

## Robots help get food from farm to table

**Level:** Upper intermediate (B1–B2)

**Time:** Approximately 90 minutes

**Business topics:** automation of job tasks, introduction of AI and robots, problem-solving, technology-led change

**Business language focus:** language associated with new artificial intelligence, technology, unskilled labour, and the food supply chain

**Activities:** In this lesson, students will:

- read a business article and look at the language necessary to understand and talk about it;
- learn or revise and define business collocations and expressions;
- discuss the relevance of the article contents to their own company or line of work;
- discuss further aspects of the article in greater depth;
- summarize benefits and facts and produce a clear and concise presentation.

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student

**Group size:** This lesson can be used with pairs or groups, with some whole class discussion. It can also be used for one-to-one teaching and online teaching.

**Overview:** This lesson is based on an authentic article from a trusted new source. The article talks about how the coronavirus crisis and lockdowns have sped up the development and workplace integration of certain types of robots and artificial intelligence (AI). It focuses on five robots that have already been deployed in various stages of the food supply chain in the US and talks about the benefits and advances they can bring not only for the companies but also for employees.

### 1. Warmer

Students look at the images and discuss what tasks they think each robot does. They should imagine what role each robot plays in the food supply chain. They should give reasons for their answers.

Note: The images of the robots are the same as the ones mentioned in the article and are shown in the same order.

### 2. Key words

Students search for words in the text and write them next to the definitions while noticing how the words are used in context.

**Key:**

1. *harvest*
2. *accelerating*
3. *creeping along*
4. *premises*
5. *collectively*
6. *monotonous*
7. *crop*
8. *kinks*
9. *mainstream*
10. *fleet*
11. *unique*
12. *grocers*
13. *catch-22*
14. *inventory*

### 3. Understanding the article

Have students read the statements and decide whether they are true or false. Then they can correct any that are false.

If students are working in pairs or small groups, they can collaborate on the answers to promote peer teaching before you check answers as a class.

**Key:**

1. *False. Before the pandemic, businesses were starting to see a trend towards greater deployment of AI, but this trend had been moving slowly.*
2. *True*
3. *False. It is doing the monotonous cleaning and allowing human staff to do precision work like disinfecting handles on shopping trolleys and baskets.*

4. True
5. True (it gets confused by shadows).
6. True
7. True
8. True
9. True
10. False. The technological advances made due to Covid-19 are likely to become a normal part of business and are here to stay.

## 4. Business language – word pairs

- a. Students match the words on the left with those on the right to make word pairs and phrases from the article. Point out that although other word pairs may be possible, they are looking for ones that they already read in the article. Then they should scan the article to check their answers.
  - b. Students should write word pairs and phrases next to the definitions.
  - c. Finally, students choose four word pairs that they would most like to be able to use in English and write an example sentence from their own lives for each one. They should share these sentences with the class and make any final corrections before moving onto the next task.
- This task can be done in pairs or small groups to encourage speaking and collaboration.

### Key:

- a. 1 supply chain; 2 underway; 3 automation wave; 4 labour shortages; 5 economies of scale; 6 a shift in focus; 7 a surge in demand; 8 in the process of
- b.
 

1. shift in focus	5. in the process of
2. supply chain	6. automation wave
3. underway	7. labour shortage
4. economies of scale	8. a surge in demand

## 5. Business English – phrases with ‘and’

Students find 3 three-word phrases with ‘and’ in the article and use them to complete the business-related sentences. The section numbers where the phrases can be found are given to help them. The meaning of each phrase is given in brackets after the sentence.

To extend this task, students use each phrase in sentences of their own. Remind them that the more personal and meaningful the sentences are to them, the more likely they are to remember the phrases and be able to use them correctly in the future.

### Key:

1. spick and span
2. up and running
3. pick and pack

## 6. Using the key words

- a. Students complete the questions with some of the key words from task 2.
- b. They should ask and answer the questions in groups or pairs.

### Key:

1. grocers, grocery, grocery shop
2. premises
3. mainstream
4. crops
5. monotonous
6. unique

## 7. Discussion questions

In small groups, students discuss the questions which expand on topics from the article. Hold a short whole-class feedback session and compare and contrast each group’s answers and input. If you are teaching an online class or a one-to-one lesson, give the learner(s) plenty of time to consider their responses to each of the discussion questions.

To extend the task, have students talk about which machines they already have to help them with monotonous tasks at home, and which others (already developed or not) they would like or hope to have in the future.

## 8. Wider business theme – creating a clear proposal and presentation

- a. In pairs or small groups, have students select a supply chain and imagine a robot that might be useful somewhere in along the chain. They should first make notes about the benefits this robot could bring to the company in the areas of employee well-being, long-term financial savings, and ease of production or process.
- b. Finally, students should turn their notes into a sketch or detailed description of their robot and present the idea to their boss. They should try to win approval or budget to develop the idea.