

Unit 4b e-business

Objectives:

- To enable Ss to talk about e-business
- To practise reading for specific information
- To practise listening for gist and specific information
- To practise describing trends in writing
- To review the future perfect and future continuous

Materials needed: Audio cd - *Pass Cambridge BEC Higher*

Unit overview

• What is e-business?

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| Speaking | Ss discuss whether/how they use the Internet. |
| Reading | Ss look at a page from a website about e-business and identify the difference between e-business and e-commerce and the benefits of each.

Ss order key words from the text in terms of frequency. |
| Speaking | Ss discuss what difficulties might be experienced with e-business and e-commerce. |

• The advantages of e-business

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| Listening | Ss listen to five people talk about how e-business has transformed their companies and decide which areas of business have been transformed and the benefits (<i>Listening Test Part Two</i>). |
| Language | Ss focus on the future perfect and future continuous. |
| Writing | Ss write a description of a graph comparing the predicted growth in e-business and e-commerce (<i>Writing Test Part One</i>). |
| Optional task | Ss research and write a report about a company's website. |

What is e-business?

This unit focuses on e-business and e-commerce. The term *e-commerce* is connected with retailing and describes company to consumer communication using the Internet, e.g. when a customer orders and pays for books over the Internet. The term *e-business* is broader, referring to the transformation of fundamental business processes through the use of Internet technologies. It refers to the way internal business processes and communication with suppliers etc. are carried out via computer networks that use Web-compatible software.

T needs to be aware that the 'customer' referred to in the discussion of e-business is not the individual consumer who buys over the Internet but the company which buys the goods supplied by another company.

- 1 **Ex ①:** Ss briefly discuss how often they use the Internet and why. T may wish to ask Ss to think about the difference between Internet use for work and Internet use outside work.
- 2 **Ex ②:** Ss read the page from the website to find the difference between e-business and e-commerce. Ss list the benefits of each.



Suggested answer:

e-business: *The transformation of key business processes through the use of Internet technologies.*

Benefits: *Can streamline business processes to improve operating efficiencies. All the processes contributing to the overall customer experience can be improved (customer relationship management etc.). Can analyse past customer behaviour to anticipate customers' needs. Can allow suppliers and customers controlled access to the data they need, so that business processes can be managed beyond the individual organisation (e.g. sharing sales forecasts, managing inventories, optimising deliveries).*

e-commerce: *The ability to offer goods and services to the consumer over the Web.*

Benefits: *Can present goods more effectively, take orders and invoice on-line, automate customer account enquiries and handle transactions electronically. This means improved margins for the business and a faster, more responsive service for customers.*

- 3 **Ex ③:** T asks Ss to predict which of the words they expect to have been used most frequently in the text. Ss then look at the text quickly to check their answers. T may wish to set a time limit of 1-2 minutes for checking. The aim of this exercise is to reinforce the idea that the focus of e-business is on the customer rather than technology.



customer 16 business 9 technologies 4 Internet 2 commerce 1

- 4 **Ex ④:** Ss discuss difficulties which might be experienced with e-business and e-commerce. T may wish to divide Ss into pairs or small groups and ask some Ss to think about potential difficulties for companies and others to think about difficulties for customers.



Suggested answer:

Possible difficulties for companies: *cost of installing systems and training staff, need to provide 24-hour service/back-up, keeping up-to-date with technical advances, potential systems failures (viruses/Millennium bug)*

Possible difficulties for customers: *need to have up-to-date, reliable Internet access (for e-commerce customers), lack of confidence in system security*

The advantages of e-business

- 5 **Ex ①:** This exercise practises the skills needed in Listening Test Part Two. Ss listen to a set of five extracts twice and complete two tasks for each extract. T points out that for the first extract Ss should answer questions 1 and 6, for the second extract 2 and 7 etc. T asks Ss to read through the lists of business areas and benefits and think of words or phrases they would expect to hear connected with each one. For example, for *training methods*, Ss might expect to hear words such as *teacher, trainer, seminar*. Ss then listen and match each speaker with a business area and benefit. (After Ss have completed the task, T may wish to point out that the exam texts are unlikely to contain as much technical vocabulary and should therefore be less difficult.)



1 H	2 G	3 C	4 D	5 F
6 J	7 I	8 O	9 M	10 N

Exam focus: Listening Test Part Two

Candidates listen to five short topic-related extracts and complete two tasks, which may involve identifying any combination of the following for each extract: speaker, topic, function, opinion or feelings. The five extracts are heard twice. Both tasks test candidates' ability to listen for gist and specific information.

Candidates should be aware that each extract contains both a Task One answer and a Task Two answer. Some candidates may prefer to deal with Task One during the first listening and Task Two during the second listening. However, the first part of each extract tends to deal with Task One and the second part with Task Two; it is therefore advisable to attempt the two tasks simultaneously for each extract. Incorrect options are included in the recordings in order to distract unwary candidates.

- 6 **Ex ②:** T refers Ss to the example sentences. Ss then look through the tapescript to find further examples of the future perfect and future continuous and discuss how they are used. Ss then discuss whether other future forms could be used with the same effect. (See the end of this unit for further information on the future perfect and future continuous.)



Future perfect and future continuous forms are bolded in T's tapescript.

No alternative verb forms are possible where the future perfect is used.

*However, alternatives for the future continuous are possible: **will, going to** and the present continuous could all be used, with differences in meaning. No other wording would need to be changed; however, the nuances conveyed by the future continuous would be lost.*

- 7 **Ex ③:** This exercise practises the skills needed in Writing Test Part One. The text above the graph is for interest only; T may wish to use it as the basis for discussion but Ss do not have to take it into account in their answers. T checks that Ss understand that *business to business* on the graph refers to e-business; *business to consumer* refers to e-commerce.

When setting up this task, T may wish to refer Ss back to Unit 2a for the language of trends and Unit 4a for the language of predictions. T may wish to ask Ss to compare e-business and e-commerce orally in class before they write a report for homework. If Ss do the writing task in class, T may wish to ask Ss to exchange reports in pairs and give each other feedback.



Suggested answer: (127 words)

The last years of the twentieth century saw the Internet being used by more and more companies as a business tool. In 1997 e-commerce was very limited earning a revenue of less than \$25 billion. However, since then, there has been a steady growth worldwide. This trend looks set to continue into the next century with revenue from e-commerce rising to reach almost \$200 billion by 2003.

Like e-commerce, e-business has shown steady growth with revenue tripling in the period 1997 to 2000, rising from about \$50 billion to \$150 billion. However, during there is predicted to be a far more dramatic increase in e-business revenue over the next three years. It is thought that by 2003 revenue from e-business will have reached over \$800 billion worldwide.

Exam focus: Writing Test Part One

Candidates write a 120-140 word report describing trends. The task tests concise writing skills.

Candidates are expected to describe, compare and contrast information presented visually, in the form of graphs, bar charts and pie charts. Candidates should use appropriate language of trends and must be concise in order to avoid exceeding the strict word limit.

This exercise differs from the exam in that Ss are also expected to refer to future trends in this case. In the exam itself, Ss are likely to be asked to report past trends.

- 8 **Ex ④:** Once again, the aim of the Optional Task is to link the lesson with the outside world. Ss research and write a report on a website. Although Ss are free to choose any website to write a report on, Ss should be encouraged to use their own company's site if there is one. T reminds Ss to consider the features of good reports in their answers.

Future perfect and future continuous

The uses of the future perfect and future continuous which appear in the tapescript are as follows.

Future perfect

- To refer to actions completed by a certain time in the future:

*By the end of the year we'll **have reduced** our paper invoices from five million to zero.*

In phrases which contain a reference to actions completed by a specific time in the future, the future perfect cannot be substituted by other future forms.

Future continuous

- To refer to actions which are arranged or expected to happen:

*We'll **be introducing** more and more new product lines.*

The future continuous can also be used to refer to an action which is in progress at a certain time in the future.

e.g. *We'll already **be discussing** the launch by the time you get there.*

The future continuous can also be used as a polite form, when making enquiries about a person's future plans.

e.g. ***Will** you **be staying** for the reception?*

It is not possible to replace the future continuous with other verb forms when it is used to refer to an action in progress at a certain time in the future. However, when the future continuous is used to refer to something which is expected/a matter of course in the future, or when it is used as a polite form, alternatives are possible - though always resulting in a change in emphasis.

e.g. *We'll **be introducing** more new product lines*
*We're **going to introduce** more new product lines*
*We're **introducing** more new product lines*

This is what we're doing anyway.

This is our intention.

This is our specific plan.

***Will** you **be staying** for the reception?*
***Are** you **staying** for the reception?*

May I ask if you intend to stay?
 I'd like to know if you are staying.