

Lesson 23: Likes, Dislikes, & Preferences

Conversation #1 – Expressing Likes & Dislikes

Denise and Robert are business partners. They're evaluating a new design for a website for their online store.

Denise: The designer sent us three possibilities for the site. Here's the first one – I think it looks good.

Robert: Hmm... I like the colors, but I'm not crazy about the format. It seems kinda disorganized.

Denise: Actually, I didn't like it at first either, but then it grew on me. The design is a bit unusual, but once you start exploring the website, it's easy to get the hang of it. *(get the hang of it = learn a new skill)*

Robert: Let me see the next one.

Denise: I love the way this design highlights the photos of our products. They're really eye-catching. But I don't care for the font he used; it's too small and hard to read.

Robert: This one has potential. We can just ask him to increase the size of the text. But I don't like the logo at all.

Denise: Okay... well... here's number three. I'm not a big fan of this look; I think it's too formal. What do you think of it?

Robert: Well, don't rule it out yet - the design is pretty sophisticated. I'd rather have a professional-looking website than one that looks amateurish. I can't stand the animated logo on the top though. It's distracting. Could you ask the designer to take it out?

Denise: Well, I don't mind the animation... but if it bothers you, I guess I'll ask him to make some changes and then send us new designs. But I hate to delay the project any further...

Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases

In this dialogue, we hear a number of phrases for expressing likes, dislikes, and preferences. You learned a few of these expressions in the lesson about hobbies - but not every expression can be used in every case.

Phrases for liking something:

- **“I like...”**

I like... Italian food / rock music / learning languages.

Your sentence: I like _____

- **“I like it a lot.” / “I really like...” (more common)**

I like... this restaurant / my teacher ...a lot.

I really like... my new apartment / playing tennis / my boyfriend's parents.

Your sentence: I really like _____

- **“I love...”**

I love your haircut! / I love to read. / I love the way he writes.

Your sentence: I love _____

- **“I absolutely love...”**

I absolutely love this dress. / I absolutely love traveling with my family.

Your sentence: I absolutely love _____



These are the most common expressions. “I like” is the weakest, and “I absolutely love...” is the strongest. You can use “like” and “love” for both nouns (like food, houses/apartments, music, movies, books, etc.) and verbs (reading, learning, playing tennis, etc.)

As mentioned in a previous lesson, after “like” and “love” you can use either the “to” form or the -ing form of the verb with no difference in meaning. I like to read = I like reading.

By the way, be careful not to make the common mistake of saying “I like very much this city” – the correct way to say it is: “I like this city very much.”

Here are a few phrases for liking things that are used in more specific situations:

- **"I'm fond of..."**

*This phrase is used when you have a special, warm, emotional attachment to something. For example, you could say, "I'm fond of this photo. It was taken on our honeymoon." The expression "I'm fond of..." can also be used for **people**.*

Your sentence: I'm fond of _____

- **"I'm crazy about..." / "I'm really into..."**

Both of these phrases are informal.

Your sentence: I'm crazy about _____

- **"It's right up [one's] alley."**

This expression means that some activity is perfect for a person's personality and interests. If Denise enjoys marketing and design, then the new website project is "right up her alley."

Your sentence: _____ is right up my alley.

- **"I didn't like it at first, but then it grew on me."**

Use this phrase when you didn't like something initially, but then you began to like it as time passed.

Your sentence: I didn't like _____ at first, but then it grew on me.

Phrases for disliking something:

We don't usually say "I dislike" in English. It's more typical to say "I don't like..." However, depending on the situation, you might want to express your dislike more indirectly. These phrases are diplomatic and polite ways to say you don't like something:

- **"I'm not a big fan of..."**

I'm not a big fan of horror movies.

Your sentence: I'm not a big fan of _____.

- **"I'm not crazy about..."**

I'm not crazy about this painting.

Your sentence: I'm not crazy about _____.

- **"I don't care for..."**

I don't care for spicy food.

Your sentence: I don't care for _____.

- **“I don’t really like...”**

I don’t really like going to parties where I don’t know anybody.

I don’t really like my sister-in-law.

I don’t really like video games.

Your sentence: I don’t really like _____.

- **“It’s not my thing. / It’s not my cup of tea.”**

Skiing is not my thing.

Going to nightclubs is not my cup of tea.

These expressions are used only for activities, not for people or objects.

Your sentence: _____ is not my thing.



The first three phrases are most typically used with **objects**. The last phrases are used for **activities**. And the phrase “I don’t really like...” can be used for **people, objects, or activities**.

If you want to express *strong* dislike, you can use these phrases:

- **“I can’t stand...”**

I can’t stand Margaret. She talks too much!

I can’t stand it when people call me and don’t leave a message.

Your sentence: I can’t stand _____.

- **“I don’t like it at all.”**

I don’t like this hotel at all.

I don’t like Peter at all. He seems dishonest.

Your sentence: I don’t like _____ at all.

- **“I hate...”**

I hate tomatoes.

I hate going out in the rain.

I hate it when my kids fight with each other.

Your sentence: I hate _____.

The expression “I can’t stand...” is used more for *annoying* things. “I don’t like it at all” is a strong statement of dislike, and “I hate...” is the strongest statement. A few other words for “hate” are **loathe**, **detest**, and **despise**, although these are less common.

One very common structure is to say “I hate it when...” or “I can’t stand it when...” and then describe the situation that angers or annoys you.

In the conversation, we actually heard a *less* strong way to use the word “hate” – Denise said, “I hate to delay the project any further.” This way of using the word “hate” means something more like “I don’t want to delay the project any further” or “I think it’s unfortunate to delay the project any further.”

Conversation #2: Expressing Preferences

After weeks of work, Denise and Robert have two designs and need to make the final decision between them.

Denise: Okay, here are the final designs - let's call them A and B. Which one do you prefer?

Robert: They're really quite different. Design A is very colorful and fun, and design B has a more formal look. I like the logo on A better, but I prefer the layout of B.

Denise: Robert, we need to just make a choice. I'd really rather not ask for any more changes. I think the designer's getting fed up!

(fed up = annoyed)

Robert: Hold on now... I'd rather take our time and not rush the decision. What do you think?

Denise: I strongly prefer A. It's still professional-looking, but it has more personality. Plus, I like the way the menu is set up, and I think it's easier to navigate.

Robert: See, that's where we differ. I tend to favor a more traditional format, whereas you like to experiment and be creative.

Denise: Actually, I asked a bunch of our employees too – and they all prefer Design A.

Robert: Oh – well... I guess I'm outnumbered! All right then – let's go with A.

Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases

In this dialogue, we hear a few different phrases used to express preference. They are the same in meaning, but there are a few details that are different.

After the expressions **I prefer...** and **I'd prefer...**, you can use a noun or a verb:

- **"I prefer** the blue shirt. It's nicer than the red one."
prefer + noun
- **"I prefer** running to swimming."
prefer + -ing form of the verb
- **"I prefer** to wake up early."
prefer + to form of the verb – used for a general preference
- **I'd prefer** to check with the boss before making this decision.
I'd prefer + to form of the verb – used for a specific situation

After the expression **"I'd rather..."** you can only use a verb – WITHOUT "to":

- **"I'd rather** watch TV than do my homework."
- **"I'd rather** live in a house than in an apartment."
- **"I'd rather not** go to the party; I'm not feeling well."
- **"I'd rather not** spend more than \$1000 on a new computer."

The expression **"I tend to favor..."** is used for general preferences – preferences that you usually have all the time, not just in one specific situation:

- "I tend to favor tea over coffee."
- "I tend to favor sci-fi movies over fantasy."
- "There are a lot of great dishes at this restaurant, but I tend to favor the seafood."

A simple and informal way to express your preference is:

- "I like the first design **better** than the second one."
- "I like rock music **more** than country music."
- "I like reading poetry **a lot better/more** than reading novels."
- "I like broccoli **a little better/more** than cauliflower."

Finally, what do you say if you have no preference? Here are a few options:

Which one do you prefer? Which one do you like better?

- **"It doesn't matter to me."**
- **"It makes no difference to me."**
- **"It's all the same to me."**
- **"I don't care. / I couldn't care less."**

These phrases – especially the second one – are a little bit rude.

- **"It's up to you. / It's your decision. / It's your call."**

Say these when you don't have a preference, and you want the other person to make the decision.

You've finished Lesson 23! Today's speaking task is to [leave a message](#) telling me about music, food, and activities that you like and dislike. Try to use the phrases from this lesson in your answer.