Negotiations English

English for negotiating: setting out your position, making proposals and conditional offers, bargaining, handling objections and reaching or confirming an agreement politely but firmly.

Model dialogue

Buyer	Thanks for meeting us. Our main priority is a reliable supplier for the next two years.
Seller	That's great to hear. We're looking for a long-term partnership too. For 5,000 units, our price is four dollars per unit.
Buyer	That's a bit higher than we expected. Is there any flexibility on the price?
Seller	If you sign a two-year contract, we can offer three seventy-five.
Buyer	What if we met halfway, at three sixty, and paid within 30 days?
Seller	I'm afraid we can't go any lower than three seventy for that volume. But we could include free delivery.
Buyer	All right. Three seventy with free delivery. I think we have a deal.
Seller	Excellent. Let's go over what we've agreed, and I'll send you the contract by Monday.

Key vocabulary

Word	Meaning	Example
terms	the conditions of an agreement	The payment terms are 30 days.
concession	something you give up to reach agreement	We made one small concession on price.
counteroffer	an offer made in reply to another	They rejected our counteroffer.
bottom line	the lowest acceptable amount	Our bottom line is ten percent.
volume	the quantity ordered	The price depends on volume.
compromise	an agreement where both sides give something	We reached a compromise.
deal	an agreement, especially in business	They signed the deal yesterday.
walk away	to leave a negotiation without agreeing	If the price is too high, we'll walk away.

Useful phrases

Starting and stating your position

Let's begin by looking at what we both want.	opening a negotiation
Our main priority is a fast delivery.	stating your priority
We're looking for a long-term partnership.	stating a goal
What's your position on payment terms?	asking about the other side

Making proposals and offers

We'd like to propose a two-year contract.	making a proposal
How about a 5 percent discount?	suggesting
If you order 1,000 units, we can offer free shipping.	conditional offer
We could consider a lower price if you pay in advance.	tentative offer

Bargaining and objections

I'm afraid that's not acceptable for us.	rejecting politely
That's a bit higher than we expected.	reacting to a price
Is there any flexibility on the price?	asking for movement
We can't go any lower than that.	setting a limit
What if we met halfway?	compromise
I'll need to check with my manager.	delaying a decision

Reaching agreement

I think we have a deal.	agreeing
Let's go over what we've agreed.	confirming
I'll send you the contract by Monday.	next step
It's a pleasure doing business with you.	closing warmly

Practice and role-play

A. Complete the phrases

Write one word in each gap.

1. Is there any _____ on the price?
2. If you order 1,000 units, we can _____ free shipping.
3. What if we met _____?
4. I'm afraid that's not _____ for us.
5. We can't go any _____ than that.
6. I'll need to _____ with my manager.
7. I think we have a _____.
8. Let's go _____ what we've agreed.

B. Correct the mistakes

Each sentence has one mistake. Rewrite it correctly.

1. If you will order more, we give a discount.

2. We can't accept this price, it's impossible.

3. Let's make a compromise in the middle.

4. We need a discount of 10%, no?

C. Role-play

Student A. You sell office coffee machines. List price: $900 each. Your limit: $780, and only for 20 machines or more. You can offer free installation.

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Student B. You buy coffee machines for 15 offices. Your budget is $14,000 in total. You need delivery within two weeks.

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Answer key

A: 1 flexibility · 2 offer · 3 halfway · 4 acceptable · 5 lower · 6 check · 7 deal · 8 over

B: 1 If you order more, we'll give a discount. · 2 I'm afraid this price doesn't work for us. · 3 Let's meet halfway. · 4 Would you consider a 10% discount?