

C1

MEETINGS & STATUS UPDATES

MONOLOG · 5 MIN.

Distinguishing a Temporary Delay from a Structural Problem

· Podcast

One-off slip or systemic fault? Three diagnostic questions and the English phrases for reporting the difference precisely (C1).

Listen to the episode +
comprehension test:

<https://www.englisch-lehrer.com/podcasts/distinguishing-a-temporary-delay-from-a-structural-problem>

NAME

DATE

BRICK 1 · LEARN THE KEY PHRASES

● ○ ○

Read the eight phrases with meaning and example. You will hear all of them in the episode.

ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	EXAMPLE
judgement call	Ermessensentscheidung	<i>Whether to escalate now is a judgement call.</i>
a one-off	ein einmaliges Ereignis	<i>The server outage was a one-off, not a pattern.</i>
recurring	wiederkehrend	<i>Late deliveries have become a recurring issue.</i>
intervention	Eingreifen, Intervention	<i>The backlog will not shrink without management intervention.</i>
underlying cause	die eigentliche, tieferliegende Ursache	<i>The underlying cause of the delays is poor planning data.</i>
capacity shortfall	Kapazitätslücke, Unterdeckung	<i>A capacity shortfall of one developer costs us a feature per sprint.</i>
worsening	sich verschlechternd	<i>The trend is worsening quarter by quarter.</i>
to mislabel	falsch einordnen, falsch etikettieren	<i>Do not mislabel a structural problem as bad luck.</i>



BRICK 2 · FILL THE GAPS



Complete the missing word from the conversation.

since

for

until

from

underlying

underneath

basic

deep

01 So: 'We have had this problem _____ three months', or 'since April' — never 'since three months'.

02 The _____ cause is a capacity shortfall: the plan assumes six developers and you effectively have five.

BRICK 3 · TRUE OR FALSE?



Tick one. T = true, F = false.

01 A temporary delay usually recovers without intervention.

T ☐ F ☐

02 According to Alexander, the most expensive mistake is to mislabel a temporary delay as a structural problem.

T ☐ F ☐

BRICK 4 · ORDER



Number the steps of the conversation (1–5).

01 ☐ Report the label with the matching management action

02 ☐ Ask whether it recovers without intervention

03 ☐ Choose the honest label: one-off or structural

04 ☐ Ask whether the problem has happened before

05 ☐ Ask whether the trend is worsening

BRICK 5 · YOUR VERSION



Write two sentences of your own using phrases from Brick 1.

.....

.....

.....

MINI-CHECK – CAN I DO THIS YET?

☐ I can announce a delay politely.

☐ I can propose an alternative.

☐ I can promise written confirmation.

Listened twice and ticked everything? Then you are ready for the real conversation.



Cut-out flashcards

× Cut out, fold on the line – English in front, German on the back. Or practise digitally:

<https://www.englisch-lehrer.com/podcasts/distinguishing-a-temporary-delay-from-a-structural-problem>

judgement call

Whether to escalate now is a judgement call.

Ermessensentscheidung

a one-off

The server outage was a one-off, not a pattern.

ein einmaliges Ereignis

recurring

Late deliveries have become a recurring issue.

wiederkehrend

intervention

The backlog will not shrink without management intervention.

Eingreifen, Intervention

underlying cause

The underlying cause of the delays is poor planning data.

die eigentliche, tieferliegende Ursache

capacity shortfall

A capacity shortfall of one developer costs us a feature per sprint.

Kapazitätslücke, Unterdeckung

worsening

The trend is worsening quarter by quarter.

sich verschlechtern

to mislabel

Do not mislabel a structural problem as bad luck.

falsch einordnen, falsch etikettieren

Answer key

Check only when you have finished. Every answer comes with the **why**.

BRICK 2 · FILL THE GAPS

01 **for**

German trap: "seit" + duration = "for" ("for three months"); "since" needs a starting point ("since April").

02 **underlying**

"Underlying cause" is the fixed collocation for the real cause beneath the symptoms.

BRICK 3 · TRUE OR FALSE?

01 **True**

True — a temporary delay has a one-off cause and the project recovers on its own.

02 **False**

False — it is the other way round: the most expensive mistake is mislabelling a structural problem as temporary.

BRICK 4 · ORDER

- 01 **1.** Ask whether the problem has happened before
- 02 **2.** Ask whether it recovers without intervention
- 03 **3.** Ask whether the trend is worsening
- 04 **4.** Choose the honest label: one-off or structural
- 05 **5.** Report the label with the matching management action

KEEP PRACTISING LIVE

Want to practise these phrases in a real conversation?

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