Master English

How to Make Requests and Speak Politely in English

- Learn how to make polite requests
- Learn the importance of speaking softly
- Learn how to politely disagree and turn down invitations
About this Book

In this book you will learn how to politely...

1. Make requests using:
   - *Can / Could*
   - *May I*
   - *Would*

2. Ask for permission

3. Use the correct tone of voice for expressions such as “pardon (me)” and “excuse me”

4. Turn down an invitation

5. Disagree
• Making Requests/Asking For Something
In English we always use can or could to make requests with friends and colleagues. “Could” is more polite.

Can / Could
To make polite requests.
Example: Can I have a glass of water?
Example: Could you pass me the salt?

Note: You can put the word “please” in front of the subject or at the end of the sentence; however, it is not necessary.
Example: Can I please have a glass of water?
Example: Could I have a glass of water please?

May I
Used in FORMAL situations: work, school, etc.
Example: May I speak with you for a minute?
Example: May I sit down?
Note: You can put the word “please” in front of the subject or at the end of the sentence; however, it is not necessary.

Example: May I please speak with you for a minute?
Example: May I sit down please?

Would
Would is used in formal situations and with friends.
Would you mind…?
Example: Would you mind explaining to me…?
Would you be able to…?
Example: Would you be able to wash the plates for me?

- Asking for Permission
The first two expressions can be used in any situation. Speak with a softer voice or it will sound aggressive.

1. Do you mind…?
Example: Do you mind if I sit here?
2. Would it be a problem if…?
Example: Would it be a problem if I take this chair?
3. I was wondering if you could…?
Example: I was wondering if you could give me a hand with this project?
• **Sorry**
When we don’t understand what someone says, we say “sorry?” (In a soft voice).
*Example: Sorry, could you repeat that?*
*Example: Sorry?*

• **Pardon (me)?**
Pardon me is a more polite way of saying sorry. This is used in FORMAL situations.
*Note: It is important to understand that you must say this in a soft voice. If you don’t, it sounds aggressive.*

• **Excuse Me**
Used in these three situations:
1. Asking the person to repeat.
   *Example: Excuse me? (Said with a softer voice.)*
2. Express shock at what the person said.
   *Example: Excuse me! (Said with surprise.)*
3. You didn’t like the context of what they said.
   *Example: Excuse ME!!! (Said in an aggressive voice.)*

*Practice: with a teacher, trying saying “excuse me” in with the correct intonation in all three situations.*
• **Turning Down an Invitation**

It is important to speak with a softer voice or it will sound aggressive.

1. I’m afraid I can’t…
   *Example: I’m afraid I can’t go to the party tonight.*
2. I’d love to but…
   *Example: I’d love to go but I’m really busy unfortunately.*
3. That sounds great but…
   *Example: That sounds great but I already have plans.*

• **Disagreeing**

It is important to speak in a softer tone of voice or it will sound aggressive.

I see what you’re saying, but I think…
*Example: I see what you’re saying but I also heard something different.*

You could be right, but don’t forget that…
*Example: You could be right about our president, but don’t forget that he provided this country with healthcare.*

Yes that’s true, but I’m not sure that…
*Example: Yes, that’s true but I’m not sure I agree.*
Practice

Write a letter to a friend/colleague making (1) requests, (2) asking for permission, (3) turning down an invitation and (4) disagreeing with something. Here is an example:

Hello Joseph,

(1) Could you please tell me if you are attending this week’s meeting? Also, (2) would it be a problem if I call you tonight to tell you about the new project?

Regarding Saturday’s dinner, (3) I’m afraid I can’t come: I’m really busy. Lastly, (4) you could be right about the new intern, but don’t forget how slow we were when we first started working here. Anyway, I will see you tomorrow.

Yours truly,

John Smith