



Focus: Mastering polite, professional language for everyday workplace interactions, especially in emails, meetings, and spontaneous conversations

Polite Language – Requests, Offers & Apologies



The English Hub

Welcome & Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Learn polite phrases for making requests and offers
- Practise different ways to apologise professionally
- Use modals, softeners, and indirect language
- Build confidence with tone and formality

Discuss:

How do you usually make requests in English at work? Do you ever feel too direct or too unsure?

Vocabulary – Key Terms for Politeness

Discuss the following terms with your tutor:

Word/Phrase	Definition
Request	A polite way of asking for something
Offer	Saying you are happy to help or provide
Apology	A polite way of saying sorry
Softeners	Words that make a message less direct
Formality	Level of politeness based on situation

Task: Say one example sentence using “request” and one with “offer”

Grammar – Modals for Polite Requests

In business, we often use modal verbs to make requests sound softer.

Examples of modals used in polite requests:

- “Could you send me the file?”
- “Would it be possible to meet at 3?”
- “Can you clarify this point, please?”

Task: Have a go at rephrasing the following sentences to sound more polite:

“Send me the document.”

- “Tell me if you’re free.”

Phrases – Making Requests Politely

We often use these in emails or conversation when making requests:

- “Would you mind...?”
- “I was wondering if...”
- “Would it be alright if I...?”
- “Could I possibly...?”
- “May I ask you to...?”

Task: Have a look at the scenarios below. Respond to each scenario with one of the phrases from above to make a request:

1. Requesting Permission

- You want to leave work 30 minutes early on Friday to attend a family event.

2. Making a Small Change

- You’d like to reschedule a meeting from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM tomorrow.



Pronunciation & Tone – Making a Request Sound Polite

Practise and repeat the following aloud with soft, respectful tone, to improve pronunciation and fluency:

- “Would you mind reviewing this today?”
- “Could I ask a quick question?”
- “I was wondering if you’re free this afternoon.”

Your tutor will give you pronunciation feedback and model natural intonation.

Activity – Request Rewrites

Rephrase the following blunt requests politely:

- “Move the meeting.”
- “Give me the feedback now.”
- “I need that report.”

Example answer:

- “Would you be able to reschedule the meeting?”

Grammar – Making Offers with Modals

We use **shall**, **can**, or **would** when we wish to offer help:

Examples:

- “Shall I send the notes?”
- “Can I help you with that?”
- “Would you like some support on this?”

Task: Practise creating phrases to offer help, with your tutor using the following prompts:

- “Shall I...”
- “Would you like me to...”
- “Can I assist with...”



Activity – Match the Offer

Have a go at matching each offer to the correct situation:

Offer	Situation
“Shall I take notes?”	Your manager looks busy
“Would you like help with this?”	During a long meeting
“Can I schedule that for you?”	A colleague is struggling with a task

Phrases – Apologising Professionally

We often use the following phrases when something goes wrong, and we wish to rectify the mistake:

- “I’m sorry for the delay.”
- “Apologies — I misunderstood your point.”
- “I didn’t mean to interrupt.”
- “Please accept my apology.”

Discuss:

Have you had to apologise at work?

What was hardest about it in English?

Grammar – Using “Sorry” and “Apologise”

Understanding the grammar rule:

We use different forms of apologies depending on formality and who we’re speaking to.

Informal	Formal
“Sorry I missed that.”	“I apologise for the inconvenience.”
“I didn’t catch that.”	“Please accept my sincere apologies.”

Task: Think of two informal apologies and rephrase them to be formal

Activity – Fill in the Blanks (Polite Forms)

Have a go at completing the sentences with an appropriate polite phrase:

- “_____ I ask a quick question?”
- “I _____ to interrupt.”
- “_____ I help you with that?”
- “I’m _____ for the confusion.”



Cultural Tip – What Counts as Polite?

In English-speaking workplaces:

- Being **clear + soft** is seen as polite
- Saying “please”, “thank you”, and “sorry” is normal
- Over-apologising can seem nervous; balance is key

Discuss:

What’s the norm in your country when it comes to being polite at work?

How do people apologise formally in your country/culture?

Role Play – Making a Request & Offering Help

Choose one of the following scenarios to respond to:

- Ask a manager to move a meeting
- Offer to support a teammate on a task
- Apologise to a client for a small delay

Your tutor will provide feedback and support for your response.

Idioms & Polite Business Expressions

Expression	Meaning
“At your convenience”	Whenever you have time
“No worries at all”	Reassuring someone after a small mistake
“I appreciate your help”	Expressing gratitude
“If it’s not too much trouble...”	Very polite way to make a request

Task: Choose 2 expressions and create a short dialogue with your tutor

Listening Activity – Realistic Office Exchange

Your tutor will read out the following short dialogue:

A: “Hi, I was wondering if we could shift the call to tomorrow?”

B: “Of course, no problem at all. Did you have a time preference in mind?”

A: “Thanks so much. Yes, does 10:00am work for you?”

B: “No problem at all. That works for me, I’ll follow up by email”.

Questions:

- What was the request?
- Was the tone formal or informal?
- What helped make it polite?
- How did they find a solution?



Activity – Spot the Mistake

Have a go at rephrasing the sentences below to make them sound more polite and professional:

“Give me that report.”

“Why didn’t you send it earlier?”

“Move it now.”

Example answer:

“Could I ask for that report, please?”

Summary Slide – Key Language Toolkit

Make a note of the following language toolkit to use at your workplace/professional environment!:

Polite Requests:

- “Would you mind...?”
- “Could you please...?”
- “I was wondering if...”

Polite Offers:

- “Shall I...?”
- “Would you like me to...?”
- “Can I help with...?”

Apologies:

- “Sorry for...”
- “I apologise for...”
- “Please accept my apology.”



Fluency Practice – Rapid Role Play

Have a go at choosing an appropriate phrase for the following scenarios with your tutor:

- Ask for a file
- Offer help during a call
- Apologise for arriving late

Your tutor will offer prompts, try to respond naturally using language from today's lesson

