

## Unit 2: Requests at work

### SUMMARY

You can use this summary to guide the learning objectives and target setting for your class.

#### Can-do statements:

By the end of this unit, students will be able to say:

- I can understand both formal and informal work requests.
- I can use multiple texts to make a list of priorities.
- I can understand a range of work-related vocabulary.

#### Skill focus

Skimming **Part A 1**

Scanning **Part A 2**

Reading for specific details and information:

**Part A 1 2 3 4**

Reading for tone: **Part A 5**

Using formal vocabulary **Part B 1**

#### Vocabulary

Formal requests: *regarding, sincerely, acceptable, appreciate, disregard, accept my apologies, enclosed, at the latest, requirements*

Work-related vocabulary: *outstanding balance, invoice, interest, petty cash, estimate, bid, contract*

#### Usage

Formality and informality in requests: *Please + Infinitive, Can you ..., Would it be possible for ... to ...?, I'd appreciate it if you could ...*

### Using Part A

1. Before starting *Exercise 1*, ask students to look at the four requests and identify who sent them: someone from the same company or someone from a different company.

(Answers: **1** different company **2** same company **3** different company **4** same company)

Draw students' attention to the opening and closing expressions in the four requests and point out how they vary according to the formality of the letter, the relationship between the sender and recipient and whether they personally know each other. Ask students if they know of any other ways to start and end a letter / email, and when these can be used appropriately.

*Suggested answers:*

**Opening expressions:** *To ... (on informal / semi-formal messages when the name of the recipient is known), Hi ... (on informal messages when the name of the recipient is known)*

**Closing expressions:** *Yours sincerely (formal, traditionally when the name of the addressee is known), Yours faithfully (formal, traditionally when the addressee is greeted Dear Sir / Madam), Regards (other formal), Best, All the best (semi-formal), Best wishes, From (informal), Love from, Lots of love (to close friends and family)*

Ask students which of the requests is more likely to contain formal vocabulary.

(Answer: **1** and **3**)

2. Draw students' attention to the *Reading tip* at the bottom of page 13, and advise them that some messages contain more than one request.
3. Ask students to complete *Exercises 1* and *2*. For each question in *Exercise 2*, ask students to highlight the phrase(s) which helps them find their answers.  
(Answers: **1** *We have yet to receive this payment.* **2** *We need some ASAP.* **3** *To whom it may concern* **4** *Would it be possible for me to ...? I assure you that I will complete all urgent work beforehand.*)
4. Ensure that students understand the meaning of *by + time* (at or before a certain time). You can also use this opportunity to review the use of different prepositions of time (*at / in / on*).
5. In pairs, students complete either boxes 1 and 2 or boxes 3 and 4 of the table in *Exercise 3*. Students then role play phone calls between Helen and the person who wrote the emails / memo. The student who completed boxes 1 and 2 is the caller, and the other student is Helen. The caller should state what he / she wants Helen to do.

### CLASSROOM EXTENSION IDEAS

You can use some or all of these ideas to check and enhance your students' understanding as they work their way through *Unit 2 of Reading B2+ Upper Intermediate* in class.

#### Using Getting Started

1. Hand out the photocopiable sheet *Requests*. Put students into pairs. Tell them to think of at least two requests they might receive from each person on the list. After five minutes, feed back students' ideas as a class.
2. Direct students to the second *Getting started* question. Students should brainstorm other requests they might receive by email, text message, letter and in person. Students can share their own experiences, and discuss which means different people use to communicate with them. Discuss some of their ideas as a class.

'Helen' should respond appropriately and, while doing so, fill in boxes 1 and 2 of the table. Students switch roles to complete boxes 3 and 4.

7. Students complete *Exercise 4*. Then invite students to find five more new vocabulary items from the texts. They should use their dictionaries to find a definition, then write the definition for their partner. The partner should read the definitions and guess the word.
8. Play 'Back to the board'. Put students in pairs, facing each other. One student faces the board, and the other sits so that they cannot see the board. Write three words from the emails and *Exercise 4* on the board. The student facing the board must define the words to the other student, who must guess the words. The first pair to describe and guess all three words wins.

### Using the *Language note*

1. Put students in pairs and give them three minutes to write down as many ways as they can to make requests. When the time is up, ask students to scan the four requests in *Part A* to find any more phrases they can add to the list. Ask students to indicate whether the phrases are formal or informal.
2. Write the following requests on the board. Ask students to choose which request in each pair will require more formal language. (*Answers may vary. Suggested answers are underlined. It is more important that the students are aware of the different things that affect formality in requests.*)
  - a. A request to a colleague / a request to a friend
  - b. A big request / a small request
  - c. A request that takes a long time to complete / a request that takes a short time to complete
  - d. A request about money / a request about a task
  - e. A request to a stranger / a request to a parent
  - f. A request to a friend / A request to a colleague
  - g. A request to your manager at work / a request to your assistant at work
  - h. An urgent request / a non-urgent request
3. Ask students to complete *Exercise 5*. Check answers as a class.
4. Explain to students how there are different types of formality. In business letters, formality can be concise (*Please...*). However, particularly difficult requests, urgent requests or requests for money tend to be wordier and may use past modals (e.g. *Do you think you **could** ...?*, ***Would** it be possible for you to ...?*, ***Would** you mind ...?*), where simple requests use the present tense (e.g. ***Can** you...? / **Do** you mind ...?*). Highlight that some requests may seem like suggestions (*I'd appreciate it if you **could** ...*) but they are in fact polite ways of making requests.

### Optional extension work – Writing and Reading

If you have time in class, you can expand the themes of this unit into two other skills – writing and reading. Alternatively, *Part 1* can be done in class and *Part 2* as homework. Then do *Part 3* in the next lesson. It will act as a good review of what they learned in the last class.

1. You will need dice and one copy of the photocopiable sheet *Extension Work – Making written requests* for each group of four students. Each student should roll the dice three times, once for each column. They should note down the words next to the number they roll, e.g. 1 a simple request 2 to a friend 3 about a task. Alternatively, photocopy the sheet once for each group of four students and cut out each box. Keep the papers from each column in separate piles. With the slips of paper face down, students must choose one paper from each pile.
2. For homework, students must compose a letter / email which matches the information on their pieces of paper (e.g. an urgent request to a parent about money). Students should choose appropriate language according to the request.
3. As a follow-up activity, students can display their requests. Students read the requests and try to work out which slips of paper their classmates used to write the letter / email.

### Using *Part B*

1. Before answering the question, complete the following *pre-reading* tasks. Tell students that they are going to read a request from a hotel to Helen Draper at Stevens Electrical. Ask students to brainstorm what a hotel may be requesting from an electrical company and discuss ideas as a class.
2. Ask students to skim the letter and find out what the hotel is requesting (*Answer: a deposit, information about any additional service requirements*).
3. Ask students to complete *Exercise 1*. They can find some of the correct answers by re-reading the messages in *Part A*. For the other words, they should use a dictionary to ensure they understand the meanings of all four options. Alternatively, ask students to cover the exercise, and complete the letter using their own words. They can then check their ideas against the words in *Exercise 1*. Check answers as a class.

### Using *Next steps*

1. A number of activities can be done using the sample letters on [www.writeexpress.com](http://www.writeexpress.com). Some can be done in class on computers, or as homework if students have computer access at home. Others can be done in the classroom by printing out letters from the website in advance.

## Reading (B2+ Upper Intermediate)

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- Go to the webpage. You will see a long list of types of letter functions. Click on **requests**. You will see a list of request types. Choose ten of these, and print out sample letters. Number the letters and pin them around the room. Give students a piece of paper giving the ten types of request (e.g. Request a change in contract or agreement) ordered in random order. Students must read the requests around the room and match them to the request types on their page.
- Choose and print two sample letters from the website and cut them up into single lines of text. Give pairs of students the cut up pieces. They must recreate the letters by putting the slips of paper in order.
- Put students in pairs or groups. Give each group a selection of request letters. Students must work together to create a table which states, for each letter, the sender, the recipient, what is being requested and, if applicable, the reasons for the request and any time limit.

### PHOTOCOPIABLES

#### Requests

1. Make a list of some requests you might receive from these people. Can you think of two requests for each person?

- A parent \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- A friend \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- A boss \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- A teacher \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- A landlord \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- A bank \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Who else sends you requests...?

- ... by email? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ... by text message? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ... by post? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ... in person? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### PHOTOCOPIABLES

#### Extension Work – Making written requests

Type of Request	Recipient	Topic
1. a simple request	1. to your assistant at work	1. about money
2. an urgent request	2. to a friend	2. about a task
3. a non urgent request	3. to another company	3. about a document
4. a difficult request	4. to a colleague	4. about equipment
5. a stern request	5. to your manager at work	5. about an appointment
6. an apologetic request	6. to a parent	6. about a person