

EVERYDAY CONVERSATIONS

Asking for things

You know that if you want to ask for things you must begin your request with "Can I ..." or "May I ...". When you are in Britain, you will notice that the people have a different, more complicated way of asking for things. And your "Can I ..." or "May I ..." may appear too direct and even rude. Just the same as you can't simply answer with "Yes" or "No".

Here are some linguistic advice on how to make a request and how to answer.

Requests

Could I possibly ...?
Is there any chance of ...?
Would you mind if ...?
Do you think I could possibly ...?
I wonder if ...?
Is it all right if I ...?
I wonder whether you could ...? (... whether I could ...?)

Positive answers

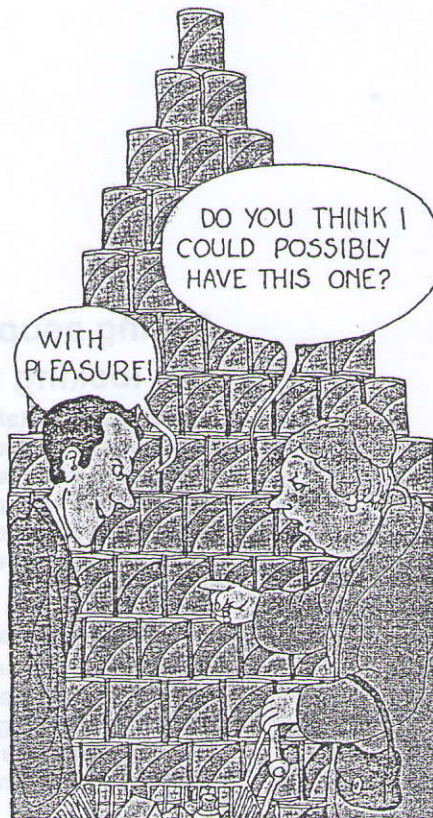
Yes, of course.	With pleasure.
Certainly.	You're welcome.
No problem.	Suit yourself.
Sure (U.S.).	Yes, I think that would be all right.
	That's all right.
Please do.	If you wish (like).
As you wish (like).	

Negative answers

I'd like to say yes, but...	I'd rather you didn't.
I'm afraid not.	Of course not.
I'm afraid it's impossible.	I'm not sure I can.
I'm sorry, you can't.	I don't think it's possible.

Reserved answers

I can't tell you just now.
I don't quite know yet.
Let me think it over and I'll tell you later.
I'll have to check with (my friends, my wife, etc.) first.



Exercise:

You ask somebody to do something for you:

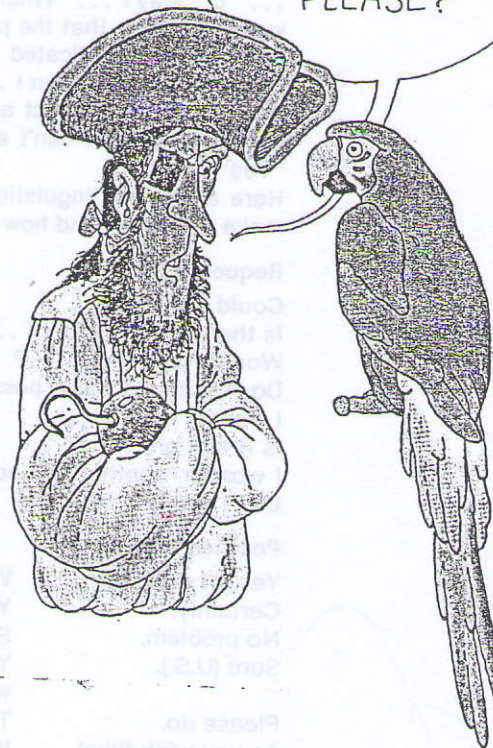
- Lend you something.
- Stop smoking.
- Bring something back from the shops.
- Turn down the radio.

You ask somebody if you can do something:

- Borrow something.
- Make a cup of tea.
- Close the window.
- Use the telephone.

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SORRY, COULD YOU SAY THAT AGAIN PLEASE?



Asking people to repeat and looking for words

A foreigner in Britain is often faced with two communication problems: (a) he may not understand what people tell him, (b) he may not know how to express himself because he doesn't know a word or has forgotten it. Here are very useful expressions to help you out in both cases.

a. Asking people to repeat

This can be a classroom situation, too. Next time you don't understand, remember to use one of the following sentences:

- Sorry, could you say that again, please?
- Sorry, would you mind repeating that, please?
- Sorry, could you repeat that, please?
- Sorry but I missed that.
- I'm afraid I didn't hear that (catch that).
- Sorry, what was that?
- I beg your pardon?
- Pardon me?

b. Looking for words

Here is a list of expressions you may need.

- I can't think of the right word, but you know what I mean.
- A sort of... you know.
- I don't know what you call it.
- I've forgotten what you call it (what it's called).
- I can't remember what it's called.
- See what I mean?
- I mean a...

EVERYDAY CONVERSATIONS

Likes and dislikes

You often find yourself in circumstances when you wish to say that you like or dislike something or somebody. Here are some sentences you may find useful.

You like...

I like... I love... I adore...

I really like... I do like...

I'm very fond of...

I'm rather keen on...

(Somebody has just said he likes something or somebody. You can agree with him.)

- Me too.
- I do too.
- So do I (can I; will I; etc.).
- Same here.

You dislike

I don't like ... I hate ...

I don't like ... at all.

I think it's horrible (awful, terrible).

I can't stand it. I can't bear it.

I'm not very fond of ... (keen on ...).

I can't say that I like ...

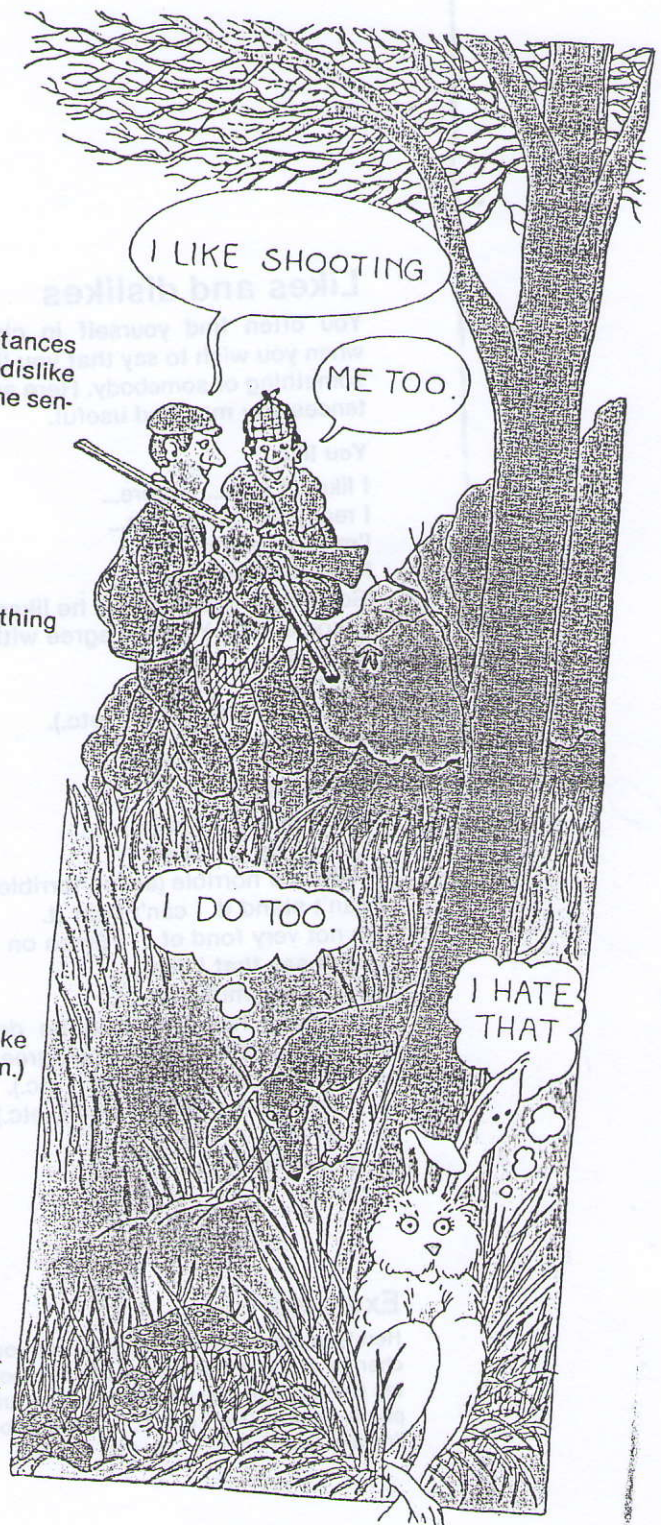
I don't care much for ...

(Somebody has just said he doesn't like something or someone. You agree with him.)

- Neither do I (can I; will I; etc.).
- I don't either (can't; won't; etc.).
- Nor me.
- Same here.

Exercise:

Here's another classroom game for you. The teacher (or one pupil) asks one of you about his tastes (Do you like classical music?) In turn, several pupils answer. (No, I don't ... What about you? — I'm very keen on it. — Me too ... etc.)



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- (Somebody has just said he doesn't like something or someone. You agree with him.)
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