

Asking for Clarification

You want someone to repeat a whole sentence:

- I'm sorry?
- Excuse me?
- Pardon?
- Sorry – what did you say?
- Sorry – what was that again?
- I'm afraid I don't quite catch that.
- I didn't quite catch what you just said.
- I didn't quite understand that last sentence.

You want someone to repeat a word:

- Sorry – what did you give Mr Schneider?
- Sorry – what did you say you wanted me to send you?

You want someone to speak more loudly:

- I'm sorry, could you speak up a bit? I'm having trouble hearing you.
- I'm sorry, there's quite a bit of background noise. What were you saying?

You want someone to speak more slowly:

- I'm sorry, could you speak a little more slowly, please? My English is not that good.
- I'm sorry, could I ask you to slow down a bit? I'm having trouble understanding.

You want someone to go on speaking after an interruption:

- Sorry – you were saying...?
- Sorry – what were you saying before we were interrupted?
- So, where were we?

You are not sure what someone is talking about:

- What is it you wanted to talk to me about?
- Sorry – I'm afraid I'm not quite sure what this is about.
- Sorry – is this still about the meeting?
- Sorry – has this got to do with holidays?

You want someone to repeat a logical argument:

- I'm afraid I don't quite follow you.
- Sorry – I didn't quite follow that.
- I'm afraid I still don't quite get your point.

You want someone to be more concrete:

- You mentioned "growth". What exactly do you have in mind?
- Can you give me an example of what you mean?
- What kind of changes were you thinking about?
- Can you be more specific?
- By "increase", what do you mean exactly?
- I'm not entirely sure I know what you mean.
- I'm not quite sure what you mean by "later".
- I'm sorry – are you saying that delays are caused by tiredness, or the other way round?

Someone has mentioned a term or a name you don't know:

- I'm afraid I don't know what "actionable" means.
- What exactly does "perjury" mean?
- I don't think I know the term "balance sheet".
- What was that word you used before? Was it "apprenticeship"?
- I'm afraid that I'm not familiar with the name Dr Kevorkian.
- I'm afraid the name Charles Schulz doesn't ring a bell.