



Better at business English

Vocabulary

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How should I use this book?

Better at business English – Vocabulary is designed to help you help yourself when it comes to improving the quality of your written and spoken English. The tips offered here aim to assist you in expanding your vocabulary so that you will be able to express yourself effectively in whatever activity is required for your studies and your future career in a professional (business) environment.

Practise with the exercises on AcademicX.nl

AcademicX.nl is the exercise and test portal of Academic Service. You will find many exercises, tests and assignments related to the topics dealt with in this book. You will receive feedback on your results, pinpointing the areas you still need to work on.

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The light indicates handy tips and reminders.

Visit [AcademicX.nl](https://academicx.nl) for practice material.



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Many examples

The *Beter in...* series is unique in its very accessible approach, with a minimum of theory and a maximum of directly usable guidelines and examples. The many examples are clearly and systematically presented in easy-to-navigate chapters. This makes it easier to expand your vocabulary and use English correctly in a professional context. More information about other titles in this series (e.g., *Better at business English – Communications*, *Beter in spelling*, *Beter in Nederlands*, *Beter in gesprekstechnieken*, *Beter in presenteren*, *Beter in argumenteren* and *Beter in rapporteren*) can be found on the AcademicX.nl portal.

Who is it for?

Better at business English is written for students in the Netherlands in professional higher education (hbo). Thanks to its clear, compact layout, it is ideally suited for both classroom use and independent study. It is designed to be a practical tool, based on the actual needs of teachers and students.

Why?

The way students in higher education learn today is different from how their predecessors learned. The *Beter in...* series recognises this. It provides short, understandable explanations, with examples taken from real business situations and online exercises with clear feedback available 24/7 at the AcademicX.nl portal.

Exercises in the book and online

Test your knowledge per topic with short exercises. Topics are presented point for point, accompanied by a wide variety of exercises. Extra exercises on each topic can be found on the AcademicX.nl portal.

We would like to thank a number of people for their support, encouragement and insightful advice during the preparation of this book. We are grateful to Aleth Bolt and Taalcentrum-vu for their kind permission to use some of our jointly designed course materials (included in Chapter 2). A special word of thanks goes to Marieke Boonstra for teaching us about visual thinking and second language learning. We also express our gratitude to Pien Rotterdam for commenting on the chapter dealing with multi-sensory learning strategies for the benefit of all second-language learners, but particularly for visual thinkers and dyslexics (Chapter 4). Finally, we would also like to thank Astrid and Andy Baxter for suggesting some improvements to the text of this book.

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Before we begin ...

This book aims to help you expand and improve your English vocabulary from level B2, the minimum achievement level set for Dutch higher secondary education, to C1 and beyond. In other words: it aims to help you become truly proficient.

You will *not* find exhaustive lists of words and phrases that are commonly used in your specific area of study and that you need to memorise; what you *will* find is a series of strategies, tools, tips and exercises to find, store and memorise your *own* vocabulary items of interest.

In sum, this book will help you help yourself.

One final consideration: lasting success requires dedication and perseverance, and expanding your vocabulary is no different. What you need is an active combination of the following:

- 1 Discipline – Make it a long-term habit to ‘hunt’ for new words and phrases as well as to consider their contexts.
- 2 Focus – Make conscious and concentrated attempts to memorise new vocabulary in ways that suit you best.
- 3 Confidence – Be convinced that your hard work will pay off in the end; your proficiency levels will improve slowly, but surely.

The useful websites listed in this book have been around for quite some time and are expected to stay where they are for some time to come. However, should you find that any of them has been migrated, you can use clever search terms (by selecting key words) and your own internet search skills to locate the new web address. Of course, you are also actively encouraged to start looking for helpful sites yourself.

We sincerely hope that this book will give you all the tips and instructions you need to become an effective and successful manager of your own learning process.

1 Text Types, Language Styles and the Wonderful World of Dictionaries

During your studies, you will come across various types of text and different language styles. All of these will help you build your vocabulary, allowing you to select purposeful and effective language to communicate whatever you need to communicate. This chapter elaborates on the help that dictionaries can offer and illustrates how vocabulary items of interest can be found in various types of text. Then, it is up to you to find your own relevant texts and start expanding your own vocabulary toolbox.

1.1 What's in this chapter?

- 1.2 A few words on dictionaries + exercise
- 1.3 Informative and entertaining texts: informal and formal elements + exercise
- 1.4 Reports: neutral and formal language + exercise
- 1.5 Textbooks and journals: formal language and technical jargon + exercise
- 1.6 Popular language: slang + exercise
- 1.7 UK English and American English + exercise

1.2 A few words on dictionaries

To discover the world of words and phrases, the first thing you need is a reliable learner's dictionary that lists the meanings of words, their pronunciation and grammar codes, partner words, expressions, synonyms, opposites and usage tips. You will likely be able to use Dutch-English and English-Dutch dictionaries, but English-English dictionaries have a special added advantage: because they offer total immersion in English, the risk of mother-tongue interference will be greatly reduced.

Reliable, top-quality English-English dictionaries include the following:

- Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English, with CD-ROM for reference and vocabulary practice
- Oxford's Advanced Learner's Dictionary, with vocabulary builder and CD-ROM with topic vocabulary banks and integrated dictionary of synonyms

- Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, with CD-ROM containing the complete dictionary and recordings in British and American English
- Collins COBUILD Advanced Dictionary of English
- New Oxford American Dictionary
- Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary

Some of these dictionaries can be consulted on the Internet, free of charge, but their online versions are generally less exhaustive than the print editions. Online dictionaries can be found at www.m-w.com, www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/ and www.ldoceonline.com/ or <http://dictionary.reference.com/>

Of course, many publishing companies also issue thematically related or industry-specific specialist dictionaries for use in business and economics, science and computing, engineering and various fields within the care sector. You are invited to investigate which dictionaries would be useful for you; search the Internet for publishers and include your area of interest as a search term.

Exercise 1

Find a reliable learner's dictionary (book or online version) and look up the words listed below. Check:

- pronunciation and grammar codes
- meaning and partner words

Care Sector:	fragile, ambulatory, deficiency, exposure, struggle, remedy
Science and Technology:	practicable, operational, inference, system, amplify, elaborate
Economics:	entrepreneurial, scarce, commodity, acquisition, merge, purchase

1.3 Informative and entertaining texts: formal and informal elements

The extracts presented in this section contain formal elements (correct and suitable for official communications) as well as informal elements (casual, more relaxed forms of language). When you study texts related to your own field of study, try to determine which words and sentence fragments could be termed 'formal' and which would be 'informal'. Of course, you should look up important words that you do not recognise but which are vital to a proper appreciation of the text.



In a business meeting or presentation, you may opt for an informal version of a word or concept, such as ‘we aim to cut down on costs’; in a written text, you may choose a more formal combination, such as ‘we aim to reduce costs’.

Exercise 2

Indicate which words and phrases mentioned in the texts below would qualify as ‘informal’ and which words and phrases could also be used in a more formal context.

Care Sector

FYI: Can You Overdose On Halloween Candy?

Say you pulled in a really good haul of Halloween candy this year. Like, really good. Months of supply good. What, hypothetically, would happen if you decided to forgo your bland, nutritional diet and embark on every 8-year-old kid’s dream—an all-candy binge? Is it physically possible to experience a dangerous candy overdose? “If you’re talking about one or two days, you could definitely make yourself sick,” according to James Ruff, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Utah and one of the few scientists who didn’t guffaw and delete my email when I asked how long it would take an all-candy diet to turn deadly. “You’re going to feel terrible. You’ll have a huge surge of energy, followed by that characteristic sugar crash once your body releases insulin and your blood sugar level tanks.”*

Science & Technology

Onewheel: the next generation skateboard

Onewheel is a skateboard with one giant wheel in the middle. You place your feet either side, put your weight on one leg to go one way and on the other leg to go the other way. A small motor does the rest. Simple. Onewheel is the brainchild of Kyle Doerksen, an American design engineer who gave up his job at an innovation consulting firm to develop and launch his idea. ... “I started working on the first prototypes four years ago,” he said. “I was a design engineer at IDEO, a project design firm, and designed lots of projects for other people. In July last year I left to pursue this full time.” ... “There’s a ton of tech in there,” said Doerksen. “We have developed a lot of the intellectual property that’s in there. The controller tech is key to making it work. The software looks at the gyro and accelerometer sensors thousands of times a second and figures out how to drive the motor to keep the rider balanced.”†

* Retrieved from <http://www.popsoci.com/article/science/fyi-can-you-overdose-halloween-candy?dom=PSC&loc=recent&lnk=1&con=fyi-can-you-overdose-on-halloween-candy>

† Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/technology-video/10825406/Onewheel-the-next-generation-skateboard.html>

Economics

Geared for Change: Products for the Impoverished

More than a billion people worldwide live in poverty—not a gadget hound’s I-can’t-afford-an-iPhone poverty, but devastating, living-on-a-dollar-a-day poverty. These folks have trouble paying for food, staying healthy, getting an education, and doing many of the other daily things you and I take for granted. In future postings of this column, we’ll discuss new tech that tackles each of these specific problems. But to kick things off, let’s look at a new program that aims at the most obvious problem of the poor: they need more money. ... Of course, most big companies are in the business of selling to the rich, not the poor. That’s where D-Rev comes in. Founded by a veteran humanitarian and staffed by a circuit-designing engineer, D-Rev collaborates with for-profit companies to develop new products. ... So far, D-Rev says, they’ve had a pretty easy time finding companies to participate.*

Exercise 3

Consult an English-English dictionary to look up the words listed below. When you have found the right meaning, do not stop reading: continue to absorb other useful information, for instance concerning the word’s pronunciation, possible additional meanings, its functions and its use.

- haul, binge, bland, nutritional, guffaw, forgo, embark, tank
- either, brainchild, launch, tech, pursue, ton, gyro
- devastating, posting, kick things off, humanitarian, staff

1.4 **Reports: formal elements**

Reviews and reports tend to form a category of their own. Many companies, universities and government institutions have their own templates or guidelines reflecting the verbal identity they wish to adopt. This section lists a few sample extracts.

Exercise 4

Indicate which words and phrases in the fragments below could be termed ‘formal’.

Care Sector

This review was part of a targeted inspection programme in acute NHS hospitals to assess how well older people are treated during their hospital

* Retrieved from <http://www.popsoci.com/scitech/article/2008-02/geared-change-products-impoverished>

stay. In particular, we focused on whether they were treated with dignity and respect and whether their nutritional needs were met.

We reviewed all the information we held about this provider and carried out a visit on 16 May 2011 to ward F1 – Oakley Unit (Stroke rehabilitation) and ward F2 – Elderly care ward. We observed how people were being cared for, talked with people who use services, talked with staff, checked the provider's records and looked at records of people who use services. We spoke to eight members of staff and eight patients.

The inspection teams were led by cqc [Quality Care Council] inspectors joined by a practising, experienced nurse. The inspection team also included an 'expert by experience' – a person who has experience of using services (either first hand or as a carer) and who can provide the patient perspective.[†]

Science & Technology

Digital technologies and networks are now part of everyday work in the sciences, and have enhanced access to and use of scientific data, information, and literature significantly. They offer the promise of accelerating the discovery and communication of knowledge, both within the scientific community and in the broader society, as scientific data and information are made openly available online.

The focus of this project was on computer-mediated or computational scientific knowledge discovery, taken broadly as any research processes enabled by digital computing technologies. Such technologies may include data mining, information retrieval and extraction, artificial intelligence, distributed grid computing, and others. These technological capabilities support computer-mediated knowledge discovery, which some believe is a new paradigm in the conduct of research.[‡]

Economics

Africa boasts significant human and natural resources that can be used to promote industrialization and structural economic transformation through value-addition strategies in all sectors (agriculture, industry and services),

[†] Quality Care Commission, *Dignity and Nutrition for Older People: Review of Compliance* (2011), retrieved from http://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/reports/RN5_Basingstoke_and_North_Hampshire_NHS_Foundation_Trust_RN506_BasingstokeandNorthHampshireHospital_DANI_20110516.pdf

[‡] National Research Council, *The Future of Scientific Knowledge Discovery in Open Networked Environments: Summary of a Workshop* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2012), retrieved from http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/PGA_041695

though not all African countries are rich in natural commodities—some are resource poor.

As well as a growing, predominantly young and urbanizing population, the continent is endowed with many natural resources, including plentiful land and fertile soils, oil and minerals. Africa has about 12 per cent of the world's oil reserves, 42 per cent of its gold, 80–90 per cent of chromium and platinum group metals, and 60 per cent of arable land in addition to vast timber resources.

With such abundance and rising global demand for raw materials, African governments are forging new partnerships, boosting infrastructure investment and sharing skills and technology.*

1.5 Textbooks and journals: formal language and technical jargon

You will find that most course books and academic articles which you need to read for your studies contain relatively formal language mixed with technical jargon, the idiom typical of your discipline. The extracts listed in this section illustrate the point.

Exercise 5

Consider which words in the fragments below could be qualified as general vocabulary and which could be termed jargon.

Care Sector

Macronutrients consist of carbohydrate, protein and fat. These nutrients form the bulk of the diet and supply all the energy needed by the body. Carbohydrates are made up of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen. They are burned during metabolism to produce energy. Carbohydrates in the human diet are mainly in the form of starches and sugars. For many (poorer) people in the developing world, carbohydrate is the main source of energy, accounting for as much as 80% of the food they eat.

Fats are also comprised of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen. The term fat encompasses all fats and oils that are edible and found in human diets. Fats in the body are divided into two groups: storage fat, which provides a reserve of fuel for the body; and structural fat, which is part of the essential structure

* United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, *Economic Report on Africa* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2013) p. 8.

of cells. In developing countries, dietary fat provides a smaller part of total energy (8 to 10%) than carbohydrates.

Proteins are made up of ‘building blocks’ called amino acids, composed of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen (amino group). Proteins from different food sources contain different amounts of amino acids. Proteins from animal origin, such as meat, milk and eggs, contain all essential amino acids in balanced amounts. Essential amino acids are those that the body cannot make itself and must therefore be eaten.[†]

Science & Technology

Although engineers build large, complex systems today, their design and realization is often wrought with setbacks that strain resources to their limits or result in designs that fall short of what is possible. Systems engineering is tasked with mitigating such setbacks by studying the way in which systems are designed and managed [and] then creating methods to support and promote best practices. As systems engineering is largely a human-driven process, setbacks are largely human driven as well, and methods should be resilient to the human component. At present, systems engineering lacks the kind of foundational knowledge required to evaluate candidate methods and tools effectively in this regard. In particular, there exists no sound theory by which one can compare methods.[‡]

Economics

The Big Mac index was invented by *The Economist* in 1986 as a light-hearted guide to whether currencies are at their “correct” level. It is based on the theory of purchasing-power parity (PPP), the notion that in the long run exchange rates should move towards the rate that would equalise the prices of an identical basket of goods and services (in this case, a burger) in any two countries. For example, the average price of a Big Mac in America at the start of 2013 was \$4.37; in China it was only \$2.57 at market exchange rates. So the “raw” Big Mac index says that the yuan was undervalued by 41% at that time. Burgernomics was never intended as a precise gauge of currency misalignment, merely a tool to make exchange-rate theory more digestible. Yet the Big Mac index has become a global standard, included in several economic textbooks and the subject of at least 20 academic studies.[§]

† World Food Programme, *Food and Nutrition Handbook* (WFP, 2003) p. 1.

‡ Sean D. Vermillion et al., “Linking Normative and Descriptive Research with Serious Gaming”, *Procedia Computer Science* 28 (2014) p. 204.

§ Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/content/big-mac-index>



Better at business English – Vocabulary is designed to help you improve the quality of your written and spoken English. The tips offered here assist you in expanding your vocabulary so that you will be able to express yourself effectively. Step by step and assisted by exercises, you will learn how to identify relevant words and phrases and how to approach them. Examples include various types of text drawn from business, science and care sectors.

Correct business English

The *Beter in ... / Better at ...* series is unique in its highly accessible approach, with a minimum of theory and a maximum of directly usable guidelines and examples. This book has been written directly in English by a native speaker and a near-native speaker, both of whom have extensive experience in academic

programmes, higher education and the business world.

Practice

Each chapter starts with a brief description of its structure and main ‘take-home’ message, followed by clear sub-units and practical assignments. More practice material can be found on the AcademicX portal.

A really practical tool

Better at business English is written for students in the Netherlands in professional higher education (HBO). Thanks to its clear, compact layout, it is ideally suited for both classroom use and independent study. The combination of book and online portal make this product a really practical tool, based on the needs and wishes of teachers and students.

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