

Unit 1 - Learning



The objectives for this unit are:

- vocabulary: learn words and phrases to talk about training and learning
- communication: practise strategies for communicating effectively on the telephone
- grammar: study how to use participle clauses and 'the future in the past'

Unit 1 - Learning – Vocabulary I

The following words and phrases appear in the text you are going to read in this section:

nurture help something or somebody to develop and be successful

It's important to nurture a good working relationship with your colleagues.

upheaval a big change that causes a lot of confusion, worry, and problems

I don't want the upheaval of changing jobs again.

holistic considering something as an interconnected whole, rather than as a collection of disconnected parts

We need to take a holistic approach to these negotiations.

radical concerning the most basic and important parts of something; thorough and complete

There are radical differences between Apple and Microsoft.

deferential being polite or respectful

Some bosses like their employees to be assertive; others like them to be deferential.

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Peter Senge, an American business strategist, came up with the concept of 'learning organizations' in his best-selling business management book, *The Fifth Discipline*. He defined them as companies '... where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together.' At the heart of this vision is what he called 'systems thinking' – an ability to see and think about the organization as a whole, not just as a lot of disconnected parts. It emphasizes the need for the whole team to focus, learn, and build a shared vision.

It sounds great, but does it actually work in practice? Those who maintain that it does, suggest that although it tends to cause upheaval and a real paradigm shift within a company, it usually leads to improved results. This is because 'systems thinking' means all levels of staff are actively encouraged to be creative and to take a holistic view of the business. Performance management and personal development plans play a key role in ensuring this happens, and the result is that all staff become far more engaged in the success of the company.

Conversely, there are some who question whether creating a learning organization is possible in the real world. They argue that in most cases a radical structural change to a company's culture is needed for it to stop thinking about training individuals and to start focusing on learning at the wider organizational level. There is also a suspicion that while the ideal is to have total employee participation and engagement in the learning process, in reality management will continue to impose values on a reluctant but deferential workforce. The argument against the 'learning organization' concept is that in the long run, what employees really need is to be able to do what they do better, not to spend time worrying about the bigger picture, and that companies should simply direct training towards addressing any skills deficit and encouraging professional development across the board in response to individual training needs.

Talking about training and learning : Complete the phrases.

Complete the phrases from the text. You must only write one word in each space..

1	<input type="text"/>	aspiration	6	employee	<input type="text"/>
2	shared	<input type="text"/>	7	in the long	<input type="text"/>
3	paradigm	<input type="text"/>	8	the bigger	<input type="text"/>
4	<input type="text"/>	management	9	skills	<input type="text"/>
5	<input type="text"/>	change	10	<input type="text"/>	the board

Talking about training and learning: Match the phrases from the text with the definitions

1	a lack of ability / knowledge within a group of people	employee participation
2	a view of the future that everyone is committed to	paradigm shift
3	over or after a long period of time; eventually	the bigger picture
4	facilitation of staff achievement within a company	performance management
5	involvement of a staff member in an activity	shared vision
6	a radical change from one way of thinking to another	structural change
7	the situation as a whole	across the board
8	when a company reorganizes itself	collective aspiration
9	a desire for success that is shared by the group	in the long run
10	involving everyone or everything in an organization	skills deficit

Unit 1 - Learning – Vocabulary II

The following words and phrases appear in the recording from the online course:

geared towards designed or organized to achieve a particular purpose
The programme is geared towards preparing students for work.

the bottom line the amount of money that is a profit or a loss after everything has been calculated
sales last month failed to add to the company's bottom line.

remit the area of activity over which a person or group has authority or control
This decision is outside the remit of the committee.

drawback a disadvantage or problem that makes something less attractive
The main drawback of the idea is the cost.

Talking about training and learning: Categorize the adjectives.

Are the following adjectives used to describe the nouns training or approach? Write the adjectives in the correct columns.

Approach		Training

bottom-up	generic	job-specific	centrally-driven	top-down
one-size-fits-all	decentralized	self-directed		

Talking about training and learning: Matching adjectives with the definitions

Match the adjectives on the right with the definitions on the left.

1	coming from lower positions in a company		generic
2	coming from central departments in a company		bottom-up
3	coming from the individual member of staff		top-down
4	coming from all areas of a company		centrally-driven
5	coming from the management		self-directed
6	answering a wide range of needs		decentralized
7	related to one particular job only		job-specific
8	shared by a whole group; not specific		one-size-fits-all

Unit 1 - Learning - Communication

Key words from the unit related to communication strategies on the telephone:

Checking facts

Did you say ...?
... did you say?
What was ... again?

Checking understanding

What you're saying is that ...
Do you mean that ...?

Asking for clarification

I'm not quite clear about your last suggestion.
I'm not quite sure I understand.
Could you run it by me again?
Could you clarify exactly what the problems were?
Could I ask you to spell out some details?

Dealing with misunderstanding

It's not that we don't We don't ...
What I'm saying is ...
That's not what I mean. What I mean is ...

Digressing

Just a thought. It may not be entirely relevant, but ...
That reminds me. Have you heard ...?
By the way, talking about ...

Resuming

Actually, it doesn't matter – it's a bit off-topic right now.
Anyway ... sorry. That's a bit of a digression.
Let's get back to the main issue.

Communication strategies on the telephone: Practice

Choose the correct verbs to complete the sentences.

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|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1 | Could you <input type="text"/> your idea by me again, please? | <input type="text" value="mean"/> |
| 2 | I'm not quite sure I <input type="text"/> what you need. | <input type="text" value="spell"/> |
| 3 | Do you <input type="text"/> that you need more time to consider the proposal? | <input type="text" value="run"/> |
| 4 | I'm not quite <input type="text"/> about the costs involved. | <input type="text" value="clear"/> |
| 5 | Let's <input type="text"/> back to what we were saying about the project earlier. | <input type="text" value="get"/> |
| 6 | Did you <input type="text"/> that you can't make it to the meeting, Greg? | <input type="text" value="reminds"/> |
| 7 | We've invited Jamie here so he can <input type="text"/> exactly what the problems are. | <input type="text" value="was"/> |
| 8 | Michael, can you <input type="text"/> out exactly what you mean by that? | <input type="text" value="understand"/> |
| 9 | What <input type="text"/> the name of the company again? | <input type="text" value="say"/> |
| 10 | That <input type="text"/> me. Have you heard about what happened at the conference? | <input type="text" value="clarify"/> |

Unit 1 - Learning - Grammar: The future in the past

Was going to

1 We can use *was going to* to talk about the future from a point of view in the past, to talk about former plans and intentions.

I was going to visit our Alicante office too, but the plane was delayed.

2 It is the intention that is in the past and has now changed. The time the plan or intention refers to can still be in the future.

Tomorrow we were going to go to the races, but the course has been flooded.

3 The time the intention or plan refers to may also be in the past.

Yesterday I was going to have a meeting with my boss, but she was ill.

4 We use this structure to explain why something didn't happen, to make excuses, to explain changes to plans, and to give background to our current intentions or thoughts.

I was going to call you, but I forgot.

We were going to meet in the café, but it was too noisy.

5 We can also use perfect tenses with *going to*, for a different perspective in the past.

She's been going to visit this office for ages - I don't think she ever will.

They had been going to make me redundant, if I hadn't taken early retirement.

Other structures

A number of other structures are also possible.

1 The past continuous can be used for former arrangements (just as we would use the present continuous for current arrangements).

I was meeting their sales rep at 3 p.m., but he's just cancelled. (Compare with: I'm meeting their sales rep at 3 p.m.)

2 *Was to / were to* is possible as the past form of *be to*, particularly to talk in a formal style about past plans and arrangements.

We were to launch the new products at the International Spring Convention but there were delays.

The future in the past: Practice

Write a word to complete the sentences.

1 -- with the problems of the world economy, we need to make some changes.

2 I -- last week off, but my boss cancelled all leave.

3 -- that the immediate future looks bleak, we need to tighten our belts.

4 I -- arrive at 2 p.m. for the meeting, but the train was late.

5 -- seen downturns before, I think the problems will be short-term.

6 We were expecting that the economy -- slow down this year.

7 -- on that principle, we must consolidate.

8 I -- Christine tomorrow at 5 p.m., but now she can't make it.

9 -- our current healthy position, we should try to tough it out.

10 There was hope that profits -- soar under the new CEO.