

高等学校教材

大学英语 口语教程

下 册

主编 梅德明

Functional Course of
Conversational English

Book Two



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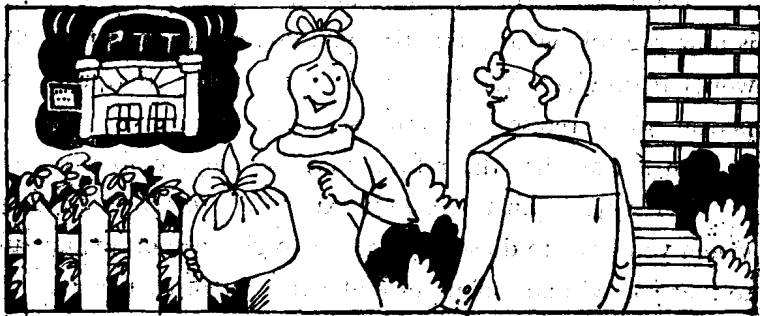
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Unit Sixteen

REQUESTS



Background Information

In this "Do it yourself" age, one finds delight in doing things on one's own. But this does not mean that requesting someone else to do something has disappeared altogether from social life. As a matter of fact, careful observation shows that people make requests quite frequently. Of course, in most situations requests are made with politeness.

There are many English expressions that you can use when requesting someone to do something for you. These expressions range from blunt to very polite. What expressions to use depends not only on how difficult, unpleasant or urgent the task is, but on the role you are playing and your relationship with the person you are speaking to. Generally, close friends make requests of each other quite directly, even when the request may be difficult to fulfil. In formal situations,

adding the word "please" has the effect of adding politeness. However, an expression with excessive politeness may sound sarcastic in certain situations. For example, "I wonder if you could possibly manage not to be late for work next time" may sound unpleasant to the ear.

The most important thing about asking favours of people is how you ask, what intonation you use, rather than the actual words themselves. When there is a possibility that the other person might refuse your request, try to phrase your question in such a way that the refusal may not cause embarrassment.

It is usually an unpleasant experience to refuse a request. When you have to do so, it is better to give a short explanation so that you will not offend or embarrass the other person.

Phrases and Expressions

Requesting

Excuse	}	me, Mr. Johnson.	{	Can	}	you (please) tell me when the game will begin?
Pardon				Could		
				Will		
				Would		

Could	}	you do me a favour?
Would		
Will		
Can		

Excuse me please, but	{	can	}	I	ask where the meeting will be held?
		may			
		could			

Could I { bother you to give this letter to Prof. Smith?
possibly use your telephone?
perhaps borrow your car?

Would it be too much to ask if I ask you to water the flowers for me?

Is it at all possible to ask you to lend me your new typewriter?

What would you say if I ask you to whitewash the wall for me?

You wouldn't like to do me a favour, would you?

You couldn't help me with my homework this evening, could you?

You don't mind cleaning the stove for me, do you?

Please send this package for me, { will
would } you?

Look, get me that book, { will
would } you?

Do {
Would } you mind sending this cable for me?

I wonder if { you would be so kind as to help me
with my French assignment?
I could borrow your bicycle for the morning?

I hope you won't { mind but I would like to borrow your
recorder.
be offended if I ask you if you could
change seats with me.

If you { don't mind, I'd like you to do some shopping for
me.
are going to the post office, would you post these
letters for me?

I'd like to borrow this dictionary for a few days if you're not using it,

I'd be { most } grateful if you could *fix this machine for*
 { very } *me.*

Responding favourably to a request

All right.

Sure.

Certainly.

By all means.

No problem.

With pleasure.

Yes, of course.

(No,) not at all.

Of course not.

Just { go ahead.
 { help yourself.

I will if I can.

I'll { see what I can do.
 { be glad to.

Refusing a request politely

Sorry, *I'm out of paper myself.*

I'm sorry, but I've promised to lend it to Mrs. Cohen.

I'm ever so sorry, but my calculator doesn't work properly.

I'm afraid I can't because I have to leave at six.

*I'd very much like to, but I'm afraid I can't. I'm using it
myself this evening.*

Sample Dialogues

Dialogue One

A: Would you lend me your dictionary?

B: Certainly. Here you are.

A: Thank you! I just want to look up a few words.

B: There's no hurry. Take your time. I'm not using it now.

A: (After using it) Thanks.

B: You're welcome.

Dialogue Two

A: Would you mind if I had some time off this week? I'm going to Chicago to see my uncle there.

B: When exactly?

A: Tuesday to Thursday. I'll be back on Friday.

B: I wonder if you could postpone your trip to the weekend because we are shorthanded^a these days.

A: No problem.

Dialogue Three

A: Could you do me a favour?

B: Sure.

A: Is there any chance of my borrowing some money from you?

B: Well, how much exactly do you need?

A: Say a hundred bucks^a.

B: I'd like to say yes, but it's just not possible. Will fifty do?

A: Yes, of course. Thanks.

Dialogue Four

A: I'm going to the mall^a to do some shopping. Is there anything I can do for you?

B: Oh, yes. Would you mind running over to the photo

studio when you are there to have this roll of film developed and printed?

A: With pleasure!

B: Could you ask them when it will be ready? I need to send them out before Christmas.

A: Sure.

B: By the way, I would be very grateful if you could cover the cost for me first. I'm running short of cash.⁵

A: I'll see what I can do. You know I have to do a lot of shopping myself and I haven't got this month's pay yet.

B: Please bring this travellers check with you in case you need it.

A: O.K. See you later.

Dialogue Five

A: Good morning, Tom. Can I help you?

B: Good morning, sir. I'd like to ask your advice about my studies for a minute, if I may.

A: Certainly. Come in and have a seat.

B: Thank you. Here's my transcription for the courses I have taken as an undergraduate student. Would you like to see it?

A: Yes. Let me see. Good, you have graduated as an honour student⁶ in physics.

B: Yes, and I'd like to apply for admission to the graduate school next semester.

A: I see. Have you asked your parents for their advice about this?

B: Yes, I have. They think it's a very good idea.

A: Well, it seems you have done very well in your studies so far. I don't think you'll have much trouble.

B: Thank you, sir. Anyway, I hope to apply, and I'd appreciate it if you could write a recommendation for me, if it's not too much trouble.

A: No trouble at all. I'd be glad to do it. Is there anything else?

B: No, sir. I think that's all. Thank you very much.

A: All right, Tom. Good luck to you.

B: Thank you, sir. Goodbye.

Dialogue Six

A: David, would you please read this letter of application I've just written? I'd like to have your opinion.

B: I'd be glad to tell you what I think.

A: If you don't think it's any good, please say so. I really want to get this job.

B: It looks fine to me. But if I were you, I would type the letter instead of writing it by hand. It'll look more impressive.

A: Good idea. Only I'm not good at typing.

B: Well, I could type it for you, but I need a new ribbon.

A: I'm going to the university book store and buy one.

B: That's fine. I'll try to get it done tonight. Is that all right?

A: Yes, that's very kind of you. Thank you very much indeed.

B: That's OK.

Dialogue Seven

A: Could you let me have a menu, please?

B: Yes, madam. Here you are.

A: Thank you.

B: Would you like to have something to drink while you are looking at the menu?

A: Yes, a glass of dry wine, please.

B: Yes, a glass of dry wine. May I recommend "Mexican Beef"? It's our special today, madam.

A: Ah, I wonder if you could explain to me what it is.

B: Certainly. It's beef cooked with our Mexican dressing with cream and asparagus.

A: Ah, that sounds nice, but could you tell me what Mexican dressing is exactly?

B: Ah, Mexican dressing, yes. That's one of our specialities. It's hot, spicy and sweet. It's very tasty, really. I would like to recommend it, madam.

A: Oh, yes.

Dialogue Eight

A: Hello, Jane. How are you feeling?

B: Oh, not too bad, but I've got to stay in bed. The doctor has just left and he gave me some tablets for my fever.

A: Oh, good. Are you hungry? Do you want me to make you something to eat?

B: No, there's no need, Ann. I'm not very hungry, but thank you all the same.

A: Isn't there anything I can do for you?

B: Well, yes. Would you mind buying some fruit for me on your way here next time? Some oranges, perhaps?

A: No, of course not. Anything else?

B: Would you bring my washing^s in please? I completely forgot that it was there.

A: Yes; of course. Shall I change the sheets for you, too?

B: Oh yes, please. I'd be very grateful.

A: What about this pile of letters here that you've typed for Peter? Would you like me to give them to him tomorrow?

B: That's very kind of you, thank you.

A: I'll drop in and see you tomorrow then, Jane. See you, bye.

B: Bye.

Notes:

1. Here the speaker is talking to his boss.
if I had some time off = if I were away from my work
2. short-handed = lacking in the needed number of workers
3. buck = American slang for an American dollar
4. mall = (AmE) an area of streets where one can walk to and around shops
5. I'm running short of cash. = I've used up almost all my cash.
6. honour student = student who achieves good results in his final degree examinations at the university
7. It's hot. = The food causes a burning taste in the mouth.
8. washing = clothes washed or to be washed

Practice

Structured

1. Instead of saying "Can I borrow your bicycle?" it is more polite to say "I wonder whether I could borrow your bicycle". Following the model, complete A's requests and

then change them to a more polite form:

Model:

A: Can I borrow your tent?

B: I wonder whether I could borrow your tent.

1. A: _____ have a cup of coffee?

B: _____

2. A: _____ invite some friends to the housewarming party?

B: _____

3. A: _____ use your telephone for a minute?

B: _____

4. A: _____ change your seat with me?

B: _____

5. A: _____ borrow your new cassette recorder?

B: _____

II. Instead of saying "Can you do some shopping for me?" it is more polite to say "Do you think you could possibly do some shopping for me?" Following the model, complete A's requests and then change them to a more polite form:

Model:

A: Can you do some typing for me?

B: Do you think you could possibly do some typing for me?

1. A: _____ teach me to drive?

B: _____

2. A: _____ help me with my homework?

B: _____

3. A: _____ put me up for the night?

B: _____

4. A: _____ show me around your library?

B: _____

III. According to the model complete A's requests and give replies using the phrase "No, go right ahead":

Model:

A: Would you mind if I closed the window?

B: No, go right ahead (and close it).

1. A: _____ turned the TV on?

B: _____

2. A: _____ turned the radio down?

B: _____

3. A: _____ made myself a cup of tea?

B: _____

4. A: _____ used your tools?

B: _____

IV. Complete the following sentences with reference to Phrases and Expressions:

1. Will you please _____?

2. May I please ask _____?

3. Could I bother you to _____?

4. Would it be too much to ask _____?

5. What would you say if I ask you to _____?

6. You don't mind _____?

7. I wonder if _____.

8. I hope you won't be offended if I ask you to _____.

9. Is it at all possible to ask you to _____?

10. I'd be most grateful if you could _____.

V. Learn individual parts in Sample Dialogues and then play

the roles in pairs.

Semi-structured

I. Complete the following dialogues by supplying the requests!

1. A: _____

B: Oh, yes, please do.

2. A: _____

B: I'll be glad to.

3. A: _____

B: No problem.

4. A: _____

B: By all means.

5. A: _____

B: Certainly. Come to my office.

6. A: _____

B: I'm sorry, but I'm not going anywhere near the post office.

7. A: _____

B: I'm afraid I can't. I have to attend a meeting then.

II. Complete the following dialogues by giving replies to the requests:

1. A: Could you help me to move into my new flat tomorrow?

B: _____

2. A: I wonder if you'd take these letters to the post office?

B: _____

3. A: Could you take my little sister to the clinic, if you have time?

B: _____

4. A: Will you take a message to Peter? Would you mind telling him I can't come to the conference next Monday?

B: _____

5. A: I wonder if you'd mind taking my bike to be repaired this afternoon?

B: _____

6. A: Could you help me with my homework tonight if you're not too busy?

B: _____

7. A: Would you mind helping me move the wardrobe?

B: _____

III. Complete the following dialogues with your partner. In each one, politely refuse the request and give a reason for your refusal:

1. A: _____ type these letters by tomorrow?

B: _____

2. A: _____ videotape tonight's program for me?

B: _____

3. A: _____ finish the project by Saturday?

B: _____

4. A: _____ cleaning the windows for me?

B: _____

5. A: _____ working overtime next weekend?

B: _____

IV. Pairing with your partner, complete the following dialogues: