



Focus: Language for problem-solving, polite clarification, and regaining clarity without sounding accusatory or unprofessional

Handling Technical Problems or Miscommunication



The English Hub

Welcome & Objectives

In this lesson, you will:

- Learn polite and practical phrases for tech issues and confusion
- Practise repairing misunderstandings without blame
- Build fluency in asking for repetition, clarification, and support
- Use English to stay professional during interruptions

Warm-up Discussion: Have you ever had a tech issue during a meeting or misunderstood an email? What happened?

Vocabulary Builder – Tech Disruption Terms

Discuss the following terms with your tutor:

Phrase/Term	Meaning
Lagging	Delay in audio/video
Drop off	Connection cuts out
Misfire	A message that was poorly timed or misinterpreted
Glitch	Temporary software/hardware problem
Crossed wires	Confusion caused by unclear or mixed messages

Task: Choose one of the terms from above and describe a real situation you've seen or experienced.

Common Tech Issues – Categorise by Type

Task: Group these into: **Connection**, **Audio/Visual**, or **Tool-based**:

- Screen froze
- Mic not working
- Slow internet
- Couldn't access shared doc
- Zoom echo
- Link expired

Discuss: Have you experienced any of these in your work? How was it resolved?

Grammar Focus – Modal Verbs for Suggestions

We use polite modal verbs when solving problems:

Could: “Could we try refreshing the page?”

Might: “It might help to use another platform.”

Should: “We should test the link before the meeting.”

Task: Have a go at building 3 polite tech-related suggestions using different modals.

Clarification Language – Polite Repetition

The following phrases are helpful to **ask for repetition or explanation**:

- “Sorry, I didn’t catch that — could you repeat?”
- “Just to clarify, did you mean...?”
- “Apologies — I think I missed part of that.”

Task: Your tutor will read out the following sentences which have ‘glitches’. Politely respond by clarifying.

- ...we need to... ***glitch***...finalise the budget report by next... ***glitch***... Thursday.”
- “The new client is from... ***glitch***... and they’ll be visiting on... ***glitch***... week of the 14th.”
- “Please update the... ***glitch***... document with the latest... ***glitch***... sales figures.”



Activity: Fill & Rephrase

Task: Complete the gaps **and** rephrase the sentences in a professional tone:

- “Your mic is ____.”
- I didn’t ____ that.”

Example:

“Not showing up.” → Better: “The document doesn’t seem to be appearing on my end.”

Then, have a go at practising with your own examples, or a situation that has happened to you previously at work.

Scenario Task – Miscommunication in Chat

Imagine you have received the following message at work:

- “I thought you said you’d handle it.”

Discuss:

- How could this be misread in tone?
- How would you respond politely to clarify?

Discuss:

Have you ever received/sent a message which was misinterpreted before?
How did you handle that situation?

Roleplay – Troubleshooting on a Call

Scenario: Imagine you and your tutor are colleagues. You both happen to be in a video conference. Suddenly:

- Audio breaks up
- Shared screen doesn't work
- Your video lags

Task: Practise how you would respond to that situation by:

- Describing the issue
- Offering or asking for solutions
- Staying calm and polite



Fluency Practice – Calm Phrasing

Repeat each sentence after tutor, focusing on calm and professional tone:

- “Let me just refresh and rejoin.”
- “No problem, I’ll wait for you.”
- “We might be having a small connection issue.”
- “Shall we move this to email?”

Student replaces 1 with their own real-life version.

Sorting Activity – Problem or Misunderstanding?

Sort the following examples, are they a **problem** or a **misunderstanding**?

- “I can’t hear anything.”
- “I thought it was due tomorrow.”
- “My camera isn’t working.”
- “I didn’t realise you meant *today*.”

Task: Then, discuss how you would politely address each situation.

Fluency Practice – Calm Phrasing

Repeat each sentence after your tutor, focusing on a calm and professional tone:

- “Let me just refresh and rejoin.”
- “No problem — I’ll wait for you.”
- “We might be having a small connection issue.”
- “Shall we move this conversation to email?”



Grammar – Conditional for Problem Solving

We use conditional structures to offer back up plans:

How Conditionals Work

A conditional sentence usually has two parts:

- **If-clause** – describes the situation or condition.
- **Main clause** – describes the result or backup plan.

Example:

If it rains, we'll move the meeting indoors.

Condition: *If it rains*

Backup plan: *we'll move the meeting indoors*

Task: Have a go at building 2 of your own “if”, “then” conditional sentences.

Task – Slack Message Repair

Have a look at the phrase below:

“I thought you were supposed to do it.”

Rephrase this to sound:

- More professional
- Neutral and polite
- Example:

“Just checking, was this task mine or yours? I want to make sure we’re aligned.”

Speaking – Misunderstood Instructions

Your tutor will give you some vague and misunderstanding instructions:

- “Can you move that over, and fix the thing with the file?”
- “Please adjust the thing so it looks better.”
- “Change what you need to and send it to me when it’s done.”

Task: Practise asking for polite clarification:

Example:

“Could you clarify what you mean by ‘the thing with the file’?”

Tutor then gives clearer instruction.

Activity – Miscommunication Bingo

Which of these have you experienced before? Discuss how you responded to them. Then, your tutor does the same.

- ☐ Frozen screen mid-presentation
- ☐ Misunderstood deadline
- ☐ Lost access to a shared file
- ☐ Responded to wrong person in group chat
- ☐ Missed part of a voice note
- ☐ Wrong name or title in email

Task: Select one situation and explain how you would respond to it, by using phrases you have learnt in today's lesson.

Tone Upgrade – Remove Frustration

Imagine you are at work, and have sent a completed task to your manager. However, they have not received it and ask you to send it again. You want to respond by saying:

“I already sent that!”

Task: Explain and rephrase the statement to make it sound polite and professional, explaining your side of the situation.

Example starter:

“I believe I shared that yesterday, let me...”

Pronunciation & Clarity

Repeat the following sentences after your tutor aloud, focusing on stress and rhythm to improve pronunciation and fluency:

- “Could you walk me through that again?”
- “Just to double-check, we’re using the updated file?”
- “Thanks for your patience while I reconnect.”

Reflection Prompt – What Would You Say?

Discuss:

- What's one tech problem you struggle with most?
- What phrase could help you manage it better?

Then, summarise your response with:

- “Next time that happens, I’ll...”

Discussion

Scenario: Imagine you're on a call with a client, and they say:

"We'll need you to handle that in the usual way, but could you try and complete it within a week?"

You're not sure what they mean by *"the usual way."*

Discuss which of the following options you would choose to respond with and why:

- A) Ask them directly for clarification.
- B) Ask a colleague after the call.
- C) Guess what they mean and move forward.

Wrap-Up Discussion – Recovering Gracefully

Discuss:

- What's more important: solving the problem or how you respond to it?
- What did you learn about tone today?