

**Lesson Plan: Making decisions**

Your business English students may be cool-headed decision makers in their office environments but what about in real life-or-death situations? Using a series of unique scenarios which would require the essential critical thinking skill of decision-making, this communicative activity from *In Company 3.0* Upper Intermediate level (B2) has students discussing their hypothetical actions in extreme situations.

**Level:** Upper Intermediate B2

**Time:** approx 60 minutes or longer depending on how the activities are used

**How to use this lesson plan:**

The lesson can be used for the whole class, who can work in pairs and small groups. Download and print out the [Student's Book pages](#) so each student has a copy and download the [audio files](#). Give Student B in each pair a copy of the additional photocopiable section on 'Worst-Case Scenarios' from the end of this lesson plan.

**Learning objectives**

This unit\* is about decision-making in business, as well as in one's personal life.

Students start by discussing decision-making and what they would do in different life-or-death situations. They do a quiz on survival situations, and focus on the language of likelihood and giving advice. They then practise giving advice in a fluency-based task.

A recording offers insight into the decision-making process at three different meetings. Students study some of the idioms used in the recording and practise the language of decisions.

Students discuss crisis management in the workplace, and read and summarize two recent accounts of crisis situations at McDonald's and Mercedes. They focus on the use of definite and indefinite articles and practise key collocations for dealing with crises.

The unit concludes with a case study – a crisis at Coca-Cola – and students take part in a roleplay as a group of crisis management consultants to the company.

The grammatical focus is on articles and the lexical focus is on English for marketing.

In this first section, students discuss decision-making before reading a short text from a website on worst-case scenarios. They then do a quiz and discuss the choices they would make in eight life-or-death situations. A recording gives advice on how to survive these situations and allows students to assess their survival skills. Students focus on the language of likelihood and complete an exercise on giving advice. Finally, they decide on the advice they would give in worst-case scenarios and workplace dilemmas.

**Warm-up**

Ask students to brainstorm different ways of making decisions. Ask students to read and explain the quotation from Margaret Thatcher (she says it's dangerous not to say which side you support in an argument).

1 Ask students to think about the questions for a few moments and then compare their answers in pairs.

2 Focus attention on the photograph and on the title of the text and ask students to predict the content of the text. Check/Pre-teach: *to lurk, to pass out, shark fin*. Students read the text quickly and check their predictions.

Get students to read the text again and discuss the questions in pairs or small groups. Ask students to give feedback on anything interesting arising from their discussion. Point out that there is also a worst-case scenarios book, which may have been translated into the students' own language.

3 In order to generate interest in the quiz, elicit examples of life-or-death situations and ask students to assess their survival skills on a scale of one to ten. With weaker groups, check/pre-teach: *to roll, cliff edge, crash barrier, to play dead, to flap, to drown, to collapse, to touch down, insulation, to leap, obstruction, to skid, to plunge, to wind up/down, to trap, to freefall, to snorkel, to punch, to splash about*.

Divide the class into two groups, A and B. A students stay on the page; B students should be given a copy of the additional 'Worst Case scenarios' from the photocopiable cut-out section at the end of this lesson plan. Ask students to read the quiz questions quickly, encouraging them to guess any new words from context before you answer vocabulary queries. Set a time limit of five minutes and ask students to hold their meetings. When they have finished, ask them to give their choice of answers.

**1:1 notes**

Do the lead-in and vocabulary check as outlined above. Assign a certain number of worst-case scenarios to you and your student. Each of you should then explain and justify your choices, making comments and discussing each scenario as appropriate.

4 Put the students in pairs and ask them to report back on their quiz questions, the alternatives, and on the decisions they took.

5 (Tracks 2.22–2.29) Check/Pre-teach: *to resist, fierce, futile, to overshoot, to triple, to crawl, water pressure, to grab, in distress, vulnerable*. Play the recording, pausing after each extract so that the students can check their answers.

**ANSWERS**

1 c 2 b 3 a 4 b 5 b 6 b 7 c 8 a

**Track 2.22 audio script**

1: Don't even think about jumping from a moving vehicle. At 70 miles per hour the chances of surviving are remote. And crashing into the mountainside at this speed will almost certainly send you straight through the windshield. So, even though you may be scared of going over the cliff, your best chance of slowing the car down is to repeatedly run it against the crash barriers. After all, that's what they're there for.

\* This lesson plan contains selected sections from *In Company 3.0* Upper Intermediate, unit 10. Not all of the activities mentioned in the Learning objectives section will be included in this sample lesson plan.

**Track 2.23** audio script

**2:** Resist the temptation to run. You cannot outrun or outclimb a mountain lion. And put any ideas of playing dead out of your mind. While it may work with grizzly bears, to a mountain lion you'll just look like a free lunch. Your best bet is to shout and flap your coat at the animal to make yourself look bigger and fiercer than you really are. Mountain lions are not proud. If you look like more trouble than you're worth, there's a fifty-fifty chance they'll back away.

**Track 2.24** audio script

**3:** Water transfers heat away from the body 25 times faster than air. So trying to keep warm is more or less futile. And while you're staying calm and conserving energy, the chances are you're dying. You have to get out. Turn in the direction you fell and use your elbows to lift yourself onto the edge of the ice. Reach forward as far as possible and kick your feet as if you were swimming. Once you are back on the ice, crawl to shore. Do not in any circumstances try to stand up.

**Track 2.25** audio script

**4:** When landing a light aircraft, make sure that the nose of the plane is six inches below the horizon. As you approach the runway the plane should be flying at an altitude of about 100 feet. If you're higher, you'll overshoot the runway completely. The optimum speed on landing is about 60 miles per hour. Go faster and you may take off again. Go slower and you'll drop like a stone. Upon landing, it's a good idea to brake as soon as you've gained control of the steering. By reducing your groundspeed by 50% you triple your chances of survival.

**Track 2.26** audio script

**5:** The current world record for the long jump is just under nine metres, but most people can barely manage three or four. The chances are you can't either. To clear four and a half metres in conditions that are far from ideal you'd need a 20 to 30 metre run-up, perfect timing and a great deal of luck. Frankly, your chances are slim. The truck is a much better idea and it is quite possible to fall from the sixth floor and live. But don't jump out from the building unless there are balconies in the way. You'll be carried forward and miss the truck completely. Drop vertically and take care to land on your back to avoid breaking it.

**Track 2.27** audio script

**6:** The taxi could take anything from a few minutes to just a few seconds to sink. But there's not much point trying to force the door open because the water pressure will make this almost impossible. If the car does sink there'll be little or no air left anyway, so forget about trapping air inside. By far the most sensible thing to do is to open the window and actually let more water in. Even if you can't escape through the window, once the water pressure inside and outside the car are equalized, there's a fair chance you'll be able to open the door and save yourself – and maybe the driver too!

**Track 2.28** audio script

**7:** It's very unusual for both parachutes to fail, so by struggling with the emergency chute there's an outside chance you'll get it to work. But don't bet on it. You may just be wasting precious time. If you can share one of your friends' parachutes you're in with a chance, but just grabbing onto the nearest person is not a smart move. The G-force when the parachute opens will throw you apart. At 14,000 feet and falling at your terminal velocity of 120 miles per hour you've got about 75 seconds before your appointment with Mother Earth. So firmly attach yourself to the chest straps of another parachutist. You don't stand a chance unless you do.

**Track 2.29** audio script

**A:** You are 30 times more likely to be struck by lightning than to be attacked by a shark, but this is little comfort in your present position. Splashing around and making a noise will simply give the shark the idea you're in distress and easy meat. It's a common mistake to think the shark's nose is the best area to target. Punch it there and you are liable to lose a hand or arm – depending on the size of the shark. You'd do much better to strike at its eyes or gills since these are a shark's most vulnerable points.

**6** Ask students to put the expressions on the appropriate part of the scale. When students have finished, ask them to compare with a partner. Then check the answers with the whole class, accepting any reasonable variation.

To give students practice in using the expressions, divide the class into groups and ask students to brainstorm a further life-and-death scenario, e.g. your plane is hijacked. Students present their situation to the other groups, who suggest possible courses of action, using some of the expressions from this exercise.

**ANSWERS**

(order of likelihood from more likely to less likely)  
a, h, e, c, i, d, f, j, b, g, k

**7** Tell students to read the words in the first box and say which are both verbs and nouns (*mistake, bet, point, move*). Tell them to see all the words as nouns when completing expressions a–n. When they have finished, call out the letters and a student's name at random in order to check the answers. Model the pronunciation of any expressions which students found difficult and drill as necessary.

**ANSWERS**

a bet b circumstances c idea d point e thing f move  
g mistake h think i Resist j Put k Make l Take  
m Forget n do

**7** Elicit examples of extreme situations from the recent news and examples of common workplace problems. Give further practice of the expressions in 6 and 7 by eliciting possible pieces of advice for each situation. Check/Pre-teach: *iceberg, bungee jump, cord, to snap, to take the credit, to back up (data), to be passed over*. Divide the students into pairs and get students to take turns to present their problem and give advice. Monitor the activity and take feedback notes. Elicit examples of the best pieces of advice/solutions. Give feedback on the use of the key language and overall fluency before highlighting important or common errors.

**1:1 notes**

Check/Pre-teach any tricky vocabulary, as outlined above. Ask your student to read the worst-case scenarios and the workplace dilemmas. Give them time to make decisions and take notes. Ask your student to give you a minipresentation on the advice they would offer. Comment on the student's advice and engage in discussion.

**Making Decisions**

(Cut out and give a copy of the scenarios to each Student B in each pair for ex. 3 activity.)

Teacher's notes

**'Worst-case scenarios' Student B**

**5** While staying in a hotel in Paris, you wake up to find the whole place is on fire. Your way down is blocked and you end up on the roof.

Do you:

- a** take a long run-up and jump onto the next building (a distance of four and a half metres)?
- b** jump six floors down and land on your back in a truck packed with soft insulation materials?
- c** leap well away from the building to clear obstructions and land in the truck?



**6** On a business trip to Amsterdam your taxi skids on a patch of oil and plunges off the road and into a canal. In seconds you are half-underwater.

Do you:

- a** force open the door and swim to safety (taking the driver with you)?
- b** wind down the window fully to let the water in?
- c** wind the window up to trap air inside the car in case you sink?



**7** You agree to do a parachute jump for charity with a group of friends. But as you free-fall from 14,000 feet at 120 mph both your parachute and emergency chute fail to open.

Do you:

- a** keep struggling with your emergency chute? It must work!
- b** grab hold of the nearest member of the group before they open their chute?
- c** take valuable time to attach yourself to the chest straps of another parachutist?



**8** Whilst snorkelling off the Great Barrier Reef in north-eastern Australia, you suddenly see a large shark swimming swiftly towards you from the depths.

Do you:

- a** try to attack the shark's eyes?
- b** punch the shark on the nose?
- c** splash about and make a noise to frighten it away?

