Business English portfolio

Sam Chamberlain

English teacher, materials writer and former IELTS Speaking examiner

Four samples for teaching, testing and editing English at a software company, written for this application.

9 years
teaching adults and teens in Vietnam

1,500+
IELTS Speaking tests examined for IDP and The British Council

CELTA
qualified, and British

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Matched to the role

six pages

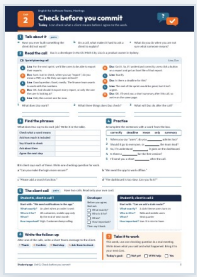


Course design — page 2

English for Software Teams

A 12-unit modular course with needs analysis, can-do checks and quarterly reports.

Design syllabi · Research needs · Report progress · English-speaking activities

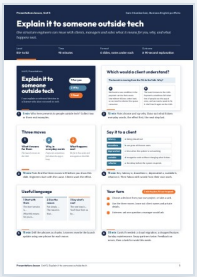


Meetings lesson — pages 3 and 4

Check before you commit

A student page and teacher's notes on clarifying a client's request during a call.

Teach soft skills · Plan lessons · Prepare materials



Presentations lesson — page 5

Explain it to someone outside tech

Six slides with notes on explaining a technical decision in three moves.

Presentation skills · Creative lessons



Testing and editing — page 6

Level checks, examiners and editing

A two-part level check, B1 and B2 descriptors, examiner training and a tracked-changes edit.

Level tests · Recruitment tests · Train examiners · Edit documents

All samples were written in 2026 for this application. The people, projects and companies in them are invented.

Open the online portfolio

sam-chamberlain-business-english.pages.dev

English for Software Teams

Twelve stand-alone units for software staff at B1 to B2, each built on a task they already do at work.

Learners	Level	Course	Class size
Developers, testers, analysts and other staff	B1 to B2	12 units of 90 minutes	Up to 15, usually 7 to 9

Every unit stands alone

Staff miss weeks in busy sprints, so no unit depends on the one before.

The work is the content

Tasks use learners' own projects, without client names or confidential details.

The same route every time

Seven stages, from real experience to a task to try at work that week.

Scope and sequence

the two samples in this portfolio are outlined in orange

Meetings

Unit 1
Stand-up updates
present perfect for progress, "I'm blocked by..."

Unit 2
Check before you commit
checking questions, saying it back
Pages 3 and 4

Unit 3
Disagree without friction
softeners, "I see your point, but..."

Presentations

Unit 4
The sprint demo
signposting, features and benefits

Unit 5
Explain it to someone outside tech
plain words, "What this means for you is..."
Page 5

Unit 6
Questions you can't answer yet
buying time, promising a follow-up

Writing

Unit 7
Status emails
subject lines, short paragraphs, a clear ask

Unit 8
Bug reports
steps to reproduce, expected and actual

Unit 9
Review comments
suggestions as questions, "Could we...?"

Clients and careers

Unit 10
Before the call starts
small talk, follow-up questions

Unit 11
When something goes wrong
the passive for neutral reporting

Unit 12
Talking about your work
interviews, describing results

Each unit ends with one can-do statement, for example *I can check what a client means before I agree to the work.*

Progress on one scale

the level-check descriptors on page 6

On entry
Level check and needs survey
The survey of hardest tasks sets the order of units.

Every unit
Can-do check
The learner rates the statement, and the teacher confirms it.

Every four units
Recorded two-minute task
Marked on the same descriptors as the level check.

Every quarter
One-page report
For the learner, their manager and L&D.

Around the classes

Lightning talks

Monthly five-minute talks by staff on a tool or idea from their work.

English lunch table

A weekly drop-in with one topic and no preparation.

Phrase of the week

Posted in a Teams channel with a real example.

Progress report, quarter 1 sample

Learner	Nguyen Thanh Huy, QA Engineer
Attended	9 of 12 classes
Level	B1 at entry, moving towards B2
Strengths	Clear updates, good checking questions
Next	Linking ideas with *so* and *which means*

Unit 2

Check before you commit

Today I can check what a client means before I agree to the work.



1 Talk about it pairs

a Have you ever built something the client did not want?

b On a call, what makes it hard to ask a client to explain?

c What do you do when you are not sure what someone means?

2 Read the call

Duc is a developer in Ho Chi Minh City. Lisa is a product owner in Sydney.

Sprint planning call — Lisa, Duc

L **Lisa** For the next sprint, we'd like users to be able to export their reports.

D **Duc** Sure. Just to check, when you say "export", do you mean a PDF, or a file they can open in Excel?

L **Lisa** Good question. Excel, mostly. The finance team wants to work with the numbers.

D **Duc** OK. And should it export every report, or only the one the user is looking at?

L **Lisa** Only the current one for now.

D **Duc** Got it. So, if I understand correctly, users click a button on a report and get an Excel file of that report.

L **Lisa** Exactly.

D **Duc** Is there a deadline for this?

L **Lisa** The end of the sprint would be great, but it isn't urgent.

D **Duc** OK. I'll send you a short summary after this call, so we're on the same page.

1 What does Lisa want?

2 What three things does Duc check?

3 What will Duc do after the call?

3 Find the phrases

What does Duc say to do each job? Write it in the table.

Check what a word means	
Ask how much is included	
Say it back to check	
Ask about time	
Agree the next step	

4 Practise

A Complete the sentences with a word from the box.

correctly **deadline** **mean** **only** **summary**

1 When you say "users", do you _____ admins too?
2 Should it go to everyone, or _____ the team lead?
3 So, if I understand _____, it goes on the dashboard.
4 Is there a _____ for the first version?
5 I'll send you a short _____ after the call.

B A client says each of these. Write one checking question for each.

a "Can you make the login more secure?"

b "We need the app to work offline."

c "Please add a search function."

d "The dashboard is too slow. Can you fix it?"

5 The client call pairs

Have two calls. Read only your own card.

Student A, client in call 1

Start with: "We need notifications in the app."

What exactly? An alert when an order is sent
Who is it for? All customers, mobile app only
When? By the end of next month
How important? High. Customers keep calling.

Developer

Before you agree, find out:

- ☐ What exactly?
- ☐ Who is it for?
- ☐ When?
- ☐ How important?

Then say it back.

Student B, client in call 2

Start with: "Can we add a dark mode?"

What exactly? A dark theme users turn on
Who is it for? Web and mobile users
When? Next quarter
How important? Low. It is nice to have.

6 Write the follow-up

After one of the calls, write a short Teams message to the client.

1 Thank **2 Confirm** **3 Next step** **4 Ask them to check**

7 Take it to work

This week, use one checking question in a real meeting. Write down what you said and what happened. Bring it to your next class.

Today's goal: ☐ Not yet ☐ With help ☐ Yes

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Check before you commit

Learners see a client's request checked properly, find the language, then use it on a call they cannot finish without asking.

Level	Time	Group	Materials
B1+ to B2	90 minutes	4 to 15, best at 7 to 9	The student page (page 3)

90 minutes, stage by stage

the main speaking task gets the most time

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 min	10 min	12 min	15 min	25 min, the client call	10 min	10 min

1 Talk about it	Reports on last week's work task, then pairs discuss a to c.	*Brings out real problems from their projects.*
2 Read the call	Question 1 for gist, then 2 and 3. Pairs compare.	*The skill is seen in use before any language work.*
3 Find the phrases	Pairs complete the table, then drill. In "a PDF, or a file…?" the voice rises, then falls.	*Meaning and pronunciation are learnt together.*
4 Practise	A alone, then in pairs. B written, then compared with a new partner.	*Accurate forms come before the role play.*
5 The client call	Two calls, roles swapped, partner's card covered. Note errors as you listen.	*The developer needs four details, so every question has a purpose.*
6 Feedback and fix	Board three or four errors. Pairs fix them and replay the opening.	*Correction follows fluency and is used at once.*
7 Write and take it to work	The Teams message, today's goal and this week's task.	*The lesson ends with a message they would really send.*

Answer key

teacher copy, not printed for students

Ex 2 1 Users can export their reports. 2 What "export" means (PDF or Excel), how much is included (every report or only the current one) and the deadline. 3 Send Lisa a short summary.

Ex 3 When you say "export", do you mean…? Should it export every report, or only…? So, if I understand correctly, … Is there a deadline for this? I'll send you a short summary after this call.

Ex 4A 1 mean 2 only 3 correctly 4 deadline 5 summary

Ex 4B Accept any question that narrows the request, for example: a Do you mean two-factor authentication or stronger passwords? b The whole app, or only saved data? c Everything, or only product names? d Which page is slow, and what loading time do you need?

Ex 6 *Hi, thanks for the call. To confirm, customers will get an alert in the mobile app when their order is sent. We'll aim to have it ready by the end of next month. Please let me know if I've missed anything.*

Lower B1

Board the five phrases before exercise 3. Learners match them to the jobs.

Strong B2

Add a hidden risk to each client card, mentioned only if asked.

Online on Teams

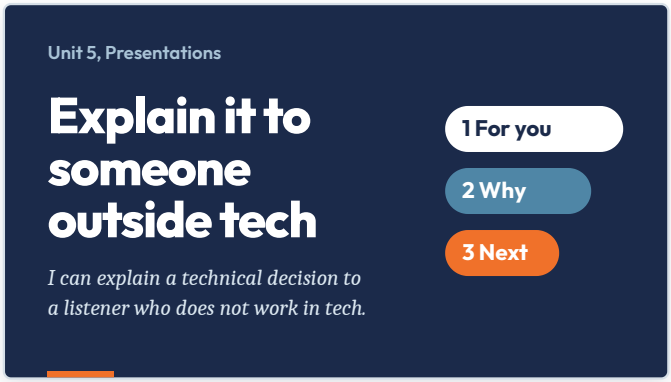
Calls run in breakout rooms. Follow-ups go in the chat.

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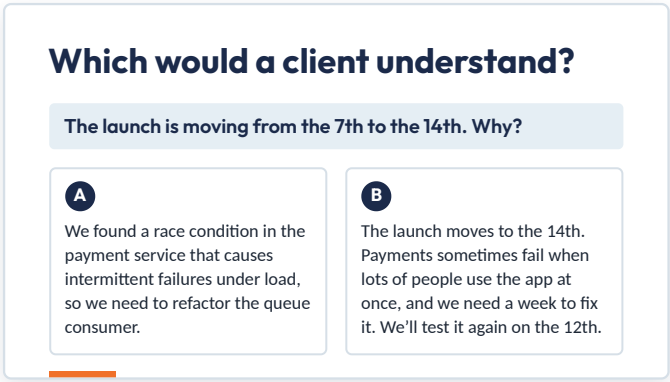
Explain it to someone outside tech

One structure engineers can reuse with clients, managers and sales: what it means for you, why, and what happens next.

Level	Time	Format	Outcome
B1+ to B2	90 minutes	6 slides, notes under each	A 90-second explanation



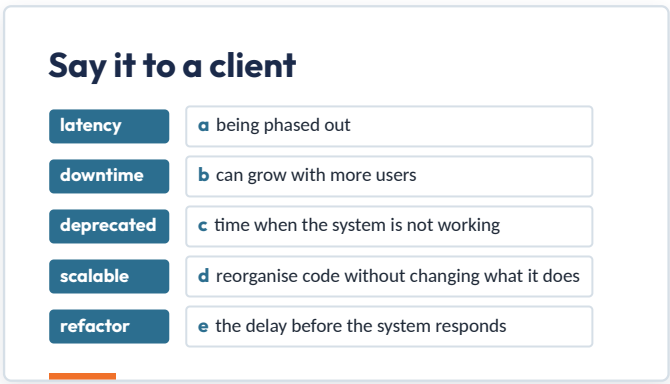
1 **5 min** Who here presents to people outside tech? Collect two or three real examples.



2 **10 min** Pairs choose and say why. Draw out what B does: everyday words, the effect first, the next step last.



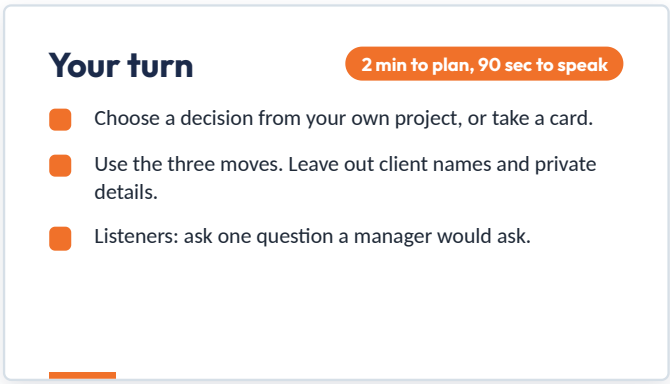
3 **10 min** Pairs find the three moves in B before you show this slide. Engineers start with the cause. Clients want the effect.



4 **15 min** Key: latency e, downtime c, deprecated a, scalable b, refactor d. Then Taboo with words from their own work.



5 **15 min** Drill the phrases as chunks. Learners rewrite the launch update using one phrase for each move.



6 **35 min** Cards if needed: a cloud migration, a dropped feature, Sunday maintenance. Swap partners twice. Feedback on errors, then a task for work this week.

Level checks, examiners and editing

Placement, recruitment and progress on one scale, built on the 1,500+ IELTS Speaking tests I examined.

For	Time	Scale	Result
Staff and shortlisted candidates	25 min written, 11 min speaking	CEFR A2 to C1	A level, set against the role

Part A, written

Microsoft Forms

1. 20 grammar and vocabulary items in work contexts, auto-marked
2. An email and a bug report, 6 questions, auto-marked
3. A 60 to 80-word email reply, teacher-marked

Two versions for recruitment, so questions are not passed on.

Part B, speaking

one examiner, recorded

1. **Your work** (3 min). Role, team and current project.
2. **Explain it** (4 min). A tool or process, to someone outside tech.
3. **Handle it** (4 min). The examiner, as a client, asks for a last-minute change.

Speaking sets the level. Recordings need consent, a retention period and secure storage.

Where B1 ends and B2 begins

most placements turn on this line

Criterion	B1 at work	B2 at work
Message	Simple updates. Listeners sometimes need to ask.	A clear order. Listeners do not need to ask.
Range	Enough to manage, with searching and repetition.	Precise about options, reasons and results.
Accuracy	Frequent errors in long turns, rarely blocking meaning.	Few confusing errors, often self-corrected.
Interaction	Answers clear questions. Asks for repetition.	Checks meaning, follows up, handles the unexpected.
Pronunciation	Mostly clear. Some words hard to catch on a call.	Clear on a call. Stress guides the listener.

Training internal examiners

modelled on my IELTS examiner training, certification and monitoring

1. **Learn the scale**
   Recorded tests with agreed levels and reasons.
2. **Mark and compare**
   Six recordings marked alone, then discussed.
3. **Double-mark live**
   Until five tests in a row agree.
4. **Check for drift**
   Two re-marks every quarter.

Editing English documents

an invented policy line, edited with Track Changes in Word

Remote working policy, section 4 — **Track Changes on**

Employees ~~who~~ working remotely who cannot join an online meeting must ~~to inform to~~ [1] tell their line manager before 9am ~~in case~~ [2] ~~they cannot join the online meeting, and all~~. [3] All company devices must be ~~keep secured~~kept secure [4] at all ~~the time~~times.

Comment
Should staff tell their manager in writing, for example in Teams? Please confirm.

1. **Grammar.** Must takes the base verb.
2. **Meaning.** "In case" means as a precaution. The rule needs a condition.
3. **Clarity.** One rule per sentence.
4. **Grammar.** Passive with the past participle.

The author approves every edit. In a contract, anything that could change the legal meaning becomes a comment, not an edit.