

Asking for things (making requests)

The information on this page will help you to sound polite when you are asking someone if you can have or do something or when you are asking someone to do something for you.

1. Asking to have something

Use these phrases when you want to ask someone if you can have or do something:

Do you mind if I take this chair?

Could I take this chair, please?

Can I take this chair, please? (*Without 'please' this can sound rude.*)

Is it okay if I take this chair? (*Slightly informal.*)

Is it okay to take this chair? (*Slightly informal.*)

May I take this chair, please? (*Slightly formal.*)

Would you mind if I took this chair? (*Slightly formal, especially when used with a verb in the past tense.*)

2. Asking someone to do something

Use these phrases when you want to ask someone to do something for you:

Could you take this box for me, please?

Can you take this box for me, please? (*Without 'please' this can sound rude.*)

Do you mind taking this box for me, please?

Would you mind taking this box for me, please? (*Sounds more polite than 'Do you mind...'*)

3. A note about 'can'

The word 'can' in requests sounds less polite than 'could'. It is usually used between people who know each other well and even then, it is often used with 'please'. If you want to sound polite, it is better not to use 'can' in requests.

4. A note about 'please'

'Please' is often used when asking for something in order to sound polite. It can be used either at the start or the end of the sentence, though adult speakers of English usually prefer to say 'please' at the end.

5. Saying yes

Use these phrases to say yes when someone asks to have or take something:

(Yes,) sure (*Slightly informal.*)

Go ahead. (*Slightly informal.*)

(Yes,) of course. (*Slightly formal.*)

(Yes,) no problem.

Yes, that's fine.

Yes, do.

Help yourself.

Use these phrases to say yes when someone asks you to do something:

(Yes,) no problem.

(Yes,) that's no trouble at all. (*Slightly formal.*)

(Yes,) sure (*Slightly informal.*)

(Yes,) of course. (*Slightly formal.*)