

# Requests

Make sure you see the right words when you ask someone to do something for you. The key point is that requests in English are usually “softened” by an introductory sentence. Take a look at the following examples.

- ❖ “This is a bit heavy. **I would really appreciate it if** you could help me with it.”
- ❖ “I’ve got this report to finish. **Would you mind** waiting 20 minutes?”
- ❖ “Do you have a minute? **I wonder if I could ask you to** proof-read this for me.”
- ❖ “I’m a bit unclear on the XY project. **I was wondering if** I could ask you a few questions.”
- ❖ “My son’s play is on today. **Would it be possible for me to** leave an hour earlier?”
- ❖ “I’m still waiting for the package. **Would it be all right if** we postponed our meeting by half an hour?”

## TIP

Be very careful with the expression “Would you be so kind as to...”. It can sound very sarcastic, even rude. If you are talking to your boss, it is less confrontational to use one of the last three phrasings instead of “would you...”. “I was wondering” is a little less direct and more formal than “I wonder”.

## Politeness in the service sector

It is particularly important for people in the service sector to be friendly and polite to strangers when they are asking them to do something such as to wait. English speakers expect to hear certain key phrases.

- ❖ “**If you’ll just** take a seat for a moment, please, we’ll/I’ll be right with you.”
- ❖ “I’m sorry, but we’re not boarding just yet. **Perhaps you’d like to** take a seat for a few minutes.”
- ❖ “I’m afraid your table isn’t ready yet. **If you’ll just bear with us for a moment**, we’ll get it ready for you.”

## TIP

Do not say “Please be patient.” It sounds as if you are criticizing someone for being impatient. “Please bear with me/us” means the same thing, but sounds much more graceful.