

THE TRACTOR DEAL
Instructor's and Learner's
Manual



*Business
English*

*with
Business Simulations*



DVBE
DAVE VOLEK'S BUSINESS ENGLISH

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INTRODUCTION

Engage

Most BE students have already been or soon will be involved in a business deal that requires communication with specs. They can easily identify with resolving many small numerical issues, similar to the position that the Tractor Deal places them.

Study

The module provides some study about the acceptable grammatical forms to use for “model numbers.” As well, the instructor should be listening to the learners’ discussion and provide appropriate language study.

Activate

The design of The Tractor Deal provides lots of good interaction between buyers and sellers. This is a good activity for formulating questions and providing answers. You should have no problems getting lots of good business English conversation.

Business

The business in The Tractor Deal is quite simple, similar to buying a car. The innovation of this module is that it requires the learners to find, sort, and communicate a lot of technical information—in a very short time. These are very good communication skills to have for doing international business and technology.



INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

Online Activity

The Tractor Deal has its complementary online exercise, The Tractor Deal Online (TDO). While TDO provides excellent listening practice, perhaps its better benefit is to prepare the learners for the classroom role playing. By spending a half hour with TDO before taking on the buyer and seller roles, learners will have a good understanding of these roles and will have been exposed to some useful language modeling.

Tell your learners to go to www.dvbe.bz/TDO before you present The Tractor Deal in class. Give them a few days to find the time to go online.

If you go through the online exercises yourself, you will find two distinct parts of the dialogue. The first part is a good modeling of small talk, something many business English learners say they would like more exposure to. The second part is the rapid fire spec exchange, where the buyer and seller obviously know their topic very well. Try picking out the specs yourself.

Technical Glossary

The design of The Tractor Deal means that learners need not be knowledgeable about tractors. This means you need not wait until you find students working in agriculture to present the module. Most numerically inclined people should be able to work with this module—and recognize they probably won't find a similar "talking specs" exercise anywhere else in their ELT training.

However, the classroom activity will go better with the more tractor knowledge the learners have. Encourage them to download the PDF technical glossary from www.dvbe.bz/TDO and spend some time with it. At a very minimum, the glossary is a good reading exercise.



Preparation

From the Resource Manual:

1. print off one copy of each of the seven spec sheets for the tractor sellers,
2. print off and photocopy the buyer's worksheet (for at least half the class),
3. print off and copy the seller's worksheet (for at least half the class),
4. print off, laminate, and cut out the 24 buying assignments.

After you get these props prepared, you should become more familiar with the tasks your learners are going to do in the classroom. Take a buying assignment, and go through each of the seven spec sheets to see the possible matches for that assignment. Do this for a small, mid-sized, and large tractor. Spending this time making matches means you will understand the buyer's and seller's roles quite well. You will be more prepared to help learners if they are struggling a bit.

Photocopy the Learner's Manual. Hand out the manual to the learners some time before you actually facilitate this exercise as a reading exercise.

Classroom Spec Exchange

Divide half the class into buyers and the other half into sellers. Give the seller his or her spec sheet. Give each buyer two buying assignments and a buyer's worksheet. Hold on to the seller's worksheet for now.

These two particular roles could be given to weaker students: the sellers for Harvest Helpers and Little Bull Plow Pullers. It's easier to determine whether matches are possible with these roles.

Set one seller with each buyer. Take on a role yourself if there are an odd number of learners. Have each pair work out whether there is a suitable match. If so, they must determine the exact features and cost of that match.

The buyers and sellers should not show their worksheets to each other. Encourage them to communicate the specs verbally. The buyers should not make a decision until they have met with all sellers. The sellers are not allowed to reduce their list prices to entice sales.

When a buyer/seller pair has exhausted its possibilities, have them wait until another pair becomes available, and mix up the pairs. Continue forming new pairs until allotted time has passed or all buyers have met all sellers.



Grammar

Most learners will have never encountered something like The Tractor Deal in their ELT training. Pay attention to what they are saying. If you hear a pattern that needs correcting, be ready to give an impromptu grammar lesson and offer some modeling examples.

Classroom Debriefing

Allow some class time for each buyer and seller to make a one- to two-minute presentation. Have the buyers talk about their tractor choices (this is when the buyers make their decision).

Before the buyers start their presentations, hand out the seller's worksheets to the sellers. As the buyers are giving their short presentations, the sellers should be taking notes about what tractors are being selected. This will actually be a good listening exercise for the sellers! After all the buyers are done, ask the sellers to give a sales report, citing what is good about their tractor line and what could be improved.

Additional Exercises

- Reverse the buyer and seller roles. If some tractor manufacturers or buying assignments were not used in the first exercise, introduce them in the second exercise to make it a little different.
- Have the buyers write a letter to their boss telling them about the tractors they bought and why they made their purchasing decisions.
- Have the sellers write a letter to their marketing department informing them about which tractors did not sell well and what improvements could be made to make them more competitive in the marketplace.
- For really ambitious learners (especially those working in agriculture or mechanical engineering), have them write a technical paper. Give them all seven spec sheets and ask them to do a technical analysis on the advantages and disadvantages of each tractor line, such as cost, hydraulic capacity, lifting capacity, etc. To start, they should compare tractors of similar power to determine the best and worst of certain features. Usually, the “best and worst” features of like-sized tractors will show up in the same lines of tractors of different power ratings (there was a lot of design to create good tradeoff decisions). The paper should summarize their findings—and will require some precise language skills to communicate the ideas well.



List of Possible Matches

When buyers and sellers have a potential match based on power, about 50% of these matches will not work because at least one other spec does not fit. Sometimes that spec is quite easy to see (such as 2WD vs. 4WD) and sometimes it is quite hard to see (Category I vs. Category II).

Below are all the valid matches for each tractor buying assignment:

- #1: DM 1313, FWT 432, LB 1100
- #2: FWT 432, HH F35, LB1100
- #3: WK 100, AW 5500
- #4: WK 100, FWT 434, LB 1101, LB 1102
- #5: WK 100, DM 1330, FWT 434, LB 1101, LB 1102
- #6: WK 200A, FWT 434, LB 1101, LB 1102
- #7: WK 200A, WK 200B, FWT 436, LB 1102
- #8: WK 200A, WK 200B, DM 3103, FP 2020, FWT 436
- #9: WK 200B
- #10: WK 200B, FP 2020, FP 2030, HH F76
- #11: AW 6200
- #12: No matches
- #13: FP 2030, FWT 439, HH S91
- #14: AW 7100, HH S91
- #15: WK 300A, FP 2040, AW 7100, LB 1104
- #16: WK 300A, HH S116
- #17: WK 300A, HH S116
- #18: WK 300A, DM 3030, AW 8000, FWT 439, FWT 520, HH S116
- #19: DM 3033, FP 2050, AW 8000, HH S132
- #20: WK 300B, DM 3033, FP 2050, AW 8000, HH S132
- #21: WK 300B, DM 3033, FP 2050, AW 8100, FWT 520, HH S132
- #22: WK 300B, DM 3033, FP 2060, AW 8100, FWT 520, HH S132
- #23: WK 300B, FP 2060, AW 8100
- #24: FP 2060, AW 8100



As you can see, some assignments have lots of potential matches, which means the buyer must make a choice between alternatives. Often that choice will be based on price, but transmission speeds and hydraulic capacity could influence the decision to take a more expensive tractor.

Some assignments have two or fewer possible matches. Perhaps these assignments could be given to weaker or indecisive learners.

Very likely, some learners will create matches that are not correct. As the instructor, you shall decide whether to force them to read the specs more closely or just leave them to their own mistakes.

Reality Check

I did take some liberties with the tractor options to make this a better business & technical English exercise. In reality, most tractors do not have as many options as suggested in the Tractor Deal. Real tractor manufacturers tend to put as many features as they can into a certain model of tractor—and make these features standard for that model. Most farmers expect that all tractors will have a PTO, 3-point hitch, and sufficient hydraulic lines. There really isn't much adding or enhancing of features within a certain model.

So if your more agriculturally minded learners bring these unrealistic options up, just acknowledge it. Tell them the designer of the Tractor Deal wanted to make a more dynamic classroom exercise.



LEARNER'S MANUAL

In this DVBE module, you will role play either a tractor buyer or a tractor seller. The buyer will be assigned to buy a tractor with particular specifications (specs). The seller has a line of tractors to sell—and each tractor in that line has different specs.

The buyers and sellers meet to determine if a tractor in the seller's line fits the specs of the buyer. If there is a fit, they must communicate the exact specs and final cost to each other.

After buyers and sellers are finished with their spec talk, they seek out a new buyer or seller.

Please try to follow these rules as much as possible to get the most out of this DVBE module:

1. The buyers and sellers cannot show their sheets to each other. They must communicate all specs verbally.
2. Buyers must make notes of the tractors they are considering. They cannot make a buying decision until the instructor tells them.
3. Sellers cannot lower their list price to encourage a sale.

You Know Nothing About Tractors?

Do not worry! The buyer's worksheet and the seller's spec sheet are designed to lead you through the various tractor features. Just follow the sheets, row-by-row. However, you still need to ask questions and give answers. It doesn't matter who starts asking questions first. Remember you shouldn't look at each other's sheets.

You can gain a little more knowledge about tractors by going to The Tractor Deal Online (see www.dvbe.bz/TDO). Download the Technical Glossary. If you read it before you do the classroom activity, you will get more enjoyment and benefit from The Tractor Deal. A little more knowledge on topics outside your interests and fields cannot hurt you.



DUSTMAKERS





Online Listening

And if you go to the TDO website, you will notice there are six great dialogues between tractor buyers and tractor sellers. Each dialogue begins with some small talk that helps build a business relationship. Then it moves into a very fast-paced exchange of specs. Download the worksheet and try your best to get all the specs down with just one listening session. Most likely, you can't get the right answers the first time, but the online audio allows you to play the sound clips again and again until you understand everything!

FWT

Imagine yourself being in an international business meeting with lots of specs flying around the room. Your practice with The Tractor Deal will help you hear these specs better in this important meeting.

End of Activity

At the end of the class, the instructor will ask all buyers to present a short talk on the tractors they have bought. If the buyer had more than one possibility, he or she should explain why he chose one tractor over the other.

The sellers should be taking notes of the buyer's presentations because they will be giving a sales report after the buyers are finished. Which models sold well? Which models didn't sell? What seems to be the competitive advantage of your tractors and your competitor's tractors?

Ask your instructor for writing activities associated with The Tractor Deal.



Language Study

Model numbers in business and technical English have their own special language. You will get lots of practice with this language skill in The Tractor Deal. Here are some examples when a double "0" ends the model name:

- A tractor that is named "500" is said as "five hundred."
- A tractor that is named "5000" is said as "five thousand."
- A tractor that is named "5500" is said as "fifty-five hundred."





For model numbers, the last two digits are said as a separate number unless they end in double zero. The number or numbers preceding the two digits are also said as a separate number. In essence, the model number is divided into two separate parts when communicated verbally. Here are some examples:

- A tractor that is named “505” is said as “five oh five.”
- A tractor that is named “5005” is said as “fifty oh five.”
- A tractor that is named “5505” is said as “fifty-five oh five.”
- A tractor that is named “520” is said as “five-twenty.”
- A tractor that is named “5520” is said as “fifty-five twenty.”
- A tractor that is named “522” is said as “five twenty-two.”
- A tractor that named “5522” is said as “fifty-five, twenty-two.”



As you can hear, saying numbers in this way has a nice musical effect, which is why tractor (and other equipment) marketers name their products in this way.

If we use the normal way of saying numbers for model numbers, a native speaker would not understand: “What are the PTO options of the five-thousand five hundred and twenty-two (5522)?”. But “What are the PTO options of the fifty-five, twenty-two?” is the right way.