

How to be assertive

In this lesson you will learn useful expressions to help you speak more forcefully.

Starter

- 1 Complete the questionnaire. Then talk your teacher through your answers.

How assertive are you?

Do you:

- ask questions when you are confused?
yes / no / unsure
- complain in a restaurant if the service is slow?
yes / no / unsure
- find it difficult to say 'no' when you don't want to do something?
yes / no / unsure
- find it easy to tell people what to do?
yes / no / unsure
- interrupt people when they say something you do not agree with?
yes / no / unsure
- prefer to send an email rather than speak to a 'difficult' client?
yes / no / unsure
- volunteer your opinion at a meeting when you think someone is wrong?
yes / no / unsure

Expressions

How to be assertive with DESK

- D = describe the situation objectively
E = explain how you feel, not what you think
S = state what you want in simple terms
K = know the possible outcomes

- Martin is the sales distribution manager for a franchise mobile phone company. He is speaking on the phone to his boss, Jane. Read the text above. Then listen to their conversation. How does Martin apply DESK?
- Put the words from the conversation in the correct order. Then listen again to check.
 - as / well / we / aware / you're / a / staffing / have / big / problem.
 - finish / what / me / was / let / I / going / say / to.
 - feeling / what / to / is / I / say / my / mean / overworked / that / team / are.
 - agree / that / right / you / we're / must / now / understaffed.
 - clear / want / this / I / be / to / perfectly.
 - anything / promise / I / you / though / can't / afraid / I'm.
 - I / the / it / no / way / see / we've / choice / other / got.

Writing

- 1 A supplier has been late in their delivery of several orders. As a result, you had to make last-minute changes to the production schedule. Write an email to the supplier informing them that you will not accept any more mistakes. Use DESK from Expressions to help you structure the email. Include the following expressions:

D = point out that / several mistakes / serious consequences

E = very dissatisfied / poor service / sales department

S = need / guarantee delivery dates in future

K = inform you / repetition late deliveries / look for another supplier

Language box

The expressions *wish* and *if only* are used to express desires or feelings.

Use *wish* and *if only* with the past simple to express something you would like to be different now:

I wish I had a better job!

(= I would like a different job)

If only he spoke better German!

(= his level of German isn't good enough)

Use *wish* and *if only* with the past perfect to express your feelings now about something that happened or something you did in the past:

I wish we'd never signed this contract.

(= we signed it and I think it was a mistake)

If only I hadn't bought this car!

(= I'm not happy. It's not a good car)

Hint

There are many adjectives with **over** and **under** that indicate the idea of too much or too little:

He's overworked. (= he has too much work)

That car is definitely overpriced! (= it should be much cheaper)

I feel my work is undervalued. (= you should respect me more)

The department is understaffed. (= more people are needed)

Speaking

- 1 You and your teacher work for the same company. You have recently changed your job in the company and now have to drive a lot more on business. You also have more expenses and are not happy with the present system of claiming these expenses back at the end of each month. (Your teacher is responsible for paying expenses.) Using the DESK technique, role-play the following situation. Try to use language from **Expressions and the Language box**.

You:

- use your own car at present (approximately 1,500 kilometres / month).
- have an average monthly expenses claim for last three months of €950 – can you be paid weekly?
- are using your own credit card a lot to pay for expenses. Possibility of company credit card?

Your teacher:

- knows company cars are provided when job involves more than 30,000 kilometres a year.
- knows company policy for expense claims is monthly but this depends on the amount. It is possible to pay certain expenses in advance.
- knows that up to now only the managing director has a company credit card. How much is this really needed?

- 1.2 3 Jane has spoken to Peter, the managing director of the firm. She then meets Martin again. Listen to their conversation and answer the questions.

- 1 Does Martin get what he wants?
- 2 How assertive is Jane?

- 4 Look at the following direct statements. How could you make them more indirect or diplomatic?

- 1 Taking on two more people is impossible!
- 2 We understand the situation.
- 3 When can I have more staff?
- 4 Wait for the time being.
- 5 Talking about this is a waste of time!
- 6 Believe me about a replacement for Tony.

- 1.2 5 Listen again. What expressions do Jane and Martin use instead of the sentences in 4?



Use *wish* and *if only* with *could* when you know that it is impossible to achieve what you want:

I wish I could take a couple of years off and travel around the world. (= impossible)

If only they could cut the price!
(= but they can't)

Use *wish* and *if only* with *would* to say you do not approve of someone's behaviour.

I wish you would stop interrupting!
(= you do this frequently and I don't like it)

If only he wouldn't send me all these emails!
(= I receive too many emails from him)

Look

Look at listening script 1.2 on page 122. Find more examples of *wish* and *if only*.

Lesson record

3 new words from this lesson

3 useful phrases from this lesson

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| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |

Things to remember

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