

**Hirad Specialized English Center**  
**Business Negotiations**

**37 Useful Words and Phrases for Business Negotiations in English**

**1. To bargain**

**Explanation:** To discuss the conditions of an agreement, to negotiate. You can also use this as a noun (something can be a **bargain**) to refer to products **being sold** for a really good price

**Examples:**

"You can't **bargain** with him, he's very inflexible."

"This laptop was such a **bargain**! I paid half as much as you paid for yours and mine is much faster."

**2. Bottom line**

**Explanation:** The most important factor

**Example:**

"The **bottom line** is that we cannot raise both salaries and bonuses."

**3. Alternative**

**Explanation:** A choice that could be better than the present situation.

**Example:**

"Let's consider the **alternatives** before deciding on the best candidate for this position."

**4. To reach consensus**

**Explanation:** To agree on a matter that initially (at first) you disagreed upon.

**Example:**

"After a really long debate, they managed to **reach consensus** on the issue of sick leave."

**5. Counter proposal**

**Explanation:** An alternative solution you offer when you disagree with the one already presented.

**Example:**

"We came with a **counter proposal**, but they weren't open to negotiation."

**6. Deadlock**

**Explanation:** A point in a discussion which takes you nowhere because people cannot reach agreement

**Example:**

"We reached **deadlock** quite early in the discussion, because they weren't willing to listen to our arguments and they didn't make any counter proposals"

**7. Highball / Lowball**

**Explanation:** To highball means to ask for a lot more than you think your partner will agree to offer you. On the contrary, when you lowball, you offer much less than you think is acceptable

**Examples:**

"They started the negotiation by **highballing** their expectations, but we saw right through it."

"I thought my boss was going to **lowball** by giving me a really small raise, but he was reasonable"

**8. Leverage**

**Explanation:** Something that gives you power in a negotiation.

**Example:**

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“The supermarket chain really wanted that land, but the owner didn’t give in easily. He had a lot of **leverage** because the position was ideal.”

### **Phrases You Can Use During a Negotiation**

After reading about the negotiation process, it is very important to learn what to say and when to say it. You can do that by learning some essential phrases to help you out in certain turning points of negotiations.

### **Beginning the Negotiation and Setting the Agenda**

The way you start a discussion is extremely important because it sets the tone for the entire negotiation. It is important to be diplomatic (polite) and efficient at the same time so that you can maximize your outcome. People generally start negotiations by agreeing on the agenda. The agenda consists of all the important points that need to be discussed. You can use the following phrases to start a negotiation.

**9. Let’s start by having a look at the agenda.**

**10. Before we begin, shall we have a look at the main points on the agenda?**

**11. Should we have a look at the main points for today’s discussion?**

### **Listening and Asking for Proposals**

In a negotiation, it is sometimes more important to listen to what the other party has to say than to start by asking for what you want to get out of the negotiation. Be ready to listen and take notes—your partner will appreciate your ability to listen, and you may get a lot of important information you can later use! Ask your partner to give you details about what they want by using any of the following phrases.

**12. What are your views on...?**

**13. Do you have any suggestions for...?**

**14. Would you like to suggest a course of action for**

**15. How do you feel about...?**

### **Making Suggestions and Proposals**

Suggestions and proposals may be presented at any point during negotiations. If you have a proposal to make, you can introduce it by using these phrases:

**16. We think the best way is to...**

**17. We propose/recommend that...**

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When the negotiation reaches deadlock, someone has to come up with solutions. It is really important to keep your mind open and also help your partner see things through different perspectives. Both of these will help the negotiation to be effective.

#### **18. I'd like to suggest a solution.**

### **Arguing for Proposals and Views Presented**

After you suggest solutions, it is crucial to support them with arguments. If the arguments are sound and presented coherently (clearly), you stand much higher chances of getting what you want out of the negotiation. Introduce your arguments with phrases like:

#### **19. The most important reason for this is...**

#### **20. I am basing my solution on three ideas/points/reasons: Firstly,... Secondly,... Last but not least,...**

#### **21. One of the key reasons for this is...**

### **Agreeing with Proposals**

When your partner presents an acceptable suggestion, you can express your agreement by using any of the following phrases

#### **22. I agree with your suggestion.**

#### **23. I think your proposal is acceptable.**

#### **24. That sounds great to us.**

### **Disagreeing with Proposals and Giving Reasons for Disagree**

Disagreeing is one of the most difficult things to do: You don't want to offend your partner, but it is important to let them know when you are not on the same page. You can disagree by using a diplomatic tone if you introduce your concerns like this:

#### **25. I have some reservations about...**

#### **26. Unfortunately, our position is different from yours.**

#### **27. I'm afraid we can't agree o**

### **Compromising**

When you simply cannot get everything you want, you will need to meet your partner halfway. Here are some ways to express you are willing to accept some terms in exchange for others:

#### **28. We might be able to work on..., if you could**

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**29. We could offer you..., if you think you can agree**

**30. Offering you... is the best we can do right now. However, we'd need your approval on...**

**31. In exchange for..., would you agree to**

#### **Clarifying**

Whenever you feel your partner is being vague or ambiguous (imprecise or uncertain), it is extremely important to clarify things on the spot. Otherwise, the negotiation may take the wrong direction and it may be too late to set the record straight. So play it safe and clarify details early on by using any of these phrases:

**32. Let me make sure I got your poi**

**33. I'm not sure I understood your position. Could you please tell me again how you feel about...?**

**34. I just want to make sure I got this part straight.**

### **Negotiation Phrases and Vocabulary in Business En**

#### **Welcoming and Establishing a Rapport**

- It's my pleasure to welcome you to ...
- I would like to welcome you to ...
- Is this your first visit to ...?
- Did you have a good journey?

#### **Setting the Negotiation Ag**

- I would like now to begin by suggesting the following agenda.
- To start with, I think we should establish the overall procedure
- Is this okay with you?

#### **Negotiation Phrases for Making Proposals**

- We'd like to propose that
- We propose / suggest ...
- Regarding your proposal, our position is ...
- How do you feel about ...

#### **Responding to Suggestions**

- Maybe it would be better t
- Perhaps a better idea woul

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- May we offer an alternative? We propose t
- From where we stand, a better solution might b

### **Agreeing – Reacting to a Negotiation Proposal**

- I think we can both agree that...
- I agree with you on that point.
- I think that would be acceptable.

### **Negotiation Phrases for Objecting**

- That's not exactly how I look at it.
- If you look at it from my point of view...
- I have some reservations about that...
- From my perspective...
- I'm afraid we couldn't agree to that...

### **Giving a Reason in Negotiation**

- The reason for that is ...
- This is because ...

### **Prioritising Interests**

- The most important issue for us is ...
- Our intention is ...
- Our main priority is ...
- We might like to ...

### **Giving Clarification in Negotiations**

- If I understood you correctly ...
- Are you suggesting that ...
- Do you mean ...
- What exactly do you mean by ...?
- I'm not sure I fully understand your point.
- Could you clarify one point for me?
- Could you be more specific?
- Can we summarize your position up to this point?
- Am I right in thinking that

### **Negotiation Phrases for Compromisi**

- If you were prepared to ..., we might be able to...
- We are ready to accept your offer; however, there would be one condition.

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- Would you be willing to accept a compromise?
- In return for this, would you be willing to ...?

### Accepting a Negotiation Proposal

- This agreement is acceptable to us.
- I think we have reached an agreement here
- That sounds reasonable.
- I think we have a deal.
- I believe we have an agreement.
- I can agree to that.

### Negotiation Phrases for Concluding

- Let's just summarise our agreement?
- I think you've covered everything.
- Let's just confirm the details, then.
- Have I left anything out?

### Exercise: Negotiating price (negotiation sample)

Read the following negotiation between a television manufacturer and a components company for a 2 year contract for components. Bill is representing the television company and Fleur is representing the component company.

From the context, try to guess what the meaning of the words/phrases in **bold** are. Then do the quiz at the end to check if you are right.

**Fleur:** 'So, we could supply you with 40,000 components per month, for a two-year period at a unit cost of \$4.35 per component.'

**Bill:** 'There seems to have been a slight misunderstanding. You do realise that we want to order nearly a million components. And for that quantity, the price per unit does seem to be very high.'

**Fleur:** 'We have taken into account the size of the order you require. And we have reduced the unit price markedly from what we normally ask. In terms of unit price, **what were you thinking of?**'

**Bill:** 'Well, **we were hoping for something** around \$3.40 per unit. Please bear in mind that we want to order nearly a million components, not a thousand.'

**Fleur:** '\$3.40 per unit. **I am afraid that is out of the question.** If we sold it to you at that price, we would be making loss on every unit sold.'

**Bill:** 'Well, **we have received a quote** from one of your competitors at \$3.53 per unit.'

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**Fleur:** 'I am afraid that we can't match that. But If I were you, I would be asking myself how can they sell the components at such a low price? I would say that they are sacrificing the quality of the component for price. But **there may be some room for manoeuvre**. If you were to increase your order to 50,000 components per months, then we could lower the unit cost to \$4.15.'

**Bill:** 'For 50,000 units per month **we wouldn't expect to pay more than** \$3.85 per unit I would say that this price is **going rate** for this quantity.'

**Fleur:** 'I don't think that we could go that far. Under \$4 per unit. It's not eno

**Bill:** 'Well, **could you meet us halfway?** At \$4 per unit?'

**Fleur:** 'If that's \$4 per unit, 50,000 per month for 2 years. I think we can do that

### Some other expressions for negotiations

#### 1. Explore

\* The reason for our meeting today is... \* As a result of....we are faced with various problems. We were surprised to realise that.... \* Therefore we would appreciate some compensations. We would like to renegotiate the contract. \* Could you be more specific on this point? Could we have more details about... What do you have in mind? I fail to understand how... If I understand you well, you would like to/ you intend to... I don't mean..... I mean..... Maybe I was not clear enough on that point.

#### 2. Make proposals

what would you suggest then? What about.... ? Why not.... ? I have a proposal to put forward : why not organise.... ? We would appreciate if you could...

#### 3. Respond to a proposal

This proposal makes sense/is quite acceptable. Indeed it is possible to.... This would be the ideal solution. \* We appreciate the situation you're in. However.... \* I'm sorry that would put us in a difficult situation. To be frank with you..... But if you could..... we would be able to.... \* I'm afraid that is not feasible/acceptable. Let me explain! Do you realise....? I'd like to remind you that..... I was hoping..... I was expecting..... This is negotiable. We are quite flexible. If we look at it in terms

#### 4. Bargain / make a deal

I have another proposal / solution to put forward. Why not...? There is an alternative solution which consists in... \* If you could.... we would be ready to consider.... \* In exchange, we would appreciate if you could....

#### 5. Agreement

I was sure we could reach a compromise/an agreement. \* To sum up, we agree to.... \* We still have to discuss another minor point which is.... \* We thank you for your understanding and cooperation

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Let me ask you a question first:... I fail to understand how / why/.... You must realise that... We are aware of the problem but don't you think.../ but I am convinced that... I am sorry for the inconvenience... This is due to circumstances beyond our control. We would really appreciate if you could... Would that be possible? Would that satisfy you? I have one proposal / suggestion: what about ... ? We could envisage to..... There is an alternative solution : what about... ? Would you be ready to....? We understand your situation, but it is difficult for us to accept this proposal. I'm sorry but this is not satisfactory. We are expecting some kind of an effort on your part. Frankly this would put us in a difficult situation since... We would be much more in favour of... Let's sum up what we have discussed so far. We would be ready to do this provided you... 3 years would be more realistic / satisfactory / acceptable / feasible. This is an interesting proposal. This is quite acceptable. I am glad we could reach an agreement / compromise.

### Some idioms used in English business negotia

<b>above board</b>	If business negotiations are described as <i>above board</i> , they are open, honest and legal. <i>There are not secret negotiations. Our dealings have always been above board</i>
<b>have an ace up your sleeve</b>	If y <i>have an ace up your sleeve</i> , you have something in reserve with which you can gain an advantage. <i>I'm well prepared for the negotiations. I've got an ace up my sleeve.</i>
<b>hold all the aces</b>	A person or company wh <i>holds all the aces</i> is in a very strong position because they have more advantages than anyone e <i>With low production costs and excellent transport faciliti seem to be holding all the aces..</i>
<b>back to square one</b>	To say that someone is <i>back to square one</i> means that they have not succeeded in what they were trying to do, so they have to start again <i>When they refused the terms of the contract, it was back to sq one for the negotiators..</i>
<b>back to the wall</b>	If you have your <i>back to the wall</i> , you are in serious difficulty. <i>With his back to the wall, the supplier had to accept the d</i>
<b>beggars can't be choosers</b>	This expression means that you should not reject an offer if it is the only possibility you have. You have no choice. <i>"Beggars can't be choosers</i>
<b>bend over backwards</b>	If you <i>bend over backwards</i> , you try very hard to do something, especially to please somebod <i>The director bent over backwards to try and persuade them to accept our proposal.</i>
<b>bide your</b>	If you <i>bide your time</i> , you wait for a good opportunity to do



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<b>time</b>	something. <i>He's not hesitating, he's just biding his time, waiting for the price to drop.</i>
<b>blank cheque</b>	If you give someone a <i>blank cheque</i> , you authorize them to do what they think is best in a difficult situation. <i>Tom was given a blank cheque and told to negotiate the possible.</i>
<b>bone of contention</b>	A <i>bone of contention</i> is a matter or subject about which there is a lot of disagreement <i>The salaries have been agreed on, but opening on Sundays is still a bone of contention.</i>
<b>bring nothing to the table</b>	If you participate in negotiations and <i>bring nothing to the table</i> , you have nothing of interest to offer the other side. <i>We'll never reach an agreement if we don't all bring something to the table.</i>
<b>clinch a deal</b>	In a business relationship, if you <i>clinch a deal</i> , you reach agreement on a proposal or offer. <i>Paul's final argument enabled us to clinch the deal.</i>
<b>drive a hard bargain</b>	A person who <i>drives a hard bargain</i> always makes sure they gain advantage in a business deal. <i>Be prepared for tough negotiations with Dan. He drives a hard bargain.</i>
<b>keep someone posted</b>	If someone asks you to <i>keep them posted</i> , they want you to keep them informed about a situation <i>Our agent promised to keep us posted on developments in the negotiations.</i>
<b>leave the door open</b>	If you <i>leave the door open</i> , you behave in such a way as to allow the possibility of further action. <i>Both parties left the door open for further negotiations.</i>
<b>leave no stone unturned</b>	If you try everything possible in order to achieve something, you <i>leave no stone unturned</i> . <i>The management left no stone unturned in their efforts to reach an agreement.</i>
<b>meet half-way</b>	If you <i>meet someone half way</i> , you accept to make a compromise and give them part of what they are trying to obtain <i>We can't agree to all your conditions but we could perhaps agree meet half-way.</i>

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<b>nitty-gritty</b>	When people <i>get down to the nitty-gritty</i> , they begin to discuss the most important points or the practical details. <i>I was interested in the project, but we didn't get down to the nitty-gritty until his partner arrived</i>
<b>play your cards right</b>	If you <i>play your cards right</i> , you do all that is necessary in order to succeed or to obtain what you want. <i>If we play our cards right, we'll get the contra</i>
<b>play for time</b>	If you <i>play for time</i> , you try to delay or prevent something from happening in order to gain an advantage. <i>He decided to play for time in the hope that the price would decrease.</i>
<b>prepare the ground</b>	When you <i>prepare the ground</i> , you try to make it easier for a future event or action to happen or be accepted. <i>The two foreign ministers prepared the ground for negotiation</i>
<b>sell ice to Eskimos</b>	This expression is used to describe a person who has the ability to persuade someone to accept something totally unnecessary or useless. <i>It's not surprising he</i> <span style="float: right;"><i>He could sel</i></span> <i>ice to Eskimos!</i>
<b>sign on dotted line</b>	If you <i>sign on the dotted line</i> , you formally give your consent something by signing an official document. <i>I consulted a lawyer before signing on the dotted line.</i>
<b>signed, sealed, and delivered</b>	When an agreement, contract or treaty is <i>signed, sealed and delivered</i> , all the legal documents are in order. <i>It is hoped that the agreement will be signed, sealed and delivered before the end of the week.</i>
<b>skating on thin ice</b>	If you are <i>skating on thin ice</i> , you are doing or saying something that could cause disagreement or trouble. <i>Don't mention that subject during the negotiations or you could be skating on thin ice</i>
<b>sticking point</b>	A <i>sticking point</i> is a controversial issue that causes an interruption or blocks progress in discussions or negotiation <i>The choice of distributor was a sticking point in the negotiations.</i>
<b>take stock of the situation</b>	If you <i>take stock of a situation</i> you assess all the aspects in order to form an opinion. <i>He took time to take stock of the situation bef</i> <i>suggestion.</i>
<b>turn on/up</b>	If you <i>turn on or up the heat</i> on someone, you put pressure on them

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**the heat** in order to obtain what you want  
*If the goods are not delivered this week, we'll have to turn up the heat.*

### Negotiation Samples

#### *Negotiations on Service*

**Mark:** So Richard, I'd like to hear more about how you charge for your service.

**Richard:** Sure Mr. Mark. We offer one-year unlimited data storage for \$2000.

**Mark:** Can you clarify the data rate? Exactly how much data storage can be used, when you say it is unlimited?

**Richard:** We have a fair use policy of 10 TB.

**Mark:** Can you bring down the rates? We won't need that much storage anyway.

**Richard:** We have 7 TB storage for 2 years at the same price. I'm sure this is the best package for you.

**Mark:** I don't know, Mark. Let me sleep on it.

#### *Negotiating an Ad Contract*

**Mark:** Mr. Smith, can you please give me your best offer?

**Smith :** Sure Mr. Mark. I can give you 15 seconds of airtime for \$2500 if you sign a contract for 100 such ads.

**Mark** But your price is too high. I am getting a quote for \$2000 from a rival network.

**Smith :** There's a good reason. Their viewership is also 30% smaller than ours. It actually works out to be more expensive.

**Mark** Hmm... Well, I never negotiated the deal with them. Let's do this: give me a rate of \$2000, and I'll sign the contract.

**Smith :** I don't think we can afford it.

**Mark :** Check it up with your boss, Mr. Mark. I am sure he'll give you a go ahead.

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*Salary Negotiations.*

**Richard:** Mrs. Ivy, you know that I applied for a salary increase last month.

**Ivy:** Yes Richard. I've forwarded your request to the human resources manager.

**Richard:** I hope you will consider the matter. My last two annual performance reviews were good, but I haven't had a salary hike for 2 years.

**Ivy:** I am aware of that, Richard, but the salary issues are handled entirely by HR.

**Richard:** I have to admit this is really disappointing.

**Ivy:** Richard, the manager responded that it's not our policy to increase salary by 30%.

**Richard:** So, can I expect 25%?

**Ivy:** I will talk to the manager again about it Richard, but 10% is standard.

**Richard:** Thank you, Mrs. Ivy. I really want to keep working for the company, but I should be able to afford it.

***Negotiating a Delivery Date.***

**Ivy :** Congratulations on winning the order! The deadline for the delivery is 30 days from now.

**Smith :** 30 days? Wow! That's cutting it rather thin. I asked for a 45-day period.

**Ivy :** Come on. You know we can't afford waiting for 45 days for the material. Thirty days is the industry standard.

**Smith :** You're right Mrs. Ivy, but you've asked for a special design modification. That's going to take time. I don't want to disappoint you later.

**Ivy** Hmm.. How soon do you think you can deliver it?

**Smith :** Well, I like working with you, so I am going to make an extra effort. Let's fix it at 36 days.

**Ivy :** Okay, Mr. Smith. That sounds reasonable.

**Some other expressions for negotiations**

1. "I'm sure we'll find a solution we're both happy with."
2. "I want to be fair, and I know you do too."
3. "I have some ideas that may help us both, and I want to hear yours."