

MASTER POLITE ENGLISH COURSE

LESSON 1: An Overview of Politeness

What is politeness?

Politeness is having or showing behaviour that is respectful and considerate of other people. **Oxford Dictionary.**

Politeness is basically it's treating people with respect.

Politeness is very important in life.

There are many reasons why politeness is important in life but one of them is that if you're polite, you are more likely to achieve your objectives and get what you want, and people are more likely to take you seriously and deal with you in a good way.

As the 19th century American writer Joss Billings said:

Politeness is better than logic. You can often persuade when you cannot convince.

And I think what he meant by that is that if you're polite, people will listen to your arguments ideas, opinions and take them seriously and maybe change their own behaviour or even do what you'd like them to do.

3 Golden Rules of Politeness. I think these are generally appropriate in most cultures.

Number 1: Don't Impose

People have their own personal space. They don't want this personal space invaded and they don't want to be pressured into doing something they don't really want to do. They want to be treated as individuals and, if you impose, if you invade their personal space, and try to get them to do things they don't want to do, they might reject you, they might not want to deal with you, and respond to you in a positive way. So, don't order, don't command.

Rule Number 2: Give Options.

So, if you ask someone to do something, give them options. They have the option to refuse or accept. To do what you want or to say 'I'm sorry, I'd rather not do that.' Again, if you have a suggestion, give people the option to accept or refuse it, or maybe give them the option to think of a suggestion of their own. It's really important to give people options so they don't feel trapped.

Rule Number 3: Make the other person feel good.

Now, this doesn't mean that you have to make people feel really happy. It means that they want to feel positive and in control of the situation, and know that you are respecting them, their opinions and their ideas, and their individuality as a person.



If you think about it, what do most people really want in life?

How do they want to be treated in social interaction?

First of all, most people want to be accepted.

They want to be accepted and respected as an intelligent person, as a mature person, a successful person, a professional person, and they want to be treated fairly. They want you to think that you are treating them as you would treat other people: richer people, poorer people, more successful people, more professional people, but they want to be treated as a normal person.

They also want to be independent and free to make their own decisions.

Free will, the ability to do what you want in life and choose what you want to do, is really important for most people.

So, if you treat them politely, that means you're giving them the option to take their own decisions and to have some control over their own life and their own actions.

The concept of saving face and losing face

Saving face means that everybody has their own positive public image, they want other people to see them as a positive person, as a successful person, an intelligent person and a skilled person. And they want to keep that positive public image.

We feel better when other people look at us and say 'I like this person, I respect this person'.

People don't want to lose this positive public image. They don't want you to think: 'This person isn't very intelligent, they're not very successful, they're not very professional. I'm not sure I like them very much.'

Most people want to have a positive public image. And if you're polite, that means that you keep and save that positive public image for them.

So, when you have a social situation, it's a good idea to think about a few questions and your answers to these questions.

What is your objective in each situation?

If you meet someone in a bar, do you want to build up a good relationship with them? Do you want to interest them in your business proposal? Do you want them to open up and relax with you so you can have a nice conversation?

What is the objective of the other person?

Do they want to do business with you? Do they want to relax with you and enjoy your company?

Will polite language help you achieve your objective?

This is a very important question. If we're too polite, the other person may feel a little uncomfortable if it's not appropriate for this particular situation. If you're in a café with a friend, do you really need to speak with polite language? Maybe, you need to speak with more relaxed language.

Will polite language have a positive effect on the other person?

Again, you have got to think about the situation. Do you need to be polite and formal or should you tell jokes, relax, maybe even make fun of the other person, because you know each other very well and being polite means you do not appreciate the fact that you have a close relationship.

Example of different situations

Let's look at an example. If you are in a bar with friends, you can probably say more or less what you like. You don't need to be polite. If you're having a drink, you don't need to say:

Would you perhaps be interested in having another beer?

You just need to say: *Fancy another beer? How about another beer?* Something very relaxed.

However, if you are in a business meeting, especially with people you don't know very well, maybe polite language here is necessary, more suitable.

So, is it OK to move onto point number 2? Would you like to say anything here? Would you like a few minutes to look at my proposal?

This is polite language that is more suitable, appropriate in this situation.

Key Points

1. **Don't impose**
2. **Give options**
3. **Make the other person feel good.**

Remember:

1. People want to save face.
2. Politeness isn't suitable for every occasion. When you're in a social situation with people you know very well and don't want to put them under pressure, it's probably a good idea to be relaxed and more informal.