

## Time to take a 'RISC'

**Level:** Upper intermediate upwards

**Timing:** Approximately 90 minutes but can be made longer or shorter depending on the length of time allowed for discussion tasks

**Material needed:** One copy of the student worksheets and Vocabulary record per student

**Group size:** Any

### Overview

This lesson plan for both pre-experience and in-work business students is based around an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* Issue 3/2011. It is written by Ken Taylor, an expert on business communication who suggests that following a structure is the key to achieving a speedy and successful result in a negotiation. He offers an easy-to-follow strategy to help achieve this aim.

The tasks in the student worksheets will encourage the students to learn and use new business vocabulary and functional language and also to develop and practise skills that could be useful in business situations, especially those that include negotiations.

The teacher's notes provide suggestions for teaching and learning strategies as well as ideas on how to present the tasks in the classroom, any necessary answer keys and extension tasks (to do in class or as homework).

### Find the information

This is a short skimming task which introduces the students to the article and its contents.

**Key:**

- a. R = relationship building;  
I = information exchange;  
S = structured negotiation;  
C = commitment
- b. in a negotiation

### Key collocations

Students should match the words in the left and the middle column to make collocations which can be found in the first third of the article. When they have done this and checked they have paired them correctly by finding them in the article, they should then match the word pairs to their meanings.

**Key:**

- **competent negotiators:** people who are able to negotiate well
- **structured approach:** an organized and planned way of doing something
- **successful conclusion:** an end that achieves the result you wanted
- **communication techniques:** different ways of passing on information

### A brief introduction

This task aims to bring together the answers that the students found in tasks 1 and 2 and use them to check understanding of the article's contents. Allow the students to quickly read through the article (again) before doing this task. Then, in order to make it a free speaking task, rather than a reading task, ask them to do task 3 in pairs or small groups without looking at the article or their answers to the previous tasks.

### Negotiating tips

This is a three-part task based around the negotiating tips the author offers in the article. First, the students should write the missing verbs provided in the box into the imperative sentences. Second, they should number the tips in the order they appear in the article (they can do this while they are checking their answers to the first part of the task). Third, they should write the letter R, I, S, or C, depending on which part of the article the tip can be found in.

**Key:**

1. h. spend time getting to know your business partner (R)
2. j. check that you have understood your business partner's needs (I)
3. i. ask both open and closed questions (I)
4. f. use your active listening skills (I)
5. a. keep eye contact (I)
6. g. prepare a clear agenda (S)
7. c. define your partner's situation (S)
8. b. make your proposals (S)
9. d. make a final summary (C)
10. e. write the agreed minutes (C)

## Time to take a 'RISC'

### Discussion

This personalization task offers the students the chance to talk about their own experiences of negotiations and to offer further tips. Encourage them to talk about a negotiation that went extremely well or about a negotiation where the parties were unable to reach an agreement. They should try to say what the factors were that caused this result.

### Business negotiating scenarios

Students should work in groups of three or more. It is important that there is an observer taking notes during each scenario. The observer should use the checklist for this and to help give feedback at the end of each short negotiation. You may want to set a time limit, e.g. five minutes per scenario, and tell the students that they must reach an agreement during this time.

#### Teaching and learning strategy: The role of the observer

During scenarios or role-plays, such as the ones in task 6, it is extremely helpful to not only have students play the parts given, but to have one or more people per role-play who act as an observer.

The role of the observer is multi-faceted. Firstly, he/she can simply be asked to make sure that the role-play stays on track and that the other students don't deviate away from the topic they should be discussing. A checklist can be given or even decided on by the students themselves before the role-play – this will provide a solid framework for constructive feedback after the role-play.

In higher-level classes, the observer can also be asked to make notes and give feedback on good language and structures that the others used.

Finally, the observer role also provides the teacher with two non-linguistic benefits: it solves the problem of having an uneven number of students in the class when pairwork is required, and it gives weaker or shyer students the chance to listen rather than speak.

### Vocabulary record

Here students should be encouraged to record all the new and useful vocabulary they have learned during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

### Related topics on onestopenglish

For follow-up lessons on the same or related topics go to the following lesson plans in the Business section on onestopenglish:

Business tasks: Ability and skill:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-tasks/ability-and-skill/156899.article>

Business tasks: Decisions:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-tasks/decisions/>

## Time to take a 'RISC'

### 1 Find the information

a. Skim the article to find out what 'RISC' stands for.

R = \_\_\_\_\_

I = \_\_\_\_\_

S = \_\_\_\_\_

C = \_\_\_\_\_

b. In which kind of business task would it be a good idea to follow the RISC approach?

### 2 Key collocations

Pair the words to make key collocations from paragraphs 1-5 of the article.

competent	techniques
structured	conclusion
successful	negotiators
communication	approach

Now match each collocation with its meaning.

- different ways of passing on information \_\_\_\_\_
- people who are able to negotiate well \_\_\_\_\_
- an organized and planned way of doing something \_\_\_\_\_
- an end that achieves the result you wanted \_\_\_\_\_

### 3 A brief introduction

Use the information from tasks 1 and 2 to give a brief introduction to the article and its contents.

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## Time to take a 'RISC'

### Time to take a 'RISC'

by Ken Taylor

- 1 **The more clearly a negotiation is structured, the faster you come to an agreement. Ken Taylor explains how to best proceed.**
- 2 Most business people need to be competent negotiators. But it is a difficult skill to master – especially when negotiating internationally. It helps when you have a structured approach to the negotiation process. You can then more easily move the negotiation along to a successful conclusion. Let's look at a four-stage structure that allows you to do just that. It's called the 'RISC' approach.
- 3 **R: relationship building.** Spend time at the beginning of the negotiation getting to know your business partner. Use your skills at small talk and social conversation to learn more about their interests, their personal situation and their role and influence in their organization.
- 4 Take this time to get to know their communication style and their level of English before getting into the negotiation itself. Remember that you can learn more about your business partner's background and ambitions over a cup of coffee or lunch – probably more than you ever will in the meeting itself.
- 5 **I: information exchange.** Start the actual negotiation by checking that you have understood the background. Check any assumptions you have made in your planning, and check your understanding of your business partner's needs. To do this, you should use three key communication techniques:
- 6 **1. Questioning**  
Start by asking open questions about the background to the negotiation. For example: "Why do you need this kind of service?"; "Who is involved in this project on your side?"; "What's your opinion about the new materials?"
- 7 Then move on to more direct questions to check the facts and figures. For example: "How many items are you considering?"; "What would you think is a reasonable price?"; "When would you need this?"
- 8 **2. Listening**  
Use your active listening skills to encourage your partner to speak and to give full answers. For example: "Interesting. Tell me more."; "What makes you say that?"; "Why do you think that?"

And don't forget that you can support these questions with your body language: nod, keep eye contact and lean forward with open gestures.

### 3. Summarizing

Make regular short summaries of what your negotiating partner has said. For example: "Did I understand you correctly when you said...?"; "So, what you are saying is..."; "So, what you mean is..., right?"

**S: structured negotiation.** Prepare a clear agenda for the negotiation. Discuss it with your negotiating partner and agree on exactly what is to be discussed. The actual negotiating should follow a simple process. First, define your partner's situation, needs and problems. Then, get acceptance that this description is correct. Next, you need to prove you have the right solutions, plans, products or services. Finally, get your partner's acceptance that these proposals are right for them.

Use conditional sentences to make your proposals. For example: "If you give me a discount of three per cent, then I'll sign the contract." This gives you the right to withdraw your proposal if the conditions are not met.

**C: commitment.** Make a final complete summary of what has been agreed and ask your negotiating partner to agree with each point you make. This will prevent any misunderstandings later when you write the agreed minutes.

Good luck in your next negotiation – but if you follow this four-stage process, you may not need it!

**KEN TAYLOR** is the director of Taylor Consultancy Ltd., an international communication consultancy in London, and the author of *50 Ways to Improve Your Business English*.

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### 4 Negotiating tips

1. Write the missing verbs into the imperative sentences a-j.
2. Number the tips in the order they appear in the article.
3. Decide which part of the RISC strategy they are from.

ask    make    ~~spend~~    write    use    define    keep    prepare    check    make

a. _____ eye contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. _____ your proposals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. _____ your partner's situation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. _____ a final summary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. _____ the agreed minutes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. _____ your active listening skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. _____ a clear agenda	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. <u>spend</u> time getting to know your business partner	1	R
i. _____ both open and closed questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. _____ that you have understood your	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 5 Discussion

- What do you think about the RISC strategy?
- Do you have any further tips to add to those in the article?
- What good or bad negotiation experiences have you had? What caused them to be good or bad?

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### 6 Business negotiation scenarios

Use the tips and techniques outlined in the article to hold short negotiations using the situations in the table below.

situations for two negotiators, plus one observer	situations for small groups, including one observer
One of you has to work next Saturday although neither of you wants to. Who will it be?	Your unpopular boss is retiring. Your department is organizing a retirement party. Divide up the work fairly between you.
A: You want to buy ten company cars. You like the model that B is selling but the price is higher than your budget allows.	Your company needs to have a small stand at an important trade fair. The trade fair takes place over a bank holiday weekend. Decide who is going to man the stand on which days.
A: You want a pay rise. B: You are prepared to offer a pay rise but you expect something in return, e.g. that A works longer hours or takes on more responsibility.	Your company is sending its top ten salespeople on an all-inclusive trip to Florida. One person from your department should accompany them to make sure that everything runs smoothly. Who will it be?

#### Observer's checklist

Did the negotiating partners ...

- ... use friendly gestures and body language?
- ... keep eye contact?
- ... define the situation?
- ... ask open and closed questions?
- ... make proposals?
- ... check that they had understood?
- ... make a final summary?
- ... speak for equal lengths of time?

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### Vocabulary record: Negotiation

verb	noun	adjective (+ opposite)	adverb (+ opposite)
negotiate			
	assumption		
		encouraging	
			competently

Vocabulary record