

Politeness strategies

Read the situations below, and select the suggested phrase that you prefer.
Sometimes, you may follow it with an explanation of why you are saying this.
If you would prefer to say nothing in a situation, there is no need to make a selection.

- 1** Someone speaks with an unusual accent, and you want them to repeat what they've just said.
You say ...
- A** What did you say?
- B** Run that by me again.
- C** Sorry, could you repeat that?
- D** My hearing isn't so good.
- 2** You are taking an exam in a hot and stuffy room.
You summon the invigilator, and you say ...
- A** Open the window.
- B** Could we open a window?
- C** Would it be possible to have a window opened?
- D** It's very hot in here.
- 3** You want to write a sign to tell visitors to your office not to smoke. You write ...
- A** No smoking!
- B** Thank you for not smoking.
- C** Smoking not permitted in this office.
- D** Smoking kills!
- 4** You are in a meeting, and disagree with what someone says. You want to interrupt, so you say ...
- A** Wait, I have a question!
- B** You're making an excellent point, but can I just jump in?
- C** I'm sorry, I have to disagree ...
- D** How did you come to that conclusion?
- 5** You know that your boss is not happy about the job you are doing. You say ...
- A** What's wrong?
- B** If you tell me what I'm doing wrong, I'm sure we can work this out.
- C** Do you think you could help me understand what I'm doing wrong?
- D** I can see you're not happy ...
- 6** A friend tells you that they have recently been made redundant. You say ...
- A** Don't worry – you'll soon find another job.
- B** How sad – can I do anything to help?
- C** Have you tried applying for other jobs?
- D** There are plenty more fish in the sea.
- 7** You are going to the airport to catch a plane, but the bus is very crowded. You want other passengers to make room, so you say ...
- A** Move!
- B** If we move up a bit, we can all get there.
- C** I don't suppose you could make room for one more?
- D** I'm late for my plane!
- 8** You are in the queue at a busy supermarket, and the person behind you is standing too close for comfort. You say ...
- A** Keep your distance!
- B** Let's give each other some space, mate.
- C** Would you mind standing a little further away?
- D** We don't want to step on each other's toes.
- 9** You have told your neighbour that you are going away for a few days. You would like him/her to water your plants, so you say ...
- A** Remember to water the plants.
- B** It would be great if you watered my plants.
- C** Do you think you could water my plants?
- D** I'm worried about my begonias.
- 10** Some colleagues have just told you that they are going to have lunch together. You would like to join them, so you say ...
- A** I'm coming too!
- B** I'll join you, if that's alright with everyone.
- C** Would it be alright if I joined you?
- D** Now you mention it, I'm hungry, too.