4 Services & systems

1 What types of online services do you use?
- Online banking
- Cloud storage
- Newsfeeds
- Others?

2 What are the benefits of these services?

3 Does your company offer any online services? Tell the class about them.

Working with words | Services and systems

1 How often do you use apps? Which app do you find most useful? How does it help you?

2 Read reviews of three apps and answer these questions for each one.
- a What are the main benefits of the app?
- b What type of person would use this kind of app?

★★★★✓

Was this review helpful?

Yes `1,469`
No `27`

'A HANDY APP'

This **handy** app lets you book a taxi and reduce your waiting time. It uses the GPS on your phone to find the nearest driver. You can even see all the taxis within a mile of you. The system sends you a text with an **accurate** waiting time. Once your taxi arrives, you receive another text to check the driver's identity, so it's all very safe and **secure**. And the really nice part is that you don't need to hand over any local currency to the driver because your credit card is automatically charged.

★★★★

Was this review helpful?

Yes `1,672`
No `15`

'SIMPLE AND USER-FRIENDLY'

Many people say meetings are the worst part of their job but, for me, arranging the meetings is worse! Emailing everyone, waiting for their replies and then working out when everyone is available can take longer than the meeting itself. For an **efficient** way to organize a meeting, this simple, **user-friendly** app makes it easier for you to schedule a meeting by offering everyone a choice of time slots. You tick the time slots that are possible and the app decides which time slot suits the majority. Automatic reminders mean there's no excuse for being late.

★★★★★

Was this review helpful?

Yes `1,803`
No `9`

'HIGHLY RECOMMENDED'

This app allows you to keep track of all your investments in one place. **Up-to-date** newsfeeds allow you to log into any stock market in the world and follow the daily ups and downs, and **high-quality** infographics illustrate the latest trends. I highly recommended it for any investors on the move.

3 Would you be interested in these apps? Do you already use something similar? Why/Why not?

4 Match the positive adjectives in **bold** in the text in **2** to adjectives 1–7 with the opposite meaning.

1 difficult-to-use   _____
2 incorrect   _____
3 unsafe   _____
4 poor-quality   _____
5 useless   _____
6 old   _____
7 time-consuming   _____

5 Complete these sentences with a positive or negative adjective from **4**.

1 Online ordering is more _____ than going to a shop. It saves you lots of time and these days orders arrive within hours.
2 Our automatic downloads help to keep your computer software _____.
3 My online banking is very _____ because it always asks for your username, PIN code and password.
4 Cloud storage is a _____ way to store your files and access them easily from anywhere.
5 Travelling to meetings takes so long. I think video-conferencing would be much less _____.
6 Why is this photocopier so _____? I never know how to print on both sides of the paper!
7 Our new track and trace app lets you know the progress of your delivery with a precise location and an _____ estimate for the time of delivery.

6 Which of the adjectives in **4** could you use to describe the following services and systems?

- Online banking
- Passport control at an airport
- System for booking a meeting room at work
- A childcare service for working parents

7 ▶4.1 Listen to three people talking about a service or system in **6**. Make notes about each question in the table.

1 Which service or system is each person talking about?
Speaker 1:
Speaker 2:
Speaker 3:
2 Does the speaker think it makes life easier? Give reasons for your answers.
Speaker 1:
Speaker 2:
Speaker 3:

8 These sentences are from the reviews of the apps in **2** and the listening in **7**. Underline the correct verb in *italics*. In two sentences, both verbs are possible.

1 This simple, user-friendly app *helps / makes it easier* for you to schedule a meeting.
2 This handy app *lets / enables* you book a taxi.
3 This app *allows / makes* you to keep track of all your investments in one place.
4 The system of colour coding *lets / helps* you see if a room is free.
5 They've even introduced a new self-service system which *enables / allows* you to put your passport on a screen and walk through.

>> For more exercises, go to **Practice file 4** on page 112.

9 Think of three more services and systems which make your life easier. Tell your partner about the benefits of these services and systems.

Example: Online video-conferencing is an efficient way to communicate and lets us talk to our overseas staff.

Tip | *let*

Verbs such as *help*, *allow* and *enable* are usually followed by an object + infinitive with *to*. However, the verb *let* is followed by an object + infinitive without *to*:

*This app **lets you** ~~to~~ **download** your boarding card.*

Language at work | Comparative forms and modifiers

1 What types of software and online systems does your company use? How do they help your work?

2 Ercho Management Systems has received user feedback on its new warehouse management systems software. Complete the comments with the correct form of the adjectives in brackets.

Please leave your comments below:

1 'So far, there have been fewer mistakes. The new system seems *far* _____ (accurate).'

2 'It takes *a little* _____ (long) to learn how to use it.'

3 'When existing customers place an order, it's *slightly* _____ (easy) to find their information.'

4 'It's much faster and *a lot* _____ (time-consuming) than the old system was.'

5 'The old system was *almost* as _____ (user-friendly) as this upgrade, but I think the new customer-profile option on this version makes life easier.'

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3 Look at the modifiers in *italics* before each comparative adjective in **2**. Complete the explanations in the *Language point*.

LANGUAGE POINT

1 We use *much*, _____ and _____ to talk about big differences.
2 We use *a bit*, _____ and _____ to talk about small differences.
3 Before *as* + adjective + *as,* we use *nearly* and _____ to talk about small differences.

>> For more information, go to **Grammar reference** on page 113.

4 ▶4.2 Listen to part of a phone conversation between an after-sales representative from Ercho and a user of their software. Complete the representative's notes about the new version.

User feedback on …	Better?	Big difference?	Comments?
the new version of the software	Y / N		
using the customer-profile system	Y / N		
filling in the order forms	Y / N		

5 ▶4.2 Listen again and write the missing words.
1 Do you think it's _____?
2 Overall, it works a lot _____ than the old version.
3 You could find a profile almost as _____.
4 The options are a lot more _____.
5 Staff are filling it in a little _____.

6 Which comparative forms in **5** are adjectives and which are adverbs?

>> For more exercises, go to **Practice file 4** on page 113.

Tip | Comparative adverbs

Most comparative adverbs use *more* + *-ly*:
*We need to work **more quickly**.*
Note that some adverbs are irregular:
*We did **well/badly**.*
→ *We did **better/worse**.*

7 Work with a partner. Make sentences to compare two financial software products on the market. Use the information in the table and the modifiers + adjective or adverb below in the comparative form.

Example: Financepro is a lot cheaper than Accounter 3.1.

a lot / cheap   almost / secure   far / up-to-date   a little / easily   much / quickly

	Financepro	Accounter 3.1
1 Price?	$499	$710
2 Easy-to-use?	Staff can learn to use it easily.	Staff can learn to use it very easily.
3 Security features?	Secure	Very secure
4 Technical support?	They can help within 24 hours.	They can help within one hour.
5 Most recent version?	Two years old	Last month

8 Make a similar table of notes about one of your company's products or services in comparison to your main competitor. Then work with a partner and tell each other about your product or service.

Example: We're a bit more expensive than our competitor, but …

Practically speaking | How to be approximate

1 Ercho Management Systems recently surveyed businesses about their management software needs. The graph below shows the results for one of the questions. How many people responded to the question? How do most companies install new software?

When you buy software, who normally installs it? (130 responses)
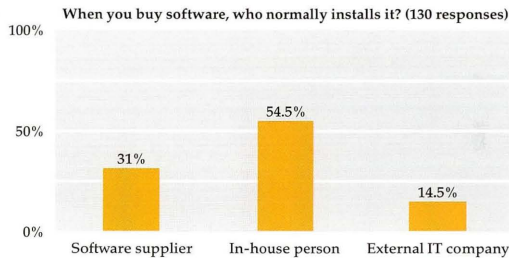
2 ▶ **4.3** Listen to someone describing the results in the table. Write the missing words for approximating numbers.

130: _____ _____ one hundred   31%: _____ a third
54.5%: _____ half   14.5%: ___ _____ _____ 15%

3 Match the language for approximating in 1–4 to the synonyms in a–d.

1 well over	a almost
2 nearly	b just below
3 a little under	c around
4 about	d well above

4 Work with a partner. Take turns to describe these numbers in different ways.

Example: Nearly a quarter / Just below a quarter.

24%   1,002   37%   240   49%   67%

5 Tell your partner approximate numbers or percentages for your company and country. Talk about:

- annual turnover
- number of part-time employees
- number of customers
- population
- inflation
- unemployment

Example: My company's annual turnover is just over three million a year, I think.

Tip | Fractions
We often use fractions for approximate numbers:
a fifth = 20%
a quarter = 25%
a third = 33%
(a) half = 50%
two-thirds = 66%
three-quarters = 75%

Business communication | Explaining features and benefits

1 A company wants to use a new type of software. Read about its key features and discuss questions 1–2 with a partner.
1 What concerns do you think some employees might have about this software?
2 How could the company explain the benefits of the software to the employees?

> **Key features**
> * The software tracks when an employee starts and ends work from when they log on and off or when they switch their computer on and off.
> * It monitors the number of hours worked and sends this information to payroll.
> * The mobile app enables employees to log on from home or when travelling.

2 ▶ 4.4 Listen to an IT trainer explaining the features of the new software to a group of employees. Make notes about:
1 the main benefits of the software
2 the employees' questions and concerns

3 ▶ 4.4 Match 1–10 to a–j to make sentences and questions from the discussion. Then listen again and check.

1 The main benefit is ___
2 It's a lot more accurate because ___
3 One of the problems is that ___
4 What happens if I ___
5 That's a good ___
6 But wouldn't that require us to ___
7 It might seem that you'd need to adjust your settings, ___
8 Will it let me ___
9 I'm not convinced that ___
10 I'm sure you'll find it much ___

a log on from a hotel?
b it automatically knows how many hours you've worked each month.
c the payroll feature.
d have to adjust the settings on our computers?
e it's possible to do that every time you're abroad.
f your manager has to fill in a form for each of you.
g but in fact the software can do this automatically.
h question.
i forget to log on in the morning when I start work?
j easier to use than the current system.

>> For more exercises, go to **Practice file 4** on page 112.

4 Work with a partner. Read about a new company system below and make two lists:
1 A list of the benefits of this system. How can it make things better?
2 The problems of this system. What objections might employees have?

Afterwards, present your list to the class and share your ideas.

> A company wants to introduce a new system to improve employee performance. The key features of the system are:
> * Managers measure the performance of employees in their departments.
> * Each employee has a meeting with their manager at the end of every month to discuss their performance.
> * Managers can give bonuses for an excellent performance.
> * The company will introduce an 'employee of the month' award.

5 Work with the same partner. You are going to discuss the features and benefits of the new system. **Student A**, turn to page 138. **Student B**, turn to page 142.

Key expressions

Explaining the features and benefits
The main benefit is …
It'll let you / It'll make it easier to / It'll help you to / It'll enable you to …
Another useful feature is …

Comparing services and systems
It's a lot more accurate / It's a lot less time-consuming because …
The new system will be much …
One of the problems is that …

Asking questions and expressing concerns
Will it let me / allow me to …?
What happens if …?
But wouldn't that …?
I'm not convinced that …
I have a question, too.

Handling questions and concerns
That's a good question.
That's true, but …
It might seem …, but in fact …
I'm sure you'll find it much …

Stack ranking

Many companies have systems to rate their employee's performance, but one of the more controversial systems is called 'stack ranking'. It's based on the idea that in any company, you have about 20% of the employees whose work is excellent and they are the future managers. Then you have the majority of employees (around 70%) who are average and, finally, 10% of employees are ranked as 'poor'. One argument for the system of 'stack ranking' is that it increases employee motivation: the idea is that by ranking a group of employees according to these percentages the system encourages healthy competition between employees and allows managers to identify (and eventually get rid of) the bottom 10%. Many companies have tried this or similar systems of ranking employee performance. However, in recent years many companies, including Microsoft, have abandoned the system because, overall, employees hated it and it had a negative effect on performance.

70% of employees

10%

20%

Poor   Average   Excellent
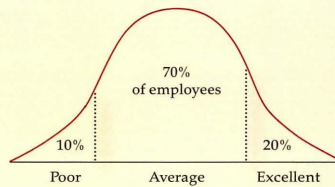
Discussion

1 Why do you think the article describes the system of stack ranking as controversial?

2 What are the arguments for and against the system of stack ranking? Can you think of any more arguments for and against this system?

3 Overall, do you think it is a good or bad system? Why?

Task

1 Imagine you work for a company with a system of 'stack ranking'. You are going to role-play a meeting between managers and employees at the company. Work in groups of four. Decide which two are managers and which two are employees.

2 Work with your partner and prepare your positions before the meeting.

• Managers: Before you meet the employees, make a list of arguments for stack ranking in your company but also be prepared to make some changes to the current system in order to improve employee performance.

• Employees: Before you meet the managers, make a list of arguments against stack ranking in your company and prepare a list of changes to the current system in order to improve employee performance.

3 When both sides are ready, start the meeting. Allow time for managers and employees to present their arguments and then discuss possible changes. Try to reach an agreement.

4 After the meeting, each group presents their changes to the rest of the class.