Meeting English — C2

Meeting Phrasal Verbs

Name: ______________________ **Date:** __________________ **Score:** _____________

What is a Phrasal Verb?

At C2 level, phrasal verbs are used with precision to convey strategic nuance. Here are 8 highly advanced phrasal verbs found in board-level and executive business meetings — covering market analysis, risk, strategy, and negotiation.

Phrasal Verb	Meaning	Example
bottom out	to reach the lowest point before recovering	Analysts believe costs have bottomed out and will now stabilise.
cash in on	to exploit an opportunity or situation for personal or financial gain	The company is looking to cash in on the growing demand.
hinge on	to depend entirely on one critical factor	The success of the merger hinges on regulatory approval.
paper over	to conceal a problem or disagreement superficially without resolving it	We cannot afford to paper over the divisions within the team.
play down	to deliberately make something seem less important than it is	The CEO tried to play down the severity of the financial loss.
ride out	to endure a difficult period and emerge successfully	We are confident we can ride out the current market instability.
square away	to deal with something completely so that it is resolved	Let's square away the contractual details before the client arrives.
underpin	to support or form the basis of something	Sound data should underpin every strategic recommendation we make.

Exercise 1: True or False

Read each statement. Write True or False on the line.

1. To paper over a problem means to resolve it permanently. ____________
2. To hinge on something means to depend entirely on it. ____________
3. To play down an issue means to emphasise its importance. ____________
4. To bottom out means to reach the lowest point before recovering. ____________
5. To ride out a crisis means to endure it and survive. ____________
6. To cash in on an opportunity means to exploit it for gain. ____________
7. To underpin a strategy means to undermine it. ____________
8. To square away an issue means to resolve it completely. ____________

Exercise 2: Multiple Choice

Circle the correct answer.

1. The board cannot continue to _____ these deep structural problems.
   a) ride out **b)** underpin **c)** paper over **d)** square away

2. Everything _____ whether the regulator approves the deal next month.
   a) papers over **b)** hinges on **c)** bottoms out **d)** cashes in on

3. She attempted to _____ the scale of the projected losses.
   a) square away **b)** cash in on **c)** play down **d)** underpin

4. Market data suggests that inflation has finally _____.
   a) hinged on **b)** squared away **c)** cashed in on **d)** bottomed out

5. Several competitors are already trying to _____ the shift in consumer behaviour.
   a) paper over **b)** ride out **c)** cash in on **d)** underpin

6. We believe the business is well positioned to _____ this period of volatility.
   a) play down **b)** ride out **c)** hinge on **d)** square away

7. Please _____ the licensing agreements before the partnership goes live.
   a) bottom out **b)** underpin **c)** play down **d)** square away

8. Every proposal must be _____ by rigorous independent research.
   a) underpinned **b)** cashed in on **c)** papered over **d)** bottomed out

Exercise 3: Matching

Match each phrasal verb (1–8) with its meaning (a–h).

1. bottom out	a. to support or form the basis of something
2. cash in on	b. to depend entirely on one critical factor
3. hinge on	c. to reach the lowest point before recovering
4. paper over	d. to endure a difficult period and survive
5. play down	e. to make something seem less important than it is
6. ride out	f. to exploit an opportunity for gain
7. square away	g. to conceal a problem without resolving it
8. underpin	h. to deal with something completely

Exercise 4: Gap Fill

Word bank: paper over | bottom out | cash in on | hinges on | ride out | play down | square away | underpin

1. The chair warned the team not to _____ the divisions in the group.
2. The whole agreement _____ the outcome of next week's vote.
3. The spokesperson tried to _____ the reputational damage.
4. Economists predict that the market will _____ by the end of Q2.

5. Rivals are already trying to _____ the disruption caused by the merger.
6. The leadership team is confident it can _____ the regulatory challenge.
7. We need to _____ the IP agreements before the launch.
8. Solid evidence should _____ every claim we make to the board.

Exercise 5: Word Order

Put the words in the correct order to make a sentence.

1. Analysts / believe / costs / have / bottomed / out.
2. The / company / wants / to / cash / in / on / growing / demand.
3. The / merger / hinges / on / regulatory / approval.
4. We / cannot / paper / over / the / divisions / in / the / team.
5. The / CEO / tried / to / play / down / the / financial / loss.
6. We / are / confident / we / can / ride / out / the / instability.
7. Let's / square / away / the / details / before / the / client / arrives.
8. Data / should / underpin / every / strategic / recommendation.

Exercise 6: Word Sort

Sort the phrasal verbs into the correct category.

Phrasal verbs: cash in on | square away | ride out | paper over | bottom out | play down | hinge on | underpin

Risk & Resilience		
__________	__________	__________

Strategy & Opportunity		
__________	__________	__________

Concealing & Minimising	
__________	__________

Exercise 7: Complete the Conversation

Fill in the missing phrasal verb in each line.

Chair: We need to address this directly and not _________ the problem.

Ed: Agreed. The outcome will _________ the data we present today.

Chair: Please do not _________ the severity — the board needs the full picture.

Ed: Of course. We believe the market has _________ and will recover.

Chair: Good. We should _________ the recovery before our competitors do.

Ed: Absolutely. Sound research will __________ every recommendation.

Chair: Can we __________ the outstanding legal points before lunch?

Ed: Yes. I am confident we can __________ any remaining objections.

■ ANSWER KEY — Do Not Distribute to Students

Exercise 1: True or False — Answers

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. True
6. True
7. False
8. True

Exercise 2: Multiple Choice — Answers

1. c) paper over
2. b) hinges on
3. c) play down
4. d) bottomed out
5. c) cash in on
6. b) ride out
7. d) square away
8. a) underpinned

Exercise 3: Matching — Answers

1. bottom out → c) to reach the lowest point before recovering
2. cash in on → f) to exploit an opportunity for gain
3. hinge on → b) to depend entirely on one critical factor
4. paper over → g) to conceal a problem without resolving it
5. play down → e) to make something seem less important than it is
6. ride out → d) to endure a difficult period and survive
7. square away → h) to deal with something completely
8. underpin → a) to support or form the basis of something

Exercise 4: Gap Fill — Answers

1. paper over
2. hinges on
3. play down
4. bottom out
5. cash in on
6. ride out
7. square away
8. underpin

Exercise 5: Word Order — Answers

1. Analysts believe costs have bottomed out.

2. The company wants to cash in on growing demand.
3. The merger hinges on regulatory approval.
4. We cannot paper over the divisions in the team.
5. The CEO tried to play down the financial loss.
6. We are confident we can ride out the instability.
7. Let’s square away the details before the client arrives.
8. Data should underpin every strategic recommendation.

Exercise 6: Word Sort — Answers

Risk & Resilience: ride out, bottom out, hinge on
Strategy & Opportunity: cash in on, underpin, square away
Concealing & Minimising: paper over, play down

Exercise 7: Complete the Conversation — Answers

1. Chair: We need to address this directly and not paper over the problem.
2. Ed: Agreed. The outcome will hinge on the data we present today.
3. Chair: Please do not play down the severity — the board needs the full picture.
4. Ed: Of course. We believe the market has bottom out and will recover.
5. Chair: Good. We should cash in on the recovery before our competitors do.
6. Ed: Absolutely. Sound research will underpin every recommendation.
7. Chair: Can we square away the outstanding legal points before lunch?
8. Ed: Yes. I am confident we can ride out any remaining objections.