EASY ACCESS ENGLISH

Asking Nicely



As you may know, English people are particularly polite and in general in English we use a lot of polite expressions I in conversation.
Situations –

- Working with a foreign colleague
- Helping a foreign client
- Talking to foreign clients on the phone

In all of these situations you need to master social niceties which will enable you to ask for things in a polite way.

Have a look at this video for an example of the differences in French and English culture regarding manners….

French Taunting – Monty python and the Holy Grail

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9V7zbWNznbs

How to be polite in English

Manners are important in daily life as in business. You can make a great impression with minimum effort just by choosing the right words. That's what's good about being polite ! And if you learn the right expressions in English it's easy. Here are some generally polite expressions to help you – today we will be practicing them…
Manners

Asking a question politely

I was wondering if you could tell me…
I was wondering if you could help me…
Hello, sorry to bother you, would it be possible for you to…
I'm terribly sorry to interrupt but I was wondering if…
Excuse me, would it be possible for you to…

Talking on the phone

Hello, would it be possible to speak to Fred please ?
Hello, Fred speaking, is John available please ?
Hello, I'm calling about…
Hello, I was wondering if we could…

Well thanks a lot, I look forward to seeing you soon.
Thanks so much for you help, I really appreciate it.
Thanks a lot, have a good afternoon.
Goodbye it was really good of you to help.
Goodbye, have a good day, I'll see you soon.

Apologising

I'm terribly sorry
Please excuse me
I must apologise
I'm afraid that totally slipped my mind, I am sorry
Excuse me
My apologies

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Activity One – Telephoning

When we start a call, we can say :
This is…
I'm calling from…. About ….
Could you give me some information please?

For clarification
Sorry, did you say?
Could I just confirm that…
Could I ask you to repeat that

To end the conversation we can say :
Thanks for your help.
Nice talking to you.
Thanks for calling.

Work with your teacher. Follow the instructions below. One person receives the call (A) and the other person makes the call (B).

A	B
• Answer the telephone	• Introduce yourself
• Offer to help	• Ask a question about a delivery.
• Ask for a reference number	• Give the reference number
• Ask for clarification	• Confirm
• Ask the person to wait	• Agree
• Give a delivery time and date	• Ask for confirmation
• Agree	• Say goodbye and thankyou
• Say goodbye	• Put the phone down

Activity Two – polite conversation.

Label the following columns from the choices below –

Offering, Requesting Agreeing Refusing Accepting Declining

Could you…	Yes, please	Shall I ….	Thanks but please don't bother	Yes, of course
Do you mind….	That's very kind of you	Do you want me to ….	Thanks but that won't be necessary	Yes, certainly
Do you think you could…	Thanks I'd appreciate that	If you like, I can…	That's very kind of you but..	Not at all
				No, of course not

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Activity Three PRACTICE.

Answer or ask the following questions politely using the expressions from above; these could be situations you encounter at work or doing an internship in your field.

ASK

1. Ask someone if they need help to resolve a problem.
2. Ask someone if they want you to send them an e mail to explain an issue.
3. Ask someone if they could fix a problem with the system.
4. Ask someone for an update on an issue which was reported the previous week and is not yet resolved.
5. Ask someone politely why a particular update has not yet been done.

RESPOND

1. Thank someone for resolving an issue
2. Thank someone for waiting on the phone while you looked up some information
3. Thank someone for offering to call back later when you are less busy
4. Thank someone for updating the system quickly on their side.
5. Thanks someone for phoning you back very quickly after you left them a message.

ANSWER

1. Will you phone me when you have the information?
2. Will you be at work tomorrow so that I can call you back?
3. Will you be able to get this information to me by the end of the day?
4. Do you mind if I call you back later with that information?
5. Please could I get back to you once I have spoken to your manager?

DECLINE OR DON'T ACCEPT

1. I can hold the line if you want
2. I can call back later if you would prefer.
3. We will have to charge you for that update as it was not initially planned.
4. We won't be able to make that change until the end of next week.
5. Could you open a new ticket regarding this question?

Activity Four - READING AND DISCUSSION

Read the article and then answer this question – in your opinion and from your experience:

THIS WILL BE A CLASS DEBATE – FOR AND AGAINST.

Are English people more polite than other Europeans?

EASY ACCESS ENGLISH

1/ Article from a German travellers blog:

It's really true what people say about English politeness: it's everywhere. When squeezing past someone in a narrow aisle, people say 'sorry'. When getting off a bus, English passengers say 'thank you' rather than the driver. In Germany, people would never dream of doing these things after all, squeezing past others is sometimes inevitable, and the bus driver is merely doing his job. I used to think the same way, without questioning it, until I started travelling to the British Isles and came to appreciate some more polite ways of interacting with people.

People thank each other everywhere in England, all the time. When people buy something in a shop, customer and retail assistant in most cases thank each other two times or more. In Germany, it would be exceptional to hear more than one thank you each in such a conversation. British students thank their lecturers when leaving the room. English employers thank their employees for doing their jobs, as opposed to Germans, who would normally think that paying their workers money is already enough of a thanks.

Another thing I observed during my stay was the way English people rarely criticise others. Even when I was working and mistakes were pointed out to me, my employers emphasised several times than none of their explanations were intended as criticism. It has been my impression that by avoiding criticism, English people are making an effort to make others feel comfortable. This also showed in other ways: British men still open doors for women, and British men are more likely to treat women for a meal than German men. However, I do need to point out here that this applies to English men a bit more than it would to Scottish men! Yes, the latter are a bit tight-fisted.

2/ And another article from the Guardian

The French aren't rude; they just hate you. That's not true, obviously, but anyone who's been the victim of a vicious and apparently unprovoked verbal assault by a Parisian waiter or shop assistant or taxi driver may be forgiven for thinking that French and civility are mutually exclusive notions.

Often, this can simply be down to the fact that the French – unlike, say, the British – have no difficulty whatsoever saying exactly what they think. It is a source of endless confusion to them, for example, that when the British say something is "really very interesting", we mean it is precisely the opposite; or that they will have to wait a very long time before we follow through on such an apparently unambiguous statement as: "We must have you over very soon."

Generally, though, it's because we haven't got the right codes. If we don't begin with *Bonjour*, if we don't continue with *Monsieur* or *Madame*, if we show signs of not understanding that it is our privilege to be talking to them rather than the reverse, if we fail to observe the least nicety ... we haven't got a chance.

Equally, of course, it's true that the French are capable of a kind of deliberate, in-your-face rudeness that would be shocking in any language. That's because they think it's fun.