

Lesson 10. Tools of Diplomatic Language

Tool	Purpose	Examples	
		Being DIRECT	Being DIPLOMATIC
Modal verbs (could, would, might, may)	to soften your message	We need to delay the site launch. Email that report to me.	We <i>might</i> need to delay the site launch. <i>Could/would</i> you email that report to me?
Qualifiers (slight, a bit, rather, a few)	to avoid sounding too dramatic	We have an issue. We are expecting a delay.	We have a <i>slight</i> issue. We are expecting a <i>short</i> delay.
Softeners (I'm afraid, to be honest, unfortunately, just)	to tone down a negative piece of news and help the reader prepare to hear it	We are running 2 weeks behind schedule. There is a delay.	<i>I'm afraid</i> we are running 2 weeks behind schedule. <i>There seems to be</i> a delay.
Passive forms (be + V3)	to reduce the amount of personal responsibility or blame	I had to decline your request. We assumed that John should not qualify for promotion.	Your request <i>had to be declined</i> . <i>It was assumed that</i> John should not qualify for promotion.
Continuous forms (be + V + ing)	to show the reader that you are still in	I wonder if you could provide some	<i>I was wondering if you could</i> provide

	the process of thinking and are open for discussion	additional information on/regarding this issue. We aimed to have it done by the end of this week.	some additional information on/regarding this issue. <i>We were aiming to have it done by the end of this week.</i>
Words and phrases with less negative meaning (bad = not good enough)	to tone down your message	I can't do it. We are unhappy.	<i>I am not sure I can do it.</i> We are not entirely happy.
Time Expressions (at the moment, at this stage, so far, just)	to soften your message	We haven't been able to finish the report. We cannot accept your offer.	We haven't been able to finish the report <i>yet</i> . We cannot accept your offer <i>at the moment</i> .
'Yes ... but' statements	to reduce the degree of disagreement	I'm not in a position to... Our budget is too limited to...	<i>I understand your concerns, but</i> I'm not in a position to... <i>I see your point, but</i> our budget is too limited to...

Useful links:

<https://www.myenglishteacher.eu/blog/a-practical-guide-to-using-diplomatic-english-in-a-business-environment/>