

Admitting fault and apologising

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL
Advanced

NUMBER
C1_1022X_EN

LANGUAGE
English





Goals

- Can understand and recall specific vocabulary and phrases to apologise.
- Can formulate a convincing apology or admission of fault for an appropriate situation.



Dear colleagues,

I feel that **I must apologise** for my behaviour yesterday. I acknowledge that it was **irresponsible** and I **accept all blame** for my actions. I **sincerely regret** the incident, and do hope you can find it within yourselves to **forgive** me.





What has happened?



What do you think
has happened in
this picture?

Who is in the
wrong and needs
to apologise?



Apologies

Liz: Jim, this is the third time you've arrived late this week. This lack of commitment is frankly inexcusable.

Jim: I really must apologise; the road outside my house is closed and the buses run later and later every day.

Liz: I see. I could accept that the first time, but three days running?

Jim: I know. I accept full responsibility. Tomorrow I'll leave home quarter of an hour earlier. Please don't hold this against me!



How many ways of apologising can you find?





Apologies

When did you last **apologise** to someone?

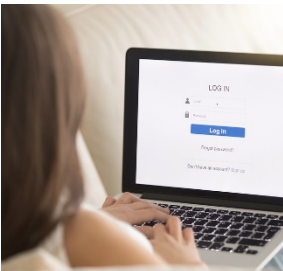
Which other situations can you think of where an **apology** would be necessary?

apology

An **apology** tells someone that you **regret** doing something that has in some way **upset** or **inconvenienced** them.



Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt; I didn't realise you were busy.



Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your message.

to apologise

This can be a formal **apology** or an informal **acknowledgement** that something was your **fault**.



My bad; I forgot to bring that book I promised to lend you.



We regret to inform you that there are delays on the Bakerloo Line.



Apologising: useful phrases

- Below and on the next slide you will find some expressions you can use to make an **apology**.

- I'm (so, terribly, really, very) **sorry** for...
- I **apologise** for...
- I **must apologise** for...
- Please **forgive me** for...
- Please **accept my apologies** for...
- I would like to **express my regret** for...
- **My bad!**



Apologising: useful phrases

- Below you will find some more useful phrases to use when **apologising**.

I'm afraid that...

I take the blame for...

There is no excuse for...

I can only apologise for...

I regret to inform you that...

I hope you can forgive me.

It's my fault!





Categorise the apologies

Some of the apologies introduced in the previous slides are very formal and would not be used in everyday speech, whereas others would only be used when apologising to a friend. Neutral apologies are suitable for both situations.

Sort these apologies into the appropriate list. Then add any others you can think of.

formal

neutral

informal



Think of an appropriate apology for each situation

1. You stood on someone's toe while on a crowded bus.



Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't see your foot there.

2. You accidentally jumped the queue in the supermarket.



3. You missed an important meeting.



4. You broke your friend's favourite mug.



5. You have to ask someone to repeat themselves... for the third time.





What has happened?



What do you think has happened? Who needs to **apologise**, and to whom? What should the **apology** be?



Get ready to listen



The next page will focus on
training your listening comprehension.



Avoiding misunderstandings in apologising

Your teacher will read a short text where someone is apologising for a mistake they have made.

Do they sound **sincere**? Explain your answer.



Avoiding misunderstandings in apologies

Apologies can be easily seen as being **insincere** or can be **misunderstood** if not constructed or **intonated** correctly.

In the next section, we will look at what **types of misunderstanding** there can be and how to avoid them.



Customer: I'm sorry, can you help me?



Waiter: Why, what did you do?

Avoiding misunderstandings: intonation

The tone of an apology and the way it is expressed can have a great impact on how it is **interpreted**.

Consider the word *sorry*. Usually (and in a **genuine apology**) the stress is on the first syllable: **sorry**.

How does it sound when you change the stress to the second syllable?



Parent: Where have you been? It's past midnight!

Teenager: *Sorry!*

Avoiding misunderstandings: intonation

Intonation in other parts of the sentence can also affect the meaning. Too much word stress (or too little!) can make the sentence sound **insincere**.

Try saying the sentences below with the stress on the words marked in blue. Then try again without stressing them.



Customer: I've been waiting here more than an hour.
Waiter: Oh, I'm **so** sorry.



Jack: Seriously? That was my new jacket!
Tanya: **My** bad.



Apologising for a past event

- When apologising for something that happened in the past, be careful to mark the past tense correctly.
- Look at the examples below to see how to do this.

■ I broke my friend's vase when she was on holiday. She is back now, has realised, and I want to apologise.

- I **am sorry** for **having broken** your vase.
- I **am sorry** to **have broken** your vase.
- I **am sorry** (that) I **broke** your vase.



Apologising for past events



Be careful which part of the sentence you mark as past tense: otherwise your apology may not be accepted!

If you are sorry now, this verb should be in the present.

- I **was** sorry I **broke** your vase yesterday.

- This is still a valid construction in English, but carries a different meaning:
 - I broke your vase yesterday.
 - I **was** sorry yesterday...
 - ... but today, I'm no longer sorry!

Can you think of any situations you might use this construction?



Apologies and admission of fault

Dear Ms MacIntyre,

Thank you for your letter in which you reported our airline as being responsible for losing your baggage during a flight from Glasgow. We appreciate you having taken the time to let us know that we appear not to have met our goals for consistently high service in this particular instance. I assure you this is a rare occurrence and is not in keeping with the usual standard of service our airline delivers. I have sent a request to one of my colleagues who will further investigate the situation and get back to you with a resolution.

We are sorry that you were dissatisfied with the service and that we failed to meet your expectations upon arrival at your destination. Nonetheless, we hope to welcome you on board again soon.

Yours sincerely,
Sally Haversham
Customer Service Manager

Read the text then
answer the
questions on the
next slide.





Admitting fault

Discuss the questions below with your teacher.

1. What was the problem?
2. How did the airline word their apology?
3. Do you feel that this was a sincere apology or admission of fault?
4. What could the airline have done to make Ms MacIntyre feel as though her problem was taken more seriously?
5. Have you ever received a similar letter from a company? How did you feel?





Customer service

Ms MacIntyre was angered by the letter and has telephoned the customer services department to try and get a more adequate apology.

Role-play the situation with your teacher, swapping roles afterwards. Ms MacIntyre's aims for the conversation are on the left and the customer service agent's are on the right.

Get a real apology.

Apologise without admitting blame.

Get some compensation.

End the conversation as soon as possible!

Accepting an apology

When someone apologises to you, you should **acknowledge** and **accept** the apology.

Not acknowledging an apology could **offend** and lead to very **frosty** conversations between you and your conversational partner.



I'm so sorry, I forgot your birthday!



No problem. After all, I forgot yours last year!



Accepting an apology

- Below are some more examples of how to **accept an apology**.

■ I'm so sorry, please forgive me!

- Never mind.
- Don't apologise.
- Don't worry about it.
- Not to worry.
- No harm done.
- I (quite) understand.
- Don't mention it.
- Forget about it.
- It could happen to anyone.

Accepting an apology

Just as we saw with the apologies themselves, some responses are very formal while others are very informal. Be careful not to use too informal language in a formal situation or vice versa; your conversational partner may think you aren't taking it as seriously as you should.



informal

- Don't mention it.
- Forget about it.



formal

- I quite understand.
- Apology accepted.
- Please don't let it happen again.

Accepting an apology

However, most can be used in either a formal or informal situation. The most important factor is that the apology is recognised.



I completely forgot to submit my reports on time; please accept my sincere apologies.

No worries; you weren't the only one!



Respond to the apologies below

I'm sorry, but I think there's been a mix-up; you seem to be sitting in my seat.



I'm so terribly sorry that I scratched your car!



Whoops, did I just kick you? My bad!



I regret to inform you that your train has been cancelled.



I'm afraid we're out of soup. Can I get you something else?





Practise giving and receiving apologies

With your teacher or one of your classmates, use the following ideas (or your own) to form apologies. Your teacher/classmate should accept the apology (even if they accept it reluctantly!).

forgot
anniversary

mislaidd their
spare key... and
they've lost
their own

shredded their
paycheque

deleted all their
emails

forgot to
prepare an
important
presentation

smashed
priceless
ornament

arrived at work
four hours late

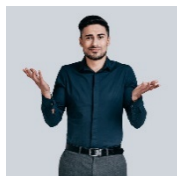
accidentally
dyed all white
clothing pink

left their car
windows open
and it rained all
night



It's not what it looks like, I promise!

Follow the instructions below to complete this speaking task.



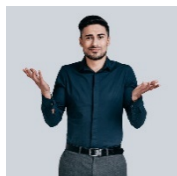
1

Think of three inexcusable situations. For example: you've just been discovered trying to open the safe of the local supermarket. Write them down (but don't tell anyone!).



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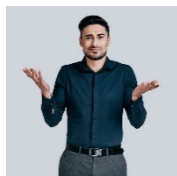
2

For each situation, think of an excuse which could explain it – no matter how unbelievable! For example: you heard a small bird cheeping inside and thought it was stuck in there.



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Follow the instructions below to complete this speaking task.



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Think of three inexcusable situations. For example: you've just been discovered trying to open the safe of the local supermarket. Write them down (but don't tell anyone!).



2

For each situation, think of an excuse which could explain it – no matter how unbelievable! For example: you heard a small bird cheeping inside and thought it was stuck in there.



3

Accuse one of your classmates/your teacher of one of your situations. Listen to their apology and excuse and decide if you will accept it. Compare yours with theirs, and decide in the group whose is the best excuse.



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!





Transcript

[Read this in a defensive voice, as though not really sorry.]

Listen, I'm sorry about last week, okay?. It wasn't intentional and I can only apologise. I regretted it the moment I'd done it. But these things happen, y'know? Let's just put it behind us. I **said** I was sorry!

Exercise p. 15



Answer key

Exercise p.5:

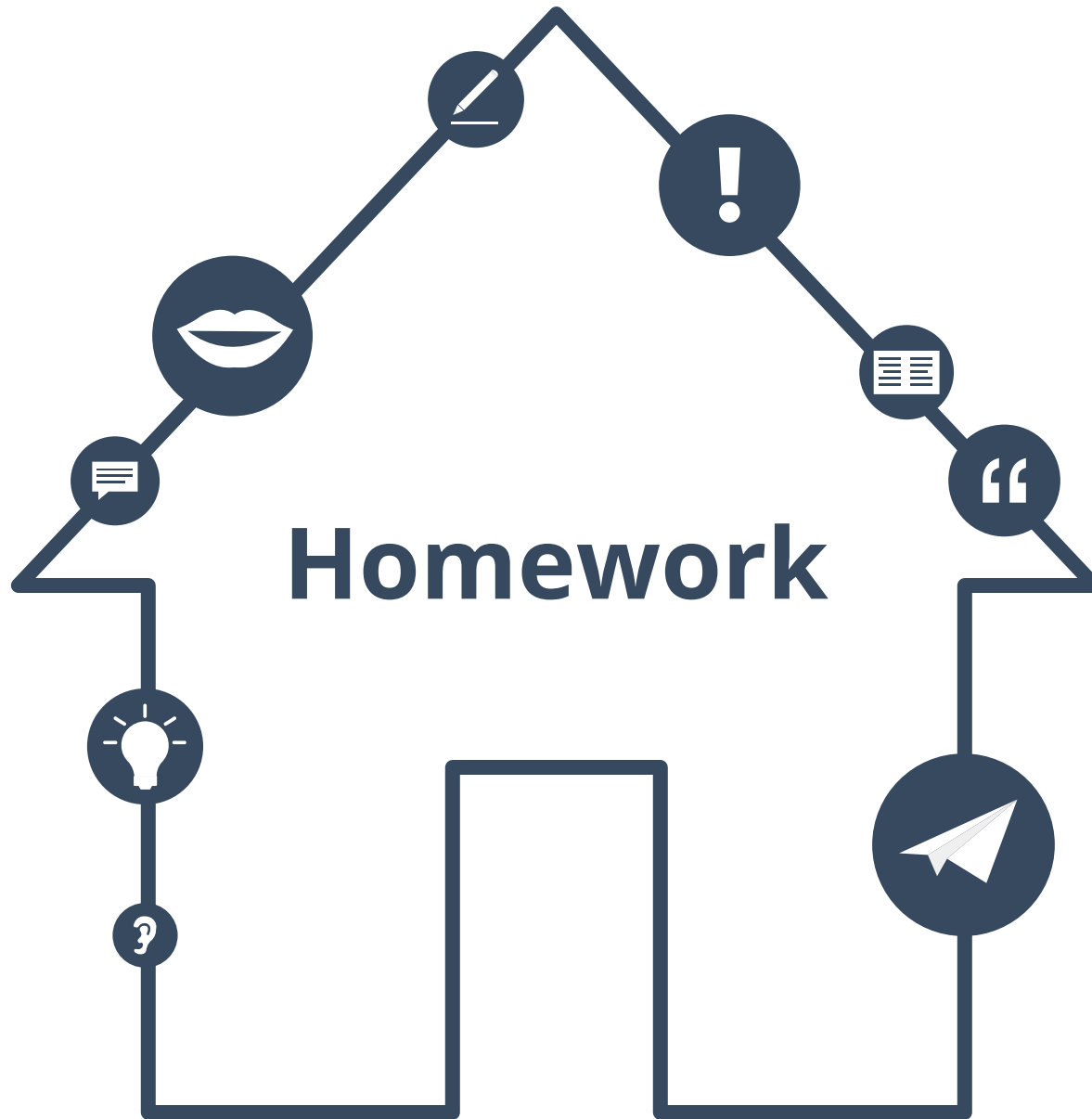
Three ways: I really must apologise, I accept full responsibility, please don't hold this against me

Exercise p. 11:

Formal: I can only apologise for, I regret to inform you that, there is no excuse for, I apologise for, please forgive me for, please accept my apologies for, I would like to express my regret for, I must apologise for, I'm terribly sorry for

Neutral: I'm afraid that, I take the blame for, I hope you can forgive me, It's my fault, I'm so sorry for, I'm very sorry for

Informal: My bad!, I'm really sorry for





Lesson evaluation

What did you find most interesting about this lesson What about easiest? Hardest?

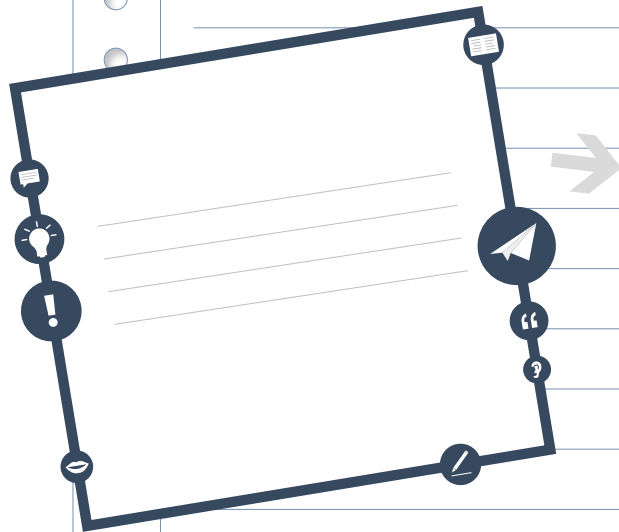


A vertical stack of 10 lined pages, resembling a spiral notebook, for taking notes.



Forgive and forget!

Find all the means of apology used on slide 3. How would you respond to these apologies?





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