

Better at business English

Grammar

Laetis Kuipers-Alting, Kathy Czako

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How should I use this book?

Better at business English – Grammar is designed to help you look at grammar in a new and highly practical light. The book offers tools that will enable you to see and feel the building blocks of text and how they fit together to form comprehensive messages. You will analyse examples from business, care and technology sectors, and you will consider topics that non-native speakers of English may find challenging. This guided practice will help you improve the accuracy and quality of your communication, and your new skills will be useful throughout your studies and professional career.

Practise with the exercises on AcademicX.nl

AcademicX.nl is the exercise and test portal of Academic Service. You will find many exercises, tests and assignments related to the topics dealt with in this book. You will receive feedback on your results, pinpointing the areas you still need to work on.

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The light indicates handy tips and reminders.

Visit [AcademicX.nl](https://academicx.nl) for practice material.



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The *Beter in...* series is unique in its very accessible approach, with a minimum of theory and a maximum of directly usable guidelines and examples. The many examples are clearly and systematically presented in easy-to-navigate chapters. This makes it easier to improve your skills and use English correctly in a professional context. More information about other titles in this series (e.g., *Better at business English – Communications*, *Better at business English – Vocabulary*, *Beter in spelling*, *Beter in Nederlands*, *Beter in gesprekstechnieken*, *Beter in presenteren*, and *Beter in rapporteren*) can be found on the AcademicX.nl portal.

Who is it for?

Better at business English is written for students in the Netherlands in professional higher education (hbo). Thanks to its clear, compact layout, it is ideally suited for both classroom use and independent study. It is designed to be a practical tool, based on the actual needs of teachers and students.

Why?

The way students in higher education learn today is different from how their predecessors learned. The *Beter in...* series recognises this. It provides short, understandable explanations, with examples taken from real business situations and online exercises with clear feedback available 24/7 at the AcademicX.nl portal.

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Test your knowledge per topic with short exercises. Topics are presented point for point, accompanied by a wide variety of exercises. Answer suggestions for the short exercises in the book and extra exercises on each topic can be found on the AcademicX.nl portal.

We would like to thank Aleth Bolt and Taalcentrum-vu for their kind permission to use some of our jointly designed course materials. We also express our gratitude to Paul Post at Academic Service for his insightful advice.

Before we begin:

looking at grammar in a new light ...

This book aims to help you expand your linguistic toolkit and raise your English grammar skills from level B2, the minimum achievement level set for Dutch higher secondary education, to C1 and beyond. The book is by no means exhaustive, but it demonstrates grammar tools that will stand you in good stead when you need to produce correct and coherent English for oral or written work to be done during your studies and your professional career.

Communication is more than applying grammar rules

You've already studied many useful grammar rules in primary and secondary school. But have you had the opportunity to really put those structures to the test in creating comprehensive, high-level text? Good communication is more than just the correct use of individual grammar rules; it's how words are selected and strung together that creates strong messages.

What words do I use? How do I combine words and phrases?

To get your ideas across, you'll need a good stockpile of words and phrases in your personal glossary. For help with vocabulary building, we suggest you read another book in this series, *Better at business English – Vocabulary*. The broader your vocabulary, the more descriptive and meaningful your message can be. And the better your grammar, the focus of this book in the series, the better you will be able to combine words and phrases.

We've concentrated on areas that non-native speakers may find challenging. If you need more help with any of the basic skills, please refer back to your old textbooks or look online for help, for instance at www.taaldok.nl, <http://www.englishpage.com/>, <http://www.edufind.com/english-grammar/english-grammar-guide/>, or <http://wp.digischool.nl/engels/oefenen/grammatica/>.

Reverse Engineering

We've selected inspirational texts from business, care and technology sectors for a closer analysis of their grammatical structures, partly by means of 'reverse engineering'. This involves analysing text components in detail through practical assignments, so that you will be able to grasp their grammar and use their sentence structure techniques in your own communications. Each chapter contains exercises to help you master the techniques that it discusses.

Elaborating a bit on this reverse engineering approach, we would like you to think about the following. Many textbooks ask you to create sentences based on a grammar rule. And then you drill that skill. We would like to flip that

process around and ask you to read text to see how grammar helped create the message. For example, take a look at the two texts below about “trophy hunting”. Think about what the writers were trying to convey. Do you notice any differences in tone or style? Can you guess what type of audience they were written for? What differences can you see in vocabulary and grammar?

1. Recent studies have shown that in areas in which trophy hunting has been permitted by government authorities, lion populations have severely declined even in the absence of other threats. Commercial utilization of wild lion populations is a highly political issue with many proponents and dissenters, but is largely allowed by governments as a venture to deliver capital. Despite some scientific efforts to ameliorate rates of offtake and (doubtful) guidelines for hunters to identify “post reproductive” males, trophy hunting has never been shown to be a sustainable venture, and is known to have many abuses. These include luring lions out of protected areas, exceeding and influencing quota systems, ignoring consequences on reproduction of lion populations by destroying pride males, and taking young males out of the future reproductive pool.*
2. Can trophy hunting ever be a useful tool in the conservationist’s toolbox? On the surface, the answer would appear obvious. It seems as if the killing of an animal – especially an endangered one – for sport is directly contradictory to the goal of ensuring the survival of a species. The question has been asked again following the auction last Saturday night of the right to hunt an endangered black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*) in Namibia. And the answer, as usual, is more complicated.†

The writers of the above texts chose particular language to communicate their messages. The first text is more formal, objective and scientific. It employs a more advanced sentence structure, transition words and phrases, and neutral language. The other text is more conversational and invites the audience to consider options. It contains a question, simpler sentence structure, and a sentence that begins with ‘and’ (a conjunction). Which is better? Neither. It all depends on your communication goals.

Grammar-speak and the learning process

A note about terminology used in the book: students sometimes say that they are intimidated by difficult grammar terms and have trouble remembering them all. To help you focus on usage rather than definitions, we’ve included extra text bubbles to help you understand ‘how’ and ‘why’ each

* ALERT, <http://lionalert.org/page/trophy-hunting>

† <http://conservationmagazine.org/2014/01/can-trophy-hunting-reconciled-conservation/>

Before we begin: looking at grammar in a new light ...

grammar building block is useful. The official terminology is merely there to help guide you if you'd like to find additional resources or exercises on each subject. Here's one tip: ignore the fact that the book talks grammar, but think of the techniques and their descriptions as if they were music styles or dance moves with exotic names.

One final consideration: the road to success requires dedication and perseverance, and improving your grammar is no different. What you need is an active combination of the following:

1. discipline – make it a long-term habit to identify new and effective grammatical structures for personal use
2. focus – make conscious and concentrated attempts to apply newly acquired grammar techniques
3. confidence – be convinced that your hard work will pay off in the end; your proficiency levels will improve slowly, but surely.

The websites we've listed for you in this book have been around for quite a while and will likely stay around for a good while, too. If you find that any of them has been moved or closed, you can use clever search terms and your own internet search skills to locate new addresses. Of course, we would also like you to start looking for helpful sites yourself.

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