

# Using tact and diplomacy

COMMUNICATION

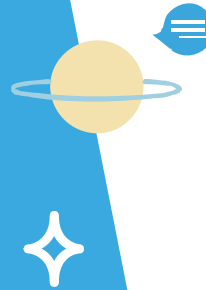
LEVEL  
Advanced

NUMBER  
C1\_4012X\_EN

LANGUAGE  
English



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## Goals

- Can explain the ideas of tact and diplomacy and the skills involved.
- Can use a range of expressions and techniques to remain tactful in a wide range of uncomfortable situations.







## Warm up discussion

Social situations can sometimes be uncomfortable.

Talk to the teacher about specific situations where someone might feel uncomfortable or awkward.





## Tell your teacher

**Explain how the following situations can make people feel.  
Have you ever encountered these situations before?**



Someone you don't know well is  
upset

argument

disagreement



What about you?

**How do you tend to  
behave in these  
kinds of situations?**

## Tact and diplomacy

**Tact** and **diplomacy** are social skills and methods which aim at understanding others and being sensitive to their ideas, feelings and beliefs.

Using **tact** and **diplomacy** effectively can lead to stronger relationships, greater respect and make communications **less stressful** for all parties.

In short, these skills involve knowing **what to say** and **how to say it** according to the **context**.



She used **tact** and **diplomacy** to avoid the awkward topic.



## Attentive listening

- One very useful skill which assists with effective tact and diplomacy is **attentive listening**.
- **Attentive listening** focuses not just on what is being said, but how it is being said. This enables the listener to react in the most appropriate way.
- Read the tips below to help you with **attentive listening**.

- Ensure you **understand** the message of what someone is telling you.
- Identifying **non-verbal communication** can help to understand the **subtext** of what someone is saying.
- Non-verbal communication might take the form of **gestures, tone** of voice and other **body language**.







## Emotional intelligence

- **Emotional intelligence** is a marker of how well someone can understand their own emotions and the emotions of others.
- People with high **emotional intelligence** are more **adept** at using tact and diplomacy.

- Understanding emotions has been classified as a type of intelligence, with no connection to intelligence of the academic kind.
- People with a higher level of emotional intelligence are more capable at developing meaningful relationships with others.
- Emotional intelligence can be useful in managing stress, coping with depression and 'fitting in' in social situations.





## Showing empathy

- **Empathy** is the ability to see something from another person's perspective.
- Successful communication relies on each participant to be aware of the feelings and emotions of others.

Feeling **empathy** is generally **intuitive**, but can also be actively worked on and developed. Empathy can be summarised by:

- Making an effort to put yourself 'in the shoes' of others, or **imagining how they must feel** in a situation
- Understanding others, picking up on emotional cues and showing sensitivity





## Useful phrases: reacting to upset emotions

That must be  
really tough.

Is there anything I  
can do?

You must be  
feeling quite upset  
at the moment.

I can see how  
that's a difficult  
situation to be in.

I'm so sorry to  
hear that  
happened to you.

I know it seems  
hard now, but with  
time things always  
do improve.



## Phrases to show empathy

**Below are some useful phrases to show you are using empathy. Can you add some of your own?**



I can understand that this must be...



I can see that you are in a difficult position...



I can only imagine how...



Putting myself in your shoes,...



## Empathy and attentive listening

**Respond to your teacher, listening for their tone and mood, using attentive listening.**



1

"You don't understand me!"



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1

"You don't understand me!"



2

"You don't understand me!"



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**Respond to your teacher, listening for their tone and mood, using attentive listening.**



1

"You don't understand me!"



2

"You don't understand me!"



3

"You don't understand me?"



## Reading between the lines

What did you notice about your teacher's voice, tone and body language that helped you to respond appropriately?







## Reacting with empathy

**Your colleague has just burst into tears in the middle of a meeting at work. She is under a lot of pressure and finding it difficult to cope. Handle the situation with empathy, and make sure you have addressed all of the points she brings up.**

Things are really getting to be too much! There is so much pressure at the moment – I just can't keep up!



Do you need to take a moment to calm down? We can talk outside if you'd like.



## Respect

**Lately a colleague has been talking to their co-workers in a dismissive way with a distinct lack of respect.**

**Write them a tactful email explaining the importance of respect and suggesting ways they can improve their communication.**

Remember to show empathy by acknowledging their perspective on the situation!

The email template consists of a window with a title bar containing three buttons: a minus sign, a square, and a red 'x'. Below the title bar are three input fields. The first field is labeled 'To:' and is empty. The second field is labeled 'Subject: Respect in the office' and is empty. The third field is a large rectangular area with horizontal lines for text, currently empty.

Remember to explain how the people your colleague is speaking to must feel too.

## diplomacy

Being **diplomatic** is hard work, and needs a huge deal of **emotional intelligence** and **discretion**. Deciding between what and what not to say can be tricky, however it is always important to handle a situation in a way that avoids offending somebody or upsetting them. Reading **how someone is feeling** plays a huge role in this.

Probably one of the most challenging aspects of **diplomacy** is striking a **balance** between being true to yourself and making sure your behaviour is not upsetting to other people. Look at the man's response below. What kind of question do you think he was just asked?



There are so many different perspectives on this. It is actually really hard to say for certain what I think about that.



## Assertiveness

- **Assertiveness** can help us get more out of our social situations and lead to more positive outcomes. It is the middle ground between **passive** and **aggressive** social behavior.
- **Assertive** behaviour can help improve our self-esteem and confidence, and build respect.
- **Assertiveness** can be a very **tactful** way of **negotiating** an argument. Look at the tips on being **assertive** below!

- Being **calm** and **persistent** – repeating clearly what you want while maintaining an even tone of voice and controlling your emotions.
- Rather than getting emotional in an argument, an **assertive** approach would aim to give a **calm** and **measured** response.





## Strategies

- Communication and relationships can be unpredictable, but mastering the art of tact and diplomacy can ensure you achieve your social goals.
- The skills discussed in this lesson can help you **negotiate**, talk your way out of difficult situations. Don't forget it also helps to **smile**!
- Other skills that are useful in a range of situations include:

- Building a **rapport**

**Rapport** building aims to reach an understanding and easy channel of communication between different people. Genuine rapport building takes time and involves finding common ground and developing a bond.

- Showing **politeness**

Being **polite** and **courteous**, as everyone is taught growing up, always pays off.



## Being diplomatic

**In what situations is it best to give your opinion, and in what situations is it best to withhold your opinion?**



## Phrases for being diplomatic: which are better in a group setting, and which are better one-on-one? Which suit both?

Maybe we can move on to some lighter conversation.

Perhaps this discussion is a little heavy for right now – maybe it would be better to continue it a different time?

I understand the situation from your point of view, but there are other ways of looking at it too.

There are so many different ways of looking at one issue.

My take on that is a little different, but I'd prefer not to get into that right now.

It's difficult to say for certain...



## Tell your teacher

**How would you show assertiveness in each of these scenarios?**



somebody is trying to tell you what to do in a situation and you have your own ideas about how to best handle it

aggressive behaviour from a colleague

someone is behaving in a manipulative way





## Be tactful!

**You are at a work function and over the course of the night you end up in two slightly uncomfortable situations with colleagues you don't know very well. How are you going to handle the situations? Will you be assertive about your opinion, or will you keep it to yourself? How will your handling of each situation differ? Role play and respond to each person.**

Steve really needs a fashion designer don't you think? He's got absolutely appalling sense of fashion. It's like his mother dresses him.



What do you mean you believe in climate change? How could you believe that? You've been brainwashed by left-wing media!



## A tough situation

**You are in a group of friends at a cafe and the conversation has turned to a topic with which your friend is extremely uncomfortable. She's growing more and more upset and nobody else seems to notice. Try to subtly change the subject without making him/her feel worse.**

- Make sure to handle the situation in a way that doesn't draw attention to your friend who is upset
- Remember to stay calm
- Try to keep things lighthearted - you can even use some humour



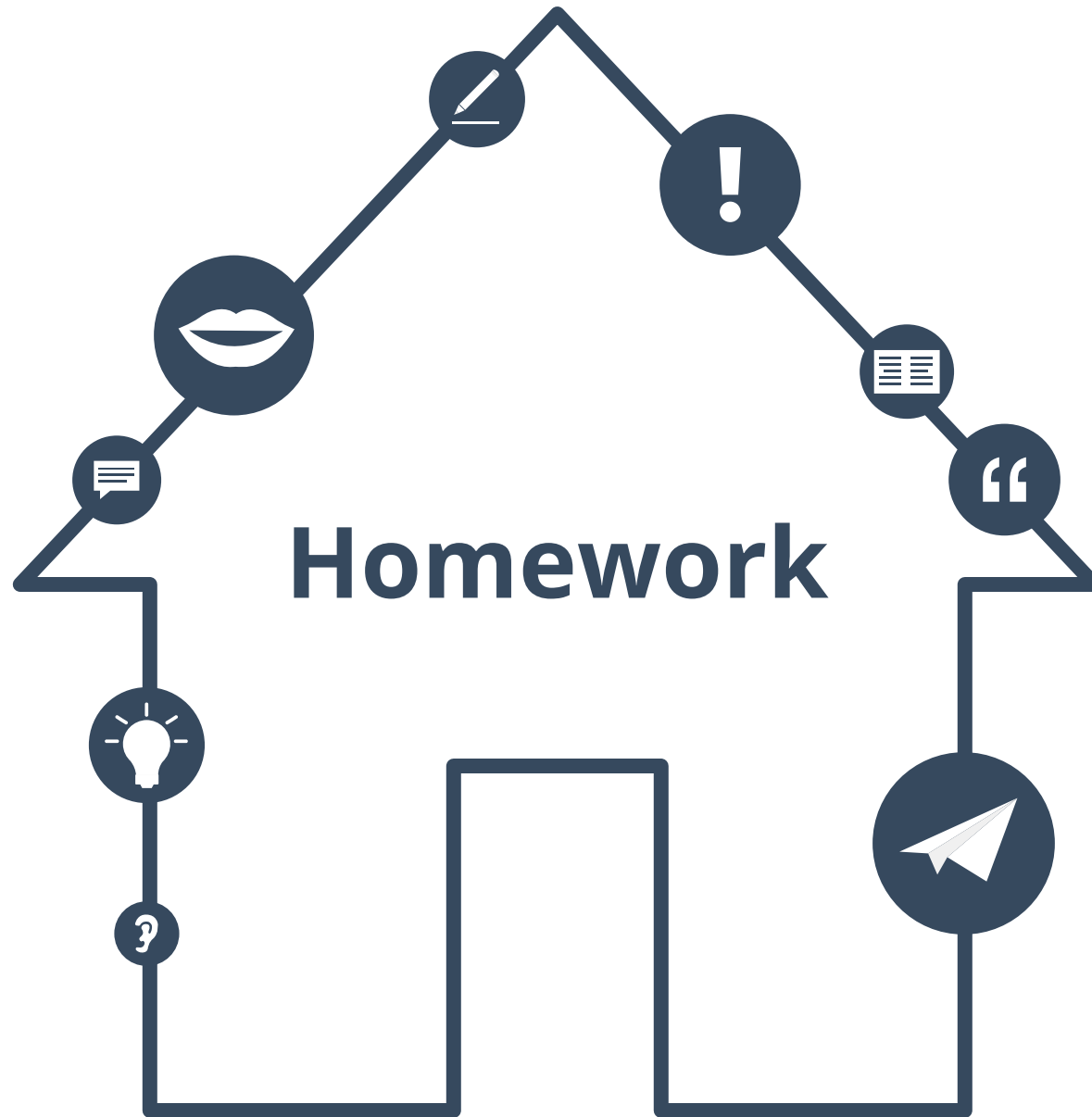


## Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!



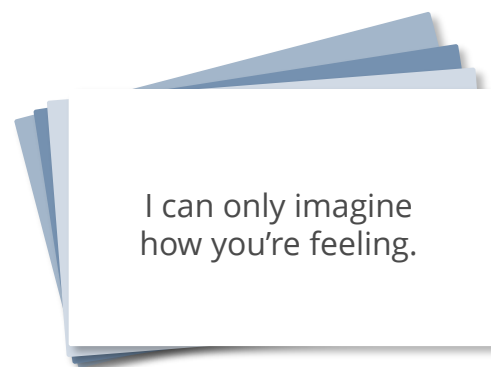




## Useful phrases

**Create flashcards for yourself with some phrases you found useful from the lesson. Which will you use the most? In what kind of situations?**

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## Write an email

**Your co-worker has emailed you as he is upset about two particular colleagues who keep making unintentionally offensive remarks to him. He isn't sure how to handle the situation and needs some advice. Reply with tact and give him some suggestions on how to stand his ground without causing a problem.**

- □ ×

To: dave\_r@kleanupcorp.com

Subject:

Dear Dave,



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