



STUDENT WORKBOOK | CHAPTER 02

Making Plans

Make plans naturally. Keep it flexible. Sound conversational.

LEVEL	FOCUS	GOAL
Intermediate / Upper-Intermediate	Invitations, plans, flexibility	Suggest, accept, adjust, follow up

Lesson principle

When Americans make casual plans, they often sound tentative rather than rigid. Learn the phrases that leave room for change without sounding uncertain.

1 | START SPEAKING

Warm-up

1. How far ahead do you usually make weekend plans?
2. Do you prefer a fixed schedule or spontaneous plans?
3. How do you ask a friend if they are free?
4. What do you say when you want to accept an invitation casually?
5. How do you postpone plans without sounding rude?

Recycle from Chapter 01

Try to reuse: Works for me. • Head over. • You got it. • Grab a bite. The new lesson should build on the old one, not replace it.

2 | REAL-LIFE CONVERSATION

The Dialogue

Situation: After their lunch last week, Mike and David are trying to make weekend plans.

David	Hey, you doing anything Saturday?
Mike	Not much. What's up?
David	A couple of us are thinking about checking out that new food hall downtown. You up for it?
Mike	Yeah, I'm down . What time?
David	I was thinking around six, but I'm flexible .
Mike	Six should work. I might be tied up until five, though.
David	No worries. Just shoot me a text when you're free.
Mike	Will do. Are we meeting there, or should I swing by your place?
David	Why don't you swing by ? We can head over together.
Mike	Sounds good. If traffic gets bad, we can always play it by ear .
David	Exactly. And if Saturday doesn't work out , we can do Sunday instead.
Mike	Perfect. Pencil me in for Saturday for now.
David	You got it . I'll keep you posted .
Mike	Cool. Looking forward to it.



First pass

Read for the social meaning: who is suggesting, who is accepting, and where the speakers deliberately keep the plan flexible?

3 | LEARN THE CHUNKS

American Expressions

Learn each phrase as one conversational unit. Notice which ones sound casual, tentative, or action-oriented.

1 WHAT'S UP?

Meaning: What is going on? / Why are you calling or asking?

"Hey, what's up?"

"You called me. What's up?"

USAGE NOTE Very common and casual. Depending on tone, it can be a greeting or a genuine question.

2 BE UP FOR SOMETHING

Meaning: Be willing or interested in doing something.

Are you up for dinner tonight?

You up for a movie?

I'm not really up for going out tonight.

USAGE NOTE In casual speech Americans often drop "Are": "You up for it?"

3 I'M DOWN

Meaning: I agree; I am interested; count me in.

"Want to try that new place?" - "I'm down."

I'm down for whatever.

USAGE NOTE Casual. Excellent with friends; usually too informal for formal business communication.

4 I'M FLEXIBLE

Meaning: My timing or plan can change.

Any time after five is fine. I'm flexible.

I'm flexible on the day.

USAGE NOTE A useful adult phrase: cooperative without sounding passive.

5 BE TIED UP

Meaning: Be busy and unavailable for a period of time.

I'm tied up until five.

Sorry, I was tied up in a meeting.

USAGE NOTE Natural way to explain temporary unavailability. It does not literally mean physically tied.

6 SHOOT ME A TEXT

Meaning: Send me a text message.

Shoot me a text when you get there.

Just shoot me a text later.

USAGE NOTE Very common and casual. "Shoot me an email" also exists in informal work settings.



7 SWING BY

Meaning: Visit or stop at a place briefly or conveniently.

I'll swing by after work.

Can you swing by my place around six?

USAGE NOTE Usually implies a short, convenient stop rather than a formal visit.

8 PLAY IT BY EAR

Meaning: Decide what to do as the situation develops.

Let's not make a firm plan. We'll play it by ear.

We can play it by ear depending on the weather.

USAGE NOTE Extremely useful for flexible plans. It means "decide later based on circumstances."

9 WORK OUT

Meaning: Happen successfully or fit the situation.

If Saturday doesn't work out, let's do Sunday.

I hope everything works out.

USAGE NOTE Do not confuse this meaning with "exercise." Context tells you which meaning is intended.

10 KEEP SOMEONE POSTED

Meaning: Keep someone updated as things change.

Keep me posted.

I'll keep you posted if the time changes.

USAGE NOTE A standard friendly phrase in both everyday and workplace English.

Bonus chunk: PENCIL ME IN

Meaning: put me on the schedule tentatively. Example: "Pencil me in for Saturday, but I may need to confirm tomorrow." It suggests a plan that is likely, but not completely final.

4 | NATURAL ALTERNATIVES

Don't Sound Like a Textbook

The same social message can sound stiff or natural. Compare the size and tone of the response.

TEXTBOOK / FORMAL	NATURAL / SPOKEN
Are you interested in participating?	You up for it?
I agree to participate.	I'm down.
Please send me a text message.	Shoot me a text.
I am occupied until five o'clock.	I'm tied up until five.
We can decide according to the circumstances.	We can play it by ear.
Please inform me of any changes.	Keep me posted.

5 | REDUCTIONS & RHYTHM

Sound American

Do not force slang. The goal is connected speech: weak vowels, reduced function words, and clear stress on the key chunk.



ARE YOU	are ya / ya	Are you up for it? → You up for it?
WHAT DO YOU	whaddaya	What do you want to do? → Whaddaya wanna do?
WANT TO	wanna	Do you want to go? → Wanna go?
GOING TO	gonna	We're going to head over. → We're gonna head over.
LET ME	lemme	Let me know. → Lemme know.

6 | STRESS THE DECISION WORDS

Rhythm Drill

Put the energy on the phrase that carries the social message. Keep the surrounding words lighter.

You UP FOR IT?

Yeah, I'm DOWN.

I'm FLEXIBLE.

I'm TIED UP until FIVE.

SHOOT me a TEXT.

I'll SWING BY.

We can PLAY IT BY EAR.

KEEP me POSTED.

Practice method

Say each line once neutrally, once friendly, and once as if you are making plans quickly on the phone.

7 | REACT WITHOUT TRANSLATING

Quick Response Drill

TEACHER SAYS	STUDENT REACTS
You free Saturday?	I think so. What's up?
Want to check out that new place?	Yeah, I'm down.
I might be busy until five.	No worries. Keep me posted.
Text me when you're free.	Will do.
The weather may change.	We can play it by ear.
Saturday may not work.	If it doesn't work out, let's do Sunday.

8 | MAKE THE LANGUAGE YOURS

Practice

A. Complete the sentence

Use: up for it | down | flexible | tied up | shoot me a text | swing by | play it by ear | work out | keep me posted

- Are you _____ tonight?
- Yeah, I'm _____.
- I can meet at six or seven. I'm _____.
- I'm _____ until about five.
- Just _____ when you get there.
- I can _____ your place after work.
- We don't know the weather yet, so let's _____.



8. If Friday doesn't _____, let's try Saturday.
9. Let me know if anything changes. _____.

B. Make it natural

1. Are you interested in participating?

2. I agree to participate.

3. Please send me a text message.

4. I am occupied until five o'clock.

5. We can decide according to the circumstances.

6. Please inform me of any changes.

C. One-minute speaking challenge

Invite a friend to do something this weekend. Suggest a time, react to a conflict, keep the plan flexible, and finish by agreeing how you will confirm. Use at least six target expressions.

9 | REAL CONVERSATION

Role Play

STUDENT A

You want to go downtown Saturday evening. Invite your friend, suggest a time, and offer to pick them up or meet there.

STUDENT B

You want to go, but you may be busy until late afternoon. Keep the plan flexible and agree on how you will confirm.

Useful language bank

- What's up?
- You up for it?
- I'm down.
- I'm flexible.
- I'm tied up until...
- Shoot me a text.
- I'll swing by.
- Let's play it by ear.
- If that doesn't work out...
- Keep me posted.

10 | SHORT ANSWERS MATTER

American Reaction Training

You up for dinner?

I'm down. • Sure. • Sounds good. • What time?

I may be tied up.

No worries. • Keep me posted. • Just text me. • We can play it by ear.

Saturday might not work.

How about Sunday? • We can figure something out. • No problem. • Let's see how it goes.

**11 | FLEXIBLE PLANS ARE NORMAL**

Mini Culture Note

Tentative does not always mean unreliable

In casual American English, phrases like "I should be free," "pencil me in," or "let's play it by ear" often mean: the plan is real, but everyone understands that details may still change. Tone and follow-up matter.

12 | LOCK IT INTO MEMORY

Homework

A. Learn the 10 expressions

- 01** what's up?
- 02** be up for something
- 03** I'm down
- 04** I'm flexible
- 05** be tied up
- 06** shoot me a text
- 07** swing by
- 08** play it by ear
- 09** work out
- 10** keep someone posted

Do not learn only definitions. Attach each expression to a real planning situation.

B. Create one sentence with each expression

Example: I'm tied up until five, but I'm free after that.

C. Voice practice

Record this: "Hey, what's up? Are you up for doing something Saturday? I'm flexible on the time. I may be tied up until five, so shoot me a text later. If the weather changes, we can play it by ear. Keep me posted."

Say it three times: 1) clearly, 2) naturally, 3) as if you are actually making plans with a friend.

D. Real-life challenge

Before the next lesson, make one imaginary weekend plan out loud in English. Change one detail halfway through and adjust naturally without restarting.

13 | SELF-CHECK

Chapter Complete

- I can ask casually whether someone is interested in a plan.
- I can accept an invitation using natural spoken English.
- I can explain that I am temporarily busy.
- I can keep a plan flexible without sounding confused.
- I can ask someone to text me or keep me updated.
- I can adjust a plan when the original time does not work out.
- I can make a 30-second weekend plan without translating from Russian.