

# GALIMATIAS GUIDE TO POLITENESS IN ENGLISH

"Is there a risk that you are unintentionally being rude - impolite in English, even if you add a please?" Claire Rytkönen, Galimatias Concept Oy Ab





## Contract

#### Requesting

Could you...
Would you be able to...
Can I ask you to...

. Galimatias

#### **Thanking**

Many thanks for all your efforts.
Thank you. I really appreciate...
Thank you again. I know X has taken a great deal of energy/effort/organisation.

#### Highlighting

Could I draw your attention to...
One point to highlight is...
The crucial/vital issue here is...
This is really important.

#### **Forbidding**

N.B. – please
don't.
X is not possible/
acceptable/
sufficient.
Can I remind you
not to...
Please be aware
that X cannot....

## Contract

#### Warning

It would be advisable to stop/cut...
It would be best to avoid...

## Helping another save face

We will bear this in mind.
We will make a note of this.
We will keep these details on file.

## Thank you very much again for

your consideration of X in connection with Y.

thinking of us in this regard.

## We wish you all the best

in the preparations for Y
for the upcoming year/
season /
the future

# And look forward to further cooperation in

further cooperation in the future if not in X.

meeting at X/soon/in the future if not at Z.



### Refusing politely

Softener – I understand... I appreciate your difficulties... I fully sympathise...

That's not possible, I'm afraid.

We won't be able to...

It is a disappointment that...

#### Compliments

The X went extremely well thanks to you and all your efforts.

X was extremely thorough/ well-conceived / well received / impressive. A fantastic job. Very well done.

### Compliments

We are lucky to have X/you

X was an excellent result / had superb feedback. All credit to you and your team..

Hope you have a very well deserved...



# Breaking bad news

Unfortunately/ regrettably...

we have already committed to another... it is not possible due to...

we have a policy of...

# Breaking bad news

Unfortunately/regrettably...

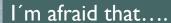
due to budget constraints/ time constraints / Finnish legislation/ the demands of our workload mean that

# Breaking bad news

Unfortunately/regrettably...

X is not possible/feasible/ sustainable/permitted/ profitable/advisable/ capable/responsible...

We won't be able to...



I regret to inform you that....



**A**pologising

TOT

I'm very sorry for...
Many apologies for the inconvenience.
I apologise for the mistake and any problems it may have caused.

**Apologising** 

My/Our fault entirely. We are at fault/to blame.

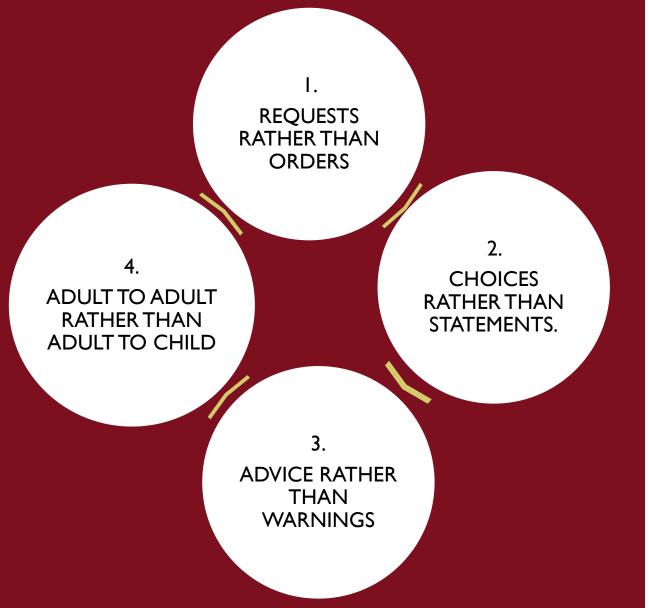
We would like to rectify this by...

In compensation we would like to...





BY FOLLOWING
THESE KEY RULES
WE CAN MAKE
SURE OUR EMAILS
ARE POLITE:





SOME EXAMPLES OF DO'S AND DON'TS'IN ENGLISH WRITTEN COMMUNICATION





Impolite/rude form	How it sounds to a native speaker	Alternative polite form
Was that it?	Sounds contemptuous – was that all/that is not very much.	Can I check – was that the X document? Is X the document/detail we discussed?
I hope you're not You better not	Sounds threatening – Often a sentence that begins "You better not" or "I hope you are not" ends with a negative condition. e.g. "You better not be late or we will reduce your salary", "I hope you are not expecting time off or you will be disappointed."	better to I would advise against doing/using X



Impolite/rude form	How it sounds to a native speaker	Alternative polite form
What's your problem?	A direct insult – you are the problem.	What issues/problems are you having with What features/aspects of X are providing difficult? Which parts of X are causing difficulty?
Don't forget	Sounds like adult to child.	Could you remember to  Can I remind you
On time	Sounds like adult to child.	We must meet the deadline. Punctuality is crucial here. This is very sensitive.



Impolite/rude form	How it sounds to a native speaker	Alternative polite form
Do it properly	Sounds like adult to child.	Could you make sure X is thoroughly/ carefully/completely done? Can you give X your full attention and focus to ensure complete satisfaction for Could you ensure that X is done to the highest possible standard?/ right down to the smallest details?
Put it in a file, Tell me, Make sure	Sounds arrogant – a direct imperative sounds like a command.	Could you put it in a file? Can you tell me? Would you make sure?



Impolite/rude form	How it sounds to a native speaker	Alternative polite form
You will be doing section 8 too?	Sounds arrogant – a statement with a question mark assumes action rather than giving someone a choice.	Will you be able/available to do section 8?
I will wait for section 7	Sounds impatient – as if section 7 is already late.	I look forward to receiving section 7. Let me know when you have finished section 7.
If you can't do it there are plenty of others that can.	Sounds threatening – you are not special; many others can easily do your work.	We fully understand if you are not available. /Could you let me know if it is not possible? Then we can make other arrangements if you are not free.



# GIVE IT A TRY! REPHRASE THESE STATEMENTS POLITELY:

- I. We won't be coming to the conference. We have another event on the same day.
- 2. We do not need your service now.
- 3. Take time to properly study these.
- 4. If you can't do it there are plenty of others that can.
- 5. No that wouldn't work. Try again.
- 6. That's not my responsibility.
- 7. Yes there was a mistake in the code. It is fixed now.
- 8. The presentation was fine. Thanks.
- 9. Thanks but no thanks.
- 10. I can't help. It's not my responsibility.
- 11. Please arrive on time.
- 12. You have improved from last year.



#### THE POLITE WAY TO SAY....

- I. Unfortunately we won't be able to attend the conference due to a previous commitment.
- 2. We do not currently require a provider but will be sure to keep you details for the future.
- 3. Could I ask you to look over these thoroughly?
- 4. If you are unavailable please let us know and we will try to make other arrangements.
- 5. Unfortunately that would not work. Could you try another solution?
- 6. I am afraid that's not my responsibility but I will refer you to the right person
- 7. I apologise for the mistake in the code. Thank you for highlighting it. It is fixed now.
- 8. Your presentation was well done. Many thanks for your efforts.
- 9. No thank you it is not necessary at the moment.
- 10. I am sorry I can't help you as it is outside my area but I will refer you to the right person
- 11. Could you be especially punctual for this, thank you.
- 12. There has been great development from last year. Well done!





#### **CONTACT US TO FIND THE RIGHT TRAINING SOLUTIONS** FOR YOUR ORGANISATION:

**HELSINKI:** PURSIMIEHENKATU 29 - 31 B, 5TH FLOOR

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