now.

- I have worked here for five years.
- He has been in the role since 2020.
- We have used this software for a long time.

# Forgetting Auxiliary Verbs in Questions

A very common mistake in business English is forming questions without the correct auxiliary verb. In English, most questions need an auxiliary such as *do*, *does*, *did*, *have* or *is* to be grammatically correct. Without it, questions often sound incomplete or informal, which can reduce clarity in professional communication. This issue often happens because many languages form questions simply by changing intonation or word order, so learners transfer this pattern into English.



You have some contacts in France?

She manages the project?

You sent the report?

You finished the presentation?



→ **Do you have** some contacts in France?

→ **Does she manage** the project?

→ **Did you send** the report?

→ **Have you finished** the presentation?

## Key point

Auxiliary verbs are essential for question structure. Simply raising your voice at the end of a sentence is not enough in professional communication.

# Not Understanding Business Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verbs are combinations of a verb + a preposition or adverb (e.g. set up, carry out, take over). They are extremely common in everyday and business English, and native speakers often prefer them over more formal single-word verbs, especially in spoken communication, meetings and emails.

Here are a few common business English phrasal verbs:

**Set up** – Create or establish

*We set up a new office in Madrid.*

**Carry out** – Complete or perform a task

*The team carried out a market analysis.*

**Bring up** – Mention a topic

*She brought up the issue in the meeting.*

**Look into** – Investigate

*We are looking into the complaint.*

**Come up with** – Think of an idea or solution

*We need to come up with a new strategy.*

**Get back to** – Reply later

*I will get back to you with an answer.*

**Point out** – Highlight or mention

*He pointed out an error in the report.*

**Settle on** – Decide

*We settled on a new supplier.*

# Countable/Uncountable Nouns

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Uncountable nouns are nouns that we do not usually count as individual items in English. They are often treated as a single mass or concept (e.g. information, advice, equipment, furniture). A very common mistake in business English is adding plural forms or using “a/an” incorrectly with these words.

Here are some common mistakes:

## 1. Adding plural “-s”

We need more informations. → We need more **information**.

The company provided many advices. → The company provided much **advice**.

## 2. Using “a/an” with uncountable nouns

We need a new equipment. → We need **new equipment**.

She gave me an important advice. → She gave me **important advice**.

## 3. Treating uncountable nouns as countable in business contexts

We have many furniture in the office. → We have **a lot of** furniture in the office.

The team shared useful feedbacks. → The team shared useful **feedback**.

# Formal Business Emails

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Writing professional emails in English requires using appropriate openings, clear tone and correct sign-offs. Don't be too informal or use the wrong level of formality.

Here are some common phrases and when to use them:

## 1. Opening an email

**Dear Sir/Madam**, (when you don't know the name)

**Dear Mr Smith**, / **Dear Ms Brown**, (formal and correct title + surname)

**Dear John**, (acceptable in semi-formal or established relationships)

**Hello John**, (neutral / less formal business communication)

## 2. Use questions rather than imperative sentences

Send me the report. → **Could you please send me the report?**

Meet me at 4:30pm. → **Shall we meet at 4:30pm?**

Give me an update on the project. → **Can you give me an update on the project?**

## 3. Use the correct formal sign-off

**Kind regards**, (can be used at any time)

**Best regards**, (can be used at any time)

**Yours sincerely**, (if you know the name)

**Yours faithfully**, (if you don't know the name)

# Why Babel Group?

We are a specialist provider of language, communication and cross-cultural training for international businesses, and have many years of experience working with global organisations. We support teams in developing the English skills they need to communicate clearly, confidently and professionally in an international workplace.

We work closely with our clients to design tailored training programmes that focus on real business communication, from meetings and presentations to emails, negotiations and everyday workplace interaction. Our aim is not only to improve accuracy, but also to help professionals sound more natural and effective in English.

Whether your team needs to refine their business English, reduce common communication errors, or build confidence when working across cultures, we provide practical, engaging training that delivers measurable results.

Our goal is simple: to help your people communicate better, work more effectively together and operate successfully in global business environments.

Contact us today to discuss how we can add value to your business.



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