

Business Class

WEEK 8 - HOW TO SOUND MORE
PROFESSIONAL?



Welcome to Class!

TODAY'S AGENDA

- General English vs. Business English
- "I don't know" - should we use it?
- What if you don't understand
- Apologize or not?
- More than one way to say "yes"
- If you need to say "no"
- 1st Q&A session
- Kind = professional?
- Company jargon
- It's not only about the language
- 2nd Q&A session



Class Objectives & Rules

EXPECTATIONS AND OUTCOMES

★ Objectives:

- Our aim is to encourage you to expand and modify your vocabulary and not telling you that your language is too simple or not enough.
- By the end of this lesson today, you'll know how sound like a professional.



Lesson for Today

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

- You can use general English to feel comfortable when speaking in any situation, including business ones. However, as we learn every day, improving your English with more formal phrases or is part of your growth.
- Sometimes very small change or replacement of the most common word with the one that is more formal or official or business related, can have meaningful impact on how you sound. And most of all, how you are perceived by others.



General English vs. Business English

GENERAL

- Used in day to day conversations, with casual words and tone, basic vocabulary and in most cases basic grammar
- Can be used in business situations and this is totally fine

BUSINESS

- More formal, it has professional context and specific purpose
- There are for sure jobs and companies, where without technical language your work would be impossible
- In majority, being professional in business language, means much more than just fancy words



"I don't know" - use it or not?

IT DEPENDS

- Simple "I don't know!" shows the lack of interest in a subject ("I don't care. That's not my problem.")
- It tells more about the attitude than knowledge.
- It's ok to admit you have no data about something.
- Useful phrases in this situation
 - I'll find out and get back to you
 - I'll check this in the files/reports/guides etc
 - I want to give you 100% answer thus I need to check the documentation
 - Let me verify this first and I will get back to you with an answer ASAP

"I don't know" - other situations

WHEN IT'S YOUR AREA OF EXPERTISE AND YOU SHOULD KNOW THE ANSWER

- I'm not sure, but I'll find out and let you know.
- I'll find out.
- I'll look into it and get back to you with what I find.
- That's a good question and I want to get you the right information. Let me get back to you by end-of-day.

WHEN IT'S NOT YOUR AREA BUT SOMEONE WANTS TO KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS

Here are 3 ways to answer a question when you're not the expert:

- I'm not sure I'm the best person to answer that but...
- Here's what I know and here's what I don't know...
- Based on my understanding, I believe that...

"I don't know" - other situations

WHEN IT'S BETTER TO HELP SOMEONE FIND THE ANSWER...

Instead of saying "I don't know" try one of these:

- Great question. Let's look into that.
- Let's see if we can get some more information on that.

WHEN YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION TO GIVE THE RIGHT ANSWER

Here are two great options:

- Before I answer, could you share a few more details about what you need/what you're looking for?
- Before I answer your question, could you clarify your question?

"I don't know" - casual options

TO YOUR FRIEND RATHER

Your friend lost her keys — again!

She always does this and, of course, you have no idea where her keys are.

- I don't have the foggiest idea.
- I haven't a clue.
- Who knows?
- Don't ask me.
- Your guess is as good as mine.



What if you don't understand?

INSTEAD OF SAYING "I DON'T GET"

- Am I correct in understanding that....?
- Just wanted to make sure that by saying XYZ you mean....





Apologize or not?

How many times have you uttered the words, "I'm sorry" when you haven't actually offended someone or made an error?

It's a common phenomenon, especially in the workplace. While you may think your reflexive apology shows deference, respect or accommodation, it's actually may make you appear less confident in your own professional abilities.

Other ways to apologize



FIND A WAY TO SAY "THANK YOU"

Instead of: "I'm so sorry I'm late in getting this to you."

Try: "Thank you for patience as I finalize this project; I'm excited to hear your thoughts once I've submitted it to you on X date."

APOLOGIZE FOR 'BOTHERING' PEOPLE?

Instead of: "I'm sorry to interrupt ..."

Try: "Let me say/ask this..." OR "Great points, I would like to add ..."

Instead of: "Sorry, do you have a minute?"

Try: "Excuse/Pardon me..."

Instead of: "I'm sorry to bother you."

Try: "I know how busy you are, but I'd love your feedback on something. Is now a good time?"

Other ways to apologize



APOLOGIZE WITH OTHER EXPRESSIONS

Instead of: "I'm so sorry I wasn't prepared for that presentation."

Try: "That didn't go the direction I'd planned. Here's how I'll fix it."

Or: "That didn't go as well as planned, but I got this. Let me go to work."

PRACTICE EMPATHY

Some people use "I'm sorry" to show sympathy. Instead, practice empathy by reflecting what the other person might be feeling. For example, if someone shares a difficult story or experience, you might say, "That sounds like it was really hard for you."

Other ways to apologize



EXPRESS SELF-AWARENESS

Consider a more emotionally intelligent approach. Ask yourself, who is it that needs to say sorry all the time -- the solution minded you, or the insecure you? Instead of saying sorry, say, "Thanks for pointing that out, what else is worth knowing here?"

WHAT IF YOU DISAGREE?

Having a difference in viewpoints isn't something either party should feel the need to apologize for. Period.

Instead of: "I'm sorry, but I disagree."

Try: "That's an interesting perspective. Here's how I was thinking of it."

Instead of: "I'm sorry, but I don't agree."

Try: "Let's look at this from another angle."

There's more than one way to say yes

OF COURSE THERE IS!
HERE ARE SOME OF THE MOST COMMON IN
PROFESSIONAL AREA:

- Yes, of course. I will get it to you this afternoon.
- I'd be glad/happy to make the reservations for you.
- Absolutely. I will finish it this afternoon.
- Certainly – I will call him now.



If you need to say "no"

UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE HAVE TO SAY NO. NO I CAN'T CHANGE THE DATE OF THE MEETING.

- I would love to/like to but our company has a holiday party that night.
- I'm afraid that I'm not available on Tuesday.
- No, (I'm sorry to say that) we aren't able to change the time of the meeting.
- I wish I could but I'm unable to make that kind of compromise.
- We appreciate the offer, however, this is not a good time for us.
- I'm afraid I can't meet you today. How about tomorrow?

YOU CAN'T OR DON'T WANT TO COMMIT TO SOMETHING?

- Perhaps I can make it. Let me check my calendar.
- Perhaps it will work. Let me think it over.
- I'm not sure whether I can but I'll check my calendar and let you know.

Is everything clear so far?

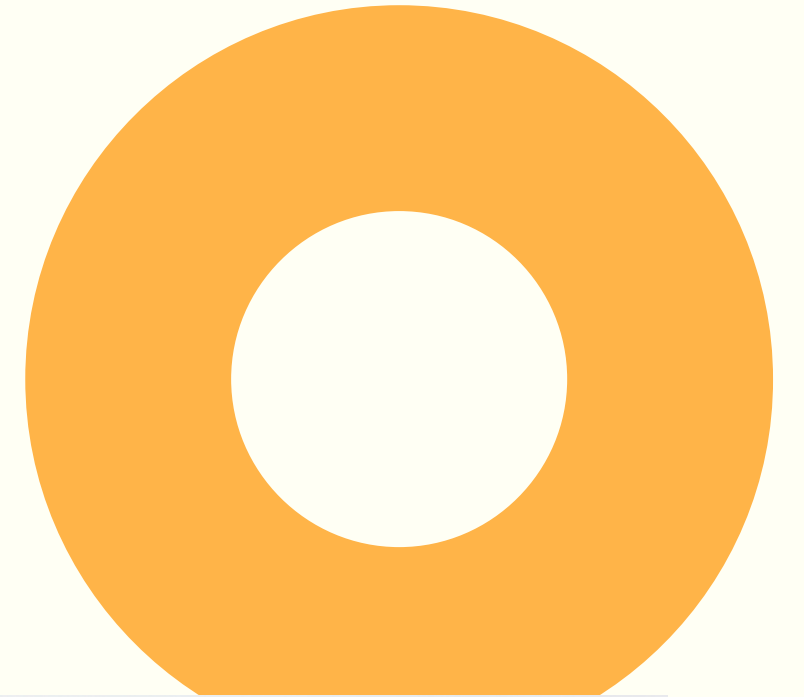
Let's have a Q&A session!



Kind = professional?

INDEED! LET'S GET SOME POLITENESS TO OUR LANGUAGE.

- Be more diplomatic in English
- Switch from direct, assertive language to indirect, formal language
- Be more flexible in English so you can say what you want, how you want



Kind = professional?

WOULD, COULD, MIGHT, MAY.. MODAL VERBS!

- It seems so simple, but using a modal can change a direct, aggressive question into a polite request.
- They soften your requests, questions, and commands, which means you won't sound rude or too direct.
- Order me a coffee, please. → Would you get me a coffee, please?
- Please leave. I have to take this phone call. → Could you step out of the room for a moment? I have to take this phone call.
- Send me those documents before the end of the day.
→ Could you send me those documents by the end of the day?
- I need to borrow your pen for a moment.
→ May I borrow your pen for a moment?

Kind = professional?

THE PRESENT SIMPLE TENSE CAN SOUND TOO DIRECT SO...

- Change the present tense to the past tense or a continuous (-ing) tense. Your meaning is still in the present, but you change the verb to add softness, to be less direct.
 - TIP: We do this with verbs such as hope, feel, think, want, wonder.
- Do you have time to meet tomorrow to discuss this?
 - I wondered if you had time to meet tomorrow.
 - I was wondering if you had time to meet tomorrow.
 - I'm wondering if you have time to meet tomorrow.
 - What is your name? → What did you say your name was?
 - I'd like to finish this meeting by 4:00 p.m.
 - I was hoping to finish this meeting by 4:00 p.m.
 - Can I ask a question about the agenda?
 - I wanted to ask a question about the agenda.
 - I think you need help with the deadline.
 - I thought you might like some help with the deadline.

Kind = professional?

SOFTEN YOUR LANGUAGE

We often use expressions such as: a bit, around, kind of, -ish, a few, quite, slightly, a little. We use these expressions – or qualifiers – to provide less direct information, for example with times or quantities.

- I'd like you to spend around 4 hours to get this project completed. If you can't complete it by then, let's talk so we can make necessary changes.
- Why don't you come to my office at 2:00-ish (= around 2:00) for a quick meeting.
- That's not quite what I had in mind. What if we made a few changes?
- That estimate is a bit high, don't you think?

CAN'T YOU? YES, YOU CAN!

In more professional situations, we sometimes have to tell someone that we can't do something. To say "I can't" can be negative and it could sound like a failure. Instead, you can use the words "not able to" or "unable to" to soften the language.

- I'm not able to complete this project by 4:00 p.m. but I should have it finished tomorrow morning.
- I'm unable to meet you tomorrow. I'm sorry.

The company jargon



- Getting to know some of the jargon is vital to understanding your work colleagues and superiors.
- Whether you choose to use these words and phrases yourself is up to you, but they will at least help you to understand what your colleagues are talking about.
- There is no other way to learn it, than to actually start working and learning the jargon on daily basis.
- Listen to your colleagues and learn from them. Or find the blogs and other literature from your field, to read and learn from.

OUR TIP

Jargon is however mostly to be used at the office or with your coworkers. It is better to avoid it with external customers. Unless they know the area.

It's not only about the language

TONE OF YOUR VOICE

Speaking too soft may look like you are in doubt of what you want to say and speaking too loud when excited may look like you are angry. Make sure you adjust the tone of voice to the situation.

VOLUME OF YOUR VOICE

Adjust the volume to the room you are in – for example when in big conference room you may need to speak louder than being in the office. But don't be too loud so people don't think you are shouting at them.

VOICE MODULATION

Remember to emphasize by your voice the most important parts of the sentence and this will cause your message to be clearly understood and remembered.

BREATHING AND PHRASING

Breathing is something we tend to forget when nervous or too excited. If you rush too much, you make your speech difficult to comprehend.

Your body

When speaking sit straight, hold your head high, open your chest, take deep breaths in and out. When standing, make sure you stand confidently, with same body weight on both legs. All of this helps the voice projection and maximizes it, without a need to shout.



It's not only about the language

BEING PREPARED

Professional look goes hand in hand with confidence and you can gain the latter by knowing what you're talking about. Before talking with another person spend some time thinking about the matter, try challenging your approach and look at the subject from different perspectives.

ENGAGEMENT

Sounding more professional is not only about showing you know the right vocabulary. It is also about showing the control you have over your voice, showing your authority and engaging people so they actually listen to what you want to tell them.

BEING TIRED

How much confidence and energy do you have in the morning when you only had four hours of sleep last night? Being exhausted and professional is hard enough in your native language, not to mention foreign one.

PRACTICE

Exercise at home with your voice – force yourself to speak louder or slower, repeating same sentences with different tone, modulation. Learn how to breath in a controlled way, so by breathing correctly you can reduce stress when needed.

Summary of Today's Class



RECAP 1

There's nothing bad about General English, although professional language brings additional value.

RECAP 2

There are popular phrases that make you sound professional even in difficult situations.

RECAP 3

Kindness is professional.

RECAP 4

Mind your breathing, voice and body language. Above all - prepare yourself :-)

Is everything clear so far?

Let's have a Q&A session!



Thank You

FOR JOINING TODAY'S CLASS

In a few second you will get the recording and ebook.
Please have a look at the tasks I have prepared for you.
See you next week!

