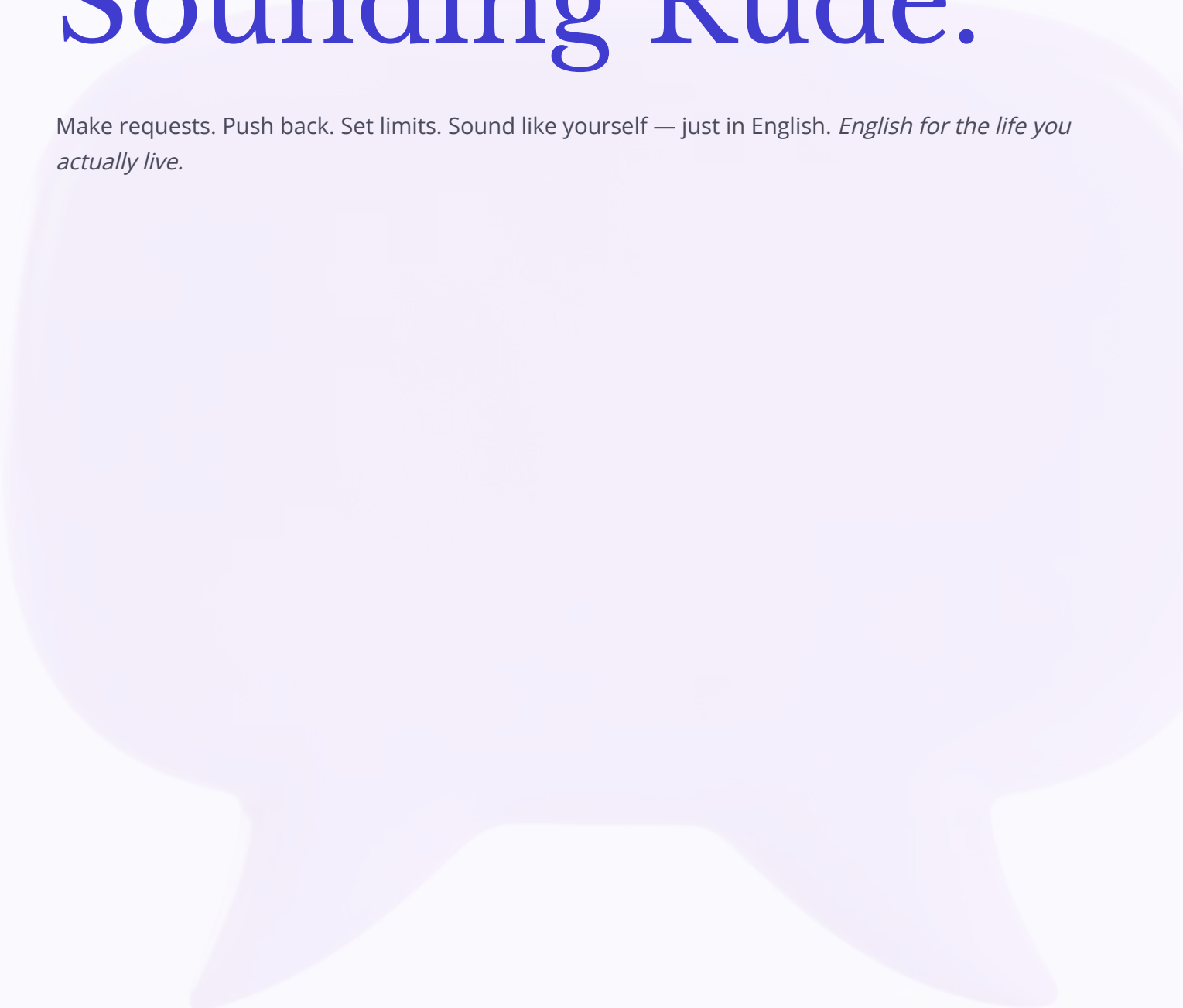


Say It Without Sounding Rude.

Make requests. Push back. Set limits. Sound like yourself — just in English. *English for the life you actually live.*



What You'll Learn — and How to Use This Pack

Has this ever happened to you? A colleague asks you to do something unreasonable. A friend keeps interrupting. Your boss wants you to work on Saturday. You know what you want to say in Spanish — but in English, you freeze. You either say nothing, or you say something that comes out too harsh. This pack fixes that.

Goal 1 · Ask Politely

Make requests that feel warm and natural — not robotic or over-formal — using real English patterns.

Goal 2 · Disagree with Respect

Offer a different opinion or push back on an idea without starting an argument or sounding aggressive.

Goal 3 · Refuse and Set Limits

Say no clearly and confidently — no long excuses, no guilt, no confusion about what you mean.

The Key Phrases at a Glance

Over the next pages you'll explore each of these in depth, with examples, explanations, and practice. For now, just get familiar with the shapes:

Could you + base verb

Polite, direct requests — *"Could you send me the file?"*

Would you mind + -ing

Softer requests — *"Would you mind waiting a moment?"*

I see your point, but...

Respectful disagreement — acknowledge before you redirect.

I'm afraid I can't...

A polite, firm refusal — no dramatic apology needed.

That doesn't work for me.

A clear boundary — short, calm, complete.

I can do X instead.

Offer an alternative — keeps the conversation going positively.

How to Use This Pack

Read the **Learn It** page first — it explains the grammar and the social meaning behind each phrase. Then read **See It in Real Life** to watch the language working in a realistic situation. After that, try the **Try It** exercises (write in the spaces — no peeking at the answers!). The **Make It Yours** page helps you connect the language to your own life. Finally, check your work in **Answers & Examples**.

One important idea before you start: **a clear sentence is not a rude sentence**. In many cultures — including much of Latin America — saying something directly can feel uncomfortable or even impolite. But in most English-speaking contexts, clarity is kindness. A vague answer confuses people. A clear "I can't do that, but I can do this" is friendly, respectful, and easy to understand. You don't need to apologise for having limits.

The Language of Polite Power

Let's look at the first group of phrases carefully. Understanding *why* they work will help you use them naturally — not just copy them.

Could you + base verb

What it is: A question form using the modal verb *could* + the infinitive (base form — no *to*, no *-ing*).

Why it works: *Could* is the past form of *can*, but here it's not about the past — it signals tentativeness, which in English = politeness. You're not ordering; you're inviting cooperation.

Register: Neutral to polite. Works with colleagues, teachers, strangers, and friends. Not overly formal.

Examples:

- ✓ *Could you send me the agenda?*
- ✓ *Could you speak a little more slowly?*
- ✓ *Could you close the window?*

🇪🇸 *¿Podrías + infinitivo?* — La misma lógica que en español.

Would you mind + -ing?

What it is: A softer request form. *Would you mind* is followed by the **-ing** form (gerund) of the main verb — never the base verb.

Why it works: *Mind* means "to object to" or "to have a problem with." So you're literally asking: "Would it bother you to...?" That's very considerate. It signals respect for the other person's time or space.

⚠️ **Answering this question:** This is where learners often get confused. The grammatically "correct" negative answer is *Not at all* or *Of course not* — meaning "No, I don't mind." But a simple *Yes* would mean "Yes, I do mind" — i.e., a refusal! To avoid confusion, use:

"Sure, I can do that." or *"No problem."*

Examples:

- ✓ *Would you mind waiting outside?*
- ✓ *Would you mind sending it again?*
- ✓ *Would you mind turning down the music?*

🇪🇸 Más suave que *¿Podrías...?* — ideal cuando quieres ser muy considerado/a.

Directness, Culture, and Relationship

English politeness is built on **indirect grammar** but **direct meaning**. That can feel like a contradiction if your instinct is to soften a message by being vague. In English, vagueness often creates more anxiety than clarity does — the listener doesn't know what you want, and that's uncomfortable for everyone.

With close friends and family

You can be more direct: *"Can you grab that?"* is totally fine. Formality can even feel cold or distant in casual settings.

With colleagues and managers

Use *Could you* or *Would you mind*. Add a brief reason if the request is significant: *"Could you review this by Friday? I need it for the client call."*

With strangers and service contexts

Could you is perfect. *Would you mind* is also excellent. Adding *please* at the end is always appreciated: *"Could you repeat that, please?"*



🇪🇸 **Nota cultural:** En inglés, ser claro/a NO es ser grosero/a. Decir *"I can't do that"* es completamente aceptable — incluso más respetuoso que dar una respuesta vaga que confunde.

A Tuesday Morning at the Office

Read the conversation below. Notice how each highlighted phrase works in context. Then read the notes underneath to understand the full range of language from this pack.

The Dialogue

Marcus: *Hey, Sofia. Would you mind covering my Friday shift? I've got a dentist appointment.*

Sofia: *I see your point — it's short notice and you can't really help it. But I'm afraid I can't this Friday. I already have plans I can't change.*

Marcus: *Oh. Okay... are you sure?*

Sofia: *I'm sure. That doesn't work for me. But — I can do Monday morning instead, if that helps you reorganise.*

Marcus: *Monday morning could work, actually. Could you send me your availability so I can check with the manager?*

Sofia: *Sure, I can do that. I'll send it this afternoon.*

Marcus: *Great. Thanks for being straight with me.*

What's Happening Here?

"Would you mind covering...?" — Marcus uses the -ing form correctly. He's making a soft, considerate request.

"I see your point" — Sofia acknowledges Marcus's situation before refusing. This keeps the tone friendly even when she says no. It shows she's listened. 🇪🇸 *Entiendo tu punto.*

"I'm afraid I can't" — This phrase softens the refusal without weakening it. *I'm afraid* here doesn't mean Sofia is frightened — it's a politeness marker. 🇪🇸 *Me temo que no puedo.*

"That doesn't work for me." — Sofia restates her limit simply and calmly. No long explanation. No apology. This is boundary language at its clearest.

"I can do Monday instead." — She offers an alternative. This is generous and solution-focused. The conversation ends positively.

"Sure, I can do that." — Sofia accepts Marcus's new request without confusion. Notice: she doesn't say "Yes" to *Would you mind* — she confirms clearly what she will do.

The Phrases in Other Real Situations



Disagreeing in a Meeting

"I see your point, but I think the timeline is too tight. Could we look at a two-week extension?"

You're not saying the other person is wrong — you're adding your perspective and moving forward constructively.



Setting a Limit with a Friend

"I love spending time with you, but weekends are really my recharge time. That doesn't work for me. How about we meet Thursday evening?"

You can be warm and firm at the same time. One does not cancel the other.



Refusing Extra Work by Email

"Thanks for thinking of me. I'm afraid I can't take this on right now — my current projects need my full attention. I can do a quick review next month if that's useful."

Clear, professional, and still helpful. No guilt required.

📌 💡 **Remember:** A clear boundary is a complete sentence. *"That doesn't work for me"* needs no explanation unless you want to give one. Offering an alternative (*"I can do X instead"*) is a bonus — a kindness, not an obligation.

Now It's Your Turn

Complete each task below. Write your answers in the spaces provided. Use the language from this pack — but make it sound like *you*. There are no trick questions. If a task asks you to choose a word, one answer is correct. If it asks you to write a sentence, there are many good answers. Don't look at the answer page yet!

Choose the correct form

1

Complete the sentence with the right word:

"Could you (send / sending) it to me by Friday?"

Which form is correct after *Could you?* Circle your answer above, then write the full sentence below.

Choose the correct form

2

Complete the sentence with the right word:

"Would you mind (wait / waiting) for five minutes?"

Which form follows *Would you mind?* Circle your answer above, then write the full sentence below.

Rewrite with respect

3

The sentence below is too direct and sounds aggressive in most English contexts:

"You're wrong."

Rewrite it as a polite disagreement. Start with *I see your point*, *I understand*, or another phrase from this pack.

Write a refusal

4

Your manager has just sent you a message asking you to come in on Saturday. You have personal plans and cannot go. Write a clear, polite response declining the request. You may offer an alternative if you wish.

Make a polite request

5

You are in a café. The person at the next table is playing music loudly on their phone. You want to ask them to make it quieter. Write what you would say using a phrase from this pack.

Offer an alternative

6

Someone wants to meet you on Monday, but Monday is not possible for you. Tuesday is fine. Write a message that declines Monday clearly and offers Tuesday instead.

 **Tip:** Read your sentences out loud after you write them. Do they sound like something a real person would say? That's the goal.

Connect This to Your Life

The best way to keep new language is to attach it to something real — a situation you've been in, a conversation you want to have, a moment where you froze and wished you knew what to say. This page is your space to do exactly that.

Speaking Task: The Conversation You've Been Avoiding

Think of a real situation — at work, at home, or in a social setting — where you need to make a request, disagree with someone, or set a limit. It doesn't have to be dramatic. Maybe you need to ask a flatmate to be quieter. Maybe a friend keeps cancelling plans and you want to address it kindly.

Plan your conversation here:

Situation: _____

The other person might say: _____

I will say (use at least 2 phrases from this pack):

Now say it out loud — three times. The first time slowly, the second time at normal speed, the third time as naturally as you can. 🎧

Writing Task: The Message You Haven't Sent

Write a short message (50–80 words) to someone — a colleague, a friend, a neighbour — in which you do ONE of the following:

- Make a request they might find slightly inconvenient
- Politely disagree with something they said or decided
- Decline something they've asked of you, and offer an alternative

Use at least three phrases from this pack. Real situation, real person — or invent one if you prefer.

Meme of the Moment

The Situation

[Imagine a cartoon figure at a desk, looking calm while a large pile of paper labelled "EXTRA TASKS" slides toward them. They hold up one hand. The caption reads:]

"I'm afraid I can't — but I can do Tuesday."

(Write your own version of this caption below — what's your version of "not today"?)

My caption: _____

Why This Language Works

"I'm afraid I can't" is not weak or over-apologetic — it's a softener, not an apology. The phrase *I'm afraid* signals that you wish things were different, without performing distress. It keeps the tone warm while the message stays firm.

Adding **"but I can do Tuesday"** turns a refusal into a solution. You're not closing the door — you're moving the meeting. This combination (refuse + alternative) is one of the most powerful patterns in professional English because it's both clear and collaborative.

🇪🇸 *"Me temo que no puedo"* tiene exactamente el mismo tono en español. El truco está en que el "but" que viene después transforma el "no" en una propuesta.

Your Success Checklist

- ☐ I can use *Could you + base verb* to make a polite request.
- ☐ I can use *Would you mind + -ing* and answer it without confusion.
- ☐ I can disagree politely using *I see your point, but...*
- ☐ I can decline something clearly with *I'm afraid I can't* or *That doesn't work for me*.
- ☐ I can offer an alternative with *I can do X instead*.
- ☐ I understand that clear limits don't need a long apology.
- ☐ I've practised at least one speaking task out loud.
- ☐ I've written at least one message using three phrases from this pack.

Check Your Work

Well done for getting this far. Below you'll find the answer to every closed task and model responses for the open ones. Remember: for speaking and writing tasks, there is no single "correct" answer. The models show you one strong version — yours may be different and equally good. Focus on the patterns, not on copying the exact words.

Task 1 ✓

Answer: send

"Could you send it to me by Friday?"

After *Could you*, always use the **base form** (infinitive without *to*). Never *sending*, never *to send*.

Task 2 ✓

Answer: waiting

"Would you mind waiting for five minutes?"

After *Would you mind*, always use the **-ing form** (gerund). This is the most common learner error with this structure.

Task 3 — Model

"I see it differently — I think we might need to look at the data again."

Or: *"I understand where you're coming from, but I see this a little differently."*

Key: acknowledge first, then redirect.

Task 4 — Model Response

"Hi [name], thanks for letting me know. I'm afraid I'm not available this weekend — I have plans I can't change. If there's anything I can help with before Friday, I'm happy to do that."

Notice: no excessive apology, no invented excuse. Just a clear refusal and a small gesture of goodwill.

Task 5 — Model Response

"Excuse me — could you speak a little more quietly, please? I'm finding it hard to concentrate."

Or more softly: *"Would you mind turning that down a little? Thank you."*
Please and thank you go a long way with strangers.

Task 6 — Model Response

"I can't meet on Monday, I'm afraid — but Tuesday works for me. Would morning or afternoon suit you better?"

Strong pattern: **decline clearly + offer alternative + keep the ball moving**. This closes the loop without leaving the other person hanging.

Model Responses: Speaking & Writing Tasks

Speaking Task — What to Aim For

A strong spoken response uses at least two phrases from the pack, sounds natural rather than rehearsed, and stays calm in tone — even if the topic is emotionally charged. For example, if you were practising asking a flatmate to be quieter late at night:

"Hey, could I talk to you about something? I've been finding it hard to sleep because of the noise after midnight. That doesn't really work for me. Would you mind keeping it down after eleven? I'd really appreciate it."

Notice the structure: **name the issue → state the limit → make the request → close warmly**. That's a complete, respectful conversation.

Writing Task — What to Aim For

A strong written message is clear, uses natural linking language, and includes at least three phrases from the pack. For example — a message to a colleague about a project decision:

"Hi Camille, thanks for sending through the plan. I see your point about moving quickly, but I'm afraid the current timeline doesn't work for me — I won't have the data ready in time. I can have everything prepared by the 15th instead. Could you let me know if that works for the team? Happy to jump on a quick call if it's easier."

Three phrases used: *I see your point, doesn't work for me, Could you*. Warm, clear, professional.

Quick Recap: The Six Patterns



You now have six reliable patterns for navigating some of the most common social challenges in English. These aren't just grammar rules — they're real tools for real conversations. The more you use them, the more natural they'll feel. Be patient with yourself, practise a little every day, and remember: being clear is a form of respect.

Resumen: Seis frases, seis situaciones reales. La claridad en inglés no es frialdad — es respeto. *Could you* + verbo base. *Would you mind* + -ing. *I see your point, but... I'm afraid I can't. That doesn't work for me. I can do X instead.* Eso es todo lo que necesitas para empezar.

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