

1 Saying 'no' politely

A In groups, answer these questions.

- 1 What excuses do people make when they say 'no'?
- 2 Have you ever had to say 'no', but been embarrassed?
- 3 Have you ever said 'yes' to a request, but later wished you had said 'no'?
- 4 When is it rude to say 'no' in your country?

B CD1.34 Listen to the first part of a short talk by a cross-cultural communications expert. Complete these five tips for saying 'no' politely.

- 1 Pay sympathy
- 2 Offer (as) clear (as possible)
- 3 Show alternatives
- 4 Be long reasons and excuses
- 5 Avoid attention

C CD1.35 Listen to the second part of the talk, which looks at saying 'no' in different countries. Decide whether these statements are true (T) or false (F). Correct the false ones.

- 1 In Japan, it is very important to focus on verbal communication.
- 2 In Japan, it will embarrass people if you turn down a request.
- 3 Indonesians do not like to embarrass people by saying 'no'.
- 4 Bahasa Indonesian has 12 ways of saying 'yes'.
- 5 In China, silence can mean there are problems.
- 6 In the Arab world, silence usually means 'no'.
- 7 Refusing a cup of coffee from an American host is considered rude.

WORKING ACROSS CULTURES 1

CD1 TRACK 34

Many of you will travel to foreign countries on business or go to international conferences and sales fairs. Some of you may end up living and working in a foreign country. For all of you, cultural and social awareness will be important if you want to become effective communicators when you're abroad. Today, I'm going to look at saying 'no' politely.

Whenever you say 'yes' to a request, you are doing so at a cost. That cost is usually your time. Sometimes you just have to say 'no'. I remember two embarrassing occasions when I had to say 'no'. One was in Finland, when a business friend invited me to a sauna. I just felt uncomfortable. The other was in Hungary, a country where it's sometimes OK to share private details. Someone asked me something rather personal. Again, I felt a bit uncomfortable.

In the first part of my talk, I'm going to look at five tips for saying 'no' politely. Firstly, pay attention. Listen carefully and make sure you don't say 'no' before the other person has even finished making their request. Listen to the request with an open mind.

Secondly, offer alternatives. You may even be able to recommend someone else who is more suitable.

Thirdly, show sympathy if someone asks you to do something that you can't do. Show that you genuinely wanted to help.

Next, be as clear as possible to avoid misunderstandings. Don't say 'maybe' when you really mean 'no'.

And finally, avoid long reasons and excuses. Sometimes the less you say, the better.

The times I have had to say 'no' the most is when customers have wanted huge discounts. As long as you can say 'no' politely with a smile, followed by a genuine 'I'm sorry', then you should be fine.



CD1 TRACK 35

In the second part of my talk, I'll look at saying 'no' in different countries. Japanese people hate saying 'no'. They don't even like using negative endings to verbs and they don't like any confrontation. So it's important to look at their non-verbal communication. They believe in harmony. They think that turning down someone's request causes embarrassment and loss of face to the other person. Many negotiators have come away from meetings in Japan thinking they have got agreement when in fact they haven't.

Indonesians can also communicate indirectly. They don't like to cause anyone embarrassment by giving a negative answer, so the listener has to work out what they really mean. In fact, Bahasa Indonesian has 12 ways of saying 'no' and also other ways of saying 'yes' when the real meaning is 'no'. The Chinese will often avoid saying 'no'. They have an expression which means 'we'll do some research and discuss it later', which is a polite way of saying 'no'. Silence in China can also imply that there are problems. Silence in the Arab world is quite common, however, and does not necessarily mean 'no'. The Arab world does not find silence difficult.

However, saying 'no' in the wrong situations can have bad consequences. An American business friend of mine once refused a cup of coffee from a Saudi businessman at the start of a meeting. In America, that wouldn't have been a problem. But this was seen as rather rude by the Saudi host and the meeting was unsuccessful. My friend should have accepted the coffee and just had a small cup. I'll now move on to ...



D Match the invitations and requests (1–5) to the responses (a–e).

- 1 Would you like to go out for a meal later?
 - 2 Would you like some more food?
 - 3 Shall we meet up next Tuesday?
 - 4 Please stay a little bit longer.
 - 5 Can you check that the fire-exit notices are all in the right place, please?
- a) I'm afraid you've come to the wrong person. You'll have to ask Ingrid in Health and Safety.
 - b) Thanks for the invitation, but I'm not feeling so well. Maybe some other time.
 - c) Nothing more for me, thanks. It was delicious.
 - d) I'm sorry. I'd love to, but I have other plans that evening.
 - e) I've had a wonderful time and I wish I could, but I really have to go.

In pairs, role-play these situations. Read both roles (A and B). Take it in turns to play Role B, so you both get the opportunity to say 'no' politely.

	A	B
1	You are the host at a meal in a restaurant. Offer your client some champagne.	You do not drink alcohol. Say 'no' politely.
2	You have to complete a short report quickly. Ask a colleague to help you.	You are very busy, and this is not your job. Suggest your colleague asks Freya to help.
3	You are an investment director. Invite a client to an important hospitality event next month.	You cannot attend this event because you have already accepted another invitation. But you want to maintain a good relationship and you would like to attend another event in the future.
4	You are the host at a meal in your home for some business contacts. Offer your guest some lamb, rice and vegetables.	You hate lamb. Say 'no' politely. Say you are happy with just rice and vegetables.
5	You have just finished writing a very important report, which you need to submit in an hour. Ask your colleague to check it first.	You are very busy. You have to prepare for a meeting with your boss in an hour.
6	You are in a country where it is common to go out to eat late at night. Invite a business contact who has arrived from another country to go out for a meal at 10 p.m. tonight.	You are very tired and need to prepare for an important meeting tomorrow.

Choose the best word to complete each sentence.

- 1 Zoltan decided on his career *move / plan* when he was in his first year of university, and amazingly, he followed it until he retired.
- 2 Rupert hopes to make a *living / course* doing freelance consulting.
- 3 My company has a training programme that offers career *opportunities / breaks* to students who have just graduated from university.
- 4 Helena was very happy with the *bonus / progress* she got last month.
- 5 If you want to climb the career *plan / ladder*, you have to be prepared to work very hard.
- 6 Dominic was very pleased when he earned his first *job / commission*.
- 7 Begonia is ready to make a career *opportunity / move*, so she's applying for jobs with other companies.
- 8 Alicia did *a mistake / her best* when she completed her job application.
- 9 Some companies help their employees take a career *path / break* by giving them a few months off without pay.
- 10 Pietro was 55 years old when he took *early retirement / a pension*.

- 11 Mei-Mei didn't follow the usual career *ladder / path* for the CEO of a marketing firm.
She started out working as a primary-school teacher.
- 12 Sharon never felt happy working *overtime / extra*.
- 13 Magnus earns €60K *per year / flexitime* in his new accounting job.
- 14 I wasn't surprised to hear that Dean got *the sack / a mistake*, but I feel very sorry for him.

Complete each conversation with *can*, *could* and *would*. Use each word once in each conversation.

A:¹ I help you?

B: Yes. My name's Heinz Wagner. I'm here to see Martina López.

A: She'll be right out.....² you like a cup of coffee or tea?

B: No, thanks. But³ you tell me where the men's room is, please?

A: My cousin⁴ speak French and German by the time she was five, and now she⁵ speak Russian and Greek as well.

B: Do you think she⁶ like to learn any more languages?

A:⁷ you like to ask any more questions about Fabian?

B: Yes.....⁸ he drive? Does he have a licence?

A: I'm not sure. I⁹ phone him and ask him.

Match the halves of the expressions.

Part A

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1 Can | a) with someone right now. |
| 2 Can I get him to | b) her to call me back? |
| 3 Can I leave | c) to Michael Sands, please? |
| 4 He seems to be | d) you hold? |
| 5 Could I speak | e) him that I called? |
| 6 Could you | f) call you? |
| 7 Could you ask | g) a message, please? |
| 8 Could you tell | h) transfer me to the IT department, please? |

Part B

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Could you tell me | a) Larissa Schulton speaking. |
| 2 Can I take | b) a message? |
| 3 I can transfer you | c) answer. |
| 4 I'll | d) there's no answer. |
| 5 I'm afraid | e) to her voicemail. |
| 6 I'm sorry, there's no | f) what it's about? |
| 7 Is this the | g) put you through. |
| 8 Who's | h) marketing department? |
| 9 Yes, this is | i) calling, please? |

2 Companies

VOCABULARY

Complete the text below with the words in the box.

net profit parent company pharmaceutical share price
Spanish subsidiary turnover workforce

Espania-pharm

Espania-pharm today announced the opening of its new head office in Barcelona. The¹ company's efforts to boost its market share paid off in the first quarter, as its² was almost €15.6 million, leading to a³ of €8 million. The company has also doubled the size of its⁴ by hiring 50 new employees in the past four months. However, the company's⁵ is unlikely to go up until investors feel confident that the company is strong.

Espania-pharm is the⁶ of the global giant. The⁷, based in Stockholm, reported profits of €950 million in the first quarter.

**PRESENT SIMPLE
AND PRESENT
CONTINUOUS**

Complete this text with either the present simple or the present continuous form of the verbs in brackets. Use contracted forms where appropriate.

I¹ (*be*) a trainee project manager and I² (*love*) my job. I³ (*work*) for a well-known computer manufacturer, in the marketing department. Right now, we⁴ (*develop*) an advertising campaign for our newest laptop computers.

We⁵ (*try*) to find the best artist for our print advertisements, so this week I⁶ (*look*) at samples of artists' work every day.

I⁷ (*feel*) proud to work for a big, well-known company. This week, I⁸ (*start*) each day with a planning meeting that includes the CEO. He⁹ (*be*) very well known around the world, and my friends all¹⁰ (*think*) I'm lucky to work with someone famous.

Complete each gap in these presentation extracts with the correct word (a, b or c).

Good morning,¹ Mieko Murata, Director of Marketing, NHHC Telecommunications. Today,² to talk about our new projects. First,³ some background information about the company.⁴, I'll talk about our marketing activities.⁵, I'll discuss some case studies.⁶ some background information about the company and about what we've been doing in the past year.

If there are no more questions about background, I'll continue.⁷ to our marketing activities – we've recently had a really big marketing event in Singapore.

Thanks⁸ my talk. Are there any questions?

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 1 a) I'm | b) this is | c) it's |
| 2 a) we're | b) it's | c) I'd like |
| 3 a) I've given you | b) I'll give you | c) there's |
| 4 a) Next | b) After | c) Finally |
| 5 a) In the end | b) At last | c) Finally |
| 6 a) Here's | b) Let's | c) There's |
| 7 a) Changing | b) Moving on now | c) Then |
| 8 a) for coming to | b) that you came to | c) for |

3 Selling

VOCABULARY

Circle the odd word/phrase out in each group.

- 1 wholesaler / retailer / supplier / offer
- 2 return / discount / offer / bargain
- 3 return / exchange / purchase / refund
- 4 stock / sale / storage / warehouse
- 5 dispatch / deliver / distribute / manufacture
- 6 money-back guarantee / out of stock / loyalty-card scheme / interest-free credit

Cultures 1: Saying no politely

A Unscramble the polite refusals.

- 1 could / wish / a / I / I / , / really / but / have / I / go / to / .
- 2 the / invitation / for / Thanks / , / I'm / feeling / but / not / very / well / . / some / time / Maybe / other / .
- 3 more / me / Nothing / for / , / thanks / . / was / It / delicious / .
- 4 you've / I'm / afraid / come / the / to / wrong / person / . / Keith / You'll / to / have / ask / .
- 5 sorry / I'm / . / to / love / I'd / , / have / but / I / other / that / plans / day / .

1 I wish I could, but I really have to go.

2 Thanks for the invitation, but I'm not feeling very well. Maybe some other time.

3 Nothing more for me, thanks. It was delicious.

4 I'm afraid you've come to the wrong person. You'll have to ask Keith.

5 I'm sorry. I'd love to, but I have other plans that day.

B Match each polite refusal in Exercise A with one of these requests.

- a) Would you like some more cake?
 - b) Shall we meet up for a game of golf on Saturday?
 - c) Please stay a little bit longer.
 - d) Would you like to go out for a curry with me and Mr Takahashi?
 - e) Can you arrange drinks and snacks for this afternoon's meeting?
-

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