



HEWITT ENGLISH

*Preparándote para el mundo inglés*

# 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

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# *About this Book*

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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

# How to speak Politely in English

- **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.

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**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.*

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# Practice

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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*

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