

In life, we all need to ask others to do things for us. Whether at work, home, or school, we hope that when we make a request, people will say yes! The way to get a positive result more often is to combine the language of polite requests with the psychology of effective requests.

This document will show you how to make successful requests. It includes:

- English expressions to make polite requests
- psychological techniques to make effective requests
- 3 levels of requests
- 3 factors that determine how to make a request
- examples of informal, formal, and very formal requests
- the secret word and technique of getting people to say yes

## LANGUAGE OF POLITE REQUESTS

### FACTORS AFFECTING REQUESTS

The language we use when making requests is based on three factors:

FACTOR	WHAT TO CONSIDER
LEVEL OF RELATIONSHIP	Are we asking a family member, a friend, a colleague, a boss, or a stranger?
LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY	How much time, effort, money or other resources does our request demand?
LEVEL OF REQUEST	Is it a small, medium, or large request

### LEVELS AFFECTING REQUEST

If we are making a small request, our language can be direct, informal and short.

If the request is medium-sized, the language we use should be polite, formal and long.

If we need to make a big request, it is better to use very polite, very formal and very long / lengthy language. This is summarized below.

LEVEL	LANGUAGE	FORMALITY	LENGTH
SMALL	Direct	Informal	Short
MEDIUM	Polite	Formal	Standard/Average
LARGE	Very Polite	Very Formal	Very Long

## EXAMPLES OF POLITE LANGUAGE REQUESTS

ABOUT ME:		
SMALL	direct, informal, short	Can I go now?
MEDIUM	polite, formal, standard	Do you think I could leave now?
LARGE	very polite, very formal, very long	I was wondering if it would be (at all) possible for me to leave early today?

ABOUT YOU:		
SMALL	direct, informal, short	Got 5 bucks?
MEDIUM	polite, formal, standard	Could you please lend me \$25?
LARGE	very polite, very formal, very long	I hope you don't mind my asking, but could I please borrow \$250?

You can use the requests above confidently whenever you are communicating in English. However, if you want to **increase your chances of getting a positive response** to your requests, you need to use a secret strategy! Read on to learn what happens when you combine the right language with the right psychology.

## PSYCHOLOGY OF POLITE REQUESTS

### THE SECRET WORD TO GET A YES!

Researchers have found that by using the word "because" or giving people a reason for our request, we greatly increase our chances of getting a positive response – a yes. They found this to be true even if the reason that was given was not particularly good! Note the difference in the same examples given above when we add a reason.

## EXAMPLES OF POLITE LANGUAGE REQUESTS + EFFECTIVE PSYCHOLOGY REQUESTS

ABOUT ME:		
SMALL	direct, informal, short	Can I go now? 'Cause I gotta pick up my kids.
MEDIUM	polite, formal, standard	Do you think I could leave now? I have another meeting in 5 minutes.
LARGE	very polite, very formal, very long	I was wondering if it would be (at all) possible for me to leave early because I have a flight this evening.

ABOUT YOU:		
SMALL	direct, informal, short	Got 5 bucks? I need to buy lunch.
MEDIUM	polite, formal, standard	Could you please lend me \$25? I need to get a haircut before my job interview.
LARGE	very polite, very formal, very long	I hope you don't mind my asking, but could I please borrow \$250? I'm late on my rent and the landlord is threatening to evict me. (force me to leave the apartment)

## CONCLUSION

Did you notice how much more effective our requests become when we give a reason? In the situations above, did you feel more likely to say “yes” when the word “because” was used or when a reason was given? What you experienced is what happens to most other people, too!

So remember: **When you need to ask someone for something, use the right language and the right psychology for the best results.**

## LANGUAGE OF POLITE REQUESTS

- **Small – Direct, Informal, Short**

- Can I...
- Is it okay if I...
- Can you...

- **Medium – Polite, Formal, Standard**

- May I please...
- Could I please...
- Would it be all right if I...
- Would you mind if I...
- Do you think I could...
- Could you please...
- Would you please...
- I'd appreciate it if you could...

- **Large – Very Polite, Very Formal, Very Long**

- Do you think it would be possible for me to...
- Do you think it would be at all possible...
- I hope you don't mind my asking but would it be possible to...
- I hope you don't mind my asking but do you think it might be at all possible for me/you/him/her/us/them to...

## PRACTICE

Make the following requests, using the right language and giving a reason.

1. Medium                    You want your secretary to send an email to your client.
2. Small                      You want your brother to pick up a coffee for you.
3. Medium                    You want your employee to finish a report by 5:00 pm.
4. Large                      You want your boss to give you 3 days off next week off to look after a relative.
5. Medium/Large            You want your professor to let you hand in your assignment late?
6. Small                      You want to know where your son put the key.
7. Large                      You want to know if your boss can give you an advance on your salary.
8. Small                      You want your friend to send you his class notes.

## SAMPLE ANSWERS

1. Could you please send that email to ABC Company as soon as possible? I need them to get it before they close down for the day in Japan.
2. Hey, can you grab a coffee for me? I really need some caffeine!
3. I would appreciate it if you could finish the report by 5:00 pm. We need to get it over to the client for approval before tomorrow's big meeting.
4. I hope you don't mind my asking but do you think it might be possible for me to take 3 days off next week? Unfortunately, my mother is unwell and I need to take her to the hospital for a number of tests so they can figure out what is wrong with her.
5. I hope you don't mind my asking but would it be all right for me to submit my assignment on Monday? I had a terrible case of food poisoning and was unable to get to the library to do any work.
6. Where's the key, hon? We need to get you to soccer practice.
7. I hope you don't mind my asking but do you think it might be possible for me to get an advance on my salary? I had some unexpected expenses this month because of my car accident.
8. Hey, man, can you send me your class notes? I couldn't get up this morning!