

Level: Elementary (A2)

Time: Approximately 120 minutes

Business topics: Difficult conversations at work.

Business language: useful business vocabulary, collocations, gerunds and infinitives, giving opinions and justifying points of view, writing a list of *dos* and *don'ts*

1. Warmer

- a. Ask students to discuss the questions in pairs. Encourage them to think of as many examples of difficult conversations as possible and the problems that may come up from adopting the wrong approach when delivering bad news. Get students to think about the skills required to handle these situations effectively, for example, communicating clearly, being assertive, showing empathy, etc. Allow each pair to share ideas and discuss each question with the class.

2. Reading comprehension

- a. Give students time to read the text and work individually to choose the title that matches each paragraph. Once they have decided, ask them to check their answers in pairs before checking with the whole class.

Key:

1. *Prepare yourself*
2. *Prepare the other person*
3. *Choose a time and place*
4. *Be direct and factual*

- b. Ask students to read the text again, this time to decide which statements are good ideas, according to the text.

Key:

The tips offered in the article are those in statements 2, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10.

Ask students to justify their answers by finding relevant evidence in the text and use this to correct the wrong sentences, so they reflect the tips given by the article. You may also ask students whether they agree with the recommendations and why.

Possible solutions to bad ideas:

1. *Getting and giving bad news is just part of professional life, so it cannot be avoided.*
3. *You need to (...) support your decision and (...) explain the bad news to the other person.*
5. *It's important to deliver bad news quickly.*
7. *Avoid starting the conversation with a ten-minute general chat.*

Extension: Ask students to list dos and don'ts using the tips in the article and add their ideas.

Example:

DOs

Prepare what you are going to say.
Choose a suitable time and place to have the conversation.
Get to the point.
Be sympathetic / show empathy.
Give the other person your full attention.

DON'Ts

Make jokes.
Be rude.
Give your personal opinion on the matter unless you are asked.
Give the other person false hope.
Include irrelevant details.

3. Vocabulary practice

- a. Write the word 'collocation' on the board and elicit its meaning. Explain that a collocation is a set of words that usually go together. You may want to elicit other examples of business collocations before moving on to activity A. Once students have grasped the concept and seen some examples, ask them to work in pairs and match words from columns A and B to form collocations that appear in the article.

Key:

1. *lose (your) job*
2. *meet (a) deadline*
3. *make a mistake/promises*
4. *get information*
5. *start a conversation*
6. *deliver (bad) news*
7. *turn off (your) phone*
8. *get to the point*
9. *make promises/a mistake*

- a. Ask students to complete Activity 3b in pairs using the collocations they formed in 3a. Check answers with the whole group.

Key:

1. *lose / job*
2. *meet / deadline*
3. *make / mistake*
4. *get to the point*
5. *deliver / news*
6. *make promises*
7. *turn off / phones*

4. Grammar practice

- a. Ask students to read the sentences and, in pairs, choose the correct options. Once they have decided, check answers with the whole class.

Key:

1. *to avoid*
2. *to be*
3. *starting*
4. *to get*
5. *to express*

Some verbs followed by infinitives: be (+adjective), remember, allow, learn, agree, like, hate, want, need

Some verbs followed by gerunds: avoid, consider, dislike, enjoy, finish, keep, stop

- b. Divide the class into pairs or groups of three. Ask students to think of as many tips as possible using the prompts given. Monitor the activity and offer feedback and guidance as appropriate. Make sure students focus both on content and the use of gerunds/ infinitives as required depending on the verbs given.

After a few minutes, ask groups to share their ideas and justify their suggestions.

5. Communicative practice

- a. Ask students to work in pairs and read the comments made by different managers when having difficult conversations at work. You may want to discuss the first one with the whole group to ensure everyone understands what to do. Remind students to be ready to justify their views.

Key:

1. *bad practice*
2. *bad practice*
3. *good practice*
4. *good practice*
5. *bad practice*
6. *bad practice*
7. *good practice*
8. *bad practice*

Once students have finished, ask them to share their opinions, justify their answers and brainstorm ideas on what they would do or say instead.

- b. Tell students they are going to work in pairs again. Ask them to tell their partners about a difficult conversation at work, explaining what happened and how they delivered (or were delivered) the news. If students do not have any experience of their own to share, ask them to share details of a conversation a colleague or friend has gone through.