Lesson Plan Easy Access English

How to Make Everything You Say Sound Polite

EAE Learning objectives for this lesson

Learn new polite words and expressions.
Put them into practice.

INTRODUCTION: Watch the **video**. Then come back into the room and put the advice into practice. *(Or summarize the advice if you are not in a face to face lesson.)*http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oq3Y7NLVcEE *Now watch a second **video** and start a conversation with your partner or teacher:* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpo4pzHy338



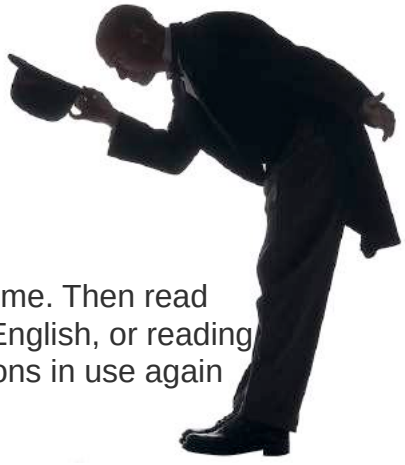
Activity One - Ask and answer:

- Do you consider yourself to be very polite?
- Are manners important to you in other people?
- Do you think that people in today's society are less and less polite?
- Are children taught manners well enough?
- Are English people more polite than French people?
- Are the people you come across in shops, in the street, at work or school polite?

Activity Two - Read the information and advice.

Learning polite expressions and understanding how to use them is good for several reasons. It makes you sound well mannered and helps you to deal with a variety of situations with diplomacy. They give you alternative ways of saying things so you sound more interesting. It also helps you to stop translating; **knowing the meaning of a word is useful, but knowing how to use it in context is essential.** (This is why it's not a good idea to learn lists of words translated into French and it's better to learn expressions and phrases in the context of their use.)

There are many idioms, collocations, set phrases and discourse markers,*(words like actually,well,now, as a matter of fact etc.),* that you can easily learn and then use in a great variety of situations to sound more polite. Your language will sound more natural and be more easily understood if you master these expressions.



To learn them you will have to go through three phases:

1.Recognize them
2.Notice them several time in different contexts
3.Use them.

It will help you to **write them down** with examples and sort them by theme. Then read through your notes regularly. Watching films or listening to the radio in English, or reading books or publications in English will allow you to see common expressions in use again and again.

When you learn a new expression it's important to make an effort to use it as soon as you can. So try to write some sentences with it, or use it in your lesson, or in any English speaking situation. This will help you to remember it.

You will be surprised and how often you then see these common expressions occurring, once you identify them, so always be curious and **take an interest in new expressions** you come across and find out what they mean.

Activity Three: Summarize the information you just read (alone or with a partner) into a list of main points to remember, (pieces of advice).

Activity Four - Read the information about different types of polite expressions:

Collocations are two or more words which are usually used together. They are similar to idioms. They include grammatical collocations (such as verbs+prepositions) and other combinations including noun+noun or adjective+noun. If you use the 'wrong' adjective with certain nouns, or the wrong 'noun +noun' combination, people will understand what you mean, but it will sound strange to them, and unharmonious.

Here are some GENERAL examples: (from English Club).

- **Adverb + Adjective:** completely satisfied (NOT ~~downright~~ satisfied)**Adjective + Noun:** excruciating pain (NOT excruciating ~~joy~~)
- **Noun + Noun:** a surge of anger (NOT a ~~rush~~ of anger)
- **Noun + Verb:** lions roar (NOT lions ~~shout~~)
- **Verb + Noun:** commit suicide (NOT ~~undertake~~ suicide)
- **Verb + Expression With Preposition:** burst into tears (NOT ~~blow up in~~ tears)
- **Verb + Adverb:** wave frantically (NOT wave ~~feverishly~~)

Other examples of Collocations in polite expressions:

- I'm sorry to bother you, but...
- There may have been a misunderstanding but..
- I'm sorry to have to say this but.. *(not ~~tell~~)*
- I don't want to make excuses but *(not ~~do~~ excuses)*
- I'm afraid that I won't be able to help you - not I'm ~~scared/frightened~~



Collocations that make you sound more polite:

- An **elderly** person - not an ~~old~~ person
- Things could **become** difficult - not things could ~~get~~ difficult
- A person who has special needs - not a ~~disabled~~ person
- An overweight person - not a ~~fat~~ person
- A slim person - not a ~~thin~~ person

Idioms - An idiom is a combination of words which have a figurative meaning thanks to their common usage. Here are some examples of polite idiomatic expressions:

- Thank you kindly - *Thank you very much.*
- Thank goodness - *I am pleased or happy / thank heavens*
- I can't thank you enough - *A polite expression of gratitude.*
- the done thing - *The correct way to behave in a particular social situation*
- To overstep the mark - *To go too far and upset someone by saying / doing something unacceptable.*
- To stand on ceremony - *To behave in a very formal way.*
- Pardon my French - *An apology for using crude or offensive language.*
- To speak out of turn - *To intervene at the wrong moment or to say something tactless or inappropriate.*



Activity Five - DICTATION or WALL DICTATION:

Saying what you really think is not exactly **the done thing** in society. Even if you are a person who likes to be informal and doesn't enjoy **standing on ceremony** you still have to be careful about what you say, especially when you meet new people, or if you are in a professional situation. If you are a very spontaneous person then it's easy to **speak out of turn.** Nowadays there are politically correct ways of referring to certain types of people, sometimes these terms change and evolve and it can be tricky to keep up with things and know the right way of saying something. Sometimes people can really feel that you have **overstepped the mark** even though you were just being honest and open. **Thank goodness** for google though, without easy access to online dictionaries and information, it would be even more difficult to be polite in all circumstances.

Activity Six - What do you think this cartoon shows about polite language in English?



Activity Seven - As you can see above, although we usually use quite short, structured sentences in English, when we are being polite our sentences get longer! This is because we 'soften' our message by adding certain collocations to make it sound less direct:

(For Example: ***I'm afraid, so sorry, to be honest, unfortunately, with all due respect, I'm terribly sorry, I wonder if, would you mind, could i ask you, if it's no trouble....***)

Here are some more examples in red - what not to say, In black and blue what you should say. There are a **variety of examples of techniques here:**

- There will be a delay in the completion of the project.

- There might be a slight delay in the completion of the project.

We have added the modal verb 'might' and the qualifier 'slight' and this makes it a lot more polite.We can also use **qualifiers** which are words used to increase or decrease the quality of a word. Here they are used to soften the tone of our content or convey politeness. Other examples of qualifiers that can make great softeners are:

a little, a bit, a little bit, slight, slightly, small, one or two.

- We are having problems with the new product.

- We are having one or two problems with the new product.

- We will run over budget.

- We might run slightly over budget.

- The marketing campaign is behind schedule.

- The marketing campaign is a little bit behind schedule.

Another way we can make our English more diplomatic is by using **negative questions** when we want to make a suggestion.

- We should redesign the company logo! ***This is too direct. Try this:*** **- Shouldn't we redesign the company logo?**

We also use shouldn't, wouldn't and couldn't to form this type of question.

- We must hire a new advertising agency.

- Couldn't we hire a new agency? - Wouldn't it be better to hire a new agency?

Again another way to make a sentence less direct and more diplomatic is to use the **past continuous tense:**

- I hope we can sign the contract today.

- I was hoping that we could sign the contract today.

Using the past continuous makes the sentence sound more hypothetical and tentative, and therefore l**ess direct** and is a great technique for politeness.

- I think we need to hire more employees.

- I was thinking we need to hire more employees.

- I aim to finish this project by the end of the month.

- I was aiming to finish this project by the end of the month.

Finally, the **passive voice** is a great way to make your sentences sound more diplomatic:

- You have broken my computer! This active voice sentence is too direct. To avoid confrontation use the **passive voice** to lessen the emotional impact of the sentence.

- My computer has been broken!

- You said you were going to come today.

- It was understood that you were going to come today.

- You agreed to send the letter. **- It was agreed that you would send the letter.**

Activity Eight - '**Hello Polly**.' http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vuW6tQ0218
Watch the Monty Python scene. Note how the shop keeper and the customer still remain polite by being indirect and somewhat wordy.. How many different words does John Cleese find to describe the fact that the Parrot is in fact dead? What happens at the end?

Activity Nine - Role Plays.

With your partner act out the following situations IMPOLITELY and then POLITELY!

1. You are in a queue at the supermarket and someone asks you if they can go in front of you as they don't have to buy much and are in a hurry. (In one version your are both impolite and in one version you are both polite).

2. You answer the phone at work to someone who has a question you hear often. (In one version you answer politely and in one version you are really rude because you are fed up of people phoning with the same stupid questions).

3. You go to a bakery to buy some bread. There is none left. (In one version you react politely and in the other you lose your patience completely with the sales person because they are impolite with you.)

4. You talk with a colleague about a report which she has submitted for your approval. In fact there are some changes needed. (In one version you find a very diplomatic way of explaining this and in the other you say it very directly).

5. You meet someone you know who is out walking in the park with their new baby.(In one version you politely admire the baby and in the other version you say what you really think about the baby).

6. Your friend arrives at work or school with a new hairstyle which really does not suit her at all. (In one version you politely admire her hairdo and in the other you say what you really think, but then, so does she..)

Activity Ten - Find the Polite ways of saying the following things: (Team competition/Class vote).

1. Breaking up with your boyfriend or girlfriend.
2. Saying no when someone asks you out.
3. Saying no to a friend who asks you to help because he is moving house.
4. Telling someone that something they are trying on does not suit them.
5. Telling someone that the item they have asked for in a shop is not available.
6. Explaining that a delivery will be very late.
7. Telling your Parents that you got really bad marks at school.
8. Telling your kids that they are grounded.

