

awk·ward ^{S3}

/ˈɔːkwəd \$ ˈɔːkwərd/

adjective

1 EMBARRASSED making you feel embarrassed so that you are not sure what to do or say

SYN difficult

*I hoped he would stop asking **awkward questions**.*

There was an awkward moment when she didn't know whether to shake his hand or kiss his cheek.

*an **awkward silence***

A laugh can help people over an awkward situation.

*Philip's remarks **put her in an awkward position** (= made it difficult for her to know what to do).*

2 EMBARRASSEDCLUMSY not relaxed or comfortable:

She liked to dance but felt awkward if someone was watching her.

Geoff looked uneasy and awkward.

Make sure that the baby is not sleeping in an awkward position.

3 DIFFICULT difficult to do, use, or deal with:

It'll be awkward getting cars in and out.

The new financial arrangements were awkward to manage.

A good carpenter can make a cupboard to fit the most awkward space.

She was afraid he was going to ask an awkward question.

4 CONVENIENT not convenient:

I'm sorry to call at such an awkward time but I won't keep you a minute.

5 HELP an awkward person is deliberately unhelpful

SYN difficult:

awkward about

The staff wanted to go home and they were getting awkward about a meeting starting so late.

*an **awkward customer** (= person who is difficult and unhelpful)*

— **awkwardly** adv:

'I'm very sorry about your sister,' he said awkwardly.

Vera smiled awkwardly.

— **awkwardness** noun [uncountable] :

He tried to smooth over the awkwardness of the situation.

Word origin

Date: 1500–1600

Origin: *awk* 'turned the wrong way' (15–17 centuries) (from Old Norse *öfugr*) + *-ward*