



Skills 360 – Top 10 Business English Skills (Part 2)

Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of language can help you give instructions or deliver a presentation?
2. Do you think you are good at bargaining or negotiation?
3. How important do you think pronunciation is when speaking English?

Vocabulary

Per se: by or in itself, or considered on its own; "It's not the job, per se, that's so interesting but rather the people I work with."

Skill set: a combination of skills that someone has or that are useful in a particular job; "Andre seems very nice, but are you sure he has the right skill set for the programming job?"

To master: to become an expert at a skill; "If you really want to master Spanish, you need to live in a Spanish-speaking country for at least a year or two."

Sequencing: putting things in a specific order; "I like the ideas, but I'm not sure about the sequencing; I'd suggest rearranging the order."

At this point: now; "Okay, if there's no more questions then at this point I think we should take a little break."

Meanwhile: at the same time something else is happening; "Jose is having fun at the conference; meanwhile, the rest of us are trying to get this tough project finished."

Subsequently: after, in a sequence; "James spent about 10 years in Russia, and he subsequently wrote a book about doing business there."

To lose someone: to make someone confused during an explanation or story; "I'm sorry Brenda but you've totally lost me... could you explain that last point again?"

Adept: skilled; "Have you seen these amazing drawings? I tell you, Sam is one of the most adept designers we have."

To rattle on: to talk a lot, for a long time; "The keynote speaker rattled on for so long about tariffs that I almost fell asleep."

To pick up the thread: to understand the main idea; "He uses a lot of big words and long sentences, so I find it hard to pick up the thread of what he's saying."

Cohesive: combined or put together effectively or logically; "You've got a bunch of great ideas in this proposal, but you need to connect them into a cohesive pitch."

Persuasive: good at making people believe or support something; "We need to put our most persuasive negotiators in the room to increase our chances of success."

To pepper: to use a lot of something in a piece of speech or writing; "I find it annoying how Robert peppers every conversation with *bro* and *buddy*."

Casual circumstances: a relaxed or informal situation; "Sure, your suit looks great at the office, but in more casual circumstances I think you need to dress more informally."

Give and take: a situation where two people or groups each get something they want and give something the other wants; "Are these guys really our partners? They just make demands, and don't seem to understand that it's about give and take."

Compromise: a situation where people accept that they can't get everything they want; "At first they weren't willing to pay me what I asked for, but we found a compromise."

Trade-off: giving up one thing to get another; "Are you really surprised that those cheap pens don't work well? Low price comes with a trade-off in terms of quality."

Hypothetical: imagined, but possible; "Okay, let's talk about a hypothetical situation here: what if we borrow all this money and interest rates go up?"

To get a handle on: to understand; "When I first started here, it took me a couple of months to get a handle on the scheduling software."

To summarize: to give the most important or main ideas about something; "Before you run off, I'd just like to summarize the decisions we've made at today's meeting."

To latch on to: to start using or feel connected to; "I'm glad to see that staff have really latched on to the productivity tips that June shared with us."

Concisely: using few but clear words; "Investors need short and impactful presentations. If you can't explain your idea concisely, you won't get any support."

Verbatim: repeating the exact words; "Just wait a second... I really like what you said and I want to write it out verbatim."

To distill: to separate the main or most important ideas of something; "I really don't have time to read the book, so could you just distill the best parts for me?"

To paraphrase: to state an idea using different (and usually fewer) words; "I'm just paraphrasing here, but Ron told us that we should finish the project by Friday."

To have a knack: to have a natural ability; "A skilled mediator has a knack for making people feel relaxed and calm."

Innate: natural or inborn; "Sure, some accountants have innate math skills, but most got to where they are through hard work."

To enunciate: to pronounce words or sounds very clearly; "It's important to enunciate a little more when talking on the phone so people can understand."

To mumble: to say something softly and/or unclearly; "To be honest, Ken was kind of mumbling in the meeting and I'm not really sure what he said."

Ace: expert; "Dan is such an ace... he just won salesman of the month award for the third time this year."

Step-by-step: moving logically from one stage to another; "In this video, we will explain step-by-step how to set up a MailChimp campaign."

Transcript

Hello and welcome back to the Skills 360 podcast. I'm your host, Tim Simmons, and today I want to finish off our look at the top 10 essential business English skills.

In our last lesson, I focused on small talk and English conversation skills such as expressing opinions, asking questions, rejecting ideas, and getting action. Of course, "conversation" is what comes to mind when someone talks about language skills. But a lot of our English communication is not conversation, *per se*. Your *skill set* has to include a lot more than expressing opinions, agreeing, disagreeing, and making small talk.

Imagine for a second that you're delivering a presentation in English or conducting a training session. What kind of skills do you need in those situations? Well, one thing you need to *master* is talking about *how* something happens or *how* something is done. By that I mean describing a process or giving instructions.

The key skill here is what we call *sequencing*, or putting your ideas in a logical order and making that order clear to your audience. To do this, you might use simple words like "first," "second," "third," "next," and "finally." But you might also use expressions like "*at this point*," "*meanwhile*," and "*subsequently*." Using this kind of language helps you organize your ideas, and you'll be less likely to *lose* your audience.

Connecting words aren't limited to processes and instructions. *Adept* English speakers will use all sorts of words to connect their ideas and structure a good argument. Think about proposing an idea to your boss. Will you *rattle on* and hope he *picks up the thread* of what you're trying to say? Or will you present a *cohesive* and *persuasive* argument using expressions like "because of this," "therefore," "nevertheless," and "furthermore?"

Now I am not suggesting that you *pepper* your speech with these kinds of words just to sound intelligent. There's a time and place for these formal expressions. But the importance of organizing your ideas holds true in any situation. And in more *casual circumstances*, you can simply rely more on simpler words like "and," "but," and "so."

Besides presentations or training, another important situation with a special skill set is bargaining, or negotiating in English. And I'm not just talking about high-level talks on corporate partnerships or negotiating a major business deal. Any situation that involves *give and take*, cooperation, or *compromise* involves a kind of bargaining.

Maybe you and a colleague are trying to design a website together. Or you and your boss are trying to figure out a work schedule. Or you are trying to get two of your employees to agree on a project budget. These are all situations that demand bargaining skills. You need to acknowledge both sides and propose *trade-offs*. Often this requires you to make conditional sentences, using words like "if," "unless," and

“as long as.” And if those statements are [hypothetical](#), you’ll have to make sure you [get a handle on](#) important helping verbs like “would” and “could.”

Okay, I’ve talked a lot today about *organizing* your ideas, and about situations that require clarity of information. This brings me to another essential skill: [summarizing](#). What happens after you’ve presented a clear and logical argument, or you’ve negotiated a compromise in a meeting? Well, you need to ensure everyone can [latch on to](#) the main ideas. That’s when you summarize.

You might hear a summary introduced with expressions like “to sum up,” or “let’s recap briefly.” But the real skill is figuring out what those main ideas or points are and then stating them [concisely](#). You can’t repeat everything that was said [verbatim](#). You need to [distill](#) only what is essential and [paraphrase](#) ideas appropriately.

Now before I do exactly that with my own ideas for this lesson, I’ve got one more essential but challenging skill for you: speaking *clearly*. You probably know some people who seem to just [have a knack](#) for clear speech. But it’s not just [innate](#) talent. You can learn to sound clear too, if you put in the time and effort.

So practice correct pronunciation. Try to [enunciate](#) clearly, even when it doesn’t feel natural for your mouth to make certain shapes or sounds. It gets easier with practice. But if you [mumble](#), or don’t make the effort to try to produce the right sounds and intonation, then it doesn’t matter *what* you say, because people won’t be able to understand you.

Now how about that summary? I’ve covered five essential skills for every [ace](#) English speaker. First, there’s the ability to present a sequence or [step-by-step](#) instructions. Next is the skill of connecting your ideas logically. Then there’s bargaining and summarizing. And finally, you need to work on your pronunciation and intonation.

That’s all for today. If you’d like to test yourself on what we’ve just covered, have a look at the [BusinessEnglishPod.com](#) website. There you’ll find a quiz about today’s show as well as a complete transcript.

So long. And happy learning!

Review

1. Which of the following are examples of sequencing words? Select all that apply.
 - A Meanwhile
 - B Nevertheless
 - C Second
 - D Subsequently
 - E Moreover
 - F But
 - G Finally
 - H At this point

2. Expressions such as "therefore," "because of this," and "furthermore" can help you present a _____ argument.
 - A Cohesive and persuasive
 - B Instructional and limited
 - C Intelligent and casual
 - D Formal and presentational

3. In what type of situation are negotiating skills most useful?
 - A Training
 - B Presentations
 - C Bargaining
 - D Scheduling

4. Which of the following expressions might you find in conditional statements? Select all that apply.
 - A As long as
 - B Nevertheless
 - C Unless
 - D To sum up

5. Summarizing is all about stating main ideas...
 - A ... appropriately.
 - B ... hypothetically.
 - C ... concisely.
 - D ... naturally.

6. Enunciating, or speaking, clearly depends primarily on _____.
 - A Natural ability.
 - B Paraphrasing accurately.
 - C Listener attention.
 - D Effort.

Review Answers

1. Which of the following are examples of sequencing words? [choose all that apply]
A **Meanwhile**
C **Second**
D **Subsequently**
G **Finally**
H **At this point**

2. Expressions such as “therefore,” “because of this,” and “furthermore” can help you present a _____ argument.
A **Cohesive and persuasive**

3. In what type of situation are negotiating skills most useful?
C **Bargaining**

5. Which of the following expressions might you find in conditional statements? Select all that apply.
A **As long as**
C **Unless**

5. Summarizing is all about stating main ideas...
C **... concisely.**

6. Enunciating, or speaking, clearly depends primarily on _____.
D **Effort.**