

Notes and messages

by Adrian Doff

Level: Intermediate and above

Aims:

- To use common expressions for talking about notes, messages, and minutes
- To practise office procedures which involve taking notes, leaving messages, etc. using English

There are three ways to use this worksheet:

- Give the worksheet to students to work through independently and then in the next lesson go through the exercises and deal with any points that arise.
- Use the worksheet for an active classroom lesson. The notes below give ideas for doing this.
- Do not give the worksheet out in class, but use it as the basis for your own lesson, getting ideas and phrases from the students and presenting language on the board (use the notes below to help you). Then give out the worksheet at the end, and ask the students to do the exercises for homework.

Worksheet

1 Warm up: Establishing the concept

Write on the board:

*take notes**take a message*

Get the class to think about when they take notes in their work (e.g. in a meeting, if someone's explaining something on the phone), and when they might take a message (e.g. if their boss is away and someone calls). Ask them if they ever use English for this. Use this to establish the meaning of *notes* and a *message*.

Give out the Worksheet.

2 Language focus

1. 'message'. Look at situation A at the top of the worksheet, and establish what's happening: she's a receptionist or secretary (or maybe just a colleague); Keith Robinson wants to talk to Ira Wülfiing; she isn't in the office; the secretary *takes a message*.

Set up an example to present what verbs we use with *message*, .e.g.

Marie, you want to speak to Alex, but he isn't there. I'm there, so I can *take a message* (= I write down what you want to say) – you are *leaving a message* for him. Later, I will *give him the message*.

Write the phrases on the board, and read through the examples on the worksheet.

Extension: Role-play practice. In pairs, students improvise a phone conversation:*Student A:* Phones B and asks to speak to XX (name of a colleague).*Student B:* Says XX isn't there.

Student A leaves a message.

Demonstrate this first with one or two students.

2. 'note' and 'notes'. Look at Situations B and C at the top of the worksheet.

Establish what's happening in each situation, and use this to show the difference between a note and notes:

- in B the person is just giving his name and phone number (*a note* = just a few words or numbers)
- in C she's writing things down while the other person is speaking (*notes* = a series of points)

Read through the examples, and point out these phrases:

- make a note *of* or *take a note of* (they mean the same)
- take notes or *make notes* (they mean the same – we often use 'take notes' when we listen and 'make notes' when we read, but this is not an important difference)

Point out the verb *note down*. This can be used instead of *make a note of* or *take notes*. (We must say *note down*, not *note* on its own here: e.g. *I'll just note down your address* rather than *I'll just note your address*.)

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Extension: Role-play practice. In pairs, students improvise a phone conversation:

Student A: Phones B and asks to speak to XX (name of a colleague)

Student B: Says XX isn't there, and makes a note of A's name and phone number.

Demonstrate this first with one or two students, taking the role of B. Include the phrase *I'll just make a note of ...* or *I'll just note down ...* in what you say. Write the 'note' on the board, and ask them to spell their name – this is a good way to check that students can spell words and say phone numbers correctly!

3. **'minutes'.** Read the example, and make sure students understand what *minutes* are. Point out that the common expression is to *take the minutes (of a meeting)* (not *write* or *make the minutes*).

To practise this, ask students:

- who normally takes the minutes of meetings in their company
- whether they have ever taken the minutes of a meeting, and whether they found it difficult.

3 Practice

1. **Talk or write.** Students write sentences. Then ask them to read out what they have written.

Alternative: Give students a few moments to think about an occasion they remember, and possibly make a few notes. Then ask them in turn to tell the others what they did.

Larger classes: Do this as pairwork, then ask a few students what they found out from their partner.

2. **Exercise. Preparation:** check that students know these verb forms:

- *take, took, taken*
- *make, made, made*
- *leave, left, left*

Do the exercise together round the class; or let students do it alone or in pairs, then go through it together.

Answers:

- I'd just like to make a note of your telephone number.
 - First of all, let's read the minutes of last week's meeting.
 - 'She isn't here just now.' – 'OK. Could you give her a message?'
 - This is very important. Could you note it down, so that we don't forget?
- made
 - take or make
 - left
 - took
 - give

Other language areas you could explore:

1. **Other phrases connected with communicating:**

- *give a speech, a talk, a presentation, a lecture*
- *write a report (on), write a summary (of)*

2. **Other expressions with 'note':**

- *write a note to someone*
- *leave a note for someone*

3. **Adjectives that go with 'notes':**

- *take brief notes, detailed/extensive notes*

4. **Details:**

- *to get/give (all) the details, note down the details*
- *Could you give me the details (about) ...?*
- *Could you give me any more details?*
- *to go into detail (about)*

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BUSINESS & ESP WORKSHEET



A	B	C
'I'm afraid Ira Wülfing isn't here at the moment. Can I take a message?'	'OK, I'll make a note of your name and phone number ...'	'Could you speak a bit more slowly? I need to take some notes.'
Keith Robson phoned. Please call him back around 4.00.	Keith Robinson 081 - 65732	Presentation: • powerpoint, beamer • 50 people? • info packs, brochures
a message	a note	notes

Message

- leave (someone) a message
- give someone a message
- take a message

Sorry, there's no-one here at the moment. Please **leave a message** after the tone.
 Could you **give him a message**? Tell him that Sue phoned.
 The sales manager is in a meeting, but I can **take a message** if you like.

Note, notes

make (or take) a note of = listen and write a few words or phrases.

You can make a note of:

- someone's name, address or phone number I'll just **make a note** of your email address.
- the time of a meeting or appointment 'The meeting's at 3.00 in Room 704.' 'OK, I'll **make a note of that**.'

take (or make) notes = write down main points while someone is talking.

You might take notes during:

- a talk or a presentation I **took** detailed **notes** of everything she said.
- a meeting I haven't got all the details. I just **took** a few brief **notes**.

We can also use the verb note down:

- I'll just **note down** your email address.
- I **noted down** most of the important points from the meeting.
- Here's my phone number – could you **note it down**?
- You can also make notes from something you read:
- I've read the report carefully, and I've **made** a few **notes** of points that we might discuss.

Minutes

Take minutes = write a summary of what people said in a meeting (an official record).
 Usually one person **takes the minutes** in a meeting, and then types them out.

Talk or write

When was the last time you:

- made a note of something?
- took or made notes?

Write sentences, saying what you did.

Exercises

1. One word is missing from each sentence. Add it in the correct place..

- a I'd just like to make a note your telephone number.
- b First of all, let's read the minutes last week's meeting.
- c 'She isn't here just now.' – 'OK. Could you give a message?'
- d This is very important. Could you note it, so that we don't forget?

2. Fill each gap with a suitable word.

- a I've _____ a note of the place where we're meeting.
- b I'm going to explain how the company operates. Please _____ notes if you want to.
- c I'm going home now, but I've _____ a message for you on your desk.
- d Who _____ the minutes at the last meeting?
- e 'I'm afraid Mr Baker isn't in the office.' 'Oh dear. Could you _____ him a message?'