

Supply Chain and Logistics English Jargon Quick Reference

Field-specific terms, contrast pairs, and high-pressure sentence frames

Audience: supply-chain managers, planners, buyers, logistics coordinators, warehouse leaders, procurement teams, customs staff, and operations managers

Focus: A supply-chain English curriculum for forecasting, shortages, purchasing, inventory, warehouse operations, logistics delays, supplier performance, customs, risk, and crisis communication.

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.

Nomenclature and Jargon

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

Demand Planning and Forecast Bias

| Term | Working meaning |
|---------------|---|
| forecast | Forward-looking estimate based on assumptions, trends, constraints, and known risks. |
| forecast bias | Working supply chain and logistics term used in demand planning and forecast bias; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| demand signal | Working supply chain and logistics term used in demand planning and forecast bias; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| S&OP | Working supply chain and logistics term used in demand planning and forecast bias; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |

Procurement and Supplier Performance

| Term | Working meaning |
|----------------|--|
| purchase order | Working supply chain and logistics term used in procurement and supplier performance; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| lead time | Working supply chain and logistics term used in procurement and supplier performance; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| OTIF | Working supply chain and logistics term used in procurement and supplier performance; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| allocation | Working supply chain and logistics term used in procurement and supplier performance; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |

Inventory, Safety Stock, and Service Levels

| Term | Working meaning |
|---------------|---|
| safety stock | Working supply chain and logistics term used in inventory, safety stock, and service levels; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| stockout | Working supply chain and logistics term used in inventory, safety stock, and service levels; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| service level | Working supply chain and logistics term used in inventory, safety stock, and service levels; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| SKU | Working supply chain and logistics term used in inventory, safety stock, and service levels; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |

Warehousing and Fulfillment

| Term | Working meaning |
|-----------|---|
| pick rate | Working supply chain and logistics term used in warehousing and fulfillment; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| slotting | Working supply chain and logistics term used in warehousing and fulfillment; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |

| Term | Working meaning |
|-------------|---|
| cycle count | Working supply chain and logistics term used in warehousing and fulfillment; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| backlog | Ordered body of work waiting to be refined, prioritized, assigned, or completed. |

Freight, Routing, and Carrier Delays

| Term | Working meaning |
|-----------|--|
| incoterms | Working supply chain and logistics term used in freight, routing, and carrier delays; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| carrier | Working supply chain and logistics term used in freight, routing, and carrier delays; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| expedite | Working supply chain and logistics term used in freight, routing, and carrier delays; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| ETA | Working supply chain and logistics term used in freight, routing, and carrier delays; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |

Customs, Trade Compliance, and Documentation

| Term | Working meaning |
|--------------------|--|
| HS code | Working supply chain and logistics term used in customs, trade compliance, and documentation; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| country of origin | Working supply chain and logistics term used in customs, trade compliance, and documentation; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| commercial invoice | Working supply chain and logistics term used in customs, trade compliance, and documentation; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| broker | Working supply chain and logistics term used in customs, trade compliance, and documentation; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |

Supply Risk and Business Continuity

| Term | Working meaning |
|---------------------|---|
| business continuity | Working supply chain and logistics term used in supply risk and business continuity; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| dual sourcing | Working supply chain and logistics term used in supply risk and business continuity; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| allocation | Working supply chain and logistics term used in supply risk and business continuity; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| constraint | Working supply chain and logistics term used in supply risk and business continuity; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |

Executive S&OP Decisions

| Term | Working meaning |
|----------------|--|
| S&OP | Working supply chain and logistics term used in executive s&op decisions; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| consensus plan | Working supply chain and logistics term used in executive s&op decisions; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |

| Term | Working meaning |
|----------|--|
| scenario | Working supply chain and logistics term used in executive s&op decisions; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting. |
| owner | Named person or role accountable for a decision, action, deliverable, or risk. |

Industry-Specific Meeting Moves

| Situation | Useful language |
|--|---|
| Demand Planning and Forecast Bias | Before we commit, I want to confirm forecast, forecast bias, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If forecast bias, lead time, capacity, and inventory exposure need review., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step. |
| Procurement and Supplier Performance | Before we commit, I want to confirm purchase order, lead time, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If capacity, allocation, purchase order terms, and recovery evidence are unclear., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step. |
| Inventory, Safety Stock, and Service Levels | Before we commit, I want to confirm safety stock, stockout, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If demand variability, lead time, margin, service level, and stockout risk differ by item., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step. |
| Warehousing and Fulfillment | Before we commit, I want to confirm pick rate, slotting, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If slotting, labor, scanner data, training, and error types need diagnosis., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step. |
| Freight, Routing, and Carrier Delays | Before we commit, I want to confirm incoterms, carrier, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If mode, route, cutoff time, expedite cost, and customer promise need a decision., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step. |
| Customs, Trade Compliance, and Documentation | Before we commit, I want to confirm HS code, country of origin, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If classification, country of origin, valuation, and document consistency matter., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step. |
| Supply Risk and Business Continuity | Before we commit, I want to confirm business continuity, dual sourcing, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If allocation, alternate sources, inventory position, and customer priority need governance., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step. |
| Executive S&OP Decisions | Before we commit, I want to confirm S&OP, consensus plan, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If the executive team must agree on assumptions, risk, upside, and owners., 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.

Contrast Pairs

| Do not confuse | Useful distinction |
|------------------|--|
| forecast vs S&OP | In demand planning and forecast bias, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision. |

| Do not confuse | Useful distinction |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| purchase order vs allocation | In procurement and supplier performance, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision. |
| safety stock vs SKU | In inventory, safety stock, and service levels, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision. |
| pick rate vs backlog | In warehousing and fulfillment, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision. |
| incoterms vs ETA | In freight, routing, and carrier delays, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision. |
| HS code vs broker | In customs, trade compliance, and documentation, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision. |
| business continuity vs constraint | In supply risk and business continuity, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision. |
| S&OP vs owner | In executive s&op decisions, define whether the discussion is about the current fact pattern, the controlling process, the stakeholder pressure, or the final decision. |