

B1 Speaking — General English + Workplace English

JBK Independent Learning Program

Layer 1 — The Learning Goal

1.1 CEFR Learning Objective — B1 Speaking

Workplace Application (how to use this at work): At work, this means you can take part in familiar conversations with coworkers, customers, or supervisors, explain a situation, and give your opinion with reasons.

B1 — Take part in conversations on familiar topics and give opinions and reasons.

I can take part in conversations about familiar topics without preparing, give my opinion and explain my reasons, and describe experiences and events in a simple, connected way.

By the end of this chapter, you will be better able to speak in everyday situations and at work. You will give simple explanations and reasons, give your opinions, and take part in conversations about topics you know.

1.2 What Will I Learn?

Workplace Application: Practice explaining a workplace problem, giving reasons, asking follow-up questions, giving an opinion, or responding to another person's idea.

In this chapter, you will learn some practical ways to improve your speaking and become a more independent English learner.

You will learn how to:

- speak about familiar topics with more detail;
- explain your ideas and give reasons;
- express and support your opinions;
- ask and answer follow-up questions;
- keep a conversation going;
- use strategies (ways to help you learn) when you do not know a word;
- practice speaking with other people and speaking that you prepare;
- use AI to support your speaking practice; and
- choose speaking activities that match your own goals.

1.3 Why Should I Care About Speaking?

Workplace Application: At B1, speaking English can help you explain a situation, give reasons, express an opinion, ask follow-up questions, and take part in familiar workplace conversations. You may need to speak with coworkers, customers, supervisors, or other professionals.

You use spoken English when you:

- have conversations;
- give information;
- explain ideas;
- discuss problems;
- give opinions;
- communicate at work; and
- take part in everyday social situations.

Good speaking skills help you:

- communicate your ideas more clearly;
- take a more active part in conversations;
- explain your thoughts;
- ask for and give information;
- deal with everyday problems;
- speak with more confidence; and
- use English in real situations.

You do not need perfect English to communicate.

At B1, an important goal is to communicate clearly and keep the conversation going.

1.4 Your Learning Goal

Workplace Application: A useful B1 workplace goal might be "I can explain a problem and suggest a simple solution," "I can give my opinion in a meeting," or "I can explain why I recommend something." Choose a goal connected to a situation you will probably have.

There is no one speaking goal that is right for every B1 learner.

Your goal should come from your own needs and interests.

You can use the "I Can..." statements of the CEFR (the European scale of language levels, from A1 to C2) to help you choose a goal.

For example:

I can give my opinion and give simple reasons for it.

Or you might choose a goal related to:

- everyday conversations;
- travel;
- work;
- meetings;
- giving explanations;
- discussions;
- presentations;

- family and friends; or
- another situation that is important to you.

Choose a goal that is useful to you now.

If you are not sure what your goal means, ask AI to explain it in simple English and give you examples.

1.5 How AI Can Help You Learn Speaking

Workplace Application: AI can help you prepare for a workplace conversation. For example, it can play the role of a coworker or customer, ask you follow-up questions, and give you feedback (comments that help you improve) afterward.

AI gives language learners many new ways to practice.

You can ask AI to:

- help you prepare for a speaking activity;
- give you useful vocabulary and expressions;
- ask follow-up questions;
- practice a conversation with you;
- practice a role-play;
- help you organize a short presentation;
- give you feedback;
- explain difficult language; and
- create more practice when you need it.

AI can be your:

Speaking Coach • Practice Partner • Learning Assistant

But remember:

AI does not replace speaking practice.

You still need to speak.

AI can give you practice when another person is not available, but you are the learner who does the work.

Layer 2 — The Learning Method

2.1 How Can I Improve My Speaking?

Workplace Application: Choose the strategies that help you most in the workplace conversations you really have, such as meetings, customer conversations, or talking with coworkers.

There are many ways to improve speaking.

In this chapter, we will introduce a few strategies that are especially useful for B1 learners.

You do **not** need to use every strategy.

The purpose of this chapter is to give you a small group of useful tools that you can try.

Later, you can visit the **Resource Library** (a list of free websites and tools in Part 3) to find many more ideas.

2.2 The Speaking Learning Process

A simple learning process is:

Listen → Understand → Practice → Communicate → Review → Reflect

You can use this process with many different speaking activities.

Listen

Workplace Application: In a workplace conversation, listen not only for the main message but also for reasons, examples, opinions, questions, and requested actions.

Before you speak, listen to some English related to your topic.

You might:

- listen to a conversation;
- listen to an interview;
- listen to a model answer;
- listen to a short presentation; or
- listen to an AI conversation.

Notice useful vocabulary, expressions, pronunciation, and ways of organizing ideas.

Ask yourself:

- What can I use in my own speaking?
- How does the speaker express an opinion?
- How does the speaker give reasons?

Understand

Workplace Application: Check the speaker's main point and the details that support it. If something is unclear, ask a follow-up question or ask the speaker to explain or repeat it.

Make sure you understand the speaking activity.

Ask yourself:

- What do I need to talk about?
- Who am I talking to?
- What is my purpose?
- What ideas do I want to communicate?
- What vocabulary or expressions will I need?

If you do not understand the task, ask your teacher or AI to explain it.

Practice

Workplace Application: Before a workplace conversation, prepare the key words and useful expressions you will need. Practice them aloud or with AI.

Practice before you communicate.

You can:

- prepare key vocabulary;
- practice useful expressions;
- organize your ideas;
- answer questions;
- record yourself;
- practice with AI;
- repeat a speaking task; or
- practice a short presentation.

Do not try to memorize everything.

Prepare the important ideas and language you need.

Communicate

Workplace Application: Use a realistic workplace role-play such as a team discussion, customer conversation, short meeting, interview, or problem-solving discussion. Try to keep the conversation going by asking and answering follow-up questions.

Now use English to communicate.

At B1, you can practice two main types of speaking.

Interactive Speaking

You speak with another person.

You can:

- have a conversation;
- ask and answer questions;
- express an opinion;
- agree or disagree;
- ask follow-up questions;
- solve a simple problem; or

- take part in a discussion.

Prepared Speaking

You speak for a longer time about a topic you have prepared.

You can:

- describe an experience;
- explain a process;
- give your opinion;
- tell a story; or
- give a short presentation.

The goal is not perfect English.

The goal is to speak clearly and keep getting better.

Review

Workplace Application: Review whether you explained your ideas clearly, gave enough detail, and responded in the right way to the other speaker. Note useful phrases you can use again.

After speaking, review your performance.

You can:

- listen to your recording;
- review useful vocabulary;
- notice repeated mistakes;
- notice successful expressions;
- check whether you answered the question; and
- think about how clearly you communicated.

Do not try to correct everything.

Choose one or two things that will help you improve most.

Reflect

Workplace Application: Think about a workplace conversation you had or may need to handle. Ask yourself: "Could I explain my idea?" "Did I give reasons or examples?" "Did I respond to the other person?" and "What should I practice before the next conversation?"

After your practice, ask yourself:

- What was easy?
- What was difficult?
- Did I communicate my main ideas?
- Which strategy helped me?
- What would I do differently next time?
- What should I practice next?

Reflection helps you become a more independent learner.

2.3 A Few Speaking Strategies

We cannot teach every possible speaking strategy in one chapter.

Instead, we will introduce a few strategies that are especially useful for B1 speaking. Many of them come from Rebecca Oxford (a researcher who studied how people learn languages), who described many strategies that language learners can use.

You can later explore more strategies in the Resource Library.

Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies help you plan and check your learning.

Planning

Workplace Application: Before a workplace conversation, decide what you want to say, what you want to find out, and which expressions you will need.

Before speaking, decide:

- What do I want to practice?
- What is my goal?
- What vocabulary will I need?
- How will I practice?

Example:

“Today I will practice giving my opinion about working from home.”

Monitoring

While speaking, ask yourself:

- Am I answering the question?
- Am I communicating my main idea?
- Am I giving enough information?
- What is difficult for me?

Example:

“I gave my opinion, but I need to give a reason.”

Evaluating

After speaking, think about your performance.

Ask:

- What did I do well?
- What was difficult?
- Did I reach my goal?
- What should I practice next?

Evaluating helps you choose your next learning activity.

Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies help you work with the English you are learning.

Practice Naturally

Workplace Application: Use new expressions in real workplace conversations. For example, if you learn “The main reason is...,” try using it the next time you explain a decision at work.

Do not only study words and grammar. Use them in real communication.

For example, if you learn:

I agree because...

I don't agree because...

practice using them in a short discussion.

Practice with Others

Use opportunities to speak with:

- classmates;
- friends;
- teachers;
- conversation partners; or
- AI.

Speaking often helps you feel more comfortable using English.

Organize Your Ideas

Before speaking, make a short list of your main ideas.

For example:

Working from home

- saves travel time;
- can be comfortable; but
- can be difficult for teamwork.

You can use these ideas to organize your speaking.

Use Chunks

Workplace Application: Learn chunks (groups of words you learn together) you can use at work, such as “Could you explain that again?”, “I suggest that we...,” or “The main problem is...”.

Learn groups of words that you can use in communication.

For example:

- In my opinion...
- I agree with you because...
- I’m not sure I agree...
- For example...
- The main reason is...
- What do you think?

Chunks can help you speak more naturally and give you time to organize your ideas.

Rehearse and Repeat

Practice the same speaking task more than once.

The first time, focus on communicating your ideas.

The second time, try to improve one part of your speaking.

Repeating a task can help you become more fluent.

Compensation Strategies

When You Do Not Know a Word

Workplace Application: If you forget a work word, describe what it does or what it looks like. For example: “I need the thing that holds papers together.” The listener can often help you find the word.

If you do not know a word, try another way to communicate the idea.

You can:

- describe the word;
- give an example;
- use a simpler word;
- use a similar word; or
- ask for help.

For example:

“I don’t know the word, but it is a place where you can borrow books.”

The goal is to keep communicating.

© 2026 John B. Kirk, AOK Basic Skills Project · CC BY-NC 4.0 · Contact: aokbasicskills.gratis/contact/

Free to copy and share for non-commercial use, with credit to the author. License: creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/ · Page 9

2.4 Personal Learning Strengths

Workplace Application: Match your workplace practice to your strengths. You might rehearse aloud, use notes or a mind map, practice with another person, record yourself, or practice a workplace conversation with AI.

There is no one best way to learn English.

People enjoy different kinds of learning activities.

Howard Gardner was a researcher. He wrote about different kinds of intelligence. His work can give you some useful ideas.

For example:

- **Linguistic** — speaking, stories, vocabulary, and discussion;
- **Interpersonal** — conversations, pair work, and group discussion;
- **Intrapersonal** — recording yourself, learning notes, and thinking about your learning; and
- **Musical** — the beat, the strong sounds, and the music of English (rhythm, stress, and intonation).

You may find that some activities work better for you than others.

But do not limit yourself to your favorite activities.

A strategy that is not your favorite can still be useful when you need it.

For more ideas, visit the Resource Library.

2.5 Weekly Study Plan

Day	Activity	Time
Monday	Prepare vocabulary and useful expressions	20 min
Tuesday	Practice questions and answers	20 min
Wednesday	Practice with AI	20 min
Thursday	Record a short speaking activity	20 min
Friday	Have a conversation or discussion	20 min
Saturday	Repeat a speaking activity and improve it	20 min
Sunday	Review and reflect	20 min

This plan is only an example. You do not have to follow it exactly.

Change it to match your own goal and schedule.

2.6 My Strategy Record

Each time you practice speaking, write down the strategy you tried, whether it helped you, and why.

Date	Strategy I tried	Did it help me? (Yes / A little / Not yet)	Why?	What will I try next time?

You do not need to use every strategy. Choose a strategy, try it, reflect on it, and decide whether it works for you.

Layer 3 — The Learning Tools

Choose Your Tier

This layer has four tiers. A tier is a way to practice with the tools you have. Each tier adds to the tiers before it.

- **Tier 1 — Paper and People:** a notebook and a partner.
- **Tier 2 — Phone, No Internet:** any phone with a voice recorder, and your notebook.
- **Tier 3 — Limited Data:** short voice notes and AI in text.
- **Tier 4 — Good Internet:** live conversation with AI, video calls, and online resources.

3.1 Partner and AI Roles

Workplace Application: A partner or AI can play the role of a coworker, customer, or supervisor so that you can practice a workplace conversation before you have it.

Tier 1 — Paper and People

Conversation Partner: Your partner talks with you and asks follow-up questions.

Listener: Your partner listens to your short presentation and asks you a question at the end.

If you have no partner, speak alone about your topic for one minute.

Tier 2 — Phone, No Internet

Recorder: You record yourself and listen back. You hear what your listener hears.

Notebook: Your paper notebook keeps your topics, questions, and useful phrases.

Text Messages (SMS): A partner sends you a question in English. Record your answer, and send a short reply. SMS needs no internet, but your plan may charge for each message, so use it sometimes.

Tier 3 — Limited Data

Voice-Note Partner: You and a partner send short voice notes. You do not need to be online at the same time.

AI in Text: AI writes questions and useful phrases for you, and gives feedback on what you type. Text uses very little data.

Tier 4 — Good Internet

For B1 speaking, AI can be your:

- **Speaking Coach** — helps you prepare and gives you feedback;
- **Conversation Partner** — practices conversations, discussions, and role-plays with you; and
- **Learning Assistant** — helps you find speaking activities and creates more practice.

With good internet, you can also speak with AI by voice, or meet a partner in a video call.

3.2 AI Functions

Workplace Application: For workplace speaking, you can ask AI to create a realistic role-play, help you prepare what to say in a meeting, or give you feedback on how clearly you explained a problem.

AI can help you:

- create speaking practice;
- practice conversations and discussions;
- prepare a presentation;
- give feedback; and
- create more practice.

These are only some possibilities.

You can find more in the Resource Library.

3.3 AI Tasks

Workplace Application: One useful task is to ask AI to play a customer with a simple problem. Explain the situation, give reasons, and suggest a solution.

For example, you can ask AI to:

- give you questions about a topic;
- practice a role-play with you;
- help you prepare a short presentation; or
- give you feedback on a speaking activity.

3.4 Scripts and AI Prompts

Workplace Application: You can adapt these scripts and prompts (the messages you write to AI) to a workplace situation. For example, replace [topic] with “a problem with a customer order” or “a change in our work schedule.”

Every tier has the same three tasks: conversation practice, discussion practice, and presentation practice. Only the tool is different.

Tier 1 — Scripts for a Partner

Copy a script onto paper and give it to your partner.

Conversation Practice: “Please talk with me about [topic]. Ask follow-up questions and help me keep the conversation going. Do not correct every mistake.”

Discussion Practice: “Ask for my opinion about [topic]. Then ask me for reasons and examples.”

Presentation Practice: “Listen to my short presentation about [topic]. Then ask me two questions, and tell me one thing that was clear.”

Tier 2 — Recording Tasks

Conversation Practice: Write five questions about [topic] in your notebook. Record your answers. Listen back, and answer again with more detail.

Discussion Practice: Record your opinion about [topic] with two reasons and one example.

Presentation Practice: Write three or four main ideas. Record a two-minute presentation. Listen, and record it again.

Tier 3 — Voice Notes and Text Prompts

Conversation Practice: Send a partner a short voice note about [topic]. Ask one question at the end. Answer your partner's reply.

Discussion Practice: Send AI this text: "I am a B1 English learner. Give me five questions about [topic] that ask for my opinion and my reasons." Answer them aloud.

Presentation Practice: Send AI this text: "I am a B1 English learner. Help me organize three or four main ideas for a short presentation about [topic]." Then record your presentation.

Tier 4 — AI Prompts for Live Practice

Prompt 1 — Conversation Practice

"I am a B1 English learner. Please have a conversation with me about [topic]. Ask follow-up questions and help me keep the conversation going. Do not correct every mistake. Give me feedback after the conversation."

Prompt 2 — Discussion Practice

"I am a B1 English learner. I want to practice giving opinions. Discuss this topic with me: [topic]. Ask me questions and ask me to give reasons and examples."

Prompt 3 — Presentation Practice

"I am a B1 English learner. I need to give a short presentation about [topic]. Help me organize three or four main ideas. Then ask me questions about my presentation and give me simple feedback."

You can change these prompts to match your own goals.

3.5 Choose Your Speaking Practice

Workplace Application: Choose a B1 workplace situation such as explaining a problem, giving an opinion in a meeting, asking follow-up questions, discussing a customer issue, giving a short explanation, or suggesting a solution.

You do not need to use every activity in this chapter.

Choose one that matches your current goal.

You can choose General English or Workplace English.

You can also choose the kind of English that is most useful to you: American English, British English, or International English.

Topics for Any Tier

General English: your weekend, a place you like, a problem in your town, a film or a book, your plans for next year.

Workplace English: a problem with a customer order, a change in the work schedule, an idea to make your work easier.

Tier 1 — Paper and People

- Have a conversation or a discussion with a partner. Use a script from Section 3.4.
- Give a two-minute presentation to a partner, or alone.

Tier 2 — Phone, No Internet

- Record, listen, and record again. Improve one thing each time.
- Play saved audio. Stop after each sentence and say your own answer.

Tier 3 — Limited Data

- Have a slow conversation by voice note. Send one message, and answer your partner's reply the next day.
- On ELLLO (ello.org), try a Repeat Relay. You hear a short phrase and repeat it in the pause.
- Find questions on any topic at ITESLJ Conversation Questions, in the Low-Data Edition of the Resource Library (its short list of websites that use little data).
- The three options under Tier 4 are text prompts. They use little data, so you can use them too.

Tier 4 — Good Internet

Option 1 — Everyday Speaking

Choose a speaking activity about an everyday topic.

Ask AI:

“Please recommend a B1 General English speaking activity about a situation that is useful to me. I would like [American/British/International] English.”

Option 2 — Workplace Speaking

Choose a speaking activity related to a workplace situation.

Ask AI:

“Please recommend a B1 Workplace English speaking activity that will help me communicate in a situation I may experience at work. I would like [American/British/International] English.”

Option 3 — Personal Goal

Choose a speaking activity that supports your own CEFR goal.

Ask AI:

“Please recommend a practical speaking activity that will help me communicate in this situation: [describe your situation]. I am a B1 learner studying [General English/Workplace English]. I would like [American/British/International] English.”

Choose only one activity for now.

You can explore more activities later.

3.6 The JBK Independent Learning Cycle

Workplace Application: Use the JBK Independent Learning Cycle (seven steps to plan and check your own learning) with speaking at work. Check what you can say at work now, and plan a goal for one situation. Choose a role-play or activity, and practice it. Then check if you were clear and kept the conversation going, think about what helped, and decide what to practice next.

Now use the learning system you learned in Part 1.

Note: The JBK Independent Learning Cycle is the author's own model. It is inspired by the European Language Portfolio (ELP), a record of your language goals and progress.

1. Assess

What can I do now?

2. Plan

What is my goal?

Who will I speak with, and what is the situation?

When and how will I practice?

3. Choose

Which activity or resource will I use?

Use the Resource Library or ask AI for help.

4. Practice

Complete the speaking activity.

Use one or two strategies.

Use AI if it helps you.

5. Evaluate

Did I communicate my main ideas?

Did I give reasons or examples and keep the conversation going?

6. Reflect

What did I learn?

What worked well?

What was difficult?

Did AI help me?

7. Improve

What will I practice next?

You might:

- repeat the same speaking task;
- practice with a partner or AI;
- record yourself and listen again;
- give a short presentation;
- try the activity without notes; or
- choose a more difficult topic.

Assess → Plan → Choose → Practice → Evaluate → Reflect → Improve

3.7 This Week's Practice

Workplace Application: Choose one B1 workplace speaking situation and practice it. Focus on explaining, responding, asking follow-up questions, or giving reasons and examples.

Plan one short speaking practice for this week.

My speaking goal:

Speaking activity:

Resource, person, or AI I will use:

Strategy I will use:

When will I practice?

After you practice, complete your Learning Record (your notes before and after each practice) in Section 3.8.

3.8 My Learning Record

Workplace Application: Record the workplace situation, your speaking goal, useful expressions, reasons or examples you used, communication problems, feedback, and your next practice goal.

Your Learning Record helps you remember what you have practiced, what you have learned, and what you want to do next. Keep it in your Learning Notebook (your own notebook for this course).

Use this record before and after each speaking practice session. A few short notes are enough.

Before I Practice

My speaking goal:

Speaking activity:

The strategy I will try:

After I Practice

Useful words or expressions:

What did I communicate well?

What was difficult?

What helped me?

What will I practice next?

Workplace English

What workplace situation did I practice?

3.9 Visit the Resource Library

Workplace Application: Look for B1 workplace speaking resources such as role-plays, meeting phrases, and customer conversations that match situations you may have at work.

You have now learned a few basic ways to improve your B1 speaking.

These are only a starting point.

Visit the Resource Library to find more:

- speaking activities;
- discussion topics;
- conversation questions;
- role-plays;
- presentation practice;
- pronunciation activities;
- AI speaking activities; and
- other resources.

Look for resources that match:

- your B1 level;
- your speaking goal;
- General English or Workplace English;
- the kind of English you prefer; and
- your interests.

You do not need to try everything.

Choose a few resources that look useful to you.

Write a short list of the ones you like in your Learning Notebook. Then decide which ones may be most useful for you.

Layer 4 — Reflection and Growth

4.1 Self-Assessment — “I Can...”

Now that you have finished this chapter, think about what you can do.

My English Skills

I can...	Yes	Sometimes	Not yet
talk about familiar topics with some detail.	☐	☐	☐
give my opinion and give simple reasons.	☐	☐	☐
explain an idea or experience.	☐	☐	☐
ask and answer follow-up questions.	☐	☐	☐
take part in a conversation about a familiar topic.	☐	☐	☐
keep communicating when I do not know a word.	☐	☐	☐
give a short prepared presentation.	☐	☐	☐

My Learning Skills

I can...	Yes	Sometimes	Not yet
use a few strategies to improve my speaking.	☐	☐	☐
choose a speaking activity that matches my goal.	☐	☐	☐
use AI to support my speaking practice.	☐	☐	☐
record and review my own speaking.	☐	☐	☐
evaluate my speaking and choose what to practice next.	☐	☐	☐
use the Resource Library to find more speaking practice.	☐	☐	☐

Workplace Self-Assessment

I can...	Yes	Sometimes	Not yet
choose a B1-level workplace speaking goal.	☐	☐	☐
take part in familiar workplace conversations.	☐	☐	☐

I can...	Yes	Sometimes	Not yet
explain a problem or situation.	☐	☐	☐
give reasons and examples.	☐	☐	☐
express and support an opinion.	☐	☐	☐
ask and answer follow-up questions.	☐	☐	☐
keep a familiar workplace conversation going.	☐	☐	☐
use strategies when communication becomes difficult.	☐	☐	☐
reflect on what I need to improve.	☐	☐	☐

You do not need to check “Yes” for everything today.

Your goal is to keep improving.

4.2 Reflection

Workplace Reflection: Think about a workplace conversation you had or may need to have. Could you explain your ideas, give reasons, and respond to the other person? What will you practice next?

Think about your experience.

- What was easiest for me?
- What was most difficult?
- Which speaking strategy helped me most?
- Was I able to communicate my ideas clearly?
- Did I give reasons or examples?
- Did AI help me? How?
- Which activity did I like?
- What would I like to practice next?

Record your answers in your Learning Notebook.

4.3 Independent Learning Tip

Workplace Application: At B1, practice more than single sentences. Practice complete workplace conversations so that you learn how to explain, respond, ask follow-up questions, and keep the conversation moving.

Do not try to speak perfectly. Try to communicate clearly.

If you make a mistake, keep going when you can.

If you do not know a word, try to explain it in another way.

When you finish a speaking activity, do not only ask:

“How many mistakes did I make?”

Also ask:

“Did I communicate my ideas?”

Then choose one thing to improve next time.

Small improvements can make your speaking stronger.

4.4 Your Next Step

Workplace Application: Choose one B1 workplace speaking situation, such as explaining a problem in a meeting or discussing a customer issue, and set a clear goal for your next practice.

You have learned several basic strategies and tools for B1 speaking.

Now choose one speaking goal and use the JBK Independent Learning Cycle from Section 3.6 to practice it.

These are not the only ways to improve. As you continue through the course, you will find more strategies, more ways to use AI, and more resources.

After the course, you can continue learning at your own speed using the Resource Library.

Your learning program will grow as you discover:

- what you need;
- what you enjoy;
- what works for you; and
- what you want to improve next.

You don't need to open every door. Choose the door that helps you reach your current goal.

4.5 Remember

Assess → Plan → Choose → Practice → Evaluate → Reflect → Improve

You are not finished when you complete one speaking activity.

You choose your next goal and continue learning.

That is how you become your own English teacher.