MODERNIZATION PACKAGE

79%

Business English Training Series

If We Launched That, It Would Be a Faux Pas

Risk assessment has a tense: test the decision before it costs anything.

THIS UNIT COVERS

- 🚩 Brand Risk Management
- 📈 Marketing Optimization
- 🎯 Market Positioning
- 🌀 IF + PAST → WOULD + BASE
- 🔬 WERE, not WAS

Advanced

Unit 79% — Present unreal conditional for risk assessment

Learning Outcomes

What you will be able to DO by the end of this unit

1

Build the unreal frame

if + past simple → would + base: 'If we launched that campaign, it would be a PR faux pas.'

2

Grade the consequence

'It would fail' (sure) · 'it could backfire' (possible) · 'it might recover' (uncertain).

3

Use the subjunctive WERE

'If I were the CEO…' · 'If the market were ready, we would already be selling.'

4

Run scenarios safely

Test a launch, a message or a new market position in the hypothetical — before it costs anything.

Icebreaker — What If We Did?

Speaking warm-up · 8 minutes

Teacher Note

1. Three hypotheticals about your company: 'If we ___, we would ___.' Make one of them something nobody would approve.

2. The reputational one: what could a technology company do tomorrow that would be a real brand faux pas? Why would it land badly?

3. Personal: 'If I were running the whole company, I would ___ and I would stop ___.' Use WERE.

Model: *'If we published our service prices openly, we would lose a few tenders and win more small clients. And if I were running the company, I would stop the Monday meeting.'*

Why this matters

✔️ **Risk assessment IS this tense**
'If the supplier failed, what would happen?' is how every risk register is written.

✔️ **The unreal frame makes disagreement safe**
'If we did X…' lets people explore an idea without anyone owning it.

✔️ **Positioning is a hypothetical argument**
You can't A/B test a brand position — you reason about it in this tense.

Vocabulary — The Risk Board

12 terms · reputational risks (teal) · market moves (amber) · assessment verbs (blue)

brand faux pas
a public mistake that damages reputation

'If we ran that ad here, it would be a faux pas.'

PR disaster
a serious failure of public communication

'Most PR disasters were predictable.'

tone-deaf
insensitive to the audience's mood

'The email wasn't rude; it was tone-deaf.'

reputational risk
the chance of damage to how you are seen

'Untested firmware is a reputational risk.'

hostile takeover
buying a company against its board's wishes

'A low valuation invites a hostile takeover.'

stock dilution
smaller ownership when new shares are issued

'If we raised money now, the dilution would be severe.'

market optimization
tuning positioning and funnel for best return

'If we optimized the funnel, our valuation would rise.'

premium positioning
selling on value and service, not price

'Premium positioning means fewer, better clients.'

to backfire
to produce the opposite effect

'A defensive statement would backfire.'

to alienate
to make a group feel rejected

'Ending support would alienate old clients.'

to stress-test
to examine under extreme conditions

'Stress-test the plan before the market does.'

to reposition
to change how the market sees you

'Repositioning would take two years.'

Recycle from 78%: supply constraint · single-source risk · strategic partnership — every one of them is a risk you can test today

Vocabulary Practice — Gap Fill

Complete each sentence with the correct term. Watch the form!

1 If we ran that advertisement in this market, it would be a real _____ _____ _____.

hint — public reputational mistake (3 words)

2 The message wasn't offensive; it was _____-_____, which lasts longer.

hint — insensitive to the mood (hyphenated)

3 Shipping untested firmware is a serious _____ _____.

hint — chance of damage to your image (2 words)

4 If our valuation stayed this low, a _____ _____ would become possible.

hint — acquisition against the board (2 words)

5 If we raised money at this price, the _____ _____ would be severe.

hint — smaller ownership from new shares (2 words)

6 If we moved to _____ _____, we would lose volume on purpose.

hint — selling on value, not price (2 words)

7 A defensive statement would _____ — and silence probably would too.

hint — verb: produce the opposite effect

8 _____ the plan before the market does it for you.

hint — verb: examine under extreme conditions

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

Vocabulary Practice — Answer Key

Say each full sentence aloud

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

1	✔️ **brand faux pas**	*real, and public*
2	✔️ **tone-deaf**	*wrong moment, wrong audience*
3	✔️ **reputational risk**	*harder to repair than a printer*
4	✔️ **hostile takeover**	*possible at this price*
5	✔️ **stock dilution**	*existing owners lose share*
6	✔️ **premium positioning**	*fewer, better clients*
7	✔️ **backfire**	*the opposite result*
8	✔️ **Stress-test**	*test it at zero cost*

Grammar Focus — The Hypothetical Frame

Past tense for a present that isn't real · WOULD for the consequence

Four systems: THE FRAME | GRADING | WERE | RISK

THE FRAME

If we launched that campaign, it would be a faux pas. *if + past, would + base*

If we optimized the funnel, our valuation would rise. *the unit's key sentence*

Never 'if we would launch'. *the fatal error*

Past form, present meaning. *the decision is still open*

GRADING THE RESULT

It would collapse. *sure*

It could backfire. *a real possibility*

It might recover. *uncertain*

The modal is your confidence level. *choose it on purpose*

THE SUBJUNCTIVE WERE

If I were the CEO, I would stop that product line. *all persons — formal*

If the market were ready, we'd already be selling. *written standard*

'If I was' is spoken; 'if I were' is written. *register*

If I were you, ... *the advice formula*

THE RISK REGISTER

What would happen if the main supplier failed? *the risk question*

If that happened, we would lose two quarters. *impact*

Unless we hedged it, the exposure would double. *78% returns*

if we lose (likely) vs if we lost (hypothetical) *the distance dial*

KEY: if + past simple → would / could / might + base · never WOULD in the if-clause · WERE in formal use · the modal grades your confidence

Grammar Practice — Test It Hypothetically

Items 1–5: complete · 6: transform · 7–8: error hunt

1 If we _____ (launch) the printer now, it _____ _____ (be) a real faux pas.

COMPLETE

2 If we _____ (optimize) the funnel properly, our valuation _____ (rise).

COMPLETE

3 If I _____ the CEO, I _____ (stop) the third product line tomorrow.

COMPLETE

4 If the label supplier _____ (fail) next month, we _____ (lose) two quarters.

COMPLETE

5 Grade it: 'A defensive statement _____ backfire.' You think it's possible, not certain.

COMPLETE

6 Say it twice — as a likely risk, then as a hypothetical: 'we lose our largest client'

TRANSFORM

7 Correct: 'If we would launch that campaign, it will be a disaster.'

ERROR HUNT

8 Correct: 'If I was the CEO, I would to reposition the brand.'

ERROR HUNT

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

Grammar Practice — Answer Key

Read each answer aloud with natural stress

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

1	✔ **launched · would be**	*past simple, then would + base*
2	✔ **optimized · would rise**	*the unit's key sentence*
3	✔ **were · would stop**	*the subjunctive WERE*
4	✔ **failed · would lose**	*the risk register's tense*
5	✔ **could backfire**	*could = a real possibility*
6	✔ **If we lose..., we'll... / If we lost..., we would...**	*real = likely · unreal = distant*
7	✔ **If we LAUNCHED..., it WOULD BE a disaster**	*no WOULD after IF · would, not will*
8	✔ **If I WERE the CEO, I would REPOSITION**	*were · no TO after would*

Hypothetical Risk Across the Company

A sure scenario, a graded one and a WERE line in four departments

TECHNICAL

scenario	*'If the certification lapsed, shipments would stop — there is no MIGHT in that sentence.'*
graded	*'If we released the firmware this week, it could fail on older scanners.'*
were	*'If I were the client, I would ask for a pilot first.'*

MARKETING

scenario	*'If we ran that campaign in this market, it would be tone-deaf.'*
graded	*'If we optimized the funnel, the valuation might rise — retention takes three quarters to prove.'*
were	*'If the audience were younger, the humour would work.'*

FINANCE

scenario	*'If interest rates rose another point, we would break the loan covenant.'*
graded	*'If we raised money at this valuation, the dilution could reach 18%.'*
were	*'If I were advising the board, I would refinance now.'*

OPERATIONS

scenario	*'If the label supplier failed, three product lines would stop.'*
graded	*'If we single-sourced the printhead, one bad quarter could hurt every client.'*
were	*'If the buffer stock were in our name, this wouldn't be a risk.'*

The trio to steal: one WOULD with no hedge · one COULD/MIGHT where the doubt is real · one WERE line that changes the point of view

🔵 GAME 1 — PROMPT

The Faux Pas Lab

PROPOSAL FILE A — you

Ideas somebody suggested: Launch the new printer at the trade show before certification · raise service prices during a competitor's outage · announce record sales in the week of the layoffs · use a client's logo in a case study without asking

PROPOSAL FILE B — your teacher

Ideas somebody suggested: Reposition as premium and drop the entry-level range · answer the viral complaint in public · end support for older models with 30 days' notice · launch the rebrand two weeks before the results

YOUR TASK Stress-test every proposal in the unreal conditional: what WOULD happen? Grade each result honestly (would / could / might). Then name the one idea that is worse than it looks and the one that is better than it sounds. Use WERE at least twice.
+1 per correct conditional · +1 per honest modal · any WOULD inside an if-clause cancels the point.

Model results are on the next slide — test yours first →

🔵 GAME 1 — RESULT

The Faux Pas Lab — Model Results

✔️ **File A**

If we launched before certification, the printer would fail in the field and we would lose the trade press. If we raised prices during a competitor's outage, we could gain a quarter's margin and would lose our clients' trust. Worse than it looks: record sales in the week of the layoffs — it would be the only thing people remembered. Better than it sounds: the case study — if we asked the client first, it would be normal practice.

✔️ **File B**

If we dropped the entry-level range, we would lose about half our volume, and we might not survive until the margin grew. If we answered the complaint in public, we could keep it alive for another week. Worse than it looks: the rebrand before the results — if the results were bad, it would look like a distraction. Better than it sounds: ending support — if the notice were twelve months, not thirty days, most clients would accept it.

The lab's method: separate the idea from its timing. 'Could gain a margin and would lose trust' — the modals do the analysis.

🟡 GAME 2 — PROMPT

The Risk Register Workshop

⚠️ YOU — THE RISK OWNER

Present four risks for your area, all in the unreal conditional (7+ sentences):

- two WOULD results you are sure about
- one COULD and one MIGHT where the doubt is real
- one WERE sentence that reframes a risk
- one 78% line: 'unless we hedged it, …would…'

🔎 TEACHER — THE CHALLENGER

Questions the register:

- modal audit: 'Would, or could?'
- chain: 'And then what would happen?'
- likelihood: 'How likely is it, honestly?'
- one grammar catch (WOULD after IF, or 'if I was')

Say the impact first, then the likelihood · Model workshop on the next slide →

🟡 GAME 2 — RESULT

Model Risk Register Workshop

A	Risk one: if our largest client didn't renew in February, we would lose 30% of our service revenue.
B	Modal audit: would lose 30%, or could? Contracts rarely end that cleanly.
A	Fair. We would lose about 20% for certain, and we could lose the rest over two quarters. The honest version is less frightening.
A	Risk two: if the printer certification lapsed, shipments would stop. No 'might' in that sentence.
B	And then what would happen? Go further.
A	Our clients would buy from a competitor for those weeks — and some of them might not come back.
B	How likely is it, honestly?
A	Low — perhaps 10%. But unless we hedged it now, the exposure would be two full quarters. And if the paperwork were filed early, it wouldn't be a risk at all.

A register with honest modals gets funded; one where everything 'would' happen gets ignored

🟢 GAME 3 — PROMPT · CORE SIMULATION

The Positioning Debate

🎯 YOU — TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Argue for a new market position (e.g. from hardware supplier to premium solutions partner), 8+ sentences:

- ✔️ three WOULD results you are sure about
- ✔️ two graded results (could / might)
- ✔️ two WERE sentences
- ✔️ one honest risk: 'If we did this badly, it would…'
- ✔️ one 78% condition: 'provided that…'

👔 TEACHER — THE CEO

Stress-tests the position with 4 probes:

- ✔️ 'Would, or might? Don't sell me certainty.'
- ✔️ 'Tell me what would go wrong.'
- ✔️ 'If we did nothing at all, what would happen?'
- ✔️ One grammar catch

The CEO decides — and names the hypothetical that decided it · Model on the next slide →

🟢 GAME 3 — RESULT

Model Positioning Debate

A	I propose we move from hardware supplier to premium solutions partner. If we did, we would lose some price-only clients, and our average contract would be about twice as large.
B	Twice as large — would, or might? Don't sell me certainty you don't have.
A	Would on the mechanism, might on the timing. Winning new premium clients might take 18 months or three years.
B	Tell me what would go wrong.
A	If the small clients left faster than the large ones arrived, we would have premium costs and falling revenue. If I were a small client, I would see a price rise as a cash grab.
B	And if we did nothing at all, what would happen?
A	We would stay profitable for three years and then face the same decision with less cash. If the market were static, waiting would be fine. It isn't.
B	That decided it. We go ahead, provided that the service team is trained before any price change.

The reversal test decides the debate: the unreal conditional's best use is testing the option everyone forgets — doing nothing

Rapid Poll — Choose the Correct Option

4 questions · 3 minutes

Q1 **If we _____ that campaign, it would be a faux pas.**

a) launched

b) would launch

c) will launch

Q2 **If we optimized the funnel, our valuation _____.**

a) would rise

b) will rise

c) would rises

Q3 **Formal written English: 'If I _____ the CEO...'**

a) were

b) was

c) would be

Q4 **'It could backfire' — not 'it would backfire' — shows...**

a) real uncertainty about the result

b) a stronger warning

c) a past event

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

Rapid Poll — Answer Key

Explain WHY each wrong option fails

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

✔ **Q1 CORRECT: a) launched**

✘ b) WOULD never goes in the if-clause

✘ c) WILL belongs to real conditionals — 78%

Rule: if + past simple, would + base.

✔ **Q2 CORRECT: a) would rise**

✘ b) 'will rise' makes it a real prediction

✘ c) would + base — never -s

Rule: the result takes would / could / might + base.

✔ **Q3 CORRECT: a) were**

✘ b) 'if I was' is spoken, not written business English

✘ c) 'would be' can't go in the if-clause

Rule: WERE for all persons in formal use.

✔ **Q4 CORRECT: a) real uncertainty about the result**

✘ b) could is weaker than would, not stronger

✘ c) neither form is past

Rule: the modal grades your confidence.

Score: 4/4 = scenario-ready · 3 = solid · 2 or less = replay THE FRAME

Final Simulation — The Scenario Planning Session

One decision, three scenarios, zero real cost · 15 minutes · you and your teacher

SCENARIO: Your leadership team stress-tests a major decision (you choose it: a launch, a new market, a new position). You are the Advocate; your teacher is the Risk Owner. Nothing is decided until every scenario has been run.

1

The proposal (4 min)

You argue for the decision in five unreal conditionals — three WOULD, two graded could / might — with at least one WERE.

2

The downside (4 min)

Your teacher runs the disaster scenario: what would happen if it went wrong? You extend the chain by three links.

3

The reversal (4 min)

The question everyone forgets: if we did nothing, what would happen? You both answer and compare.

4

The decision (3 min)

Decide. Name the one hypothetical sentence that decided it — and attach one 78% condition: 'provided that…'

🎤 FINAL SPEAKING TASK

If I Were — The 90-Second Scenario

Run three hypotheticals about your own work, honestly graded. Your teacher checks every frame.

- ✔️ 3 unreal conditionals about real decisions you face
- ✔️ 2 graded results (could / might) where your doubt is real
- ✔️ 2 WERE sentences
- ✔️ 1 downside chained two links: '...which would mean...'
- ✔️ Close with the reversal: if you did nothing, what would happen?

MODEL EXAMPLE

'If we moved technical support in-house, we would answer clients faster and we would need three more engineers. If we certified the new product range this year, we could win two tenders — and we might not find the people to install it. If I were the client, I would choose the supplier who answers first. And if I were ten years younger, I would learn the software side myself. The downside: if the pilot failed, we would lose the reference client, which would mean a slower year. And if I did nothing, I would be having this same conversation next year — with less time.'

Homework: write your team's top three risks in the unreal conditional, with every modal graded. It opens the 80% Capstone, which reviews Units 76–79%.