



## POLITE ENGLISH FREE ON-LINE COURSE

### Lesson 9:

*Learn how to praise and criticize in a polite way.*

**version without a key**

## WARM UP

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THINK



*“Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfills the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things.”*

**Winston Churchill**

Read more about Winston Churchill: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winston\\_Churchill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winston_Churchill)

→ Explain the quote using your own words?

→ Do you agree with the quote?



**Expand your vocabulary!**

**Criticism** - comments that show that you think something is wrong or bad

- **to criticize someone/something for (doing) something:**  
*The new proposals have been criticized for not going far enough to change the system.*
- **be strongly/severely/widely/sharply/heavily criticized:**  
*Social services were widely criticized for not taking more action to protect children at risk.*
- **criticism of:**  
*He finds criticism of his team's performance hard to take.*
- **to attract criticism:**  
*It's not unusual for politicians to attract criticism.*
- **fierce/strong criticism:**  
*Plans for the new road have drawn fierce criticism from local people.*
- **constructive criticism (=criticism that is intended to be helpful):**  
*We always welcome constructive criticism.*

**To praise** – to express strong approval or admiration for someone or something, especially in public:  
*Mayor Dixon praised the efforts of those involved in the rescue.*

- **to highly praise:**  
*The painting of St Basil's Cathedral was highly praised.*
- **to praise someone for (doing) something:**  
*He praised the staff for encouraging the artistic talents of the prisoners.*



## SPEAKING

- Express the fact of criticizing or praising using the structures from above.

– *He criticized me for my bad behavior (to be criticized for ...)*

I was ...

– *The teacher was angry because the pupils didn't do their homework, (to be criticized for not having done something)*

The pupils ...

– *The local government was criticized for not supporting the local schools, (to draw strong criticism)*

The local government ...

- **Build your own sentences about your own experience with the expressions: to highly praise and to praise someone for doing something.**



## LISTENING AND WATCHING

Watch the video and answer the questions below.

**Video 1:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dYgb12DIII>

1. Complete the Golden Rule:

PRAISE in ....., criticize in ....

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2. Explain the thought of Nancy Jane? Elaborate on it!

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**Video 2:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwSU72bLEJc>

3. What pieces of advice does Marie give?

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4. Which piece of advice is your favorite one? Why?

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5. Finish the phrase:

Judging a person does not define who they are,

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## THINK and ANSWER

- Do you sometimes have to criticize or give negative feedback to someone at work, e.g. your colleagues? If yes, how do you do this? What words, expressions, phrases do you use?
- Do you know how to give negative feedback in a diplomatic way?



## READING and EXERCISE.

Read the dialogues below.

### Situation 1

**Emma:** 'John, I have to talk to you immediately!'

**John:** 'Yeah.'

**Emma:** 'I've just read your report about the current progress with the new supermarket project. **It is really very bad and has to be improved at once.**'

**John:** 'OK.'

**Emma:** 'I can't seem to find the projected future costs of the project on the report.'

**John:** 'Yes, I can explain what happened. We still haven't finished them yet. I'm really sorry. I'll make sure they are completed and they'll be in the report by the end of the day.'

**Emma:** 'Thank you. The things on the report are not explained in a clear way. **How are you going to improve them?**

**John:** 'It seems fine to me.'

**Emma:** **It is not! It has to be** re-written. It's not very easy to read. There are a few grammatical errors and some parts of the text are confusing to understand.'

**John:** 'Really! I don't know what else I could have done. It makes perfect sense to me.'

**Emma:** '**Just look at** this paragraph. '

**John:** 'You have a point.'

**Emma:** 'It's just that the report is going to the client, so everything needs to be perfect. I understand that you're busy but you **mustn't forget** that the people who'll read the report have less technical knowledge than yourself.'

**John:** 'Sorry, what would you like me to do?'

**Emma:** 'Add the projected future costs to the report and then re-write the report.'

**John:** 'OK.'

**Emma:** 'And make **sure, you don't do it in the future!**

## Situation 2

**Jonathan:** 'Would you mind coming to my office for a minute?'

**Vicky:** 'OK.'

**Jonathan:** 'Take a seat. The reason I've asked you to come here is that **there was another complaint about you.**

**Vicky:** 'Really! Who from?'

**Jonathan:** 'From a customer. **How do you think?'**

**Vicky:** 'I've no idea.'

**Jonathan:** 'A woman said that you wouldn't help her with her enquiry and that you also insulted her.'

**Vicky:** 'I spoke to a woman this morning who was very aggressive to me, but I didn't insult her. She wanted us to go to her house to repair today and I told her it was impossible. I told her that the earliest someone could go was on Friday.'

**Jonathan:** '**Really, but** this isn't the first time that you have received a complaint from a customer.'

**Vicky:** 'That was different. Today, I did everything correctly.'

**Jonathan:** 'So, **how do you explain** the complaint?'

**Vicky:** 'I don't know. But I did everything that I should.'

**Jonathan:** '**No, you didn't.** I have listened to a recording of the call and you were aggressive with her.'

**Vicky:** 'She continued demanding that we had to go and repair her TV today. She wouldn't shut up. I did nothing wrong.'

**Jonathan:** 'Well, if that's your attitude, **I have to** give you a verbal warning about your behaviour.'

**Vicky:** 'That's not fair! It was her fault, not mine!'

**Jonathan:** 'One more complaint and I will give you a written warning. You do understand what this could mean?'



**NOW. Think:** what expressions from the dialogues should be removed and how could you change them in order to make the conversations sound more polite, gentle and diplomatic.

**Read the text.**

## How to Criticize Gently in English

Your boss tells you that you did a bad job. Your coworker criticizes you in front of your whole team. Ouch! It's not easy to take criticism, no matter who it comes from. But, it is easy to soften the blow when you offer criticism to someone in English. Merely by altering your wording and your attitude, you can help someone grow as opposed to making them feel defeated.

## Avoid direct accusations

Phrases like "You're wrong!" and "Your presentation was terrible!" have no place in effective criticism. In fact, it's best to leave the word "you" out, if at all possible. Personal attacks make people feel defensive, and then they won't really listen to anything you have to say.

## Soften with compliments

Before starting with the criticism, warm the person up with compliments. If you are discussing their work, find several things you truly like about what they have done. For example, "I enjoyed your presentation today. You presented a lot of good and helpful information in it, and I can tell you put a lot of effort into it. I appreciate your hard work." This will lower their defenses and make them feel appreciated.

## Don't continue with "but"

However, a short, vague compliment followed by "but" – such as "It was a helpful talk, but you really need to improve your presentation skills." – won't do much to help the process. After you've shared your compliments, allow them time to be absorbed. Immediately following your compliment with a "but" will destroy all you've tried to accomplish by making your praise seem false and insincere.

## Advise with advice

Remember that the goal of constructive criticism isn't to make the person feel terrible; it's to help them grow. Instead of directly accusing the person, try to get the message through to them in the form of light-hearted advice. Phrases like, "Next time you might want to ..." or "I find it helpful to ..." can take away the blame while still leaving an impact: "Next time you might want to give a little more attention to the audience. I find it helpful to look people in the eyes while I am speaking."

## Stay specific

People can't change overnight, especially if they don't get detailed direction. Simply saying "you need to work on your presentation skills" won't help a soul! Be detailed in your advice, and don't overload anyone with criticism. Remember, you want them to keep trying and improving. Don't leave them feeling defeated!



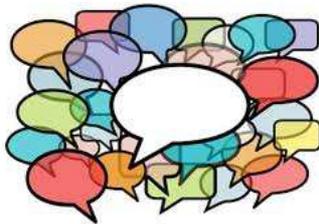
## Exercise – paraphrasing polite English

After you have read the text, try to change the dialogues so they sound nice, polite and contain constructive criticism. Take into the account advice from the text.



## More phrases for constructive criticism and being negative diplomatically.

- I'm afraid ..., ...
- I'm sorry, but ... .
- Well, actually ...
- I'm afraid we've found the report rather /a bit vague / not very clear.
- I have some reservations about it.
- I can see both sides of the argument.
- I don't fully agree with the idea.
- My impression of the idea is positive but I have some doubts.
- I'm uncertain about the idea.
- I want more time before I give my opinion of the idea.
- Could you please try not to ... .
- I'm very impressed by your work unfortunately due to some factors ...
- I'm aware how much hard work went into this.
- I realize that this must be disappointing for you ..
- You did an excellent job, but ...
- I really appreciate all your efforts on this, but ...
- Please take into account that ...
- Please remember next time ...
- Please bear in mind ...
- I've had a similar problem in the past ....
- I can tell you from my experience ....



## SPEAKING

- Paraphrase the criticism into a constructive criticism or polite reminders.

*You are late again!*

*Your presentation was a disaster!*

*You missed the deadline again!*

*Your project failed!*

*You mustn't wear jeans to office!*

- **Work with your friend/colleague and practise the phrases in situations above. Try to keep the conversation going for a bit longer. Improvise.**