BOOK CLUB · CLASS 3 · 1-ON-1

B2

Business English Training Series

Power: Setbacks, Costs & Staying Power

A speaking class on Jeffrey Pfeffer's 'Power' — Chapters 9 to 13.

TODAY'S JOURNEY

- **Warm-up** — *The comeback*
- **Recap** — *Chapters 9–13*
- **Vocabulary** — *12 words for setbacks & power*
- **Discussion** — *10 questions*
- **Case** — *The rejected proposal*

B2 · One-to-one · Speaking · 60 minutes

Book follow-up class 3 — for senior professionals

Today's Plan

60 minutes of speaking — you lead, I listen and push

6 min	**Warm-up**	The comeback — and your email from last class
8 min	**Reading recap**	The main idea of each chapter, in your own words
12 min	**Vocabulary**	12 words for setbacks, the cost of power and losing it
20 min	**Discussion**	10 questions on Chapters 9–13 — and your own career
8 min	**Case**	The rejected proposal
6 min	**Final task**	Your verdict on the whole book

Ground rule: these chapters ask what power costs. Keep asking 'Is it worth it?' — for the person and for the organisation.

Warm-Up: The Comeback

Pfeffer's point: a setback is not the end of a career

Teacher Note

GUESS WHO

This leader lost his government job in his fifties.

He spent about ten years 'in the wilderness' — criticised, ignored and out of power.

Then, at 65, he became his country's prime minister. Who was he?

ANSWER

Winston Churchill

Out of office through the 1930s; Prime Minister in 1940, aged 65.

DISCUSS *What other comebacks do you know — in business, politics or sport? What do they have in common? And — homework check — did you send your email to someone senior? What happened?*

Tutor — cover the answer box until she guesses. Then check her reaching-out email from class 2.

Reading Recap: In Your Own Words

What is the main idea of each chapter? One sentence each.

CHAPTER 9
Overcoming Opposition and Setbacks

CHAPTER 10
The Price of Power

CHAPTER 11
How — and Why — People Lose Power

CHAPTER 12
Power Dynamics: Good for Organizations, Good for You?

CHAPTER 13
It's Easier Than You Think

➡️ **A summary of each chapter is on the next slide — give yours first**

Reading Recap: Summary

Compare with your version — what did you notice that this misses?

🔑 **ANSWER KEY — Do not show until the student has completed the exercise on the previous slide**

Chapter 9	Move early, look like a winner and never give up power voluntarily. Persistence wears down opposition, but pick your battles. Give opponents a stake or a dignified exit, and don't take conflict personally.
Chapter 10	Power has costs: constant scrutiny, less control over your time, long hours and effort, and difficulty knowing whom to trust. Leaving power can feel like losing part of your identity.
Chapter 11	Overconfidence and insensitivity, misplaced trust, losing patience, burnout and failing to change. Keeping power needs constant attention. Leave on your own terms — 'before the party's over'.
Chapter 12	Politics exists in almost every organisation. It can lower morale, but hierarchy and power differences are natural and hard to remove — so it is better to understand them than to ignore them.
Chapter 13	We often hold ourselves back. Power usually comes from small, everyday moves: asking, offering, taking an opportunity. 'Authority is 20 percent given, 80 percent taken.'

Which chapter do you agree with most? Which least — and why?

Vocabulary: 12 Words for Setbacks, Costs & Staying Power

Opposition (teal) · The price of power (blue) · Losing power (purple) · Organisations & action (amber)

setback
a problem that stops progress for a time

'The rejected budget was a setback, not a defeat.'

pick your battles
choose which conflicts are worth fighting

'Pick your battles — you can't win every argument.'

back down
stop insisting on something; give way

'She refused to back down on the risk limits.'

resilience
the ability to recover quickly from difficulties

'Her resilience after the restructuring impressed everyone.'

scrutiny
close and careful examination

'As director, every decision is under scrutiny.'

autonomy
freedom to decide for yourself

'Senior roles bring influence but less autonomy over your time.'

burnout
exhaustion caused by long-term stress at work

'Long hours with no break can lead to burnout.'

overconfidence
believing too much in your own abilities

'Overconfidence made him ignore the warning signs.'

misplaced trust
trust given to the wrong person

'Misplaced trust in one adviser cost him the deal.'

step down
leave an important job or position

'The CEO chose to step down after ten years.'

office politics
the use of power and relationships at work

'Office politics exists in every organisation.'

seize the opportunity
act quickly to use a chance

'She seized the opportunity to lead the new project.'

Also from the reading: competency trap · self-handicapping · hierarchy · morale · leave on your own terms

Vocabulary Practice

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not used. Watch the form.

resilience | autonomy | setback | burnout | back down | scrutiny | pick your battles | overconfidence | step down | seize the opportunity

1. After the merger was cancelled, the team showed real _____ and delivered the plan on time.
2. Losing the client was a _____, but it taught us to diversify.
3. You can't fight every decision. You have to _____.
4. In a pension fund, every investment decision is under _____.
5. Working 70-hour weeks for a year left him close to _____.
6. Years of success led to _____: he stopped listening to his team.
7. After 15 years in the role, she decided to _____ and let someone new lead.
8. When the CEO announced the new role, he _____ and volunteered first.

➡️ **Answers on the next slide — do not look until you have attempted all questions**

Vocabulary Practice: Answer Key

Not used: autonomy · back down

🔑 **ANSWER KEY — Do not show until the student has completed the exercise on the previous slide**

1 ✔ **resilience**
After the merger was cancelled, the team showed real resilience and delivered the plan on time.

2 ✔ **setback**
Losing the client was a setback, but it taught us to diversify.

3 ✔ **pick your battles**
You can't fight every decision. You have to pick your battles.

4 ✔ **scrutiny**
In a pension fund, every investment decision is under scrutiny.

5 ✔ **burnout**
Working 70-hour weeks for a year left him close to burnout.

6 ✔ **overconfidence**
Years of success led to overconfidence: he stopped listening to his team.

7 ✔ **step down**
After 15 years in the role, she decided to step down and let someone new lead.

8 ✔ **seized the opportunity**
When the CEO announced the new role, he seized the opportunity and volunteered first.

Now use the two unused words: How much autonomy do you have over your diary? When did you last refuse to back down?

Discussion Questions (1/2)

Give reasons and examples. Use the word in the tag.

Teacher Note

1	CHAPTER 9	Persistence can wear down opposition, but Pfeffer says you must pick your battles. How do you decide which battles are worth fighting at work?	pick your battles
2	CHAPTER 9	After a setback, people want to back someone who looks like a winner. How should a leader behave in public after a failure?	setback
3	CHAPTER 9	Pfeffer warns: never give up power voluntarily. Is backing down always weak — or is it sometimes the smartest move?	back down
4	CHAPTER 10	Power brings scrutiny: every word and decision is watched. How has visibility changed for you as you have become more senior?	scrutiny
5	CHAPTER 10	Leaders lose control of their time, and Pfeffer says the price is often higher for women. Is that fair? What would lower the price in your industry?	autonomy

Follow up: Can you give a specific example? · Is it worth it? · What would you do differently? · What's the cost?

Discussion Questions (2/2)

Give reasons and examples. Use the word in the tag.

6	CHAPTER 10	People tell powerful people what they want to hear. How can a director make sure she still gets honest feedback?	misplaced trust
7	CHAPTER 11	Pfeffer says very little power is needed to make people overconfident and insensitive. Have you seen it happen? How do you protect yourself from it?	overconfidence
8	CHAPTER 11	'Leave before the party's over.' When should a leader step down — and how should they do it?	step down
9	CHAPTER 12	In one survey, 93% of managers said office politics is common. Is it good or bad for a financial-services firm?	office politics
10	CHAPTER 13	'Authority is 20 percent given, 80 percent taken.' Do you agree? What opportunity could you seize in the next three months?	seize the opportunity

Follow up: Can you give a specific example? · Is it worth it? · What would you do differently? · What's the cost?

Language for Setbacks and Difficult Conversations

Phrases you can use at work — and in today's case study

Responding to a setback

'This isn't the result we wanted, but…'

'Let's take a step back and look at what we learned.'

'I'm confident we can turn this around.'

Holding your position

'I understand the concern, but I'd like to stand by…'

'I'm not ready to drop this yet.'

'Can we agree on what would change your mind?'

Asking for honest feedback

'What am I not seeing here?'

'If you were in my position, what would you do differently?'

'Please be direct — I'd rather hear it now.'

Stepping back gracefully

'I think this is the right moment for someone else to lead.'

'I'll make sure the handover is smooth.'

'I'm proud of what we achieved together.'

Challenge: use one phrase from three of the boxes in the case study

Case Study: The Rejected Proposal

Use Chapters 9–13 to decide your next move

🎓 Teacher Note

THE SITUATION

You spent six months on a proposal to change how your area works. Yesterday the executive committee rejected it.

One colleague who opposed it is now presenting a similar idea as his own. Some people in your team are worried, and senior leaders are watching how you react.

1. What do you say to your team in the next 48 hours?
2. Do you fight, back down, or wait? Which battle — if any — do you pick?
3. How do you deal with the colleague? (Think: a stake in it, don't take it personally.)
4. What would tell you it's time to move on — and how would you leave?

Use today's words: setback · resilience · pick your battles · back down · scrutiny · step down

🧭 FINAL TASK — THE WHOLE BOOK

My Verdict on 'Power'

Complete the sentences, then give a 2-minute review.

- ✔️ The idea I will use at work is… because…
- ✔️ The idea I reject is… because…
- ✔️ The book changed my mind about…
- ✔️ I would / wouldn't recommend it to… because…

MODEL EXAMPLE

'The idea I will use is that people help you far more often than you expect — so I'll ask more. The idea I reject is that you should never give up power voluntarily; sometimes stepping down is the right thing to do. The book changed my mind about office politics: I used to think it was something to avoid, but now I think it's something to understand. I'd recommend it to any new manager — with a warning to read it critically.'

Take 2 minutes to prepare. Your teacher will note two strengths and one thing to work on.

Wrap-Up & Homework

Today's language and what to do before next lesson

TODAY'S LANGUAGE

Opposition: setback · pick your battles · back down · resilience

The price of power: scrutiny · autonomy · burnout

Losing power: overconfidence · misplaced trust · step down

Organisations & action: office politics · seize the opportunity

HOMEWORK

Write a 150-word book review of 'Power' for a colleague: one idea to use, one to reject. Use 5 words from the book club.

Choose one small 'power move' from Chapter 13 and try it this week. Be ready to report back.

Choose the next book or topic for our classes.

Next lesson: her book review, her 'power move' report — and what we read next