

Unit

1

Starting your career

In this unit you will learn

- how to make good first impressions
- how to use the *as... as* structure
- how to use compound adjectives ending with *-ed*
- some tips on American and British business culture



Around the topic



01

Your ideas

There is a saying that goes “A good beginning is half success.” Starting a career has always been an important thing for young people. To some extent, how well you start decides how well you will end up.

How important are the following things for those who are just starting a career? Circle a number (1=the least important, 5=the most important).

When you finish, compare your responses with your partner.

1	Spend enough time hunting for jobs.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
2	Ask friends for job information.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
3	Evaluate job offers carefully.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
4	Nail a job interview.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
5	Take the job that pays the highest salary.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
6	Stay in the entry-level job for at least 2 or 3 years.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
7	Work hard to gain credibility.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
8	Establish good relations with colleagues.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
9	Take chances of networking.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
10	Dress and speak properly.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
11	Try to please your superiors.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
12	Ask parents for financial support.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

02

Vocabulary

The words given in the table below describe some good qualities of career starters. What do these words mean? What are their opposites?

Qualities	Meaning	Opposites
confident	<i>feeling sure you can do things well</i>	<i>unconfident; insecure</i>
organised		
punctual		
cooperative		
hard-working		
modest		
patient		
vigorous		
sociable		
sincere		
responsible		
dedicated		

03

Listening and speaking

A. Mary Crystal is the Personnel Manager of a large hotel group. She has just interviewed some applicants for a job as a reception clerk. Below are some notes that Ms. Crystal made about five interviewees. Listen to the extracts from the five interviews and match the notes with the interviewees.

Interviewee *Replies were not clear, difficult to understand. Poor communication skills.*

Interviewee *Too many personal problems.*

Interviewee *Replies were too long, and the information was off the point.*

Interviewee *Only interested in money and holidays!*

Interviewee *Knew nothing about the job. Not interested.*

B. Listen again. Write down the questions Ms. Crystal asked.

C. What should be done and what shouldn't be done when you answer a job interviewer's questions? Work in groups and fill in the table with DOs and DON'Ts at job interviews.

DOs	DON'Ts

Reading A

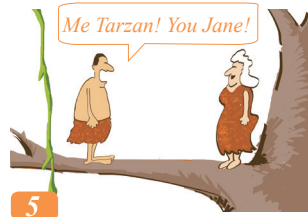
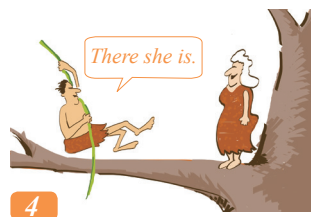
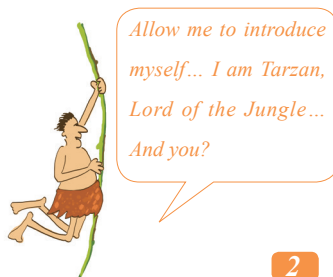
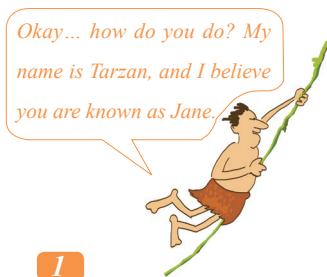


01

Pre-reading tasks

- Do you know the story of Tarzan? If not, ask your partner about it.
- Look at the pictures on the next page. What is Tarzan trying to do? How well does he do it?
- Are you a "Me Tarzan! You Jane!" type of person? How can you avoid shyness when meeting people for the first time?

When reading how-to articles, it is important to follow sign-post words. Scan for order linkers, such as first, next, third, finally, etc., and you will get the gist!



02

Reading comprehension

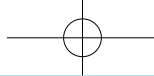
Job-seeker tips for making good first impressions

Life is all about making good first impressions with the people we meet. This article provides tips for making good first impressions in business and networking situations, in job interviews, and when you are starting a new job.

1. _____

When meeting people for the first time, whether for career networking or client meetings, it's essential that you look the part. In other words, you must dress for the specific occasion. Conduct a little research or contact the





organisation responsible for the event to uncover the proper attire. If you can't be certain, it's always better to be overdressed than underdressed. And it's not just what you are wearing—but how you're wearing it, so make sure your clothing is clean and well-pressed.

Grooming is also an important part of first impressions. Hair should be neat—and certainly not windswept. For men, facial hair should be either nonexistent or well-maintained. For women, less make-up is always better than too much. A light perfume or cologne is acceptable, but be careful of overwhelming the people in the room. Finally, a minimal amount of tasteful jewelry is best.

A small, but relatively unknown fact about name tags—they should be worn on the person's right shoulder area so that when someone approaches to greet and shake his/her hand, the person's eyes follow the arm right up to the name tag, making it much easier to greet the person—rather than looking all the way over to the other side of the person.

Next up for first impressions are the handshake and greeting. Handshakes should be simple—extend right hand and grasp gently but firmly. No bone-crushers and no four-handed, one-hand-over-the-other shakes. And no sweaty handshakes. If your nerves cause you to get wet palms, carry a handkerchief in your pocket and wipe your hand before you do the meet and greet. The greeting should be short and simple, making certain you listen for the other person's name. For example, I might greet someone in a business setting as, "Hi. I'm Dr. Randall Hansen, founder of Quintessential Careers." Be certain to speak clearly and properly.

To nail the good impression you're trying to make, the last tip when you're in this setting is not to make the conversation all about you. You want to engage the other person in conversation, making certain to use his/her name for emphasis. You can, of course, talk about yourself, but don't make the whole conversation about you—and keep stories short. Look for common ground with the person you're talking to, and share stories about that common interest. And, of course, avoid talking about controversial subjects, such as religion, politics, and sex. If you're naturally funny, you might use humour, and show your serious side also.

2. _____

Because the job interview is usually your first face-to-face with the employers, first impressions are especially crucial. Arrive about 15 minutes early so that you have time to find the exact office, perhaps with a stop at a restroom to conduct a final grooming check—as well as possibly complete some paperwork before the interview starts. Always be polite to the support staff, as the impression you make with them will often be factored into the hiring decision. Of course, dressing for success and proper grooming are essential. Never arrive with any kind of food in your mouth or on your teeth, and try not to smoke right before the interview. Turn off your mobile phone on the way to the interview. In the interview, smiling and making strong eye

contact are important elements to establishing a good impression. Answering interview questions with ease (showcasing your interview preparation) and asking questions of the interviewer are vital to making a good impression. A great way to cement a strong first impression is writing a thank-you note after the interview.

3. _____

The first impressions you make with your co-workers and supervisor will go a long way to building a solid reputation for yourself. In those first days and weeks, you'll want to arrive a bit early, take no more than your allotted breaks during the day, leave no earlier than the majority of the others in your area, and avoid calling in sick or taking personal days. In terms of actual work, you'll want to show your team spirit by supporting team members, perhaps even offering to take on a bit more than usual. Listen more than talk in those early days, and certainly do not showboat until you have firmly established your reputation as a solid worker and team player. And it should go without saying, but stay clear of all office politics and gossip. Finally, remember to keep your personal communications—email, IM, and phone—to a minimum while at work.

4. _____

You might think that making a good first impression is really about using common sense—and you would be correct. At the same time, we constantly hear horror stories from recruiters and employers about the unfortunate things jobseekers do—resulting in extremely poor first (and often last) impressions. Use your common sense—and follow the tips in this article—and you will go far in making a good first impression.

New Words & Expressions

Reading A

New Words

allotted/ə'lɒtɪd/	adj.	分配的
approach/ə'prəʊtʃ/	v.	接近
attire/ə'taɪə/	n.	服装
cement/sɪ'ment/	v.	加强
controversial/ˌkɒntrə'vɜːʃəl/	adj.	有争议的
essential/ɪ'senʃəl/	adj.	极其重要的
gossip/'gɒsɪp/	n.	流言蜚语，闲话
grooming/'gruːmɪŋ/	n.	整理仪容

minimal/'mɪnɪməl/	adj.	最少的
nail/neɪl/	v.	加强, 强化
overdressed/ˌəʊvə'drest/	adj.	穿着过于正式的
paperwork/'peɪpəwɜ:k/	n.	资料, 文件
showboat/'ʃəʊbəʊt/	v.	炫耀自己
showcase/'ʃəʊkeɪs/	v.	展示
underdressed/ˌʌndə'drest/	adj.	穿着过于随便的
well-pressed/'wel'prest/	adj.	熨烫平整的
windswept/'wɪndswɛpt/	adj.	(头发) 被风吹乱的

Phrases & Expressions

common ground	共同话题
engage sb. in conversation	开始与某人攀谈
look the part	得体

A. Below are the headings for the four parts in the text. Read the text and match the headings with the four parts.

- Final thoughts
- In business and networking situations
- In job interviews
- When starting a new job

B. What tips does the text provide under each heading? Find key words from the text and write them in the table below. When you finish, compare your notes with your partner.

In business and networking situations	In job interviews	When starting a new job

C. Decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F).

- () 1. If you are not certain about how to dress for a specific business occasion, it's better to be underdressed than to be overdressed.
- () 2. In business and networking settings, you should be active and talkative, and dominate the conversation.
- () 3. In job interviews, to leave a good first impression, you should be serious and professional, and avoid smiling or being humorous.
- () 4. To demonstrate your ability to your colleagues, you should talk more than listen when you start your job.
- () 5. You should show your team spirit by supporting team members and even offering to do more than usual.

D. Do you agree with the following statements? Discuss in groups.

1. Formal dressing gives you authority.
2. A casual appearance is more relaxed and friendly.
3. People feel more comfortable when wearing clothes similar to those of others around.
4. "Talk less and do more" is a good work philosophy.

03

Vocabulary and structure

A. The words and expressions in the left column of the table below may be new to you, but there are plenty of clues in the text which can help you to guess their meaning. Read the text again and find the clues.

Words/expressions	Clues in the text
look the part	
attire	
overdressed	
underdressed	
grooming	

Words/expressions	Clues in the text
cologne	
bone-crushers	
nail (a good impression)	
common ground	
crucial	
showcase	
stay clear of	

B. Complete the following sentences with the adjectives below.

essential specific nonexistent acceptable
tasteful controversial minimal proper

- Good food and plenty of exercise are _____ to a healthy life.
- This is a game that is suitable for _____ age groups.
- On an early Sunday morning traffic was almost _____.
- Smoking is no longer considered _____ in many countries.
- This room is furnished with _____ furnishings and original artwork.
- I tried to avoid _____ topics, such as religion and politics.
- This is a practical course, with only a(n) _____ amount of theory.
- We need to put the books back in their _____ place.

C. In English, many structures can be used to give advice or suggestions, depending on how strong people feel about what is suggested. The following sentences are taken from the text. Decide if they are *strong*, *medium strong*, or *weak* suggestions. Write S, MS or W in brackets.

- () 1. ...it's essential that you look the part.
- () 2. In other words, you must dress for the specific occasion.

- () 3. For men, facial hair should be either nonexistent or well-maintained.
- () 4. No bone-crushers and no four-handed, one-hand-over-the-other shakes.
- () 5. And no sweaty handshakes.
- () 6. The greeting should be short and simple...
- () 7. You want to engage the other person in conversation...
- () 8. You can, of course, talk about yourself.
- () 9. If you're naturally funny, you might use humour, and show your serious side also.
- () 10. ...perhaps with a stop at a restroom to conduct a final grooming check—as well as possibly complete some paperwork before the interview starts.
- () 11. Never arrive with any kind of food in your mouth or on your teeth...

04

Writing

Nowadays young people often have parties, at which they meet and get to know each other. However, not everyone is good at getting to know others. According to your own experiences, what do you think people should do, can do, or might do at parties when they meet new people? Write an essay of about 200 words on this issue to help people at your age. You may begin by writing an outline.

Guidelines:

It's very helpful to write an outline before you start writing the essay. An outline is an important organisational device that will help you to construct a logically developed, unified, and coherent essay. Practices of writing outlines vary widely.

- You may write an outline which includes the main ideas in each paragraph.
- You may just list all the important points about your subject matter based on the main theme of the essay.
- Another common way is to write an introduction and a conclusion for your essay, so the bulk of the outline is devoted to how the body of the essay is developed.

Language in use

01

Test your grammar

Rewrite the following sentences using the *as... as* structure without changing the meaning of the original sentences. The first one has been done for you.

1. Jack is younger than he looks.
Jack isn't *as old as he looks*.
2. You spent more money than me.
I didn't spend _____.
3. The station was nearer than I thought.
The station wasn't _____.
4. The meal cost less than I expected.
The meal didn't cost _____.
5. I go out less than I used to.
I don't _____.



02

Grammar development: *As... as* structure

We use *as... as* with an adjective or adverb in between to say that something or someone is like something or someone else, or that one situation is like another, e.g.

- Was the film *as funny as* his last one?
- Tom came round to my flat *as quickly as* he could.

The negative form of this structure can be *not as... as*, or *not so... as*, e.g.

- Tom's *not as old as* you, is he?
- I wouldn't *go so far as* that.

In formal speech and writing, it is more common to use *less... than*, e.g.

- Tickets were *less expensive than* I had expected.



A. Complete the following sentences with *not as... as* or *less... than*.

1. I am quite tall but you are taller.
I am _____
2. My salary is high but yours is higher.
My salary is _____
3. It's still cold but it was colder yesterday.
It is _____
4. You know a bit about cars but I know more.
You know _____
5. Tickets are usually expensive, but tickets this year are cheaper than we have expected.
Tickets are _____

B. Maggie and Ray have just moved into a new house. Maggie is talking to Ann about it. Look at the extracts from the conversation and correct any mistakes.

1. **Ann:** Ray told me the people next door are very noisy.
Maggie: Shhh! Not as loud. They'll hear you. Actually, they're not so bad neighbours as we first thought.
2. **Maggie:** The previous owners wanted as many as £75,000 for it, but £70,000 was so high as we could go.
3. **Ann:** How large a garage have you got?
Maggie: It's very small. In fact we can't get our car in, but that is not too big problem. We can park it outside.
4. **Maggie:** It's not such beautiful garden, but it's okay for us. The main problem is a huge tree as few as three meters from the house, which keeps out the light.
5. **Ann:** Do you think Ray will be happy here?
Maggie: Well, I'm not as sure. He still has a long journey to work, and will be in the car for as many as three hours a day.

Grammar tips

1. 表示比较意义时，我们经常用到 as... as, not as... as, twice as... as, the same as..., ...than...等结构。例如：

Let's walk. It's just as quick as taking the bus.

Henry isn't as rich as Shirley. 或者

Shirley is richer than Henry is.

Petrol is twice as expensive as it was a few years ago.

Tom's salary is the same as mine. 或者

Tom gets the same salary as me.

2. 在比较两个人或事物的不同时，than/as 后面常用人称代词的宾格形式 me/him/her/them/us. 试比较：

You are taller than me. (不用 than I)

He is not as handsome as him. (不用 as he)

I can't run as fast as her. (不用 as she)

03

Vocabulary building: Compound adjectives ending with *-ed*

In English there are many compound adjectives which end with an *-ed* form, such as *overdressed*, *underdressed* and *well-maintained* in Reading A. These adjectives are usually made up of two or more words that can be joined by a hyphen and often appear as a single word. Usually we can work out the meaning of this kind of compound adjectives by looking at the components that form the words.



A. Fill in each blank with a word below to form a new compound adjective. Check the unknown words in a dictionary.

absent light brown bright wide kind
warm narrow bald pig empty serious

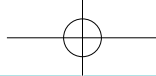
1. _____ } -eyed
_____ }
_____ }
2. _____ } -hearted
_____ }
_____ }
3. _____ } -headed
_____ }
_____ }
4. _____ } -minded
_____ }
_____ }

B. The following are some other compound adjectives ending with *-ed*. Try to figure out the meaning of the following words and put them in the sentences.

sweet-tempered understaffed underdeveloped well-pressed
kind-hearted strong-willed overemphasised well-maintained

- Jane is a beautiful, good-natured and _____ girl.
- He was kept busy writing lectures because the department was seriously _____.
- The community services are underfunded and _____.
- In the past, examinations were _____.
- At the age of 79, she is as _____ as she ever was.
- Being a(n) _____ woman, she felt sorry for the poor child.
- A(n) _____ campus environment should have both sports activities and library branches equally funded.
- A clean, _____ shirt is necessary for an office lady.





Reading B



01

Pre-reading tasks

Have you ever done an internship at college? Is an internship important for a student before graduation? If yes, in what way? Discuss these questions with your classmates.

02

Reading comprehension

The importance of internships

Internships are known for giving students the opportunity to apply their knowledge in real world environments. At the same time, they will also develop skills which will help them perform better at their jobs.

Internships greatly increase the chances that a student will gain full-time employment after graduation. In this article, we will look at internships, and how they can assist students in performing well at their jobs.

One problem commonly cited by employers is that many graduates do not have the practical skills necessary to excel in the job market. They also feel that the professionalism of students is less than it should be. Even though there are a large number of theories on how to encourage employees and increase profits, it is apparent that enhanced levels of education are not enough to prepare students for a real world environment. Being able to improve these weaknesses will make graduates much more effective in their careers.

By using internships, students are provided with experience that will make them stronger. In addition to this, their work ethic will increase, and they will be confident in their abilities. Internships will also allow students to learn about time management, discipline, and effective communication skills. In the business world, critical thinking skills are very important. Graduates must be able to make quick decisions which are based on logic. Internships will teach students how to excel in a large number of different organisations and industries. When students use internships, they will bring

benefits to themselves as well as their employers.

Because many employers feel that some students lack the practical experience to excel in the real world, internships have become more important than ever before. Those who choose to participate in internships will be granted credits towards their graduation by many colleges.

There are a variety of different companies which offer internships to students. These include corporations, non-profit organisations, and other institutions. When looking for internships, it is important to understand what employers want. A number of studies have shown that there are five attributes that employers are looking for.

These attributes are motivation, leadership, oral communication skills, experience, and interpersonal skills. There are a number of employees who naturally have these skills. However, it should be noted that most employees don't have these traits, and they must be taught. When students go through mentoring programmes, they must learn to solve problems and communicate effectively. In addition to this, it is also important to know how to use different forms of media and technology. When looking at the effectiveness of internships, it is also crucial to look at case studies.

A study was conducted which included 270 colleges all over the United States. A total of 350 students were included in this study. Before they could start their internship, the students were required to take a career development programme. In this programme the students learned how to conduct an interview and how to enhance their careers. The results of the study demonstrated that using a variety of different teaching methods is effective in giving graduates the traits which are desired by employers. The students gained skills in problem-solving, critical thinking, and computer skills.

The vast majority of students in this study had high and above-average scores. The students also demonstrated enhanced abilities in the areas of oral communication and leadership skills. The goals of the study were largely successful. If more colleges and educational programmes can encourage their students to take internships, it is likely that many of their graduates would have the skills necessary to succeed. Setting up the right programme for employees can be a challenging process. The students who participated in internships performed much better than students who graduated from the programme without going into internships.

This is evidence that education is not enough to allow graduates to perform at a



higher level. In the real world environment, analytical skills are not enough. Students must have both interpersonal and leadership abilities. While most colleges are good at teaching analytical skills, they are lacking when it comes to other characteristics. By effectively using internships, students will increase their skills and make themselves valuable in the job market. Their employers will benefit as well, and they can increase the efficiency of their businesses.

New Words & Expressions

Reading B

New Words

apparent /ə'pærənt/	<i>adj.</i>	显然的
apply /ə'plai/	<i>v.</i>	运用
assist /ə'sist/	<i>v.</i>	帮助, 协助
attribute /'ætrɪbjʊt/	<i>n.</i>	特性, 特质
conduct /'kɒn'dʌkt/	<i>v.</i>	进行
credit /'kredɪt/	<i>n.</i>	学分
enhanced /ɪn'hɑːnst/	<i>adj.</i>	提高的
excel /ɪk'sel/	<i>v.</i>	擅长
grant /grɑːnt/	<i>v.</i>	给予
internship /'ɪntɜːnʃɪp/	<i>n.</i>	(尤指学生) 实习期的工作
mentoring /'mentɔːrɪŋ/	<i>n.</i>	职业辅导制度
trait /treɪt/	<i>n.</i>	显著特点

Phrases & Expressions

analytical skill	分析能力
full-time employment	全职职位
work ethic	职业道德

A. Choose the best answer to each of the following questions.

1. What do graduates lack before they start a new job?
 - a. Professionalism.
 - b. Theories and knowledge.
 - c. High levels of education.
 - d. Computer skills.

2. The internships can provide students with the following benefits except _____.
 - a. work experience and ethic
 - b. time management and communication skills
 - c. attractive salaries and good reputations
 - d. critical thinking and problem-solving skills
3. According to the study, students who took internships demonstrated the following abilities except _____.
 - a. better oral communication skills
 - b. better foreign language skills
 - c. better problem-solving skills
 - d. better leadership skills

B. Discuss the following questions.

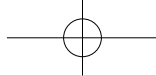
1. Why are internships important?
2. What have you learned from this text to get prepared for internships? What kind of internship will you be interested in doing?

03

Vocabulary and grammar

A. Match the words in Column A with their meaning in Column B.

1. professionalism	a. to do something very well or much better than most people
2. enhanced	b. successful in producing a desired or intended result
3. excel	c. the competence or skill expected of a professional
4. discipline	d. to give someone something
5. effective	e. increased, improved or better
6. grant	f. a system where people with a lot of experience, knowledge etc. advise young people at work



7. naturally

g. the ability to control your own behaviour, so that you do what you are expected to do

8. mentoring

h. normally, not surprisingly

B. Study the use of “it” in the sentences from the text. What does “it” refer to in each sentence?

...it is apparent that enhanced levels of education are not enough to prepare students for a real world environment.

...it is important to understand what employers want.

...it is also important to know how to use different forms of media and technology.

Rearrange the following words into correct sentences.

1. it dangerous to walk the in road is

2. here us take long it didn't to get

3. pity can't to it a is you party come that the

4. let's not it is waiting any worth longer go

5. wonderful it could finish that in you time is the work

C. Translate the following sentences into English.

1. 这次面试是用英语进行的。(conduct)
2. 你将受聘协助开发新设备。(assist)
3. 这些想法常常很难实际应用。(apply)
4. 里克一向擅长外语。(excel)
5. 一名优秀的经理应该具备哪些素质?(attribute)

Project

A job interview

Step 1 Interview questions

Read through the 9 interview questions with a partner. What kind of questions are they? Classify them into five categories marked A, B, C, D, E.

A	Conversation opening questions.
B	Questions about skills and qualifications.
C	Questions about your personality.
D	Questions about salaries and working conditions.
E	Questions about your ambitions.

1. Why are you interested in this company/ position?
2. What do you hope to gain by working with us?
3. How do you feel we would benefit most by hiring you?
4. Which are your strong points/weak points?
5. How do you handle criticism?
6. What problems did you encounter and how did you overcome them?
7. What salary are you looking for?
8. Do you enjoy working with other people?
9. Would you tell me something about yourself?

Step 2 Job advertisement

Read the following job advertisement. What qualifications do you think the advertisers are looking for?

- Are you interested in a career in retail store management?
- We have vacancies for 16 trainee retail managers, to start working in September!
- We offer full training in all areas of retailing.
- We offer an attractive salary and benefits with good prospects for future promotion.

Step 3 Role-play

Role-play an interview for the job of intern retail manager. The interviewer should prepare questions and be professional. The interviewee should answer questions with ease and ask questions of the interviewer.

Step 4 Act out the play

Invite several pairs to act out the play in front of the class. The rest of the class should make comments on the interview and offer advice on how to improve the interviewee's performance.

Culture tips

Some tips on American and British business culture

Knowledge of cultural differences is one of the keys to international business success. Improving cultural awareness can help companies build international competitiveness and enable individuals to become more globally sensitive. The following tips will be of great help to you in your business.



Tips on American business culture

- Tip 1** Americans value straight talking and “getting to the point”.
- Tip 2** Respect is earned through conspicuous achievement rather than through age or background.
- Tip 3** Self-deprecation is often misunderstood by Americans as a sign of weakness. Sell your plus points.
- Tip 4** Humour is frequently used in business situations but is unlikely to be appreciated when matters become very tense.



Tips on British business culture

- Tip 1** British companies tend to develop managers to be “generalists” rather than “specialists” and managers are expected to be interested in, and take a view on, a wide number of topic areas.
- Tip 2** Recent years have seen a change in working patterns with many people moving jobs on a reasonably frequent basis.
- Tip 3** British organisations have moved away from the traditional hierarchical models of the past towards a much flatter system. In the process, many layers of management have been removed.
- Tip 4** Job descriptions in the UK are often very unclear and imprecise, leaving a potential vacuum in ownership of tasks and decisions.

Tip 5 Remember that time is money—wasting people’s time through vagueness will not produce good results.

Tip 6 Compromise is often sought—at the brink. This can often equate to the end of a quarter or financial year.

Tip 7 Do not be offended by personal questions.

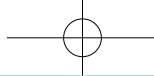
Tip 8 Dress code in the States is very variable—check on the appropriate mode before departure.

Tip 5 The value of pure academic education is viewed with some suspicion. Respect is earned through experience rather than qualification. It is rare to see a professor or doctor on the senior management committee of a large UK company.

Tip 6 Managers find it difficult to articulate direct instructions and will often couch instructions in very diplomatic language.

Tip 7 There are a lot of meetings in the UK and they often fail to produce the desired decision.

Tip 8 The British do less empirical preparation for meetings than other nationalities—seeing the meeting as a forum for debating potential solutions.



Learning to learn

What to do when your mind goes blank

According to most surveys the number one fear of most people is the fear of giving a speech. And the greatest fear of all—at least when it comes to speaking—is the fear of having your mind go completely blank.

Here's the solution.

Back up.

Summarise the point you just finished making. Often, repeating your previous point, like retracing your steps before taking a leap, will give you momentum to carry you forwards.

Check your notes.

Even if you speak without a podium, keep your notes—at least an outline—nearby just in case something happens.

Ask your audience for help.

Say, “I got so caught up in what I was saying that I lost my place. Where was I?” Someone will tell you. (This is especially true if earlier in your introduction you enumerated your main points.) Making your audience part of your presentation is a good thing.

Say something.

Say anything. The longer you remain silent, grasping for exactly the right word, the you're your anxiety (and the audience's) will grow. Try to recall anything relevant to your speech, the audience, or the occasion, and say it. Once you begin talking, your memory will most likely kick into gear. Remember that your audience wants you to succeed. (Your mind is much more likely, by the way, to go blank, if you're trying to memorise your speech. Don't focus on saying exactly the right words. Focus, instead, on communicating the concepts you have in mind.)