

Meeting and Discussion Skills

1

Interrupting and seeking clarification

AIMS

- Interrupting politely
- Asking for clarification
- Handling interruptions

Warming Up

Student A: Introduce yourself to your partner and share the below details about yourself.

My name is (first name).
I work in (department).
I joined my company in (year).

Step 2

Switch roles and repeat.

Student B: Listen and try to remember what your partner says.

Switch partners and talk about what your first partner said.

Step 3

Conversation

Arthur is a sales manager. He will be on vacation the next several weeks. He holds a meeting with other staff members to delegate his duties while he is away.



vocabulary check

interrupt
clarify
several
delegate (verb)
responsibilities
get through
administration (admin)
human resources (H.R.)

Step 1

Read the conversation on the following page.

Arthur: Alright everybody, There are several jobs that need doing while I'm away. First of all, I won't be able to attend the monthly staff meeting.

Rob: **Sorry to interrupt**, but when are you leaving?

Arthur: Monday morning. *Anyway*, uh . . . can somebody send out an email to marketing, human resources and administration to remind them about the meeting? Rob? And Linda, I'd like you to . . .

Rob: **Excuse me, did you say** marketing, admin and sales?

Arthur: Actually, not sales, but H.R. *As I was saying*, Linda, I need you to send that email that we talked about earlier. I need that done before the presentation in June.

Linda: **Do you mean** the Carlton email? What details do I need to include?

Arthur: Yeah, that one. If you don't mind, can I talk to you about the details later? I need to get through this list.

Linda: Sure.

Step 2

Answer the following questions.

1. What is Arthur going to miss while he is away?
2. What is Rob going to do for Arthur?
3. What is Linda going to do for Arthur?

Step 3

Practice the conversation with your partner.

Speaking Tips

Use these expressions to return to a previous topic:

Anyway, . . .

As I was saying, . . .

Culture Questions

Question:

Is it rude to interrupt superiors or colleagues?

Answer:

In English interrupting superiors and colleagues is accepted and even expected. The goal is exchanging information efficiently.

1 - Interrupting And Seeking Clarification

Skill Focus

Step 1

Read the following expressions and examples.

Interrupting Politely

Excuse me, . . .
If I may interrupt, . . .
Sorry to interrupt, . . .
(after a pause)
May I ask a question?



Asking For Clarification

Did you say . . .? / What did you say . . .?
Do you mean . . .?
Could you be more specific?
Can you explain that (in more detail)?
Could you reword that for me, please?

Handling Interruptions

Yes, go ahead.
Sorry, please let me finish.
If I may finish this point, . . .
Can I (come to that) later?

pattern

A: (speaks)
B: (interrupts) + (asks for clarification)
A: (handles interruption)

example one

A: We need to increase production by 15% to meet our targets but that will be...
B: *Sorry to interrupt, but did you say we need to increase by 50%?*
A: No, actually, 15%. Anyway, as I was saying, that will be difficult without increasing labor costs. Anyway, the third thing is . . .

example two

A: Also, we have to change our pricing to reflect market changes.
B: *Excuse me, but could you explain that in more detail?*
A: If you don't mind, I'd like to come back to that later.
Anyway, the third thing is . . .