

Retail and E-Commerce English

Instructor guide for advanced ESL learners working in retail and e-commerce

Audience: retail managers, e-commerce teams, merchandising staff, store operations leaders, fulfillment teams, customer service managers, marketplace sellers, and growth operators

Focus: A retail and e-commerce English curriculum for merchandising, pricing, inventory, fulfillment, marketplaces, customer complaints, returns, conversion metrics, promotions, and vendor coordination.

Designed for advanced ESL learners who already use professional English and need industry-specific terminology, realistic meetings, role-play pressure, careful pushback, and polished workplace outputs.

Teaching stance: this is language and workplace-communication training, not legal, medical, financial, safety, or regulatory advice. Instructors should connect every scenario to the learner's current company policies, local rules, and approved procedures.

Purpose and Course Logic

A retail and e-commerce English curriculum for merchandising, pricing, inventory, fulfillment, marketplaces, customer complaints, returns, conversion metrics, promotions, and vendor coordination.

Core language challenge

Advanced learners do not only need vocabulary. They need the ability to ask which standard applies, who owns the decision, what evidence is sufficient, what risk is being accepted, and how to disagree without sounding vague, defensive, or reckless.

Each module trains a realistic workplace pressure point with role-specific terms, decision language, pushback practice, and a written output learners can adapt to their own work.

Course objectives

- Use retail and e-commerce terminology accurately in meetings, written updates, handoffs, escalations, reviews, and client or stakeholder conversations.
- Turn vague requests into specific questions about evidence, owner, deadline, constraint, risk, and decision rights.
- Push back on unsafe, unsupported, noncompliant, unrealistic, or poorly scoped proposals while preserving professional trust.
- Handle realistic dialogues from the field, including conflict, uncertainty, documentation gaps, customer or stakeholder pressure, and cross-functional disagreement.
- Produce concise workplace outputs: briefing notes, escalation updates, meeting scripts, risk memos, decision records, and follow-up messages.

Instructor Module Plans

Module 1. Merchandising and Assortment Planning (90 minutes)

Discuss assortment choices using customer, margin, and inventory language.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: assortment, SKU, sell-through, gross margin.
- Explain the workplace tension: Shelf space, demand signal, margin, inventory risk, and vendor capacity need review.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Approve the assortment expansion.
- Draft a usable assortment decision memo with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A buyer wants to add many new SKUs before holiday season.

Approve the assortment expansion.

Shelf space, demand signal, margin, inventory risk, and vendor capacity need review.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.

4. Output lab: draft and revise a assortment decision memo.

Module 2. Pricing, Promotions, and Margin (90 minutes)

Explain discount strategy beyond top-line sales.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: markdown, promotion, gross margin, cannibalization.
- Explain the workplace tension: Gross margin, cannibalization, inventory, customer acquisition, and brand impact matter.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Repeat the promotion because sales increased.
- Draft a usable promotion readout with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A promotion drives revenue but margin falls sharply.

Repeat the promotion because sales increased.

Gross margin, cannibalization, inventory, customer acquisition, and brand impact matter.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a promotion readout.

Module 3. Inventory, Allocation, and Replenishment (90 minutes)

Balance stock availability with working capital.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: allocation, replenishment, stockout, inventory turn.
- Explain the workplace tension: Allocation, demand, lead time, logistics cost, and service level require planning.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Transfer everything immediately.
- Draft a usable replenishment action plan with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A hot item is stocked out in stores but overstocked online.

Transfer everything immediately.

Allocation, demand, lead time, logistics cost, and service level require planning.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.

3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a replenishment action plan.

Module 4. Fulfillment, Shipping, and Returns (90 minutes)

Communicate order problems with clear recovery options.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: fulfillment, SLA, return rate, carrier.
- Explain the workplace tension: Order status, carrier capacity, customer promise, refund policy, and service recovery matter.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Send a general apology.
- Draft a usable fulfillment delay script with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A warehouse backlog delays guaranteed delivery dates.

Send a general apology.

Order status, carrier capacity, customer promise, refund policy, and service recovery matter.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a fulfillment delay script.

Module 5. Conversion, UX, and Digital Analytics (90 minutes)

Discuss website performance using funnel language.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: conversion rate, funnel, cart abandonment, A/B test.
- Explain the workplace tension: Instrumentation, device mix, payment errors, and funnel step drop-off need analysis.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Assume customers dislike the new look.
- Draft a usable conversion diagnosis with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

Checkout conversion drops after a redesign.

Assume customers dislike the new look.

Instrumentation, device mix, payment errors, and funnel step drop-off need analysis.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.

2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a conversion diagnosis.

Module 6. Marketplace and Vendor Management (90 minutes)

Hold marketplace or vendor partners accountable.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: marketplace, vendor scorecard, SLA, defect rate.
- Explain the workplace tension: Scorecards, SLA, customer impact, inventory, and remediation plan need review.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Threaten to delist them immediately.
- Draft a usable vendor scorecard update with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A vendor ships late and product ratings fall.

Threaten to delist them immediately.

Scorecards, SLA, customer impact, inventory, and remediation plan need review.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a vendor scorecard update.

Module 7. Customer Service and Escalations (90 minutes)

Respond to angry customers without policy chaos.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: return policy, goodwill credit, chargeback, customer lifetime value.
- Explain the workplace tension: Policy, goodwill, fraud risk, and customer lifetime value need balanced judgment.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Make an exception for anyone who complains loudly.
- Draft a usable escalation response with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A customer demands a refund outside the return window.

Make an exception for anyone who complains loudly.

Policy, goodwill, fraud risk, and customer lifetime value need balanced judgment.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.

2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a escalation response.

Module 8. Store Operations and Omnichannel Execution (90 minutes)

Coordinate store, online, and fulfillment workflows.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: BOPIS, inventory accuracy, queue, labor model.
- Explain the workplace tension: Labor, inventory accuracy, queue management, and customer expectations all matter.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Tell stores to prioritize online orders over walk-ins.
- Draft a usable omnichannel operations brief with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

Buy-online-pickup-in-store orders are not ready on time.

Tell stores to prioritize online orders over walk-ins.

Labor, inventory accuracy, queue management, and customer expectations all matter.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a omnichannel operations brief.

Nomenclature and Jargon

These are classroom working definitions. Learners should adapt wording to their organization's policies, systems, and local regulatory environment.

Merchandising and Assortment Planning

Term	Working meaning
assortment	Working retail and e-commerce term used in merchandising and assortment planning; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
SKU	Working retail and e-commerce term used in merchandising and assortment planning; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
sell-through	Working retail and e-commerce term used in merchandising and assortment planning; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
gross margin	Working retail and e-commerce term used in merchandising and assortment planning; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Pricing, Promotions, and Margin

Term	Working meaning
markdown	Working retail and e-commerce term used in pricing, promotions, and margin; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
promotion	Working retail and e-commerce term used in pricing, promotions, and margin; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
gross margin	Working retail and e-commerce term used in pricing, promotions, and margin; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
cannibalization	Working retail and e-commerce term used in pricing, promotions, and margin; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Inventory, Allocation, and Replenishment

Term	Working meaning
allocation	Working retail and e-commerce term used in inventory, allocation, and replenishment; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
replenishment	Working retail and e-commerce term used in inventory, allocation, and replenishment; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
stockout	Working retail and e-commerce term used in inventory, allocation, and replenishment; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
inventory turn	Working retail and e-commerce term used in inventory, allocation, and replenishment; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Fulfillment, Shipping, and Returns

Term	Working meaning
fulfillment	Working retail and e-commerce term used in fulfillment, shipping, and returns; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
SLA	Service-level agreement defining expected service performance or response commitments.
return rate	Working retail and e-commerce term used in fulfillment, shipping, and returns; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
carrier	Working retail and e-commerce term used in fulfillment, shipping, and returns; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Conversion, UX, and Digital Analytics

Term	Working meaning
conversion rate	Working retail and e-commerce term used in conversion, ux, and digital analytics; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
funnel	Working retail and e-commerce term used in conversion, ux, and digital analytics; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
cart abandonment	Working retail and e-commerce term used in conversion, ux, and digital analytics; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
A/B test	Working retail and e-commerce term used in conversion, ux, and digital analytics; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Marketplace and Vendor Management

Term	Working meaning
marketplace	Working retail and e-commerce term used in marketplace and vendor management; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
vendor scorecard	Working retail and e-commerce term used in marketplace and vendor management; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
SLA	Service-level agreement defining expected service performance or response commitments.
defect rate	Working retail and e-commerce term used in marketplace and vendor management; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Customer Service and Escalations

Term	Working meaning
return policy	Working retail and e-commerce term used in customer service and escalations; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
goodwill credit	Working retail and e-commerce term used in customer service and escalations; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
chargeback	Working retail and e-commerce term used in customer service and escalations; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
customer lifetime value	Working retail and e-commerce term used in customer service and escalations; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Store Operations and Omnichannel Execution

Term	Working meaning
BOPIS	Working retail and e-commerce term used in store operations and omnichannel execution; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
inventory accuracy	Working retail and e-commerce term used in store operations and omnichannel execution; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
queue	Working retail and e-commerce term used in store operations and omnichannel execution; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
labor model	Working retail and e-commerce term used in store operations and omnichannel execution; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Industry-Specific Meeting Moves

Situation	Useful language
Merchandising and Assortment Planning	Before we commit, I want to confirm assortment, SKU, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If shelf space, demand signal, margin, inventory risk, and vendor capacity need review., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Pricing, Promotions, and Margin	Before we commit, I want to confirm markdown, promotion, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If gross margin, cannibalization, inventory, customer acquisition, and brand impact matter., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Inventory, Allocation, and Replenishment	Before we commit, I want to confirm allocation, replenishment, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If allocation, demand, lead time, logistics cost, and service level require planning., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.

Situation	Useful language
Fulfillment, Shipping, and Returns	Before we commit, I want to confirm fulfillment, SLA, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If order status, carrier capacity, customer promise, refund policy, and service recovery matter., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Conversion, UX, and Digital Analytics	Before we commit, I want to confirm conversion rate, funnel, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If instrumentation, device mix, payment errors, and funnel step drop-off need analysis., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Marketplace and Vendor Management	Before we commit, I want to confirm marketplace, vendor scorecard, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If scorecards, sla, customer impact, inventory, and remediation plan need review., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Customer Service and Escalations	Before we commit, I want to confirm return policy, goodwill credit, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If policy, goodwill, fraud risk, and customer lifetime value need balanced judgment., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Store Operations and Omnichannel Execution	Before we commit, I want to confirm BOPIS, inventory accuracy, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If labor, inventory accuracy, queue management, and customer expectations all matter., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.

High-pressure pushback frames

- I understand the urgency. The risk is that we move faster than the evidence or process supports.
- I am not blocking the goal. I am naming the condition we need before the decision is safe and credible.
- If we accept this risk, we should name the owner, document the assumption, and define the trigger for escalation.
- That may be possible, but not under the current scope, timeline, or approval path.
- Let's separate what we know, what we assume, and what still needs confirmation.

Assessment and Coaching

Performance rubric

Skill	Developing	Proficient	Strong
Terminology	Recognizes terms but uses them loosely.	Uses field terms accurately in context.	Defines terms, connects them to evidence, and explains decision impact.
Pushback	Disagrees vaguely or avoids disagreement.	Names concern with evidence and next step.	Balances urgency, relationship, risk, owner, and decision rights.
Scenario judgment	Focuses on one stakeholder's preference.	Identifies constraint, risk, and process.	Guides the group toward a documented, realistic decision.
Written output	Writes general summaries.	Produces clear notes with facts and owner.	Creates concise, decision-ready workplace communication.

Source orientation

- Company pricing, returns, and marketplace policies.
- Consumer-protection and privacy requirements.
- Vendor contracts and fulfillment SLAs.
- The learner's own company policies, SOPs, contracts, systems, templates, and approved communication standards.