

COMMUNICATION

Admitting to a mistake

LEVEL

Intermediate (B1)

NUMBER

EN_B1_2093X

LANGUAGE

ENGLISH

Learning outcomes

- I can identify and recall a variety of vocabulary and phrases related to mistakes.
- I can apologise for a mistake in a variety of situations and say what I'll do differently next time.



Warm-up

Discuss your ideas as a class. How many different ideas can you think of?

**You're planning a
dinner party with
lots of people!**

**What are some things that can
go wrong before and during
the party?**



Reading

Our readers share some of their dinner party stories. **What happened to each person?**

Disasters at dinnertime!



Sue, 31, from Manchester

Once, I invited all my friends to my flat for dinner. We were enjoying a few glasses of champagne in the lounge and I completely forgot to take the chicken out of the oven! I'd burnt the whole thing. In the end, we ordered pizzas and drank more champagne. I'll never forget to use a timer again!



Tommy, 44, from Sheffield

My partner, Jess, had her boss round for dinner. I brought out the soup and, served Jess' boss first, of course. I didn't realise the pan was so heavy and accidentally dropped it. The hot soup spilled everywhere and onto her boss' dress. Next time, I'll be more careful with those big pans!



Poppy, 25, from Glasgow

My brothers and I threw a dinner party for my parents' wedding anniversary. We baked them a cake and got the measurements totally wrong. We thought the recipe said 2 tablespoons of baking soda, not teaspoons. The cake was very...erm... bitter. I will never confuse *tsp* with *tbsp*, again!

Read the article again

This time, **focus more closely on the language** by **answering the questions** in the boxes.

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Can you find examples of **verbs to describe a mistake**?

What does each verb mean?

Are there any other words you don't know?

Vocabulary check

Match the **verbs** to describe a **mistake** with the correct picture.

1



2



3



4



5



6



a I **confused** meat with fish!

b He **forgot** to take his keys!

c We **burned** the gravy!

d You **spilled** the red wine!

e She **dropped** the bowl!

f I **got** the password **wrong**!



Write a sentence

Use each of the verbs correctly in a sentence. Be careful if you use **to forget** with another verb!

1 to confuse



I confused salt with sugar in the recipe!

2 to forget (to)



3 to burn



4 to spill



5 to drop



6 to get wrong





I **accidentally** dropped
your new wine glass!

Native speakers add this **adverb** when
explaining something they've done
wrong.

What does it mean? Where can it go in the
sentence?

Admitting to a mistake

Look at the two examples from the text. Then, answer the question below.



Poppy

We thought the recipe said two tablespoons of baking soda, not two *teaspoons*!



Tommy

I dropped hot soup everywhere. I didn't realise the pan was so heavy!

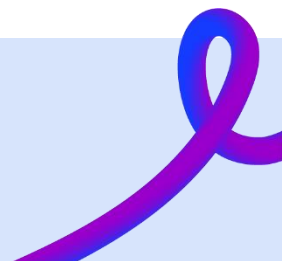
- We can also say we ***thought*** or ***didn't realise*** something when we admit to a mistake.
- Look at the **verb** that comes next in the sentence. **Which tense** is it in?



Admit your mistake

Use *I thought* or *I didn't realise* to **admit** to your mistake in each situation.

- | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|-------------------|
| 1 | Your friend cannot drink milk and you've made them cheesecake for dessert. | > | I didn't realise you were allergic to milk! | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 2 | You leave your friend's expensive vase on the ground and someone kicks it over. | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 3 | You make a dinner reservation for the wrong weekend with a person you find attractive. | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 4 | You buy the incorrect kind of flour for the dessert your partner wants to make. | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 5 | You arrive at a party dressed as a clown and everyone else is wearing normal clothes. | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 6 | You buy flowers meant for a funeral for your mother-in-law's birthday. | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |



Making an apology

“

I'm so sorry, but I didn't realise that you were both vegetarian! I'll be sure to remember next time.

In what situation could someone say this?

How do they apologise?

How do they admit to their mistake?

Why do they say *next time*?

Which tense do they use here?





Accepting an apology

Use the words below to create five complete phrases.

Hint: Two of your sentences will begin with **It's...**



Don't worry...

It's...

It wasn't...

...your fault!

It was an...

...absolutely fine!

...honest mistake

...no big deal

...about it

Role-play a situation

1. **Choose** a situation. **Make some notes** on what you'll say.
2. **Role-play** the situation with a partner.



- Apologise for it
- Admit to the mistake
- Tell the person what you'll do differently next time

1



Arrive 30 mins late
to a team meeting
at work

2



Organise a party
for Monday, not
Friday

3



Knock over a glass
of wine on a
friend's new rug

4



Don't reply to a
friend's text for a
week

5



Buy a friend a very
smelly perfume



Discuss in breakout rooms or as a class

For breakout rooms, **find** one similarity between you and your partner.

Would you call yourself a good cook or not?

Have you ever hosted a dinner party? Did anything go wrong?

How easy is it for you to admit to a mistake?

What do you consider to be a 'good apology'? What makes a bad one?



End of lesson

Idiom

Eat some humble pie

Meaning: To admit that you were in fact... wrong!

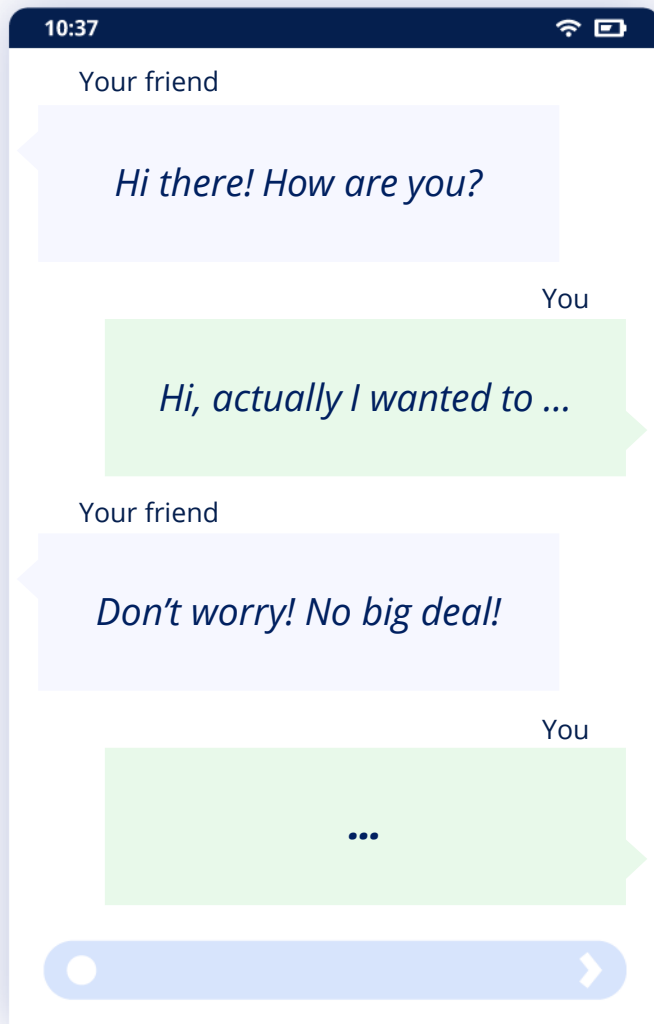
Example: Tom had to eat some humble pie after his colleagues told him that his sales figures weren't higher than theirs.



Additional practice



Sending an apology text



Choose one of the situations below and **write a short text message conversation**. Apologise for the mistake and say what you'll do differently next time.

You dropped a friend's trophy and it smashed into two pieces

You confused your friend's girlfriend with his mum

You forgot to wish your friend a happy 30th birthday

You got the date for a friend's party wrong and didn't attend



Categorise the phrases

Match the phrases with the **correct category**. Can you think of any other phrases?

1 I didn't realise and I ...

2 It is not your fault.

3 I accidentally...

4 it is absolutely fine!

5 Next time I will...

6 I am sorry I thought it was ...

Apologising

Accepting an apology

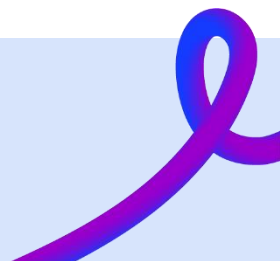
Compensating



Complete the sentences

Give as many different ideas as you can for each verb. Who can think of the most?

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | I confused... | > | the time, the place, ... | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 2 | I forgot to... | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 3 | I dropped... | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 4 | I spilt.... on.... | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 5 | I got wrong. | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 6 | I accidentally burnt.... | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |





What was the mistake?

Look at the pictures below. What do you think has happened in each one?

What do you think each person is saying? What apology are they making?



1



2



3



4



Answer key

- P.5:** Sue forgot to take chicken out the oven
Tommy spilled soup on his partner's boss.
Poppy got the measurements for baking soda wrong in a cake
Verbs: forget (to); drop; spill; confuse; get wrong; burn
- P.6:** 1. (c) 2. (e) 3. (a) 4. (d) 5. (b) 6. (f)
- P. 12:** Don't worry about it!; It's absolutely fine!; It wasn't your fault; It was an honest mistake; It's no big deal;
- P. 19:** **Apologising:** 1, 3, 6
Accepting: 2, 4
Compensating: 5



Summary

- We can describe a mistake using a variety of verbs to state what has happened:
 - It could be **drop, spill, burn** to describe a physical action
 - Or, it could be **confuse, forget** or **get wrong** to describe something more abstract.
- We use the adverb **accidentally** to express that a mistake was **not our intention** or done on purpose. We usually place it before the main verb:
 - *I **accidentally** bought the wrong ingredients at the supermarket (= I did not intend to buy the wrong ones; I made a simple error while there!).*
- When explaining we've made a mistake, it can be helpful to follow this simple structure:
 - Apologise by saying we are **sorry**.
 - Admit to the mistake or say we **thought** or **didn't realise** something.
 - Say what **we'll do differently** in the future.
- Be careful with the tenses of the verbs after **thought** or **didn't realise**:
 - *I didn't realise you **wanted** me to buy fresh herbs, and not frozen ones, at the supermarket!*
 - *I thought you **needed** me to buy frozen herbs, and not fresh ones, at the supermarket!*



Vocabulary

to forget

to confuse

to burn

to spill

to drop

to get something wrong

accidentally

apology

I thought it said...

I didn't realise it was..

Don't worry about it!

It's no big deal!

It was an honest mistake!

It's absolutely fine!

It wasn't your fault!

