

50 natural English Tips

2. "EXCUSE ME!"



natural English asking people to be quiet

less polite

Shut up! [impolite]

Quiet! /'kwaɪət/ Be quiet!

Shh!

more polite

Could you be quiet, please?



natural English conversation openers

Excuse me, is anyone sitting here?

Sorry, have you got the time, please?

I think we've met before, haven't we?

It's really hot, isn't it?

Are you going all the way to San Francisco?



natural English permission and requests

Could I use your pen?

Do you mind if I borrow your dictionary?

Do you think I could leave early today?

Would you mind if I opened the window?

('Do you mind if I ...?' means 'Is it a problem for you if I ...?')



natural English thanking and replying

Thanks (a lot / very much).

Thank you (very much indeed). (more formal)

That was / 's very good / kind of you.

No problem. ☺

That's OK.

Don't mention it.



natural English getting sb's attention

Excuse me, have you got a moment?

Sorry to bother you, but could I just ask you something?

Excuse me, can you spare a minute or two?

Excuse me, are you in a hurry?

Sure.

Go ahead.

It depends what it is.

Sorry, I'm late already.

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What's the context?

Look through the *natural English* boxes above. Find *natural English* phrases that you could use in each of the following contexts:

- at work
- on public transport (bus, train, plane...)
- in the street
- at a party
- at school
- at a friend's house
- in the library, shop, swimming pool...
- in the street

Example: at work: **Do you mind if I close the window?**
Sorry to bother you, but could I just ask you something?



Study the *natural English* phrases

Which *natural English* phrases could you use in the following situations?

Example: Someone's just thanked you for helping them.
Don't mention it.

- Someone's just given you a very expensive present.
- Someone's talking loudly in the library.
- You've forgotten your pen and you need one for five minutes.
- You want to ask your teacher a few questions after class.
- You're starting a long journey on a busy train.
- Someone wants to ask you some questions. You don't have time.
- Someone wants to ask you some questions. You are happy to help.
- A friend has just thanked you for helping him.
- You want to interview people in the street. What do you say to each person first?
- You are on the bus. You want to know what time it is.

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Activate the *natural English* phrases

You'll need a dice for this. Work with a partner. Roll the dice to get a PLACE, then again to get a WANT OR NEED. Use your imagination to prepare short dialogues using those ideas. Include *natural English* phrases in your dialogues. (If you don't have a dice, you could write the PLACES and WANT OR NEEDS on pieces of paper and pick them at random.)

PLACE

1. at a party
2. on a bus
3. in the street
4. at a friend's house
5. at school
6. at work

YOU WANT OR NEED ...

1. ...to ask permission to do something
2. ...to start a conversation with a stranger
3. ...to start a conversation with someone you know a little
4. ...to ask someone for help
5. ...to thank someone for something
6. ...to ask someone to be quiet

Example:

PLACE **6**: at work

YOU WANT OR NEED **1**: ... to ask permission to do something

A: **Excuse me, have you got a moment?**
B: **Sure.**
A: **Do you think I could** come in late tomorrow?
B: Why's that?
A: Well, I need to go to the doctor.
B: OK, that's no problem.
A: **Thanks very much.**
B: **That's OK.**

1 Choose one dialogue to practise and perform to other students.

2 Listen to the other students' dialogues. Can you tell what the PLACE and WANT OR NEED are? How many natural English phrases did you hear?



These tips are brought to you by *natural English*, the course where students use English naturally.