

Everyday Speaking Skills in English — Lesson 1

Giving Opinions and Agreeing / Disagreeing | B2 | Student Worksheet

Vocabulary

Each phrase is labelled by register: neutral (most professional contexts) or informal (casual conversation).

Stating a position with nuance

I'd argue that... [neutral]	A confident way to put forward a position, often used when you expect some pushback.	<i>"I'd argue that remote work has done more good than harm overall."</i>
My instinct is that... [neutral]	Used to give an opinion based on intuition rather than firm evidence.	<i>"My instinct is that the policy will backfire, though I can't prove it yet."</i>
If I'm honest, I think... [neutral]	Signals that you are about to say something slightly more direct or unpopular than usual.	<i>"If I'm honest, I think the whole approach needs rethinking."</i>
I'm inclined to think... [neutral]	A more tentative way of stating an opinion, suggesting you lean towards a view without total certainty.	<i>"I'm inclined to think the criticism is fair, but I'd want more evidence."</i>

Conceding and pushing back

That's not unreasonable, but... [neutral]	Acknowledges that an argument has some merit before introducing a counterpoint.	<i>"That's not unreasonable, but it overlooks the cost involved."</i>
I'd push back slightly on... [neutral]	A diplomatic way to challenge a specific part of someone's argument without rejecting it entirely.	<i>"I'd push back slightly on the idea that this is purely a generational issue."</i>
Fair point, although... [neutral]	Concedes that the other person has made a valid point, then introduces a qualification.	<i>"Fair point, although I think you're underestimating how quickly things are changing."</i>
I take your point, but I'm not sure it holds up when... [neutral]	Acknowledges an argument before explaining a specific situation where it breaks down.	<i>"I take your point, but I'm not sure it holds up when you look at smaller companies."</i>

Signalling structure and stance

Having said that, ... [neutral]	Used to introduce a point that qualifies or partly contradicts what you just said.	<i>"It's a strong proposal. Having said that, the timeline seems unrealistic."</i>
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That said, ... [neutral]	Similar to 'having said that' — a slightly more concise way to introduce a qualifying point.	<i>"The data looks promising. That said, the sample size is quite small."</i>
To be fair, ... [neutral]	Used to acknowledge a valid point, often when you have been critical and want to balance the view.	<i>"To be fair, the team did have very little time to prepare."</i>
I'm in two minds about... [informal]	Used to express genuine internal conflict or ambivalence about an issue.	<i>"I'm in two minds about the new policy — it solves one problem but creates another."</i>

Exercise 1: Listening

Listen to James and Priya discussing the four-day working week. Then answer the questions — some ask about attitude and how opinions shift.

Panel Discussion

Host: Tonight we're discussing the four-day working week. James, you've trialled this at your company. What's your honest assessment?

James: If I'm honest, I think it's been one of the best decisions we've made. Productivity hasn't dropped, and staff morale is noticeably higher.

Host: Priya, you've been more sceptical. What's your concern?

Priya: I'd push back slightly on the idea that this works for every type of business. James runs a software company — output is relatively easy to measure. For client-facing industries, the maths is murkier.

James: That's not unreasonable, but I'd argue the same logic was used against remote work a decade ago, and most of those fears didn't materialise.

Priya: Fair point, although remote work and a shorter week aren't quite the same comparison. One changes where you work; the other changes how much you're available.

Host: Do you think the policy could ever work in your sector, Priya?

Priya: I'm in two minds about it, honestly. There are roles where it could work brilliantly. There are others — anything requiring constant client availability — where I genuinely don't see how it functions without hiring more people.

James: I take your point, but I'm not sure it holds up when you look at companies that have already made it work in client-heavy industries. It usually comes down to better prioritisation, not just luck.

Priya: That said, I'll admit the evidence is becoming harder to dismiss. My instinct was that this was a fad. I'm starting to think I was wrong about that.

Host: James, final thought?

James: Having said all that, I don't think it's a universal solution. To be fair to Priya's point, some industries will need a different model entirely. But I'm inclined to think most companies haven't even tried hard enough to make it work.

Circle the correct answer.

1. What is James's overall assessment of the four-day week at his company?

a) It has been largely unsuccessful. b) It has been one of the best decisions, with no drop in productivity. c) It is too early to say anything definitive. d) It has improved morale but significantly hurt output.

2. What is the basis of Priya's scepticism?

a) She doesn't believe in employee wellbeing initiatives. b) She thinks James's company is lying about its results. c) She thinks the model may not transfer easily to client-facing industries. d) She believes a four-day week is illegal in most countries.

3. How does Priya respond to James's comparison with remote work?

a) She agrees completely and withdraws her objection. b) She rejects the comparison as completely irrelevant. c) She partially agrees but argues the two situations aren't quite equivalent. d) She says remote work was actually a failure too.

4. What does Priya mean when she says she is 'in two minds' about the policy?

a) She has completely changed her opinion. b) She thinks it would work in some roles but not others. c) She refuses to discuss the topic further. d) She believes no one has a clear answer yet.

5. By the end of the conversation, how has Priya's position shifted?

a) She has become more confident that the four-day week is a fad. b) She admits the evidence is harder to dismiss than she initially thought. c) She has completely reversed her original view. d) Her position has not changed at all.

6. What does James suggest is the real obstacle preventing wider adoption of the four-day week?

a) Government regulation b) Most companies haven't tried hard enough to make it work. c) Employees don't actually want it. d) It only works for software companies.

Exercise 2: Multiple Choice

Choose the correct phrase. Options are often close in meaning — read carefully.

1. The proposal addresses some real issues. ____, I think it underestimates the cost of implementation.

a) Having said that b) I'd argue that c) I'm inclined to think d) To be fair

2. You've said the criticism is fair, and ____ to that extent. But I still think people are underestimating how much progress has actually been made.

a) I take your point b) My instinct is that c) Having said that d) I'd push back slightly on

3. ____ remote work has been one of the most positive shifts in how we work, even if it has created new problems too.

a) I'd argue that b) Fair point, although c) I'd push back slightly on d) That's not unreasonable, but

4. ____ the assumption that younger employees are less committed — in my experience, it has very little to do with age.

a) I'd push back slightly on b) My instinct is that c) Having said that d) To be fair

5. The team worked incredibly hard under difficult circumstances. ____ the results were always going to be limited given the timeline.

a) I'd argue that b) To be fair, c) I'm in two minds about d) I'd push back slightly on

6. He raised some valid points about the budget. ____ I don't think his overall conclusion follows from the evidence.

a) Fair point, although b) My instinct is that c) I'm inclined to think d) To be fair

7. ____ whether this approach actually works long-term — it solves an immediate problem but might create a bigger one later.

a) I'm in two minds about b) I'd argue that c) Fair point, although d) I take your point, but

8. ____ his argument holds up when you consider companies that operate across multiple time zones — the logistics become far more complicated.

a) I'm not sure b) I'd argue that c) To be fair d) My instinct is that

Exercise 3: Matching

Match each phrase (A) to its function or meaning (B).

A - Phrase	B - Function / Meaning
1. I'd argue that... ____	7. Used to express genuine internal conflict or ambivalence about an issue
2. I'm inclined to think... ____	8. Used to give an opinion based on intuition rather than firm evidence
3. I'd push back slightly on... ____	1. A confident way to put forward a position, often expecting some pushback
4. Fair point, although... ____	5. Used to introduce a point that qualifies or partly contradicts what was just said
5. Having said that, ... ____	4. Concedes that someone has made a valid point before introducing a qualification
6. To be fair, ... ____	6. Used to acknowledge a valid point, often to balance an otherwise critical view
7. I'm in two minds about... ____	3. A diplomatic way to challenge a specific part of an argument without rejecting it entirely
8. My instinct is that... ____	2. A tentative way of stating an opinion, suggesting you lean towards a view without total certainty

Exercise 4: Gap Fill

Choose the correct phrase from the box.

Phrase Bank: I'd argue that | I'm inclined to think | I'd push back slightly on | Fair point, although | Having said that | To be fair | I'm in two minds about | My instinct is that

1. ____ the benefits of this policy far outweigh the costs, even though the transition period will be difficult.

2. ____ he's right, although I'd want to see more data before committing to that view fully.

3. ____ the claim that this only affects junior staff — senior employees report exactly the same frustrations.

4. ____ I think you're assuming the budget will stay the same next year, which seems unlikely given current trends.
5. ____ , the long-term risks are significant enough that I think we should proceed with real caution.
6. ____ to the previous team, they inherited a system that was already badly outdated before they even started.
7. ____ the proposal — it solves our immediate staffing problem, but I worry it creates a dependency we can't easily reverse.
8. ____ this will work, though I admit I don't have hard evidence to back that feeling up yet.

Exercise 5: Choose the Right Phrase

Each question gives a sentence that is too blunt, too uncritical, too vague, or otherwise unsuitable for a professional context. Choose the most appropriate rewrite.

1. Original: "You're completely wrong about that and I don't agree at all."

Context: A colleague has made an argument in a meeting that you partly disagree with, but their underlying point has some merit. This sounds far too blunt for a professional discussion.

Which rewrite is most appropriate?

- a) That's not unreasonable, but I'd push back slightly on the conclusion you've drawn from it. b) You're wrong, and I don't agree at all, to be honest. c) I completely disagree and think the whole argument is flawed. d) I'm in two minds about whether you're wrong or not.

2. Original: "I totally agree with everything you just said, one hundred percent."

Context: A senior colleague has made a reasonable but not flawless argument. Agreeing this enthusiastically sounds insincere and uncritical.

Which rewrite is most appropriate?

- a) I'd argue that you're completely right about everything. b) That's not unreasonable, though I'd want to think it through a bit more before fully committing. c) Yes, I agree, definitely, completely, no question. d) I'm in two minds about agreeing with you.

3. Original: "Maybe you're right, maybe not, I really can't say, who knows."

Context: Someone asks for your professional opinion on a proposal. This response is too vague and avoids giving any real answer.

Which rewrite is most appropriate?

- a) Who knows, really, it could go either way, I suppose. b) I'm inclined to think it could work, though there are a couple of risks worth flagging first. c) Maybe, or maybe not, it's honestly impossible to say at all. d) I have no opinion on this whatsoever, sorry.

4. Original: "Your point is good but mine is better and you should agree with me now."

Context: In a debate, someone has made a fair point that complicates your position. This response is dismissive and overconfident.

Which rewrite is most appropriate?

- a) Fair point, although I think the data still supports my original argument more strongly. b) Your point is fine, but mine is clearly superior, so you should agree. c) I completely reject your point because mine is obviously correct. d) That's not unreasonable, but you should just agree with me now.

5. Original: "This plan is perfect and has literally no problems at all."

Context: You are reviewing a colleague's proposal that has genuine strengths but also a clear weakness around timeline. Calling it flawless is not credible.

Which rewrite is most appropriate?

- a) This plan is perfect, honestly, with absolutely no issues whatsoever. b) It's a strong proposal. Having said that, the timeline does look unrealistic to me. c) I'm in two minds about whether this plan has any problems. d) I'd argue that this plan is

flawless in every conceivable way.

6. Original: "I don't know what I think, I have zero opinion on this issue."

Context: A colleague asks how you feel about a contentious workplace change. You do have genuine mixed feelings, but this response sounds evasive rather than honest.

Which rewrite is most appropriate?

a) I genuinely have no thoughts on this matter at all, sorry. b) I'm in two minds about it — it solves one problem but creates a different one. c) Who can say, really, it's anyone's guess at this point. d) I refuse to share an opinion on this topic.

Exercise 6: Error Identification

Each sentence contains one error, or no error at all. Underline the error and write a correction, or write "No error".

1. I'd push back slightly about the idea that seniority guarantees better judgement.

Correction / No error: _____

2. Having said that, the long-term risks still concern me considerably.

Correction / No error: _____

3. Fair point, although I think you underestimate how quickly competitors are moving.

Correction / No error: _____

4. I'm inclined thinking that the proposal needs significant revision before approval.

Correction / No error: _____

5. To be fair, the previous team inherited a genuinely difficult situation.

Correction / No error: _____

6. I'm in two mind about whether this approach is sustainable long-term.

Correction / No error: _____

7. My instinct is that, despite everyone's optimism, this will not work easily.

Correction / No error: _____

8. I take your point, but I'm not sure it hold up under closer scrutiny.

Correction / No error: _____

Exercise 7: Complete the Dialogue

Choose the correct phrase from the box to complete each turn between Noor and Theo.

Phrase Bank: My instinct is that | That's not unreasonable, but | I'd push back slightly on | Fair point, although | Having said that | I'm in two minds about | To be fair | I'm inclined to think

Noor: We need to decide whether to outsource the design work or hire in-house.

1. Theo: ____ outsourcing makes more sense right now — it gives us flexibility while we're still scaling.

2. Noor: ____ flexibility comes at a cost. We'd lose a lot of control over quality and turnaround time.

3. Theo: I hear you, but ____ the idea that quality automatically suffers — the agencies we've used before have been excellent.

4. Noor: ____ our experience with agencies has generally been positive. But long-term, I think in-house gives us more institutional knowledge.
5. Theo: ____, building a full in-house team takes months we don't currently have.
6. Noor: ____ the timeline pressure, to be honest. I can see both sides clearly here.
7. Theo: ____, a hybrid approach might be worth considering — outsource for now, build in-house gradually.
8. Noor: ____ that could work. Let's draft a proposal along those lines.

TEACHER ANSWER KEY

Do Not Distribute to Students

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Exercise 1: Listening

1. What is James's overall assessment of the four-day week at his company?

Answer: It has been one of the best decisions, with no drop in productivity.

2. What is the basis of Priya's scepticism?

Answer: She thinks the model may not transfer easily to client-facing industries.

3. How does Priya respond to James's comparison with remote work?

Answer: She partially agrees but argues the two situations aren't quite equivalent.

4. What does Priya mean when she says she is 'in two minds' about the policy?

Answer: She thinks it would work in some roles but not others.

5. By the end of the conversation, how has Priya's position shifted?

Answer: She admits the evidence is harder to dismiss than she initially thought.

6. What does James suggest is the real obstacle preventing wider adoption of the four-day week?

Answer: Most companies haven't tried hard enough to make it work.

Exercise 2: Multiple Choice

1. The proposal addresses some real issues. ____, I think it underestimates the cost of implementation.

Answer: Having said that

2. You've said the criticism is fair, and ____ to that extent. But I still think people are underestimating how much progress has actually been made.

Answer: I take your point

3. ____ remote work has been one of the most positive shifts in how we work, even if it has created new problems too.

Answer: I'd argue that

4. ____ the assumption that younger employees are less committed — in my experience, it has very little to do with age.

Answer: I'd push back slightly on

5. The team worked incredibly hard under difficult circumstances. ____ the results were always going to be limited given the timeline.

Answer: To be fair,

6. He raised some valid points about the budget. ____ I don't think his overall conclusion follows from the evidence.

Answer: Fair point, although

7. ____ whether this approach actually works long-term — it solves an immediate problem but might create a bigger one later.

Answer: I'm in two minds about

8. ____ his argument holds up when you consider companies that operate across multiple time zones — the logistics become far more complicated.

Answer: I'm not sure

Exercise 3: Matching

1. I'd argue that... -> 1

A confident way to put forward a position, often expecting some pushback

2. I'm inclined to think... -> 2

A tentative way of stating an opinion, suggesting you lean towards a view without total certainty

3. I'd push back slightly on... -> 3

A diplomatic way to challenge a specific part of an argument without rejecting it entirely

4. Fair point, although... -> 4

Concedes that someone has made a valid point before introducing a qualification

5. Having said that, ... -> 5

Used to introduce a point that qualifies or partly contradicts what was just said

6. To be fair, ... -> 6

Used to acknowledge a valid point, often to balance an otherwise critical view

7. I'm in two minds about... -> 7

Used to express genuine internal conflict or ambivalence about an issue

8. My instinct is that... -> 8

Used to give an opinion based on intuition rather than firm evidence

Exercise 4: Gap Fill

1. ____ the benefits of this policy far outweigh the costs, even though the transition period will be difficult.

Answer: I'd argue that

2. ____ he's right, although I'd want to see more data before committing to that view fully.

Answer: I'm inclined to think

3. ____ the claim that this only affects junior staff — senior employees report exactly the same frustrations.

Answer: I'd push back slightly on

4. ____ I think you're assuming the budget will stay the same next year, which seems unlikely given current trends.

Answer: Fair point, although

5. ____ , the long-term risks are significant enough that I think we should proceed with real caution.

Answer: Having said that

6. ____ to the previous team, they inherited a system that was already badly outdated before they even started.

Answer: To be fair

7. ____ the proposal — it solves our immediate staffing problem, but I worry it creates a dependency we can't easily reverse.

Answer: I'm in two minds about

8. ____ this will work, though I admit I don't have hard evidence to back that feeling up yet.

Answer: My instinct is that

Exercise 5: Choose the Right Phrase

1. Original: "You're completely wrong about that and I don't agree at all."

Answer: That's not unreasonable, but I'd push back slightly on the conclusion you've drawn from it.

Why: This concedes that the underlying point has value while precisely targeting disagreement with the conclusion — appropriately diplomatic and specific for a professional setting.

2. Original: "I totally agree with everything you just said, one hundred percent."

Answer: That's not unreasonable, though I'd want to think it through a bit more before fully committing.

Why: This shows genuine, measured engagement rather than uncritical agreement — more credible in a professional context.

3. Original: "Maybe you're right, maybe not, I really can't say, who knows."

Answer: I'm inclined to think it could work, though there are a couple of risks worth flagging first.

Why: This gives a genuine, considered opinion while still acknowledging uncertainty — far more useful than refusing to answer.

4. Original: "Your point is good but mine is better and you should agree with me now."

Answer: Fair point, although I think the data still supports my original argument more strongly.

Why: This genuinely concedes the point's validity before offering a substantive counter-argument, rather than dismissing it.

5. Original: "This plan is perfect and has literally no problems at all."

Answer: It's a strong proposal. Having said that, the timeline does look unrealistic to me.

Why: This gives credible, balanced feedback — acknowledging genuine strength while flagging a specific, real concern.

6. Original: "I don't know what I think, I have zero opinion on this issue."

Answer: I'm in two minds about it — it solves one problem but creates a different one.

Why: This honestly conveys genuine ambivalence with a specific reason, rather than evading the question entirely.

Exercise 6: Error Identification

1. I'd push back slightly about the idea that seniority guarantees better judgement.

Error: "about" -> "on" | Preposition collocation error — the correct phrase is push back on, not push back about.

2. Having said that, the long-term risks still concern me considerably.

Answer: No error.

3. Fair point, although I think you underestimate how quickly competitors are moving.

Answer: No error.

4. I'm inclined thinking that the proposal needs significant revision before approval.

Error: "thinking" -> "to think" | Fixed phrase error — the correct expression is inclined to think, not inclined thinking.

5. To be fair, the previous team inherited a genuinely difficult situation.

Answer: No error.

6. I'm in two mind about whether this approach is sustainable long-term.

Error: "mind" -> "minds" | Fixed phrase error — the correct expression is in two minds (plural), not in two mind.

7. My instinct is that, despite everyone's optimism, this will not work easily.

Answer: No error.

8. I take your point, but I'm not sure it hold up under closer scrutiny.

Error: "hold" -> "holds" | Subject-verb agreement error — the subject is it (singular), so the verb should be holds, not hold.

Exercise 7: Complete the Dialogue

Gap 1: My instinct is that

Gap 2: That's not unreasonable, but

Gap 3: I'd push back slightly on

Gap 4: Fair point, although

Gap 5: Having said that

Gap 6: I'm in two minds about

Gap 7: To be fair

Gap 8: I'm inclined to think