

BUSINESS ENGLISH

These units are intended for German-speaking students who wish to improve their command of Business English. They are the result of my teaching at various universities, consultancies or companies. All units are freely available for study but copyright.

Abbreviations used are: **e.g.** = *exempli gratia* (Latin), for example, for instance, and **i.e.** = *id est* (Latin), that is, that means. German translations are usually in brackets.

Unit 10: Common Mistakes

When reading the homework of German students of Business English I noticed some common mistakes which appeared time and again. Please note the following:

1 Every piece of written work should have at the top of the page your **name**, the **date**, and the **course number/university/institution** so that any potential examiner/supervisor/superior can quickly identify your work. The same might be true for anything you write at work where you will have to include your department, function and contact details. It is common today to use standardized text templates for internal as well as external company communication.

2 Please remember to **write 1 ½ spaced** (1 ½ zeilig!) so that any examiner has enough space for corrections. This text is arranged with enough space between the lines.

3 In English the first person pronoun is “**I**”, as a capital letter, never *i* in English. Avoid using the lower case letter *i* on its own in English, it is wrong.

4 Everything related to nationalities and languages is always capitalised: the **E**nglish language, the **F**rench people, the **G**erman constitution etc.

5 In scientific writing use did not, can not instead of didn't or can't.

6 A constant nuisance: "**of the**" is often turned into *oft he* by word processing programmes.

7 **Irregular verbs**: if you have a hardcopy of a good dictionary it will always include a list of irregular words. If in doubt – check! Some examples: **to leave** left left; **to speak** spoke spoken; **to go** went gone; **to take** took taken; **to teach** taught taught; **to write** wrote written.

8 Watch these verbs in particular: **to lie lay lain** – liegen; **to lay laid laid** – legen (you can also often use **to put** instead): to lay swollen legs high – geschwollen Beine hochlagern; to lay down – hinlegen; **to lie lied lied** - lügen

9 In grammar school you get a baccalaureate (Abitur) or A-Levels (British English BE). You can **do/undergo/finish/complete a training/ education/ apprenticeship** (Lehre, Ausbildung).

10 Always **explain abbreviations** when you use them for the first time: NATO and EU should be clear to everybody, but for DB use German Rail, ie she works for DB (German Rail) in Hamburg.

11 In English this part of Germany is called **Lower Saxony**, the capital is spelt **Hanover**. You can distinguish between inner and outer Hanover (= Region Hannover), and a big city has suburbs (Vorstädte), boroughs/districts or parts (= Stadtteile).

12 The **numbers** one to ten are always written in letters, numerals are only used for the number 11 or higher: **five** books but **24** candidates.

13 **Confusing words**: *thing* (object) versus *think* (verb); *to become* (to change into = werden) versus *to get* – to receive or obtain (bekommen); *gym* is short for *gymnasium*, a place where you do sports or PE = Physical Education, the German word *Gymnasium* is best translated into English by *grammar school*. *Realschule* and *Orientierungsstufe* are best translated by **secondary school**.

14 Some **grammar**: write *she lives in Burgdorf* when she still does, but *she has been living in Burgdorf since 2017* when you want to emphasize the period of time.