



Context: For employees working in English-speaking office environments, hybrid teams, or international workplaces

Office Vocabulary & Workplace Etiquette



Slide 1: Welcome & Objectives

Let's learn how to speak confidently and behave professionally in the modern office, wherever you work.

By the end of this lesson, you will:

- Use office-related English naturally
- Understand workplace etiquette in hybrid or global teams
- Practise polite and indirect phrases used in offices
- Participate in realistic workplace conversations

Vocabulary – Office Spaces & Equipment

Discuss the following vocabulary with your tutor:

Item	Function
cubicle	Small personal working space in an open office
stationery	Office materials like pens, paper, staplers
meeting room	A space for formal or group discussions
shared drive	Online folder accessible by teams
hot desk	A desk shared by different employees, no fixed owner

Discuss: Which of these are common in your workplace?

Common Workplace Behaviours

Knowing what is polite or impolite can vary by country, but some habits are appreciated globally.

Respectful etiquette:

- Saying “excuse me” before interrupting
- Cleaning shared kitchen items
- Keeping phones on silent
- Not checking messages during meetings
- Being punctual

Problematic behaviours:

- Speaking loudly on personal calls
- Leaving dirty mugs in the sink
- Interrupting others in meetings
- Gossiping about colleagues

Discuss: What behaviour is expected in your workplace?

Polite Phrases for the Office

Use these to remain respectful:

- “Would you mind if I joined you here?”
- “Is this seat taken?”
- “Sorry to interrupt, but may I ask something?”
- “Would it be okay if I adjusted the air conditioning?”
- “Could you please lower your voice a little?”

Task: Practise using 2 of the above phrases and use them, imagining you are in a workplace. Your tutor will respond. Then, swap roles.



Grammar – Indirect Requests with 'Would' & 'Could'

To sound polite in English, we use **indirect requests**.

Direct	Polite & Indirect
“Close the door.”	“Could you please close the door?”
“Give me the file.”	“Would you mind sharing the file?”
“Answer this now.”	“Would it be possible to discuss this now?”

Task: Rephrase these commands politely:

- “Send it now.”
- “Help me with this.”
- “Move your things.”

Example answer:

- “Would you be able to send it now, please?”

Activity – Match the Situation to the Response

Choose the best polite response for each workplace situation:

- **You're late to a meeting**
 - A) "Sorry I'm late — the elevator was slow."
 - B) "Let's get started."
- **You need to interrupt two colleagues talking**
 - A) "Sorry to jump in — may I ask something quickly?"
 - B) "I need to talk now."
- **Someone is using your desk**
 - A) "That's my spot!"
 - B) "Hi! I usually sit here — would you mind if I take it back?"

Vocabulary – Work Culture Words

Discuss the following terms with your tutor:

Word	Definition
punctual	Always on time
collaborative	Works well with others
respectful	Treats others politely
proactive	Solves problems early
reliable	Can be trusted to deliver results



Grammar – Present Simple for Office Routines

We use present simple to describe workplace routines:

Examples:

- “I arrive by 9am.”
- “We hold team meetings every Wednesday.”
- “He cleans his space before leaving.”

Task: Complete the sentences using the correct form:

- We _____ (start) our day with a team call.
- She _____ (reply) to emails every afternoon.
- They _____ (use) the shared printer often.



Activity – Office Role Play

Choose one of the following scenarios, and create a dialogue with your tutor:

- You're new to the company. Ask where things are (kitchen, printer, etc.)
- You're asking a colleague to speak more quietly
- You're sharing a desk and want to adjust the chair

Tip: Use polite phrases, indirect requests, and clear pronunciation

Cultural Awareness – Global Workplace Norms

Some etiquette changes across cultures. Have a look at the examples below:

Behaviour	Western Workplace	Other Contexts
Eye contact	Seen as confident	May be seen as disrespectful
Silence in meetings	Often filled quickly	Sometimes means reflection
Saying “no” directly	Can be normal	May be considered rude

Discuss: Have you had a culture shock during office communication?

Listening Practice – Colleagues in Conversation

Listen to your tutor read the following dialogue:

A: “Hi, is this your desk?”

B: “Yes, I sit here most days, but feel free to take the chair.”

A: “Thanks! I just need to print something quickly.”

B: “No problem. Let me know if you need help.”

Questions:

- What was the request that was made?
- What made the tone polite?
- What kind gesture was offered?

Politeness Rewriting Challenge

Rephrase these into more polite and office-appropriate phrases:

- “Move. That’s my space.”
- “Stop talking.”
- “Give me your notes.”

Model answer:

- “Hi, I think this might be my spot, would it be alright to swap?”

Email Practice – Office Etiquette

Task: Discuss what you would write in an email, in the following situations:

- Ask someone to clean up shared space
- Reserve a room
- Request a favour

Tip: Use indirect language and a neutral tone. Then, ask your tutor to demonstrate their version.



Idioms & Phrases for Office Life

Learn some informal office English:

Phrase	Meaning
“Touch base”	Briefly connect with someone
“Heads-down time”	Quiet focus time
“Watercooler chat”	Informal small talk
“Back-to-back”	Meetings scheduled one after another
“Loop someone in”	Add someone to a conversation or thread

Task: Build 2 sentences using the phrases from above.

Pronunciation Practice – Tone in Polite English

Practice saying the following phrases in the correct tone, repeat after your tutor:

- “Would you mind giving me a hand?”
- “I appreciate your support.”
- “Let’s keep things quiet during calls.”
- “Sorry to interrupt, just one quick thing.”

Focus: pacing, friendly stress, calm intonation

Role Play – Navigating Shared Spaces

Scenario: Imagine you're in a hybrid office with shared desks and kitchen space. Your tutor pretends to be a colleague or manager.

Discuss and role play how you would approach the following situations:

- Ask to share space
- Make a polite complaint about mess
- Thank the person for understanding



Common Mistakes – Workplace Manners

Avoid these common mistakes:

- Being too direct or blunt
- Using casual language with senior staff (“Yo!”)
- Ignoring greetings or farewells
- Taking resources (e.g. chairs, chargers) without asking

Instead, do the following:

- Greet people professionally
- Ask before using shared items
- Say “please” and “thank you” often

Reflection – My Own Office Culture

- What's considered polite in your office?
- What surprised you most about English-speaking offices?
- What would you teach a new colleague from another culture?

