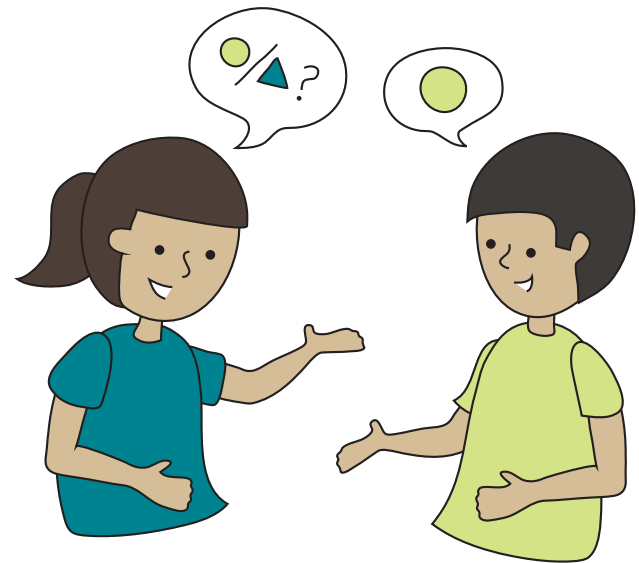


Asking for Clarification



Warm-Up

Clarify is a verb. It means “to make clear.” You need to speak and understand language clearly in order to communicate. If you don’t understand someone, you need to ask for clarification. *Clarification* is a noun.

In the paragraph above, what parts of speech are the words *clear* and *clearly*?

Dialogues

Read the dialogues, and practice with a partner.

A. Asking for Clarification

Dialogue 1

- A: **Excuse me. Could you repeat that, please?**
 B: No problem. I said that the next bus comes in 15 minutes.

Dialogue 2

- A: **I’m not sure I follow. Could you give me an example?**
 B: Sure. Let me think of one.

Dialogue 3

- A: **Did you say the meeting is on Friday?**
 B: No, I said the meeting is today. We’re meeting to discuss Friday’s schedule.

B. Using Tag Questions to Ask for Clarification

Dialogue 1

- A: You said three cups of sugar, **right?**
 B: No, I said two cups of sugar.

Dialogue 2

- A: You understand the rules, **don’t you?**
 B: Yes, I understand them clearly.

Dialogue 3

- A: You are Joey’s wife, **aren’t you?**
 B: No, I am Allan’s wife. Lisa is Joey’s wife.
 A: Oh, I’m sorry! You and Lisa look similar. Thanks for clarifying.

C. Offering Clarification

Dialogue 1

- A: **What I mean is, come over anytime.**
 B: Oh, okay. Thanks for clarifying.

Dialogue 2

- A: **Let me explain that differently.**
 B: Thanks. I’m really confused.

Dialogue 3

- A: **Let me clarify. This trip is just for the senior students.**
 B: Oh, I misunderstood. I thought it was for all of the students.

Asking for Clarification

A. Useful Expressions for Interrupting

Never pretend to understand something that you don't understand. Use a polite expression to interrupt and ask for clarification if you don't hear or understand something properly.

1. Pardon me?
2. I beg your pardon?
3. Excuse me. Could you repeat that, please?
4. Could you say that again?
5. I'm sorry, I didn't hear you properly.
6. I'm sorry, I missed that.
7. I'm sorry, I didn't catch that.
8. I don't understand what you mean. /
What does _____ mean?
9. Could you give an example? /
Could you explain more about _____?
10. Did you say _____?
(repeat what you think a person said)

B. Speaking Practice

Now work with a partner. First, work together to come up with questions for the responses below (orally). Then practice asking and answering the questions together. The person who asks the question will ask for clarification after hearing the response. The respondent will repeat the answer (more slowly). Finally, switch roles.

Responses:

- 459-9901
- 450 Water Street
- Melissa
- April 14
- It's on page 45.
- There is no parking available here.
You will have to park on the street.
- In aisle seven.

Example:

- A: What's your phone number?
B: 459-9901.
A: I'm sorry, I didn't catch that.
B: (more slowly) 459-9901.

Let Me Be Clear

Play a game of broken telephone in small groups. One person starts a message and whispers it to another person. Did the message make it all the way to the end of the line? Now play again. This time, if you don't hear correctly, ask the whisperer for clarification:

Example:

- A: (whispering) I like cute puppies, such as poodles.
B: (out loud) I'm sorry, I didn't hear you.
A: (whispering) I said I like cute puppies, such as poodles.

Informal Clarification

BETWEEN FRIENDS

Close friends and family members aren't always polite. You may hear them asking for clarification in a very informal way.

- What?
- Say again?
- Huh?
- Wha'd you say?
(What did you say?)

Vocabulary Review

A. Choose the Best Response

Listen to the recording. Circle the best response for each question.

1. a) Let me clarify.
b) No, I don't get it.
c) Yes, that's right.
2. a) Allow me to rephrase that.
b) Thanks. I'm really confused.
c) Yes, it's a good one.
3. a) You're coming, aren't you?
b) Understand?
c) That's right.
4. a) Yes, you got it now.
b) Let me explain.
c) I'm sorry, I don't understand.
5. a) Follow me.
b) Sorry. I'll give you an example.
c) Yes, that's how I got here.
6. a) No, I said for 14.
b) That's okay.
c) Oh, I misunderstood.

B. Word Forms

The word "clarify" is a verb. The word "clarification" is a noun.
The word "clear" is an adjective. Which word is needed in each blank?

1. Are we all _____ on what we need to do?
2. Let me _____. You *can* use a dictionary.
3. Please ask for _____ if you don't understand.
4. I need you to _____ the instructions.
5. The voice message was not _____.
Can you tell us your address again?

A Fun Idiom

ON THE SAME PAGE

to have the same information
and a shared understanding
of something

- I just want to make sure
we're all on the same page.
- Are we on the same page?
- I don't think we're
on the same page.

Review

Task 1

Work with a partner. Read a dialogue between two hockey coaches and some parents. Identify the following:

1. the date of the event
2. the location of the event
3. clothing requirements
4. transportation details
5. the cost of the event
6. one special rule
7. one important reminder

A TEAM MEETING

- Coach #1:** Hi, parents. We have a few announcements about the upcoming hockey tournament. As you know, the tournament is on the second weekend in March in Brampton, Ontario.
- Interrupting Parent #1:** Pardon me, where is it?
- Coach #2:** Brampton. Next, all players must have their Home and Away jerseys.
- Interrupting Parent #2:** Sorry, I missed that.
- Coach #1:** Bring your child's Home and Away jerseys to the tournament.
- Coach #2:** Next, each child must bring his own skates, helmet, padding, and hockey stick. We will not have extras.
- Interrupting Parent #1:** Could you repeat that, please?
- Coach #2:** Bring your child's jerseys, skates, helmet, padding, and hockey stick.
- Coach #1:** We are taking a bus. The bus is leaving on Saturday at 9:00 am from Market Square.
- Interrupting Parent #2:** Sorry, did you say Markham?
- Coach #1:** I said Market Square. Am I forgetting anything?
- Coach #2:** No siblings are allowed on the bus.
- Interrupting Parent #1:** I'm sorry, what does that mean?
- Coach #2:** No brothers or sisters. Players and parents only.
- Coach #1:** Oh, and all players must bring a deposit of \$50 to Monday's practice.
- Interrupting Parent #2:** Pardon me? Did you say \$15?
- Coach #1:** \$50. Five-oh. And don't forget to sign and submit the permission form.
- Coach #2:** Are there any questions?

Task 2

- the date of the event
- the location of the event
- clothing/equipment requirements
- transportation details
- the cost of the event
- one special rule
- one important reminder

[illegible]

Review cont.

Task 3

It's time to hold your parent meeting. Go to the front of the room with your partner and hold your meeting. The parents (classmates) will practice interrupting you politely to ask for clarification. They may also ask you additional questions.

Remember to talk about:

- the date of the event
- the location of the event
- clothing/equipment requirements
- transportation details
- the cost of the event
- one special rule
- one important reminder

Did You Remember?**PROMPTS FOR INTERRUPTING**

1. Pardon me?
2. I beg your pardon?
3. Excuse me. Could you repeat that, please?
4. Could you say that again?
5. I'm sorry, I didn't hear you properly.
6. I'm sorry, I missed that.
7. I'm sorry, I didn't catch that.
8. I don't understand what you mean. / What does _____ mean?
9. Could you give an example? / Could you explain more about _____ ?
10. Did you say _____ ? (*repeat what you think a person said*)

Speaking Assessment Tool

Student / Group: _____

Date	Level	Assessed By	Role-Play Scenario	Skills
			Asking for Clarification	Speaking, Listening

Criteria	Achieved 😊	Achieved With Help 🤔	Needs Improvement 😞
interrupts politely			
asks for clarification using tag questions			
provides a reason for the lack of comprehension or understanding			
speaks clearly			

Notes




Learner Reflection

ASKING FOR CLARIFICATION

Add check marks (✓) to show what you've learned in this lesson.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Can I...	Yes (very well) 	Yes (with help) 	Not yet 
ask for clarification?			
use tag questions when asking for clarification?			
offer clarification?			
interrupt politely when I don't understand or don't hear properly?			
ask for clarification in a very informal situation?			

My Notes

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

Students review language and useful expressions for clarifying and asking for clarification. They play a modified game of broken telephone and practice interrupting for clarification. An optional three-part review/assessment task is included at the end of the lesson.

LEVEL: Int

TIME: 1–2 hours

TAGS: functional English, useful expressions, clarifying, asking for clarification, interrupting, tag questions

Warm-Up

Discuss why being able to clarify and ask for clarification is so important. What happens if you don't know how to (or if you're too shy to) ask for clarification? Remind students that *clear* is an adjective and *clearly* is an adverb.

Dialogues

Have students practice the dialogues in pairs. If you have not introduced tag questions, you may need a supplementary lesson. Check out our editor's tips on teaching tag questions: <http://blog.esllibrary.com/2012/11/29/tag-questions-are-fun-to-teach-arent-they/>

There is also additional practice in our Functional English lesson, *Reporting a Missing Item*: <https://esllibrary.com/courses/92/lessons/2106>

Asking for Clarification

A. USEFUL EXPRESSIONS FOR INTERRUPTING

Read the useful expressions out loud, and have your students repeat them. Check for proper intonation.

Explain that people who are in a close relationship will use informal language to ask for clarification. Make sure your students understand that these expressions can be considered rude or abrupt if the relationship is not informal and close.

B. SPEAKING PRACTICE

Place students in pairs for the practice exercise. They will think of questions before they practice a Q&A with interruptions. Questions will vary. Here are some possible examples:

- What is your phone number?
- What is the address?
- What is your/her name?
- When is your birthday?
- What page is it on?
- Where should/can I park?
- Where would I find the cereal?

Let Me Be Clear

Put students in groups. (If you have a small class, play all together). Play a regular game of broken telephone. Then play the revised game where students ask each other for clarification.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Vocabulary Review

Explain the idiom in the box ("on the same page") and use it as often as you can in class. Explain how teachers might use this expression literally and figuratively.

A. CHOOSE THE BEST RESPONSE

1. a 2. b 3. c 4. b 5. b 6. a

Transcript:

1. I'm sorry, but I don't get it.
2. I'll give you an example.
3. You said the party starts at 9:00, right?
4. I'm confused.
5. I'm not sure I follow.
6. You said a table for four, right?

B. WORD FORMS

- | | | |
|------------|------------------|----------|
| 1. clear | 3. clarification | 5. clear |
| 2. clarify | 4. clarify | |

Review (Assessment Tasks)

The following three tasks can be used for assessment purposes and/or review practice.

TASK 1

Have four volunteers read the dialogue out loud for the class. Put students in pairs. Have them read the dialogue again to identify the information. Take up the answers together:

1. second weekend in March
2. Brampton, Ontario
3. Home and Away jerseys, skate, helmet, padding, stick
4. a bus that is leaving on Saturday at 9:00 am from Market Square
5. \$50
6. no siblings on the bus
7. sign permission form and bring to Monday's practice

TASK 2

Give pairs time to come up with an idea for a parent meeting and plan the details of their meeting in short form. Discourage students from writing out full sentences.

TASK 3

If you want to use this task for summative assessment, hand out the ready-made Speaking Assessment Tool (page 7), or personalize your own from a template in Shared Criteria for Success: <https://esllibrary.com/resources/2352>

Give each pair the opportunity to come to the front of the class to hold a parent meeting. The other students will be the parents. Encourage the other students to interrupt politely throughout the meeting. You can decide whether or not to allow other students to have the interruption prompts on page 6 available or not. For this task, you will be assessing the students who are acting as parents asking for clarification (rather than the coaches/leaders).

Learner Reflection

When you are finished with this lesson, have your students reflect on their learning by filling in the chart.

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the word *Practice*. Other English-speaking countries spell it this way: *Practise* (when used as a verb; *Practice* when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find this word in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spelling.

ABOUT THE EMOJI:

The emoji (and their derivatives) used in this lesson are from Twemoji, an open-source project by Twitter. They are licensed under CC-BY 4.0. <https://github.com/twitter/twemoji>