

Teaching the lesson

BD1 | Student pages 1-5 | Separate this pack before sharing

Aim: negotiate a practical decision, explain trade-offs, set conditions and assess suggestions and defend or revise a choice. All situations are fictional and low stakes; students never need to share personal experiences.

Start and language 10 minutes

Use student page 1. Complete the language practice and model a short disagreement. Check better off + -ing and best bet + to + verb. Provided that and as long as introduce conditions here.

Decision rounds 20-25 minutes

Use pages 2-3. Let pairs choose four dilemmas first, then tackle more if time allows. Ask for a reason and one drawback. Invite students to suggest a fourth option if they have a better plan.

Listen and compare 15-20 minutes

Use page 4. Read the script, record it yourself, or paste the separate script into a speech service. Pause after each numbered section. Collect suggestions and things to check, then replay for phrases. Ask students to challenge the recording. Use BD1-Business-Decisions-Listening.mp3. Voices change between pairs of situations: British, Indian, South African and Irish English.

Decision meeting and discussion 15-20 minutes

Use page 5. Use a different dilemma for each role swap. In one-to-one lessons, take the challenging role and then swap. Finish with six discussion questions or set the email as homework.

Scoring, if your group enjoys it

Award one point each for a reason, a drawback, a clear condition and a polite response to a challenge. Add one point for explaining why a suggestion changed or confirmed a decision. Matching the recording is not the only way to succeed.

Support and stretch

For B1+, pre-teach inflate, sample, supplier, reserved and shortlist. Show or read two options at a time if helpful. For B2, ask students to defend a different option by changing one fact, while keeping all other conditions.

Ideas to discuss

The recording models possible approaches, not correct answers. Reward reasons, questions to check, realistic conditions and better alternatives. The suggested letters below are starting points. Treat unconfirmed details as possibilities throughout.

1 A The giant duck. A is a possible starting point. Check access to a pump, setup time and a suitable space. B or C could be reasonable if A is impractical. No pump availability is established.

2 C The mug mystery. C is a possible first step. Call the printer about corrections, cost and delivery before approving or cancelling. B may be practical if the order cannot be corrected in time.

3 B The video call soundtrack. B depends on a suitable room being free and a successful equipment test. Consider noise cancellation, a short break from the band or a colleague hosting elsewhere.

4 C The biscuit budget. C starts by checking requirements and supplier options. The original biscuit box or cake could work if it meets everyone's requirements and stays within budget. No supplier quote is established.

5 A The surprise social media star. A avoids promising unconfirmed stock or dates. Check whether existing stock can be sold and what the supplier can offer. An interest list is not a sales guarantee.

6 A The missing demonstration. A may suit a client who wants to understand the process. A client needing hands-on testing may need that part rescheduled. Explain that the recording is not live. No repair time is established.

7 B The office jungle. B allows suitability, care and the total cost to be checked first. The larger order could make sense if those checks are satisfied. No plant price or shop offer is established.

8 C The team day vote. C means checking details before booking. Keep the original choice if it meets the requirements; revise the shortlist if it does not. The evening quiz fails the stated finish time. No other price or timing is established.

Language answers

Student page 1: Open answers. Examples: a check the remaining agenda; b discussing the key item first; c we move the smaller items to email. Accept any grammatical completion that makes sense.

Student page 4, useful phrases: a bet; b point; c off; d Resist; e Provided; f balance.

How sure are we: likely: there's a good chance; possible but unlikely: there's an outside chance, the chances are slim; impossible under the stated conditions: there's no chance. The middle two overlap and have no fixed numerical value.

The decision desk

Suggested approaches | Pause between situations | Students may disagree

Welcome to the decision desk. You've discussed eight business dilemmas. Now here are some suggested ways forward, but they aren't the only choices. We don't have all the information, and you may have a better idea. As you listen, notice what we suggest, what we're assuming, and what we'd need to check. You don't get a point just for choosing the same letter as us. A different plan with a good reason could be just as convincing. Pause after each situation, compare our suggestion with yours, and decide what you'd actually do.

One. The giant duck. We'd probably start with option A. Our best bet is to deflate the duck, provided we can inflate it again when we get there. Hopefully, the venue will have a pump we can borrow, but we certainly shouldn't turn up and expect one to appear. Get on the phone and ask. We'd also need to check how long the duck takes to inflate and whether there's somewhere suitable to do it. If the venue can't help, could we borrow a pump elsewhere or bring our own? Hiring the larger van might be worth considering if the duck would fit and we couldn't arrange a pump. The poster could be a perfectly sensible backup if transporting the duck became too complicated. So we'd lean towards A, but only after checking the practical details. What would you ask before putting a giant duck in a van?

Two. The mug mystery. We'd lean towards option C, but the first step would be a phone call. Get on the phone and call the printer. They might be able to correct the design today, or they might need more time. Ask what they can change, whether there's an extra charge, and when they could deliver. There's no point in cancelling an order before you've found out whether it can be corrected in time. If they can fix it within the budget and deliver before the visit, ask for a new sample and approve that in writing. If they can't, plain mugs might be the more practical choice. You could even decide that mugs aren't essential for this visit. Perhaps your clients would enjoy the joke, but we'd want a good reason before deliberately approving the wrong design. Which matters more here: the gift itself, the company name, or simply making the visitors feel welcome?

Three. The video call soundtrack. Option B looks promising, but we don't know whether a quiet room is actually free. We'd check that first, then test the internet, sound and screen sharing. If a suitable room is available and everything works, we'd be better off moving now rather than waiting until the client joins. If there isn't time to move, noise cancellation might help, but we'd test it instead of assuming it will remove a brass band. Could the band take a short break? Could a colleague host the demonstration from somewhere quieter? There may be another option we haven't listed. Moving the appointment to next month seems a big change for a twenty-minute demonstration, though the client might prefer a different time. We'd try to keep the meeting today if possible. How would you explain the unexpected soundtrack without making a small problem sound like a disaster?

The decision desk

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Four. The biscuit budget. We'd begin with option C: find out what people can eat before ordering. Send a short message today and give people a clear time to reply. Meanwhile, ask the supplier about prices, quantities and labelled choices. Hopefully, there'll be a suitable selection within forty-eight pounds, but we don't know that yet. If not, could we choose simpler refreshments or use another supplier? The mixed biscuit box might work if everyone has a suitable choice. A cake might work too, depending on the ingredients, portion sizes and what the group wants. We'd avoid spending the full budget before checking those details. We could also ask whether people even want sweet snacks. Perhaps fruit or something savoury would be more welcome. The aim is to make sure everyone has something suitable, rather than to win an imaginary cake competition. What would you check before placing the order?

Five. The surprise social media star. We'd probably go for option A. We'd explain that stock is limited and invite interested people to leave their details without paying. First, though, we'd check whether the twelve mascots are available to sell and contact the supplier about another batch. They might be able to produce more quickly, or there might be a long wait. We don't know. Resist the temptation to promise a date just because people are excited. Once we have a realistic estimate, we can tell people what we can offer and be clear about any uncertainty. An interest list might help us judge demand, although people who ask for an update won't necessarily buy. Removing the post could make sense if it gives misleading information, but perhaps we could update it instead. Would you try a small batch, collect interest first, or find another way to test demand?

Six. The missing demonstration. Option A would be our starting point, but we'd check what the client needs from today's workshop. If they mainly want to understand the process, screenshots and an earlier recording might be enough to get a useful discussion going. Provided that the recording covers the process the client needs, we could show it, pause it and answer questions. We'd explain clearly that it isn't live. At the same time, someone could contact support to find out whether the app might be available soon. If the client needs to test the app themselves, a recording won't meet that need, and rescheduling that part might be the better choice. We'd agree on a follow-up rather than promise a repair time we haven't confirmed. How much of the workshop could still go ahead, and what would you need to tell the client first?

The decision desk

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Seven. The office jungle. We'd lean towards option B: check what will suit the space and price a small trial. Ask someone who knows about plants, or speak to a local shop. Hopefully, they can suggest something suitable for the light available, but we'd also need to think about pots, watering and who will look after everything. The twenty-plant offer might be excellent value if the plants suit reception and the team can care for them. A small trial might cost more per plant, but it could help us avoid an expensive mistake. If living plants aren't practical, perhaps a different decoration would do the job. Before buying anything, we'd ask what the team wants the reception area to feel like. Calm and welcoming? Bright and playful? A jungle is one possibility. What would you suggest if the plants looked lovely in the shop but needed more light than reception gets?

Eight. The team day vote. We'd start with option C: check the details before booking. Ask the cooking-class organiser about the price, finishing time and access arrangements. It might fit the budget and schedule, or it might not. We'd also check what colleagues need in order to take part comfortably. If the original winner meets those requirements, there may be no reason to vote again. If it doesn't, we could explain the problem and offer a revised shortlist. On balance, a new vote is fairer than quietly replacing the winning choice with something completely different. The evening quiz might suit some people, but it doesn't meet the stated requirement to finish by five. Could we find an afternoon quiz, a different cooking session, or an activity suggested by the team? Participation is optional, so we'd also make it easy for someone to decline. How would you keep the decision fair without turning it into another long meeting?

Those are our suggestions. Now it's over to you. Which idea would you keep, change or reject? Did we make an assumption you disagree with? You may have a better solution than any of the choices on the page. Pick one situation, explain your preferred plan and say what you'd need to check before going ahead. You don't need to agree with the recording. You need to make a convincing case.