



How Learning Polite & Diplomatic Advanced English Can Help Your Career

June 28, 2019

Categories: Business English

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In this post you'll learn why being polite and diplomatic can make you look more professional when dealing with English speakers. Above all, you'll learn the expressions and language to use in order to make your English well received by the people you talk to.

- **Language level:** upper intermediate and advanced B2-C1
- **Skills:** Speaking, email writing (Business English)
- **Time needed:** 20 mins

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- **Focus:** style, tone
- **Associated Course:** com



Lesson by Kerin

When you speak English at work, your first priority is probably that people can understand you. That's a good priority to have! However, you might also want to sound **smooth, confident, professional** and **kind**. So you should definitely make this a **priority** too.

In other words, to be all of these things, you can start by using **polite, diplomatic** and **modern** English!

Ask yourself:

- Do you always know which **register** to use at work? (Register means the degree of formality of language that you use).
- Are you always sure that your **tone is appropriate** when you speak in English?
- Are you always **confident** that you use the correct words and expressions when you write emails?

If you answered 'no' to one or more of these questions, read on!

Why is using polite and diplomatic English important at work?

USING A **#EDA** **polite & diplomatic** **style in English** CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING **SUCCESSFUL OR NOT**

#EDA

It's not an exaggeration to say that being successful in your professional life can have a lot to do with how others perceive you. And, when you **can use** this **style** of language with certain people, you can find that you **achieve** the **result** that you are **aiming** for.

Otherwise, you may **risk** being **rejected** or even completely ignored by the person you are addressing.

Translating doesn't always work: English has its own way of being polite

The **words**, **register**, **tone** and **expressions** that you use in your **own language** to be polite and kind more often than not **do not translate** in the **same way** into **English**.

That is to say, the language strategies that we use to be polite and diplomatic in English **are particular to English** – so translating usually doesn't work.

Therefore, to help you get it right, we're going to look at the **grammar and the vocabulary** that will upgrade your English to being polite, kind and diplomatic.

Let's have a look!

#EDA

Read the two conversations and pay attention to the tone used in each one.

► [Click here to read the conversations](#)

Which conversation do you prefer, and why?

In the first conversation, the language is **direct** and **clear**. However, to a native speaker it may feel **COLD** and **IMPOLITE**.

The second conversation has **words** and **phrases** that make the language feel more **POLITE** and **DIPLOMATIC**: *I was wondering if, Actually, That won't be easy ...* (the words in bold do this).

We are aware that the exact meaning may not be meaningful or clear to you, if you are a non-native speaker.

Yet this 'softening' of words is really important to English speakers.

Now let's look at HOW to do it in English:

Strategy 1: change the grammar you are using!

Advanced English Grammar: using the present simple can sometimes come across as **#EDA** rude, a bit too direct and bossy. **By changing the tense**, the meaning is still in the present, but the style becomes more **diplomatic, softened, more friendly and less direct**.

Here's how to do it:

Present > past

When is deadline? > When did you say the deadline was?

Simple > continuous

I hope you can (join us for the meeting) > I was hoping you could (join us for the meeting)

Past + Continuous (progressive)

I think you can > I was thinking you could

I wonder if I can > I was wondering if I could

Use Indirect questions

I need to know ... > Could you tell me ...

Make a negative question so that it becomes a suggestion, not an order

It is better to... > Wouldn't it be better to ...

Use the passive to depersonalise the issue

#EDA

He promised us ... > we were promised ...

Use the 2nd condition instead of the 1st

If you can I'll be very grateful > If you could I'd be very grateful

Use modals

We can try > We could try ...

We will need > We would need / We might need



#EDA

Pick me up on
the way to the
meeting

No, I'm not
joining you for
drinks later.

Order me a
coffee please.



I was wondering
if you could give
me a lift to the
meeting

I'd love to, but
I really have to
finish this

Would you mind
getting me a
coffee please?

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Strategy 2: Use these words and expressions

When information may not be true, or you are unsure if it is

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accurate you can use:

- Apparently ...
- It seems that ...
- As far as I know ...
- It would appear that ...



Reformulating something that you have said because it was too strong, direct or definitive:

- Or rather,...
- I mean, ...

Giving bad news or a refusal

- I'm sorry, but ...
- Unfortunately,...
- I'm afraid .. (BrE)

Making things less serious

- A small / a slight > There may be a slight delay
- A bit / slightly > The price is slightly higher

Use 'just' and 'sorry'

- Can I ask you something? > Could I just ask you something?
- I disagree > Sorry, but I don't really agree

Replace negative sounding adjectives with 'NOT' + 'Opposite

Adjective'

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- That's terrible > That's not great
- I think that's a bad idea > I don't think that's a such good idea

Replace: You said with I understood

- You said you'd give us a 4% discount > I understood we could have a 4% discount

Don't finger point

- You don't understand me > Perhaps I'm not making myself clear.
- You didn't explain that properly > Sorry, I'm not following

Use vague language

- Have you read my email yet? > Did you have a chance to read that email?

Share your experiences with us!

POLITE LANGUAGE: FOR OR AGAINST

Some people argue that 'polite' language can sound fake and confusing.

On the other hand, others would argue that polite language is way of showing people respect.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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- Have you ever been misunderstood when you were trying to be kind?
- Have you ever struggled to know which phrases to use in order to be polite?
- Have you had difficulties writing emails to international colleagues? What happened? How did you fix it?