



POLITE ENGLISH FREE ON-LINE COURSE

Lesson 1:

The importance of being polite in England

version without a key

WARM UP



THINK

- Are English people polite?
- Are Polish people polite?
- Compare those two nationalities in terms of politeness.



READING

Read the text and answer the questions.

Translation table explaining the truth behind British politeness becomes Internet hit.

The British trait of being too polite to speak one's mind has led to a table translating numerous **hollow** English phrases becoming an Internet hit.

The table sheds light on just how difficult it can be for a foreigner to understand what the British really mean when they're speaking – especially for those take every word at face value.

Phrases that prove the trickiest to **decipher** include 'you must come for dinner', which foreigners tend to take as a direct invitation, but is actually said out of politeness by many Britons and often does not result in an invite.

The table also reveals that when a person from Britain begins a sentence "with the greatest respect ...", they actually mean 'I think you are an idiot'.

WHAT THE BRITISH SAY	WHAT THE BRITISH MEAN	WHAT FOREIGNERS UNDERSTAND
I hear what you say	I disagree and do not want to discuss it further	He accepts my point of view
With the greatest respect	You are an idiot	He is listening to me
That's not bad	That's good	That's poor
That is a very brave proposal	You are insane	He thinks I have courage
Quite good	A bit disappointing	Quite good
I would suggest	Do it or be prepared to justify yourself	Think about the idea, but do what you like
Oh, incidentally/ by the way	The primary purpose of our discussion is	That is not very important
I was a bit disappointed that	I am annoyed that	It doesn't really matter
Very interesting	That is clearly nonsense	They are impressed
I'll bear it in mind	I've forgotten it already	They will probably do it
I'm sure it's my fault	It's your fault	Why do they think it was their fault?
You must come for dinner	It's not an invitation, I'm just being polite	I will get an invitation soon
I almost agree	I don't agree at all	He's not far from agreement
I only have a few minor comments	Please rewrite completely	He has found a few typos
Could we consider some other options	I don't like your idea	They have not yet decided

The table points out that when Britons say 'I'm sure it's my fault', it actually means 'it's your fault'.

It also reveals that 'very interesting' can often mean 'that is clearly nonsense'.

The table, which has been posted on an number of blogs, has attracted thousands of comments from both Britons and foreigners claiming the interpretations are true to life.

Duncan Green, a strategic adviser for Oxfam who posted it online, described it as "a handy guide for our fellow Europeans and others trying to fathom weaselly Brit-speak".

Mr Green said: "Sadly, I didn't write it. It's just one of those great things that is being passed around on the Internet."

Although the author of the table is unconfirmed, it is thought it may have originally been drawn up by a Dutch company as an attempt to help employees working in the UK.

Hugh Grant in Four Weddings and a Funeral is the epitome of British politeness

Source:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/howaboutthat/10280244/Translation-table-explaining-the-truth-behind-British-politeness-becomes-internet-hit.html>

Understanding the text



Answer the questions below.

Explain the general idea of the text.

Has the text surprised you?

Which of the translations do you find the most funny, surprising or unbelievable one?

Build at least three questions to the text.



EXTENDING YOUR VOCABULARY

→ Exercise 1:

Try to deduce the meaning of the highlighted words and match them with their definitions.

hollow	→		1. a person or thing that is a perfect example of a particular quality or type
decipher	→		2. without meaning
fellow	→		3. to be <u>able</u> to <u>understand</u> something after <u>thinking</u> about it a lot
fathom	→		4. a man
epitome	→		5. sly
weaselly	→		6. to <u>discover</u> what something says or <u>means</u>

→ Exercise 2

Complete the sentences with the words from the previous exercise.

hollow	decipher	fellow	fathom
weaselly	epitome		

1. He's a _____, conniving thief.
2. Somehow the outfit was the _____ of French chic with a very modern twist.

3. Your son's a bright little _____.
4. No one could _____ why she had left so early.
5. It's sometimes difficult to _____ his handwriting.
6. His promises are often _____.



PRACTICE NEW VOCABULARY

Answer the detailed questions using the words from the previous exercise.

Do the sentences in the article have a second meaning?

Do English people tend to say things out of politeness?

On the whole does the article imply English people to be polite or not?



SERIOUS TIPS ;)

No matter whether you consider English people to be polite or not, the way they express themselves is always very polite.

The two key words are **PLEASE** and **THANK YOU**.

Don't forget to use them, as they do, otherwise you might be perceived as a rude person.

There are also other ways of being polite in English and you will find them out in the next lessons!

→ **READ** the text and remember the rules.

Minding Your Ps and Qs in English

All too often we get caught up in the world with our busy lives. It's easy to forget the simplicities in life, like saying please and thank you. These days we have a lot on our minds. Yet, five simple words can improve the world we live in, if only we incorporate them into our daily lives.

A simple **Please**, **Thank You**, and **Excuse Me** go a long way in showing a person to be well mannered. Saying **Please**, **Thank You**, and **Excuse Me** is the beginning of developing one's social graces.

Do you still remember when to use **Please**, **Thank You**, and **Excuse Me**? When you need a favour from somebody, adding a **Please** to the request is basic courtesy. At the dinner table, for example, you can say "can you pass the salt please?". When the favour is done, it would be good to say "Thank You" to the person who helped you. **Excuse Me** is used when you need someone's attention, such as asking a stranger on the street for directions. "Excuse me, do you know where King's Avenue is?" It is also used when you need to get past someone who is in your path.

Early on during our childhood, our parents taught us how to say **Please**, **Thank You**, and **Excuse Me**. However, when we reach our teenage years we took for granted saying **Please**, **Thank You**, and **Excuse Me** because we were in a rebellious self-assertive stage. By the time we became adults, we also tend to forget to say **Please**, **Thank You**, and **Excuse Me** because we often get carried away by the rush of our daily lives.

Source: <https://www.englishtown.com/community/Channels/article.aspx?articleName=psandqs>



SPEAKING

PRACTISE saying PLEASE!

Ask for the things in a polite way.

- ask someone to pass you the salt / a tissue / a glass of water / your glasses,
- ask someone to tell you the time,
- ask someone for help with something for example with a copy machine,
- ask someone for a piece of information that you need for your work.

REMEMBER TO USE PLEASE AT THE END OF YOUR QUESTION!