

# 3 Could you do me a favor?

## 1 Would you mind ... ?



**A** Complete the request for each situation.

1. You want to borrow a dollar from a friend for a cup of coffee.

*Can I borrow a dollar for a cup of coffee?*

2. You want a classmate to give you a ride home after class.

*Would you mind*

3. You want to turn down your roommate's TV.

*Is it OK if*

4. You want to use a friend's cell phone.

*Do you mind if*

5. You want to borrow a friend's car for the weekend.

*Would it be OK if*

6. You want someone to tell you how to get to the subway.

*I was wondering if*

**B** Think of four things you would need to have done if you were going on a long vacation. Write requests asking a friend to do the things.



Example: *Could you water the plants?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

2

Accept or decline these requests. For requests you decline, give excuses. Use the expressions in the box or expressions of your own.

Accepting	Declining
That's OK, I guess.	Sorry, but . . .
I'd be glad to.	I'd like to, but . . .
Fine. No problem.	

1. A: Can I use your computer? I have to type a paper.  
 B: *Sorry, but I'm going to use it myself in a few minutes.*

2. A: I've just finished this ten-page paper. Could you check it for me, please?

B: \_\_\_\_\_

3. A: I wonder if I could stay at your place for a week while my landlord fixes the roof.

B: \_\_\_\_\_

4. A: Would you mind if I used your cell phone to make a long-distance call to Nigeria?

B: \_\_\_\_\_

3

Look at the pictures and write the conversations. Speaker A makes a request. Speaker B declines it. Each speaker should give a reason.

1. A: *I was wondering if you'd mind carrying these suitcases for me. I have a bad back.*  
 B: *Sorry, but I have a bad back, too.*



2. A: \_\_\_\_\_

B: \_\_\_\_\_

3. A: \_\_\_\_\_

B: \_\_\_\_\_



**A** Read the magazine article about making requests.



## Requests that get RESULTS

There are many different ways of making requests. For example, if someone wants to borrow a dollar, he or she can say:

“Could you lend me a dollar?”  
 “Do you have a dollar?”  
 “You don’t have a dollar, do you?”

How does a person know which request to use?

Language researchers have suggested that speakers must make several important decisions. First, they must consider the other person’s feelings because requests can sometimes cause embarrassment to both the speaker and the listener. If the speaker thinks the listener will accept the request, he or she will probably use a less formal request; however, if the speaker thinks the listener may decline the request, he or she will probably use a fairly formal request. The listener then has to make a choice either to accept or refuse the request. If he or she refuses, then both the speaker and the listener might be embarrassed.

In addition, speakers must decide how well they know the person they are requesting something from and choose a suitable question. If the speaker knows the listener well, one of several types of requests can be used.

For example:

1. Make a statement with *need*: “I need a dollar.”
2. Use an imperative: “Please lend me a dollar.”
3. Use a question: “Do you have a dollar?”

If the speaker doesn’t know the listener well, one of several types of requests can be used instead. For example:

4. Ask about ability: “Could/Can you lend me a dollar?”
5. Be polite – use *may*: “May I borrow a dollar?”
6. Ask for permission: “Would it be OK if I borrowed a dollar?”
7. Express curiosity: “I wonder if I could borrow a dollar.”
8. State the request negatively: “I don’t suppose you could lend me a dollar.”
9. Apologize: “I hope you don’t mind my asking you for a dollar?”
10. Give a hint: “I wish I had a dollar.”

Knowing how to make requests means knowing different types of requests as well as when each type of request is appropriate.

**B** Check (✓) if each request is less formal or more formal. Then write the correct number from the article (1–10) for each type of request.

	Less formal	More formal	Type
1. Close the door.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2. It’s really cold in here.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3. Could you possibly move your car?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4. May I borrow your dictionary?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5. I wonder if you could help me with this assignment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
6. I need some help moving to my new apartment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

**C** When do you usually use each type of request? Which of the ten types of requests described in the article do you use most often? least often?

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## 5

**Nouns and verbs**

**A** Complete this chart. Then check your answers in a dictionary.

Noun	Verb	Noun	Verb
apology	<i>apologize</i>	invitation	_____
compliment	_____	permission	_____
explanation	_____	request	_____

**B** Check (✓) the phrase that describes what each person is doing.



**I really like your new haircut.**

- I really like your new haircut.
  - giving a reason
  - giving a compliment
- Don't worry, I know you didn't mean to break it.
  - returning a favor
  - accepting an apology
- Can I borrow your laptop?
  - asking for a favor
  - giving a gift
- I can't lend you my bike because I need it myself.
  - denying a request
  - accepting an invitation
- I was wondering if you'd mind helping me cook dinner.
  - making a request
  - returning a compliment

## 6

**Choose the correct words.**

- My phone didn't work for a week. The phone company \_\_\_\_\_ an apology and took \$20 off my bill.  
(accepted / denied / offered)
- A friend of mine really loves to \_\_\_\_\_ compliments, but he never gives anyone else one. I don't understand why he's like that.  
(do / owe / receive)
- Carol is always talking on the phone. She makes a lot of calls, but she rarely \_\_\_\_\_ mine. Maybe she never listens to her voice mail!  
(makes / offers / returns )
- I need to \_\_\_\_\_ a favor. Could you please give me a ride to school tomorrow? My bike has a flat tire!  
(ask for / give / turn down)

## 7

Use these messages to complete the phone conversations.  
Use indirect requests.

1

## MESSAGE:

Eric,  
Kevin called this morning. Can  
he borrow your DVD player? If  
yes, when could he pick it up?

2

## MESSAGE:

Rosa,  
Anita called. Her flight  
arrives at 7 P.M. on Tuesday.  
Please meet her in the  
International Arrivals area.



3

## MESSAGE:

Alex,  
Judy called yesterday. The class  
reunion is on Saturday at 8 P.M.  
Don't forget your digital camera.

4

## MESSAGE:

Jenny,  
Philip called earlier. Are you  
going to the movie tonight?  
When does it start?  
Call him.

1. A: Is Rosa there, please?

B: No, she isn't. Would you like to leave a message?

A: Yes, please. This is Anita calling from Toronto.

Could you tell her that my flight arrives at 7 P.M. on Tuesday \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Would \_\_\_\_\_ ?

B: OK, I'll give her the message.

2. A: Can I speak to Eric, please?

B: I'm afraid he's not here. Do you want to leave a message?

A: Yes, please. This is Kevin.

Please \_\_\_\_\_ .

And if it's OK, could you \_\_\_\_\_ ?

B: Sure, I'll leave him the message.

3. A: Could I speak to Alex, please?

B: I'm sorry, but he's not here right now.

A: Oh, OK. This is Judy. I'd like to leave a message.

Could \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Can \_\_\_\_\_ ?

B: OK, Judy, I'll give him your message.

4. A: I'd like to speak to Jenny, please.

B: She's not here right now. Can I take a message?

A: Yeah. This is Philip.

Can \_\_\_\_\_ ?

And would \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Oh, and please \_\_\_\_\_ .

B: OK, Philip, I'll give Jenny your message.



**Complete the conversation with the information in the box. Add any words necessary and use the correct form of the verbs given.**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ask Jill to get some soda        | <input type="checkbox"/> bring a big salad |
| <input type="checkbox"/> borrow some money                | <input type="checkbox"/> can buy dessert   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> borrow your CD player | <input type="checkbox"/> don't be late     |

Chris: So, is there anything I can do to help?

Len: Yeah. Would it be OK *if I borrowed your CD player* ?

We need good stereo sound at the party.

Chris: Sure. And I'll bring some CDs. I have some great party music.

Len: Thanks.

Chris: No problem. Now, what about food?

Len: Well, I thought maybe a salad. Would you mind

\_\_\_\_\_ , too?

Chris: Well, OK. And, how about drinks?

Len: Well, I was also wondering if you'd mind

\_\_\_\_\_ .

And please tell her \_\_\_\_\_ .

Last time we had a party, she didn't arrive till eleven o'clock,  
and everyone got really thirsty!

Chris: I remember.

Len: One more thing, I wonder if you

\_\_\_\_\_ .

Chris: Um, sure. All right. But, uh, would you mind if I

\_\_\_\_\_ to pay for it?



**Rewrite these sentences. Find another way to say each sentence using the words given.**

1. Can I use your cell phone?

*Would it be OK if I used your cell phone?* \_\_\_\_\_ (OK)

2. Please ask Penny to stop by and talk to me.

\_\_\_\_\_ (would)

3. Could I borrow your guitar?

\_\_\_\_\_ (wonder)

4. Would you ask Adam what time he's coming over?

\_\_\_\_\_ (could / when)

5. Lend me your hairbrush.

\_\_\_\_\_ (mind)