

COMMUNICATION

Asking for a favour

LEVEL

Intermediate (B1)

NUMBER

EN_B1_1111X

LANGUAGE

English

Learning outcomes

- I can politely ask for a favour.
- I can recognise and recall a variety of ways to accept or reject a favour.

Warm-up

Choose one person from below. What was **the last thing** you asked them for help with?



A parent

A friend

A neighbour

A colleague

Reading

Read the text and **answer** the questions below.

Matt: Thad! Could you do me a favour and tape these boxes up, please?

Thad: Sure thing. I'll just grab some tape from the kitchen! Is there anything else I can help you with?

Matt: Actually, yes! While you're in there, would you mind checking if all the drawers in the kitchen are empty?

Thad: No, not at all! Will you pass me my phone? I need to text Vanessa about the van. She said she'd lend it to us for the afternoon. Remember?

Matt: Ah, yes. Let's see what she says! Ooof! This box is heavy. Could you give me a hand with it?



1. What are Matt and Thad doing?
2. What three things does Matt ask Thad to do?
3. Why does Thad need to text Vanessa?



Could you **do me a favour** and tape these boxes up?

Could you give me a hand?

Are these phrases **more formal** or **informal**? Note how the first phrase is formed: ***do me a favour and*** + **bare infinitive**



Will you **pass** me my phone?



What's another way of saying **this verb**?



Asking for a favour

We use these phrases to ask for a favour. **Complete** the rules then **answer** the questions.

Can you give
me a hand?



Could you give
me a hand?

Will you pass
me my phone?



Would you pass
me my phone?

- Which **four auxiliary verbs** do we use to ask for a favour?

_____ / _____

OR

+ **you** + **bare infinitive**?

_____ / _____

- Are the two phrases on the right **more or less polite** than those on the left?
- Discuss your answers as a group!

Yes, of course!
Sure thing!

Sorry, I'm busy!
I'm afraid not!

Which phrases can
we use to **accept** a favour? Which
can we use to **reject** one?



Transform the sentences

The sentences below all use imperatives and sound quite impolite! **Transform** them into questions using **can/could you...** or **will/would you...** to make them sound more polite.

1 Carry those suitcases downstairs!



2 Pass me that book on the shelf!



3 Always lock the door on your way out!



4 Water my plants while I'm on holiday!



5 Remind me to call my sister tomorrow!



to borrow vs to lend

Read the sentences below and **answer** the questions about *to borrow* vs *to lend*.

Could you **lend me** your van for the afternoon?

Could I **borrow** your van for the afternoon?

Thad and Matt's friend Vanessa **lends** them her van.
But why *lend* and not *borrow*? Discuss as a class!

- Hint 1: Which highlighted word is another way of saying **give** and **receive back later**?
- Hint 2: Which highlighted word is another way of saying **take** and **return later**?





Discuss

**What was the last thing
you lent to a friend?**



**Who is someone who
always borrows clothes
from you?**



Multiple choice

1 Could you _____ my friend your car for the weekend?

a. borrow

b. lend

2 I need you to _____ me thirty pounds for these tickets.

a. borrow

b. lend

3 I never _____ money from my parents. I like being independent.

a. borrow

b. lend

Asking for a favour

Read the sentences below and **complete** the blue boxes.

Would you **mind checking** that all the drawers in the kitchen are empty?

Would you **mind picking** me up from the party at midnight?

- ***Would you mind...?*** is another way of asking for a favour in English.
- It's a bit more polite than ***can/could you...?*** or ***will/would you...?***.

- We follow it with the **-ing form** of the verb (e.g. *checking; picking*)
- Ask your teacher for a favour using ***Would you mind...?***

Would you mind
opening the window?

No, not at all!

Why do we use a negative answer as
a positive response? How would we
answer this question negatively?



Look at these five situations

Practise asking for a favour politely using *Would you mind...?* Who would you ask a favour from?

1 Your work laptop has just broken and you have a report to finish by tomorrow.



2 Your best friend is visiting on Saturday, but you have a lunch with your mother that day.



3 You have a date on Friday night. You don't want to leave your new puppy alone at home.



4 You have a work event on Thursday and want to look your best. You have nothing nice to wear.



5 You have a flight very early in the morning. You don't want to pay for a taxi to the airport.





Role-play

1. **Choose** one of the situations. **Makes notes** on what favour you would ask for.
2. **Role-play** your situation with a partner (in the classroom or in breakout rooms).
3. After the breakout room: **tell** the class if your partner accepted the favour or not!



You're freezing cold in the office and a colleague has the window open. You are too far away to close it.

You're going to miss a delivery this evening because you won't be at home. Your neighbour is always at home.

You've bought a piece of furniture and can't build it alone because it needs two people. Your friend is very good at D.I.Y.

You're going to a festival that can only be reached by car. Your brother is the only person you know who can drive.



End of the lesson

Idiom

I owe you one!

Meaning: You did me a favour, so I will do you a favour in return at a later time.



Additional practice

Make the sentences polite

These sentences are too direct and perhaps rude. **Soften** them with requests using *could*.

1 Hold the door for me.



2 Help me out.



3 I need you to take care of my dog.



4 Do me a favour.



5 Let me borrow your jacket.



Fill in the gaps

Fill in the gaps with the correct verbs.



- 1 Would you mind _____ me?
- 2 Could you _____ me with the washing-up?
- 3 Would you mind _____ outside to smoke?
- 4 Do you think you could _____ me some money?
- 5 Would you be able to _____ me a hand with this list?

give
helping
help
lend
going



How would you say it?

Form questions for each person. Practise asking for and granting favours with a partner.



Boss



Sister



Friend



Grandma

***Would you mind staying late today?
Sure, no problem/No, not at
all/Yeah, sure.***

***Do you think you could you help me
with my homework?
Absolutely.***

- move to the next seat
- borrow your car
- help me out
- with these bags
- lend me some money



Discuss

“

Neither a borrower nor a lender be.
- *William Shakespeare*

What do you think Shakespeare meant by this?

Do you agree with him or not? Why or why not?

Are you more of a lender or a borrower?





Answer key

- P.4:**
1. They are getting ready to move house (or flat).
 2. Matt asks Thad to help him tape up the boxes, to check that the kitchen drawers are empty, and to give him a hand with the boxes.
 3. As Vanessa is going to lend Thad her van for the afternoon.
- P.7:**
1. can/could; will/would
 2. the questions on the right are more polite (could/would)
- P.12:**
1. b). 2. b). 3. a)
- P.21:**
1. helping 2. help 3. going 4. lend 5. give



Summary

Kinds of favours

- personal favours
 - work favours
- favours among strangers
deciding whom to ask for favours

Asking for favours

- Forming polite questions with *Could I...?* and *Could you...?*
- Asking for things vs. Asking people to do things

to borrow vs to lend

- *to borrow* – intransitive/ *lend* - transitive
- *to borrow* means to take something from someone with the intention of returning it.
- *to lend* means to give something to someone else with the intention of getting it back.



Vocabulary

to do a favour

to give someone a hand

to lend (someone) something

to borrow something

Would you mind... + -ing

Could you...?

Would you...?

Can you...?

Will you...?

to pass

