

## Success and failure

by Adrian Doff

**Level:** Intermediate and above

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Aim:** – To use common expressions for talking about success and failure.  
– To talk about things you succeeded and didn't succeed in doing.

**There are three ways of using 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 students to do the exercises for homework.

### Warm-up

**Warm-up: Establishing the concept**

Write on the board: *How to be successful*, and then write *You need to...* Ask students to think about their own job, and note down three things you need to do to be successful. Then get the students to give you their ideas.

**Larger classes**

Pairwork: Students exchange ideas with their partner and then talk about them with the whole class together.

Now hand out the worksheet.

### Worksheet

**Language focus**

1. **succeed in, manage to:** Look at dialogue A at the top of the worksheet and establish what is happening: someone is setting up a new computer, or repairing a computer system that has broken down. Point out that the context uses two verbs: *manage* and *succeed*. These mean the same, but they have different forms:

*manage + to + infinitive*, and *succeed + in + verb -ing*

Read the examples.

Point out these spelling features:

- *success* (double c and double s)
- *succeed* (double e)
- *successful, successfully* (one l in *successful*, two in *successfully*)

Ask students: *Think about this week. What did you manage to do / succeed in doing? What didn't you manage to do / didn't succeed in doing?*

**Larger classes:** Do this as a quick pairwork activity. Students ask each other. As a round-up, ask a few students what they found out from their partner.

2. **success, successful:** Look at dialogue B at the top of the worksheet. Establish what it is about: It's about an international café chain who are expanding to the global market. If you like, ask students what café chains they know that are like this (e.g. *Starbucks, Costa*), whether they go to them, what they think of them, etc.

Point out the verb, noun and adjective forms and read the examples.

Ask students to think of a company they know that is a success. Discuss what successes they have had, and why they have been so successful (if you like, you could guide them by suggesting particular areas, e.g. clothes, cars, drinks). Try to use the words *succeed, success* and *successful* in talking about it.

3. **fail, failure:** Look at dialogue C at the top of the worksheet. A company brought out a new range of goods, which failed because it was too expensive. Discuss what the 'Hitech' range might be, e.g. saucepans, running shoes or furniture.

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Read the examples, and point out that we often say something was *a complete failure* (or *a total failure*). Ask students to think of a company they know (or something a company has done) that has been a failure. Ask whether they think it was a complete failure, and why they think it failed.

### 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 the topic and possibly make a few notes. Then ask them in turn to talk about it.

**Larger classes:** Do this as pairwork, then ask a few students what they said.

#### 2. Exercises:

Let students do the exercise in pairs, thinking of as many possible answers as they can. Then go through it together. Possible answers:

1. a) *failed to*  
b) *managed to*  
c) *succeed in*  
d) *successful in*  
e) *manage to*
2. a) *success*  
b) *successful*  
c) *failure*  
d) *success*

#### Other language areas you could explore:

##### 1. Ways in which businesses fail

- *don't sell their products, don't make a profit, get into debt, have high overheads*
- *go bankrupt, go into liquidation*

##### 2. Ways in which businesses succeed

- *win contracts, market their products, make a profit, reduce their overheads*
- *expand into new markets, open new branches, make acquisitions*

##### 3. unsuccessful, not successful

- *'he wasn't very successful', 'we were unsuccessful' as a softer way to 'he/we failed'*

##### 4. achievement

- *achieve goals/aims; a (great) achievement*

##### 5. hit and flop (used mainly for books, films, music etc.)

- *It was an (big) hit; it was a (complete, total) flop*

##### 4. Ways in which businesses try to do things

- *try to, attempt to; the first / another / a final attempt (to); make a bid, a successful/unsuccessful bid*

