

# Writing clear instructions



## BUSINESS WRITING

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How many times have you sat there, confused by how to set up the new router or to work out how to clear a paper jam in the new photocopier? Make sure the instructions you give are clear – follow our guide! **p.2**



## BUSINESS WRITING

### Numbers and statistics

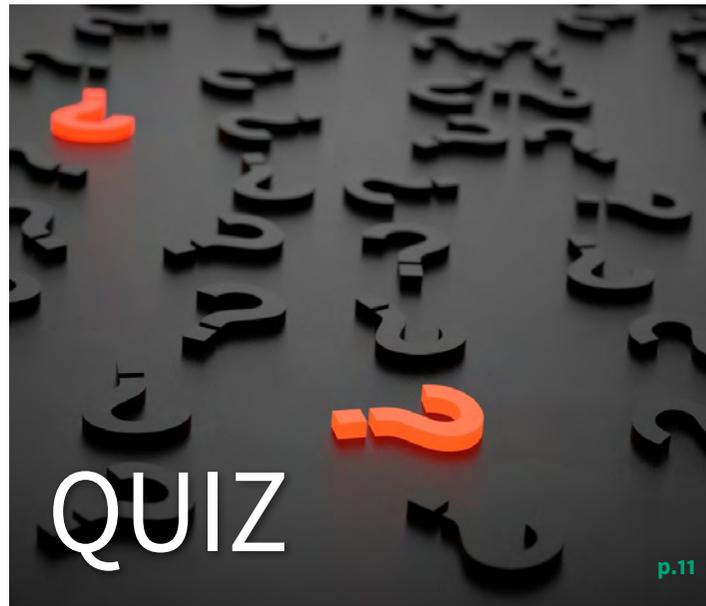
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## BUSINESS WRITING

### Asking for recommendations

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EASY



# Writing clear instructions

Deutliche Anweisungen schreiben

How many times have you sat there, confused by how to set up the new router or to work out how to clear a paper jam in the new photocopier? Make sure the instructions you give are clear – follow our guide below!



### VOCABULARY

unambiguous — eindeutig

prior knowledge — Vorwissen

explicit — genau angegeben

### What sort of instructions?

As with anything that you need to ‘teach’ to someone else, you first need to make sure that you understand it as completely as possible yourself. So whether it’s instructions for using the coffee machine or directions on finding your new offices, you want to make them as clear and unambiguous as possible. Different types of instructions will of course require different vocabulary, but the essentials to give clear instructions remain the same. So follow these steps in your written instructions:

- Decide who the instructions are intended for: who is included in your target group?
- Work out what the person following the instructions will need to have ready in order to begin (things you must have in order to complete the steps in the instructions).
- Break the steps down as far as possible.

### Your audience

Ideally, you will know – or can find out – who the instructions are for, so you can work out how much knowledge – the readers may already have, their backgrounds and prior knowledge what you can assume, what needs to be explicit. This is especially important if some technical ability is required to complete the task. You may, for example, need to provide a glossary if there are likely to be new or unfamiliar words or terms for your reader. Diagrams often help as long as they are really clear (but remember that unclear diagrams are worse than no diagram at all, as they only serve to confuse) and it is best to give too much information rather than too little.

### Preparation

It often seems unnecessary when you are writing instructions, as you know what you will need. But remember that

### THE LANGUAGE LEVELS

in **business english trainer** relate roughly to *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*:

**Easy** = Level A2

**Medium** = Level B1 – B2

**Difficult** = Level C1 – C2

To find out about your level of English download our overview at:

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## Writing clear instructions

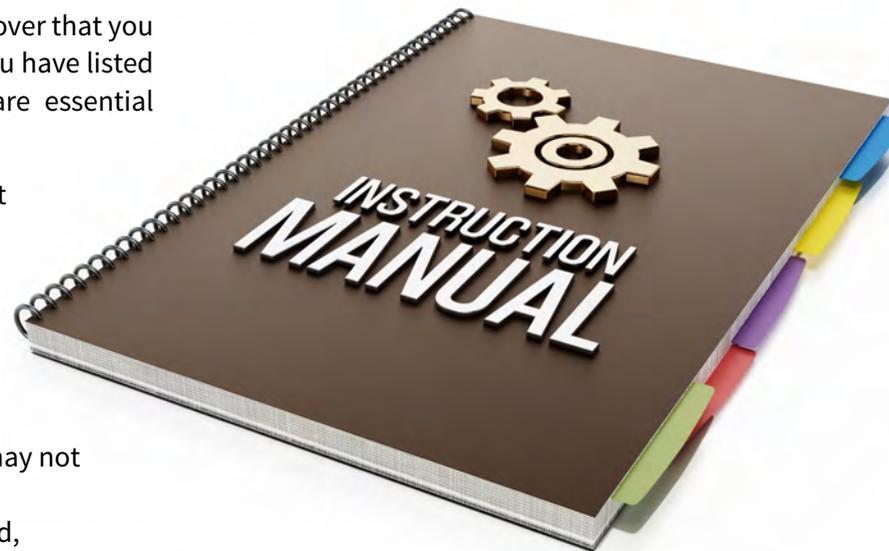
the person following your instructions may not know, for example, that super glue will be required and it is frustrating to get half way through a task, only to discover that you do not have what is needed. To ensure that you have listed everything that is required, in case there are essential equipment/components:

- start by placing all the essentials in one spot
- make a list of everything you have collected together
- now work through the task (multitask here: write out the instructions as you go, more on this stage below) and make sure that you have included everything you need in the list and remove any items you may not have used
- did you need any additional items? If you did, don't forget to add them to the list of requisites at the beginning of your instructions!

### Writing out the steps

You may wish to start with a brief introduction, explaining what the instructions are for and what the result should be (this is of course not always necessary!) Then list the items that your reader will need to have to hand and move on to the step-by-step instructions, with diagrams if these would be helpful (if you include diagrams make sure they are really clear – there is nothing worse than a confusing diagram as part of instructions!) and end with a troubleshooting section if appropriate.

- break each step down into separate tasks and do not group too many together – better to have more steps that are clear and easy to follow than a few steps that are confusing, as they contain too many things to do



- ensure that steps are in logical order: do not expect your reader to move on to step 7 and then have to return to step 4!
- instructions are simpler to follow if you number each step and use bullet points for options or for any additional information within each step
- edit the instructions carefully: remove any information that is not strictly necessary
- usability testing: if possible, get someone who matches your target group to follow the your instructions and see whether they end with the desired result

### VOCABULARY

requisites	Bedarfsgegenstände
usability	Benutzerfreundlichkeit

### TIP!

Start each step with an action verb: 'collect', 'turn', 'switch on', etc.



EASY

# Numbers and statistics

## Zahlen und Statistiken

In business it's often all about the numbers, so using data confidently is a must. Our tips below will help you deal with numbers and statistics in a professional way.



# Numbers and statistics

## Numbers and statistics are in...

...well, basically, they come up in just about everything, so let's look at how best to handle them. First of all, the fundamentals of writing and saying them and then using more complex number and statistics.

## Writing and saying basic numbers

When writing out a number, three, two and one are generally written as words, anything higher in digits, as follows:

'We purchased two units.'

'We purchased 8 units.'

When saying a number, remember that it can be difficult to differentiate between '17' and '70', so the stress is important:

thir**TEEN**/seven**TEEN**

**THIR**ty/**SE**venty

With very high numbers, even native speakers start to lose track of how many zeroes are in billions and trillions.

Numbers are spoken out loud like this:

*hundreds: at least 3 digits, eg: 945  
(nine hundred and forty five)*

*thousands: at least 4 digits, eg: 2536  
(two thousand, five hundred and thirty-six)*

### 🗣️ VOCABULARY

digit ————— Ziffer

to differentiate ————— unterscheiden

stress (hier) ————— Betonung





## Numbers and statistics

tens of thousands: 5 digits, eg:

27,655 (twenty-seven thousand, six hundred and fifty-five)

hundreds of thousands: 6 digits, eg:

354,803 (three hundred and fifty-four thousand, eight hundred and three)

millions: at least 7 digits, eg:

15,226,378 (fifteen million, two hundred and twenty-six thousand, three hundred and seventy-eight)

billions: at least 10 digits, eg:

2,087,353,121 (two billion, eightyseven million, three hundred and fifty three thousand one hundred and twenty-one)

But, when numbers include decimals each digit is spoken separately, eg:

1.8596 (one point eight five nine six)

and

523,016.024 (five hundred and twenty-three thousand and sixteen pointzero (or 'o') two four.

The exception is money:

EUR 55.16 (fifty-five Euros sixteen)

\$16.02 (eighteen dollars and two cents)

### Contracting numbers

It may be acceptable to round long numbers up or down or to give an approximation, eg:

approx. 15,000 (approximately fifteen thousand)

c \$18 per unit (circa eighteen dollars)

around 15K (approximately fifteen thousand)

### Statistics

When numbers are used in reports, presentations and so on, complex data may be used. Talking about this may seem daunting but it needn't be:

53.3% (fifty-three point three percent)

18,000 @ EUR 7.45 each (eighteen thousand at seven Euros forty-five each)

1,107,354 units required (about 1.1 million units)



### VOCABULARY

exception	—	Ausnahme
approximation	—	Näherung
daunting	—	entmutigend

### TIP!

Don't forget that English commas and points (full stops/periods): commas make long numbers easier to read, while a point indicates a decimal, eg: 5,385 is over five thousand, while 5.385 is just over five.

MEDIUM



# Asking for recommendations

Nach Empfehlungen fragen

Personal recommendations are generally a good way to choose a restaurant, hotel, or even a health care provider! Use the dialogue below as a guide if you find yourself needing to ask for recommendations.



### The scenario

Francesca and Dave work in Berlin but are flying to Sydney, Dave's home town, for a conference. Francesca has never visited before so she has some questions for Dave...

### What do you want to know?

**Francesca:** I haven't been to Australia before, Dave, I'm really so excited about this trip. I know we'll be working most of the time, but I have planned a couple of days at the end... I guess I can see most of Sydney by doing a little after work each day, but then I want to see Ayers Rock, the Great Barrier Reef, go surfing, cuddle a koala and watch kangaroos. Oh, and I want to hear that famous Maori war cry and to listen to someone playing the didgeridoo...

**Dave:** Um well, Francesca, that's great, but you know Maoris are from New Zealand, right?

**F:** Oh Lord, I'm so sorry, how silly of me. Of course I know that, what a stupid mistake to make, I'm so terribly sorry, really, I didn't mean to offend...

**D:** That's OK, no offence taken, but don't say that once we get to Oz, it could be taken the wrong way... our aborigines are really proud of their heritage, you know!

**F:** Yes, of course, I do apologise.

**D:** Well, and while we're on the subject, we don't call it 'Ayers Rock' any more. Nowadays it's known as Uluru.

### VOCABULARY

to cuddle	umarmen
plethora	Vielzahl
unbiased	unparteiisch
fee	Gebühr
genuine	echt
discretion	Urteil

### INTERNET TIP!

Today, we are fortunate enough to have a plethora of Internet sites that can offer us 'unbiased' opinions on anything from a lawyer to a coffee bar. Many of these sites are fairly reliable, but others require businesses to pay a fee in order to be listed or allow businesses to write their own reviews, so be careful! Generally, it is not difficult to tell if a site really contains (at least largely) genuine user reviews or whether the reviews can be manipulated or paid, but if in doubt check for the same location on different sites. For example, both TripAdvisor and Yelp offer restaurant reviews: if a location has almost all excellent reviews (say 16 out of a total of 18) on one site and 52 bad reviews out of a total of 55 on another site, you may wish to use your discretion ...



## Asking for recommendations

F: Oh yes, I do recall, I should have remembered that. Oh dear, I hope I'm not going to make a fool of myself or inadvertently insult anyone.

D: Don't worry, you'll be fine: and remember, we want you to appreciate our beautiful country, so we'll be forgiving!

F: Phew, well, that's very nice of you! Now then, what about my list, what should I do first?

D: Ah, well, Australia is pretty big, you know. You may not have time to do everything. But that just means you'll have to come back for another visit, look at it that way!

F: True. So I can't do all of that in 2 days, so what can I do?

D: I'd choose one big thing, either Uluru or the Reef, and do that. Then spend the rest of your time enjoying Sydney, you are right, you will get to know the city a bit if you explore

after the conference every day, and I know they've planned in some tours for everyone, so you'll get to see a lot.

F: What do you think is the most important thing to do, if I only have time to choose one thing to see and do?

D: Personally? I'd try and get a time slot to climb the bridge.

F: Do you mean the Harbour Bridge?

D: Is there any other! Just kidding! But yes, of course. Sign up as soon as we land and you might be lucky. Of course, you could also just try going along there one afternoon, there might be a slot available. It's an amazing experience, totally unique!

F: Great, thanks! Now, how about food? What' must I try? And where? There must be so many amazing new places to go to!

D: I like going to Hugo Manlys, chill out and watch the sunset with a Sunset Geisha...

F: Huh? What's that then? Some form of sushi maybe?

D: Ha, no, it's an amazing restaurant, just pizzas, really but so very, very good, and awesome cocktails. Best of all is their location, right on the harbor. So get there early so you can grab a good table start with a cocktail and have a fig pizza when you get hungry.

F: Fig pizza? Seriously?

D: Yup. Figs, pancetta, all the good stuff. Trust me!

F: OK, well it sounds interesting, that's for sure! I can't wait!

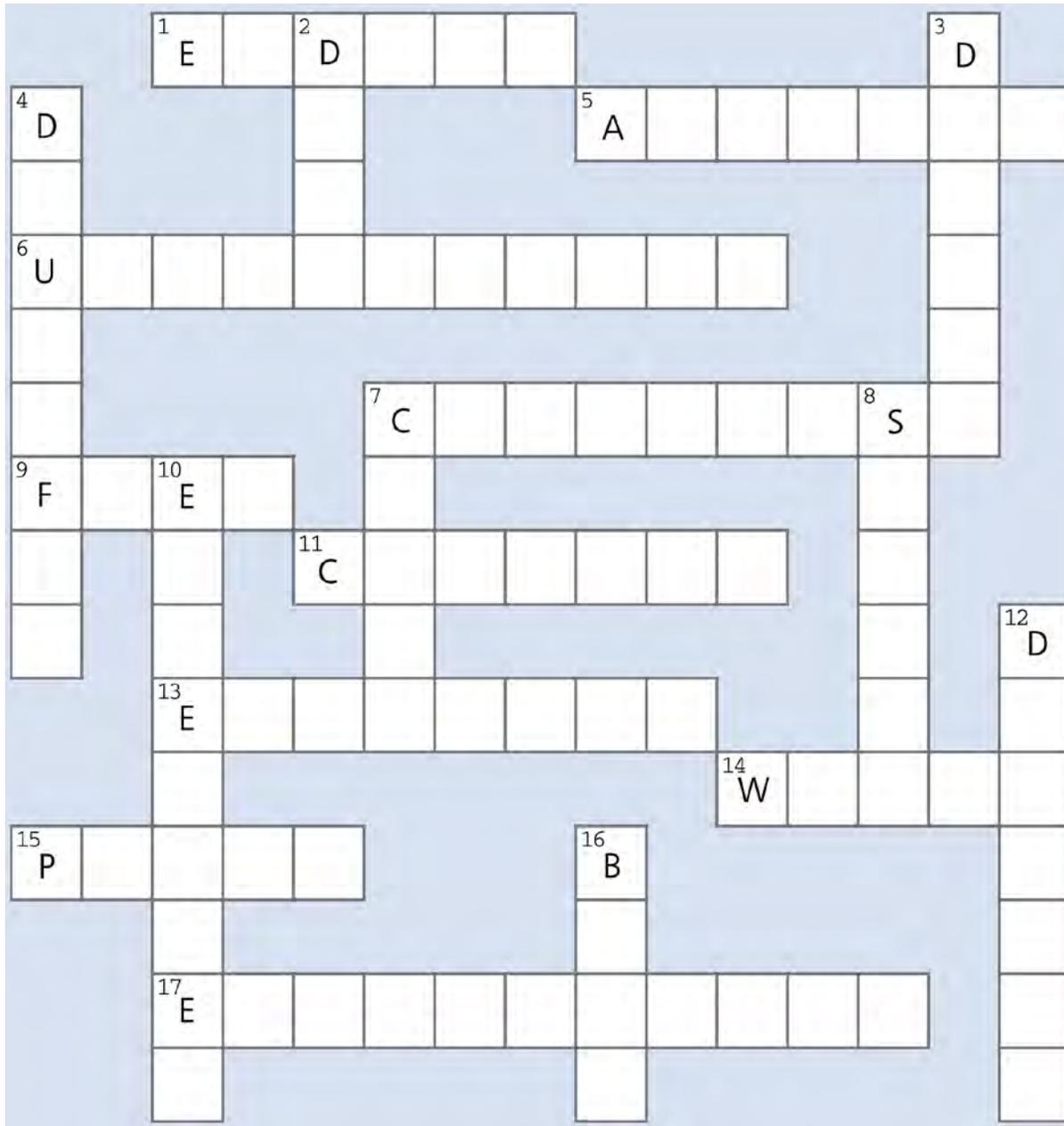


### VOCABULARY

inadvertently ————— versehentlich

time slot ————— Zeitfenster

fig ————— Feige



**Across**

- 1. to suffer patiently
- 5. another word for 'clothing'
- 6. something that is clear and cannot be misinterpreted
- 7. the large open spaces in airports where you can find check-in desks or duty free shops
- 9. a verb meaning to 'run away'
- 11. the stage a model walks on when displaying clothes
- 13. something that is explained or depicted in great detail
- 14. to form a textile by placing fibres together and across each other, using a loom
- 15. a word meaning 'before'
- 17. something that is exciting and that holds your attention

**Down**

- 2. something that is not bright or colourful
- 3. another word for 'gadget'
- 4. something that is not sure
- 7. the way babies move on hands and knees
- 8. the watery fluid produced in your mouth
- 10. 'rushed' or 'made faster'
- 12. a synonym for 'feared'
- 16. traditionally made of blown glass and containing a filament, this object is used in light fittings



# TRAINING

## exercise: adverbs and adjectives

Complete the following sentences by choosing a word from the toolbox on the right and putting it into an appropriate place in the sentence. Turn the adjective into the adverbial form where necessary – example: beautiful becomes beautifully.

1. Most people welcome the idea of processing tax returns \_\_\_\_\_, because it involves less cumbersome papers to archive, and because it takes much less time to send and receive forms.
2. Eye-tracking has been hailed as the \_\_\_\_\_ technology that will take over retail in a few years. In fact, however, the technology has proved very difficult to implement.
3. 3D \_\_\_\_\_ worlds are emerging to become one of the channels that companies use to communicate with their customers and above all, to market their products.
4. There are a growing number of scientists who maintain that cyber usage can \_\_\_\_\_ impede your child's cognitive development.
5. In 2016, the first 4D virtual entertainment park is set to open in Utah. 4D \_\_\_\_\_ means superimposing a VR world on top of \_\_\_\_\_ 3D props with which the user will interact.
6. Bricks-and-mortar retailers are fighting back; reverse showrooming is \_\_\_\_\_ more common than showrooming.
7. As water shortages affect manufacturing centres for consumer goods, price increases are likely to spread \_\_\_\_\_ along the supply chains.
8. Organisations will pay the price of \_\_\_\_\_ technology, if they don't protect themselves from ever more sophisticated hacking techniques.

toolbox: adjectives	
digital	actual
fast	creative
revolutionary	serious
virtual	essential

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## exercise: the apostrophe

**Place an apostrophe in the correct place in the following sentences:**

1. It is the companys obligation to look after all its employees, even when technologies change and thus jobs may no longer be required.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Marketing executives intentions are not always in keeping with state regulators goals.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Its not easy to ascertain how people will acquire information in 2050. Will the universities position as centres of information authority be upheld?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. The consumers rights must be protected whatever the changes in retail that may be before us.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Retailers range of channels has become varied and they now have many options open to them for reaching different target groups.

\_\_\_\_\_



# TRAINING

## exercise: describing change in charts and graphs

English uses certain collocations for describing change when talking about the ups and downs of market dynamics. It's handy to have a few of these off pat for presentations, as correct use of these collocations will aid understanding and give you more credibility as a speaker. Choose the correct collocation from the tool box on the right and complete the sentences below. To give you a clue: the direction is given in brackets.

1. In the first quarter there was a \_\_\_\_\_ in customer numbers. (up)
2. Due to the arrival of a new competitor, regional sales \_\_\_\_\_ in February. (down)
3. Thanks to the launch of our new product at the end of Q1, there was a \_\_\_\_\_ in new business customers. (up)
4. Sales \_\_\_\_\_ throughout Q2. (neither up, nor down)
5. This solid regional performance was reflected in the overall figures: the company saw a \_\_\_\_\_ in turnover for the domestic market. (up)
6. The market \_\_\_\_\_ in July, when as expected, school holidays brought a change. (up)
7. Since we had decided to discontinue one of the products that had been so popular in the past, we saw a \_\_\_\_\_ towards the end of the summer. (down)
8. Overall turnover \_\_\_\_\_ in mid-September. What a relief! (down)
9. Thanks to the new trend of shopping in accordance with American tradition, on Black Friday, we enjoyed an \_\_\_\_\_ in late November. (up)
10. Compared with figures from the same time last year, sales \_\_\_\_\_, in line with our forecast. (down)

### toolbox: collocations for describing charts

encouraging upswing	rapid decline
fell slightly	sharp increase
significant rise	remained stable
plummeted	slight improvement
reached its highest point	bottomed out



## TRAINING

### exercise: prepositions: to, at and in – and, by the way – by

Add the right preposition to the sentences below.

1. Customer numbers rose \_\_\_\_\_ January \_\_\_\_\_ over 100,000.
2. Sales remained stable throughout April and May \_\_\_\_\_ just under 2 mn euros \_\_\_\_\_ turnover.
3. Sales for the domestic market as a whole decreased \_\_\_\_\_ 2 per cent \_\_\_\_\_ just over 110 mn euros.
4. Overall turnover bottomed out \_\_\_\_\_ mid-September, \_\_\_\_\_ 1.9 mn euros.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ July, the market levelled off \_\_\_\_\_ just under 2 mn euros, in line with forecast, when the school holidays started.
6. Sales increased \_\_\_\_\_ November \_\_\_\_\_ 5 per cent, thanks to the adoption of American tradition.
7. Discontinuation of old product accounted for a drop in sales of 12 per cent, \_\_\_\_\_ 1.8 mn euros.
8. Sales \_\_\_\_\_ year-end showed a slight decrease compared \_\_\_\_\_ the previous year.

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# TRAINING

## exercise: synonyms

Complete the table below with the correct synonym.

to speed up	
to help	
to take apart	
to show	
to ban	

## exercise: New word of the month

### MIND THE GAP!

### New word of the month:

#### ‘shrinkflation‘



We bet you’ve experienced this, perhaps without realising it: it refers to the practice of reducing the amount or size of a product while maintaining the same price (in effect a price rise that doesn’t advertise itself): “... one of the worst examples of shrinkflation was Cadbury’s reducing the number of Creme Eggs in a box from half-a-dozen to five...”

## “QUOTE OF THE MONTH!”

‘There cannot be a crisis next week. My schedule is already full.’

Henry A. Kissinger

### IMPRESSUM

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