

Polite Requests by Matt Done

Age:	Teenagers/ Adults
Level:	Intermediate and up
Time:	90+ minutes
Objectives:	by the end of the class the students will be able to make polite requests with the correct pronunciation
Key Skills:	Speaking, phonology
Materials:	one copy of the worksheet per student, equipment to play the audio recordings, optional: tape script for the students

1 Warmer

Aim: To introduce the theme of polite requests and activate students' schemata.

- a. Give the students some time to think about the questions. Put students in small groups or pairs to discuss. When most groups have finished, end the activity and take some feedback. **Extra tip:** Answer some of the questions yourself to model the task.

2 Listening

Audio: recordings 1, 2, 3

Aim: To give students practice in listening for detail.

- a. Focus students on the task and play the audio. Allow students to check their answers in pairs before doing a class correction. If students are unsure, play the audio again.

Key

1. A man is asking for help carrying boxes upstairs.
2. A hotel employee is asking a guest not to smoke.
3. A man is asking a friend to check his cover letter for mistakes.

3 Listening for specific information

Audio: recordings 4, 5, 8

Aim: To draw students' attention to the target language for making polite requests.

- a. Focus students on the task. Tell them that if need be, you will play the audio multiple times. Let students check their answers in pairs before doing a class correction. **Extra tip:** After the two listening tasks, let the students listen to the audio again with the tape script in hand.

Key

1. Do you think
2. can I ask
3. Would you mind

4 Focus on form

Aim: To help students notice the grammatical form of the target language.

- a. Focus students on the task. Tell them to match the first halves of the questions (a–c) with the second halves (1–6). You may wish to do the first as an example. If students struggle, tell them to use the answers to Exercise 3 to help them. Let students check their answers in pairs before doing a class correction.

Key

- A: 2,3
b: 1,5
c: 4,6

- b. Elicit the structure of the target language:
would you mind + verb + ing.
can I ask you + to + infinitive.
do you think you could + bare infinitive.

Key

1. to bring
 2. bringing
 3. bring
- c. Focus students on the task and give them a few minutes to attempt it alone. Allow them to check their answers in pairs, before doing a class correction. **Extra tip 1:** Do the first question together as a class as a demonstration. **Extra tip 2:** Ask students to imagine a context for each of the requests, e.g., who would be making these requests? To whom? In what situation?

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Key

1. *to call*
2. *send*
3. *rescheduling*
4. *turning off*
5. *to send*
6. *come*

5 Pronunciation

Audio: recordings 4, 5, 8

Aim: To help students practice using indirect questions with appropriate intonation and connected speech.

- a. Play the three audio tracks for the students, ask them to listen and pay particular attention to the intonation of the three questions. Then, draw their attention to the words in bold. Model these questions pointing out the vowel sound shift. Explain that these words are not stressed and therefore the vowels shift to the /ə/ schwa sound. Encourage students to focus on the movement of their mouth and tongue. Explain that to produce the schwa sound, the jaw and the tongue have to be relaxed. Often students open their mouth too much when trying to produce the schwa sound. They can use a mirror, selfie camera in their phones, or put a hand under their chin to prevent that. Drill the words individually practising the schwa.
- b. Have students practice the whole sentences with the right pronunciation. You may wish to tell/ elicit from students that in polite requests such as these, we often sound 'uncertain' in order to sound less direct.

Allow the students to practice saying the questions themselves, first chorally, then individually. Offer feedback. **Extra tip:** if your class isn't too large or noisy, you can ask students to record themselves with their phones when practicing the sentences, and reflect on their own pronunciation.

6 Reflection

Aim: To encourage students to think about the reason why we use indirect language.

- a. Get the students to think about the question before listening to their ideas. If students struggle, tell them that we sometimes use indirect language when we ask for favours or make requests because we want to sound polite and not make the other person feel uncomfortable with what we are asking. **Extra tip:** Ask the students if their languages also have ways of making requests more polite/ indirect.

7 Speaking

Aim: To build the students' confidence in using the new language, and to prepare them for the final activity.

- a. Focus the students on the task and on the example sentences. Give students a few minutes to write out the requests, before sharing with a partner. Then, take some class feedback.

Suggested answers:

- *Would you mind moving the car? Can I ask you to move your car? Do you think you could move your car?*
- *Would you mind asking your brother to come and have a look? Can I ask you to see if your brother can come and have a look? Do you think you could ask your brother if he can come and have a look?*
- *Would you mind taking my calls for the rest of the day? Can I ask you to take my calls for the rest of the day? Do you think you could take my calls for the rest of the day?*
- *Would you mind sending me the presentation? Can I ask you to send me the presentation? Do you think you could send me the presentation?*
- *Would you mind turning the music down? Can I ask you to turn the music down? Do you think you could turn the music down?*

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8 Pair work

Aim: To give students an opportunity to use some of the language taught in the lesson in a realistic context.

- a. Focus students on the task. Give them some time to choose two situations on and write a short dialogue. Encourage them to use the indirect question forms introduced earlier. As the students work, walk around the class helping them with language and answering any questions they may have. After the students have finished preparing, allow them to practice reading their dialogues in pairs, before sharing them with the class. **Extra tip:** Ask students to think about real life situations they have been in, or will be in in the future, where the language focused on during the lesson would have been/will be useful.

Tape scripts

Conversation 1

- A: Shaquille, are you in a rush to get home?
 B: Not particularly, no. Why?
 A: Oh great. Do you think you could give me a hand with these boxes? I've got to get them all upstairs.
 B: Yeah, of course. Where do you need them exactly?
 A: Just at the top of the stairs is fine. Thanks.

Conversation 2

- A: Good morning Sir, how are you today?
 B: Morning! Yeah, not too bad, thanks!
 A: Good! Are you enjoying your stay?
 B: Oh yes, definitely. It's lovely. I don't want to go home!
 A: Well, you're more than welcome to stay with us a bit longer!
 B: Wouldn't that be nice!
 A: Haha, listen sir, I don't mean to be a pain, but can I ask you to put the cigarette out? I'm afraid this is a non-smoking area!

B: Oh sorry, I didn't realise! Yeah, definitely.

A: Not a problem, sir, thanks for understanding.

Conversation 3

- A: Emmanuel, do you have ten minutes to spare?
 B: I suppose so yeah, why?
 A: So basically I'm applying for this job...
 B: Oh yeah? What job is that?
 A: Social media manager with a marketing company! It's perfect for me!
 B: Yeah you've been looking for something like that for a while, haven't you?
 A: Yes - ages! Emmanuel, since you're an English teacher...would you mind checking my cover letter, just to make sure there are no big mistakes?
 B: Yeah, sure. Let's have a look.
 A: Oh great, thanks!