

Speak English With Vanessa

Free PDF Worksheet

Dear English Learner,

Get ready to speak confidently with these English expressions. I recommend reading these sample sentences out loud and using the blank space on the last page to answer my challenge question using the vocabulary. Thanks so much for learning English with me!

*Your teacher,
Vanessa*

Casual Alternatives to “What?”

1. Sorry?
Simply say, “Sorry?” You’ll notice that we use “sorry” in front of a lot of these phrases.
2. Sorry, what’d you say?
This is great to use if you weren’t completely paying attention.
3. Sorry, can you say that again?
Say this if there is a lot of noise and you can’t hear what someone is saying.
4. What was that?
Say this if you catch someone saying something that they didn’t want you to hear.
5. One more time? = Can you say that one more time?
Say this if you have already asked the person to repeat themselves several times.

Regional Alternatives to “What?”

These 4 are common sayings in parts of the US. These phrases can be used when you don’t understand, or when someone says something surprising and you want them to repeat it.

For example: Your friend tells you that she’s moving to Japan next month. You can say these phrases to show your shock and that you want her to say it again.

6. Come again?

7. How's that?
8. Do what?
9. Say what?

Professional Alternatives to “What?”

10. I'm sorry. I didn't catch what you said.
You can say this when it's noisy or maybe you weren't paying attention.
11. Can you run that by me again?
Say this if what someone said to you was long, confusing or difficult to understand.
12. Could you rephrase that for me?
Use this phrase if what someone is saying to you is unclear.
13. When you say [x] do you mean [y]?
For example: When you say “the manager,” do you mean “the regional manager”?
Use this phrase when you want to make sure you understand terms or lingo.
14. Could you be more specific?
You can say this when someone says something vague.
15. Can you elaborate on that?
Say this when you need more details or ideas about something that someone is saying.
16. I'm sorry, can you repeat that?
A clear, polite, professional way to ask someone to repeat what they just said.
17. Let me make sure I understand this right...
Say this phrase, then repeat what you understand the other person to be saying.
18. Just to clarify...
Say this phrase, then summarize what you think the other person is saying.

Be careful!!

These can be polite phrases, but depending on the situation and your tone of voice, it can sound aggressive. Be VERY careful if you use them with a neutral, non-aggressive voice.

19. I beg your pardon?

20. Excuse me?

Aggressive example:

Boss: *The company is going through a hard time, so all vacations are cancelled for the next two months.*

Employee: *I beg your pardon?!?!*

Vanessa's Challenge Question

Use the space below to write a few sentences answering this question: **We're watching a loud outdoor concert together, and I try to tell you something, but you can't hear me. What will you say to me?**

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