

# Language for ...

## opening a bank account

**Age:** Adult / Young adult 

**Level:** Upper-intermediate–Advanced

**Length:** 60 minutes (approx.)

**Language Focus:** Key vocabulary associated with banks, personal finance and bank accounts

**Skills:** Speaking, reading

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student, one role card for each student for Exercise 4

**Aims:** To allow students to effectively understand and use common language for talking about banks and personal finance, in particular with regard to opening a bank account

### What are red words?

Ninety per cent of the time, speakers of English use just 7,500 words in speech and writing. These words appear in the Macmillan Dictionary in red and are graded with stars. One-star words are frequent, two-star words are more frequent and three-star words are the most frequent.

'Language for' lessons are based on red words and encourage students to improve their English through communicative tasks using collocation and commonly used phrases.

[www.macmillandictionary.com/learn/red-words.html](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/learn/red-words.html)

- 1 To begin the lesson, write on the board the names of some of the most famous banks in the world, or in the country where you are teaching (e.g. *Bank of America*, *Deutsche Bank*, *HSBC*, *Santander*, *Barclays*, *Bank of China*, etc). If you have internet access, show the banks' logos. Ask students to briefly talk in pairs about which banks are the most popular in their country/ countries. They should also suggest reasons for why these banks are so popular (good service, good marketing, lack of competition, etc). After a minute or two, elicit some of the main points that students have been discussing.
- 2 Tell students that in today's class they will study language for opening a bank account, one of the first steps a person needs to take if moving to a new country. Hand out the student worksheets. Ask students to again talk in pairs, referring them to the questions in Exercise 1a. Allow them a few minutes to talk, monitoring and taking notes as they do so. Once the time is up, perhaps identify the person in the class who has most recently opened an account. Then provide feedback, focusing on useful bureaucracy-related vocabulary which has come up.
- 3 On the board, write the expression *A cashless society*. Ask students to brainstorm what this might mean, but don't reveal the answer yet. Then ask students to read the article extract in Exercise 1b. Did they predict correctly? Refer students to the table of percentages. If the country where you are teaching does not appear in this table, it could be useful to search for the corresponding percentage and to write this on the board.
- 4 Before students begin to discuss the questions for Exercise 1b, take a moment to focus on prepositions. On the board, write the phrases *to pay \_\_\_\_\_ cash and to pay \_\_\_\_\_ card*. Ask students to guess the missing prepositions. Then refer them to the questions on the worksheet to find the correct answers (*to pay IN cash and to pay BY card*). Allow students a few minutes to discuss the questions in pairs. Provide feedback, focusing on language related to finance.
- 5 Refer students to Exercise 2a and read the instructions aloud. Allow students a few minutes to read the texts alone and then talk in pairs

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to compare their answers to the *True or False* questions. Encourage students to explain their suggested responses. Then elicit the correct answers.

- 6 Refer students to Exercise 2b and tell them to work in pairs to complete it. Set a time limit of about five minutes to do this. Remind students to look at the context of the highlighted words within the texts to help them to understand their exact meanings. This is particularly important for words which have quite similar definitions (e.g. *direct debit* and *standing order*). Finally, elicit answers.
- 7 Now refer students to the form *Opening a new account* in Exercise 2c. Ask them where they might see a form like this (it could be an online form or a paper-based form to be filled in at the bank counter). Read aloud the instructions for the task. Set a short time limit for students to complete the form (maybe five minutes). Monitor the class as they do this, encouraging students to refer to the glossary that follows the form and helping weaker students to understand definitions. Once the time is up, check understanding of new vocabulary with a few comprehension questions (e.g. *Apart from a bank account, what other things could be 'joint'?* [a joint decision, a joint celebration, etc]; *What's the difference between a loan and a mortgage?* [a mortgage is a loan to buy property]). Finally, ask students to talk in pairs to compare their responses on the form. Encourage them to elaborate on their basic responses. Then provide feedback, focusing on correct/incorrect use of new vocabulary.
- 8 Refer students to Exercise 3. Point out that the missing words can be found in the texts from Exercise 2a and the form from Exercise 2c. Allow students to complete the task in pairs, monitoring them as they do so. If the class finds this task very difficult, you could write the ten possible expressions in random order on the board (see Key) and then allow them to decide which expression goes where. Finally, elicit the correct answers.
- 9 If possible, draw or show an image on the board of a bank customer talking to a bank worker. Tell students that they are going to do a role-play in which a customer needs to decide between two possible banks. For clarity, write the names of these banks on the board: *Southeast Bank* and *Queen Margaret Bank*. Divide students into groups of three. Tell them that each group will have one customer, one worker from Southeast Bank and one worker from Queen Margaret Bank.
- 10 Hand out the role-play cards for Exercise 4. Tell all students to read their role card but not to share any of the information with other students, apart from the title of the role. Tell students that if they don't understand words on their card, they should raise their hand and ask you. For these challenging words, write them on the board and elicit a definition.
- 11 Once everybody is clear about their role, tell them to begin their 'meeting'. Allow students about seven–eight minutes to complete the role-play. Remind them that all students should talk and encourage them to elaborate on the information from the role card. Monitor them as they do this and take notes of good language and possible errors. When there is only a minute or so of time left, tell the class that the customers must choose which bank they prefer. Once the role-plays have finished, decide which of the two banks proved to be the most popular among all the customers in the class. Then provide feedback on the role-plays. This could lead to a

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class discussion on what factors are really most important to customers when deciding on a new bank.

- 12** Refer students to Exercise 5. In pairs, give them a few minutes to talk together using the question prompts. Encourage them to use new language from this lesson. Monitor and take notes. Finally, provide feedback on impressive language that you have heard being used.

### KEY:

**1a.** students' own answers

**1b.** students' own answers

- 2a.** 1. False  
2. False  
3. True

- 2b.** 1. mortgage  
2. standing order  
3. direct debit  
4. savings  
5. branch  
6. cashback  
7. withdraw  
8. building society  
9. fee  
10. interest  
11. investment  
12. overdraft

**2c.** students' own answers

- 3.** 1. bank statement  
2. overdraft  
3. credit history  
4. joint  
5. branch  
6. utility bill  
7. direct debit  
8. withdraw  
9. tenancy agreement  
10. cashback

**4.** students' own answers

- 5.** students' own answers (NB. a *contactless card* is a card containing electronic information that can be read from a distance with special equipment, so a customer can hold their card near a payment terminal and it automatically takes payment. There is no firm definition of an *ethical bank*, but it is commonly considered to be one that considers the social and environmental impact of its investments, and also gives back to the local community.)

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**Student A:** You are the customer.

You need to open a new bank account and you have two options: an account with Southeast Bank or with Queen Margaret Bank. Talk to the workers from each bank. Ask them about their services (fees, interest, overdraft, etc). Then choose which bank offers the best service for your own personal needs. To identify your needs, you could look again at the form you completed in Exercise 3c.

**Student B:** You work for Southeast Bank.

Try to persuade the customer to open a bank account with you. Tell the customer about all the good points related to your bank. Only mention the bad points if necessary.

**Good points**

- No monthly fee
- Branch near the customer's home
- Low rates on borrowed money (about 3%)
- Free pens and pencils for new customers
- Extremely friendly workers

**Bad points**

- No interest on savings
- Fee of 20 pence to use ATM
- Very basic online banking
- No overdraft allowed

**Student C:** You work for Queen Margaret Bank.

Try to persuade the customer to open a bank account with you. Tell the customer about all the good points related to your bank. Only mention the bad points if necessary.

**Good points**

- Interest on savings 0.2% (per year)
- Free use of ATM
- Excellent online banking
- Overdraft up to £5,000
- Free television for new customers

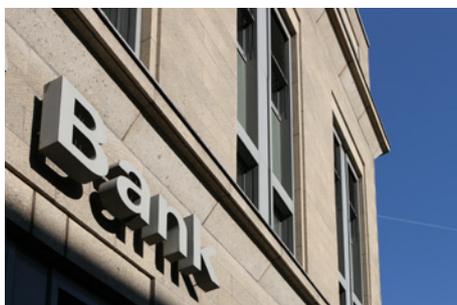
**Bad points**

- A monthly fee of £5
- Very few branches
- High rates on borrowed money (about 8%)
- Customers often complain about workers

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### 1 Warmer



**a. Discuss the questions below with your classmate.**

- When was the last time that you opened a bank account? Explain.
- What information and documents do you need to provide to open a bank account?
- These days, it is very difficult to live without a bank account. Why is it so important to have one?

**b. Look at the article extract and discuss the questions.**



Experts tell us that, in the near future, we will all be living in a cashless society. That is, a society where we pay for everything using a **debit card** or a **credit card**. Cash will become a thing of the past and banks will control all payments. But statistics show enormous cultural differences in this trend:

<i>Percentage of payments which are cashless</i>	
<i>Singapore</i>	61%
<i>France; Sweden</i>	59%
<i>United Kingdom</i>	52%
<i>United States</i>	45%
<i>Germany</i>	33%
<i>Spain</i>	16%
<i>China</i>	10%
<i>Italy</i>	6%
<i>Mexico</i>	4%
<i>Thailand</i>	2%
<i>Indonesia</i>	0%



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- In your country, is it more common to pay in cash or by card?
- Describe the last time you paid for something in cash.
- Describe the last time you paid for something by card.
- For the items below, decide if it would be more common to pay in cash or by card in your country:
  - a bottle of water in a small shop
  - supermarket shopping
  - two drinks in a bar or café
  - a meal in a restaurant
  - a journey by taxi
  - a haircut
  - a new television

## 2 Text

- a. Read about three people who describe experiences with their banks. Then answer the True or False questions below.



Matteo (19, student)

I'm pretty happy with my bank. Although, I have to say, I don't have a very complex financial life! I'm still living with my parents, you see. I have a part-time job, which allows me to have some small **savings**. Generally, I just pay for things using my debit card or I **withdraw** cash from the ATM when I need it. Oh, and my bank allows me to get **cashback** when I pay for things in shops. That can be useful if there's no ATM nearby.



Rebecca (28, designer)

I would say my bank is fairly standard. Just the usual services, with no monthly **fee**. I have a **direct debit** for my phone bills, another for my gym, and so on. And then there's a **standing order** for my monthly rent. They also allow me an **overdraft** of up to £5,000. I try not to use it, but it's good to have it as an option in case I need some extra money. All in all, I can't complain.



So Jeong (53, doctor)

About ten years ago, we needed a **mortgage** to buy a flat and we decided to get it from the local **building society**. The **branch** is just a short walk from our home, so it's easy to arrange a meeting when necessary. More recently, we started a small **investment** with them – nothing very big, just a fund that earns a bit of **interest**. They also have really good online banking, so we can do most tasks from home.

### True or False?

1. Matteo rarely uses cash. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Rebecca has over £5,000 in her bank account. \_\_\_\_\_
3. So Jeong does her banking tasks both online and face-to-face. \_\_\_\_\_

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- b. Look again at the three texts and notice the expressions in bold. Write each expression next to its corresponding definition below.



1. \_\_\_\_\_ = a legal agreement in which you borrow money from a bank in order to buy a house or flat
2. \_\_\_\_\_ = an instruction to your bank to regularly pay a fixed amount of money to a person or organisation (e.g. £1,000 on the first day of each month)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ = an instruction to your bank to regularly pay money from your account to a person or organization (the amount can change and is decided by the person who you are paying)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ = money that you keep in your bank account so that you can use it later
5. \_\_\_\_\_ = a bank office where customers can go to talk face-to-face with bank workers
6. \_\_\_\_\_ = money (cash) from your bank account that you can get from a shop when you pay for things with a debit card
7. \_\_\_\_\_ = to take money from a bank account
8. \_\_\_\_\_ = a financial organisation in the UK which is similar to a bank but its 'owners' are its customers - many people join this organisation to borrow money to buy a house
9. \_\_\_\_\_ = money that you pay to a bank for its services
10. \_\_\_\_\_ = money that you receive from an institution such as a bank when you keep money in an account there
11. \_\_\_\_\_ = money used in a way that may earn you more money (e.g. using it to buy property which you hope will increase in value)
12. \_\_\_\_\_ = an agreement with your bank that allows you to spend money when you have no money left in your account

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- c. Imagine that you want to open a bank account in the UK. Complete the form with your information. For difficult words, refer to the glossary at the end. When you have finished, compare with your classmate.

### OPENING A NEW ACCOUNT: Tell us about yourself

#### Residency status

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

Countries in which you have tax residency: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a UK resident? Yes / No

#### Address

How long have you been living at your current address? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Status (tick ONE option):**

- Home owner with mortgage  
 Home owner without mortgage  
 Tenant (private rental)  
 Other  
 (please explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

#### Account details

\* Will your salary be paid into this account? Yes / No

\* What type of account do you wish to open? Individual / Joint  
 (If the account is joint, please state the name of the person who you wish to share it with: \_\_\_\_\_)

#### Documentation

Please tick the documents which you are able to provide:

- a recent bank statement                       a tenancy agreement or mortgage statement  
 a recent utility bill                               a recent bill for council tax

#### Important factors

Please tick the TWO most important factors for you when choosing a bank:

- No monthly fee                                       Low rates on loans/mortgages  
 Good online banking                               Possibility of overdraft  
 Free use of ATM                                       Good interest on savings  
 Branch near your home                               Friendly workers

**Your history:** Do you authorise the bank to carry out a check on your credit history? Yes / No

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### Glossary

**residency** (*noun, uncountable*) the legal right to live in a country that is not your own

**tenant** (*noun, countable*) someone who rents a flat, house, etc from the person who owns it

**joint** (*adjective*) involving two or more people, or done by them together

**bank statement** (*noun, countable*) a document that shows all the money that went into or out of your bank account during a particular period of time

**tenancy agreement** (*noun, countable*) a contract which shows the conditions under which someone rents a flat, house, etc from the person who owns it

**utility bill** (*noun, countable*) a document which shows how much money a person owes for public services such as gas, electricity or water

**council tax** (*noun, uncountable, British English*) a tax that you pay to your local council for services such as schools and libraries, based on the value of your house or flat

**rate** (*noun, countable*) the percentage which the bank charges you for money that you borrow (or pays you for the money you save with them)

**loan** (*noun, countable*) an amount of money that a person borrows, especially from a bank

**credit history** (*noun, countable*) a record of how someone has paid back what they owed in the past, used as a way of deciding whether to lend them money

### 3 Language in use

For each gap, write one word from this lesson to complete the sentence.

- In my most recent \_\_\_\_\_, I saw that my bank had taken an annual fee of £40 for a credit card. I don't even have a credit card! It must have been a mistake.
- My bank allows me to have an \_\_\_\_\_ of up to £3,000. It's good to have it, in case of emergency, but I'd prefer not to use it.
- Last year, Steve didn't pay his phone bill because he was angry with the phone company. As a result, he now has a bad \_\_\_\_\_, so his bank refused to give him a loan.
- After Hasan and Vicky started living together, they decided that it was time to get a \_\_\_\_\_ bank account. It made it easier to divide the costs of rent and bills.
- Last month, my bank closed the \_\_\_\_\_ that they had in my town. Now I need to travel for almost an hour if I want to speak to a manager face-to-face.
- Joe wanted to open a new account. However, he wasn't able to show the bank a \_\_\_\_\_ because all the services in his house (water, gas, etc) are in his wife's name.

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7. I've been having so many problems with the gas company recently, so I've decided to cancel the \_\_\_\_\_ . When they try to take money from my account next month, the bank won't allow them.
8. These days, I pay for almost everything with my debit card. I only \_\_\_\_\_ a small amount of cash about once a week, just to have some in my pocket.
9. The bank asked Corinne to show them the \_\_\_\_\_ for the flat that she rents. However, she shares the flat with two other people, and her name doesn't appear on the contract.
10. At the supermarket, I always pay by card. But I usually ask for about £50 \_\_\_\_\_ , just so I don't need to make a separate trip to the ATM.

### 4 Communication

**Work in groups of three. Read the role-card which your teacher gives you. Then begin the role-play, remembering to use new language from this lesson.**

### 5 Discuss

**Work in pairs. Discuss the questions below with your classmate.**

- Are you happy with your bank? Talk about its good points and its bad points.
- How often do you go to the bank?
- In your country, is it common to use contactless cards? Explain.
- Talk about the advantages and disadvantages of using a credit card.
- What is a good age for people to open their first bank account?
- Has a bank ever made a mistake with your money/account? Explain.
- For many people, it is important to use an 'ethical' bank. What do you understand by this term?