

THE

Business English Training

Language Key

1994



2014

in
Hong Kong

WHAT'S INSIDE!

- Advice on Taking Business English Courses
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THE Language Key

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WHY SELECT US?

- 1 The Language Key Ltd has been delivering successful language training programs for 100s of Hong Kong companies since 1994.
- 2 We use experienced business English trainers who have a understanding of the language learning needs of Hong Kong professionals.
- 3 We provide online learning support for all courses and workshops, and free continuous learning through our online training platform.

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THE Language Key

Welcome Back!
to enhancing your business English and communication skills.....

Dear Readers

If you are considering an English language course, my advice would be to take one which is taught only in English.

Most people agree that, whatever we are learning, we learn by doing, not by listening to explanations about how to do something. This is as true of language learning as of learning to drive a car.

In the past, teachers often used the student's mother tongue, but experience has proved that this method was not effective for people wanting to learn how to communicate in the foreign language. It is vital that students learn the language, not about the language. We learn language more effectively by using it, not by talking about its structure.

Some people believe it's useful to learn the grammatical rules of English in their own language. Again, experience shows that this is not effective and can cause great problems.

People who have tried to learn a foreign language in this way often find it very difficult to communicate naturally. They tend to think about the rules before putting a sentence together. This means that they react slowly, with frequent pauses, when people speak to them. They also tend to translate everything in their minds before speaking, and when they speak it doesn't sound natural. People learn a foreign language well by being exposed to it and practicing it.

Learning a language involves a lot more than understanding words and grammatical rules. It requires the ability to put this knowledge into practice, that is, to communicate. This also involves understanding what people say to you. This is difficult if you have never heard the language being spoken!

Gung Hei Fat Choy!
Rebecca Williams
Editor – The Language Key

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Workplace English Training
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Property Still Costly Despite Slow Sales

The housing market is slowing but prices remain high on a key measure of how **affordable** property is, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) says.

The house-price-to-income **ratio** reached 14.6 in the third quarter, a level close to the 1997 property market **peak**, the HKMA said in its quarterly **bulletin**.

"The gap between **rental yield** and **interest rate** also decreased **considerably**, making property investment less attractive," the **de facto** central bank said.

The housing market has been quiet since the third quarter of this year. After falling **sharply** in the second quarter, property trading activities remained at a **subdued** level of about 3,600 transactions a month, compared with the monthly average of 6,800 last year.

Year-on-year property prices have increased by 2.6 per cent.

Hong Kong is likely to see the lowest returns on **residential** investments in the next five years among 12 global cities **monitored** by Real Estate Foresight, a research company based in Hong Kong.

The city scored poorly on several **criteria**: it has one of the lowest **median** household incomes, a government that has introduced **policies** to **cool** the housing market, and short **lease-holds** compared to most of the other cities in the survey.



Secret Smuggler's Tunnel from Shenzhen to Hong Kong

Mainland **smugglers** constructed a concrete underground tunnel into Hong Kong equipped with lights, **vents**, steel **reinforcements** and rails to transport goods.

The **concealed** tunnel started in a rented garage in Shenzhen and ended in long grass in Hong Kong.

The 40-metre-long tunnel had a rail track and **wagon** with a rope system to move goods such as cell phones and computers. The tunnel-builders have not yet been **identified**.

The tunnel stood about 0.8 metres wide and one metre high, just big enough for an adult to **crawl** through.



It started from a **remote** area of Shenzhen, in a garage full of bags packed with **sludge** dug up from the tunnel, and ended in a **cluster** of tall **reeds** a few metres past a river dividing the mainland and Hong Kong, with the nearest village 20 metres away.

The project was estimated to have cost three million yuan and taken around four months to complete. However, it is unknown just how much usage it got.

Border officers discovered the tunnel, and a nearby resident said she heard drilling noises for one or two nights but thought someone was just improving the property.

The man who rented the garage had used a **fake** ID, according to officials.



Key Vocabulary

smugglers (noun) people who take something into or out of a place in an illegal or secret way

vents (noun) holes in a wall that let air in and allows smoke or smells to go out

reinforcements (noun) when you make something stronger

concealed (adj.) something hidden

wagon (noun) a vehicle with four wheels used for transporting things

identified (verb) recognized someone

and said who they are

crawl (verb) move on your hands and knees

remote (adj.) away from other places

sludge (noun) soft, wet soil

cluster (noun) a group of similar things

that are close together

reeds (noun) tall plants like grass that grows near water

Border (noun) the line that separates two countries

fake (noun) false; not real



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Vocabulary Test

Complete the sentences below and right (including the crossword) using the highlighted vocabulary from the three articles. Remember to use the correct part of speech and verb tense. You'll find the answers below.

- By 10 o'clock the club was already full and they were _____.
- Rents are _____ higher now than they were 12 months ago.
- There is a growing _____ for companies to employ people on short contracts.
- The engineers have _____ a number of structural problems with the building.
- The listening device was _____ in a pen.
- The government has promised to double the amount of _____ housing in the next five years.
- The new museum _____ more than 300,000 visitors last year.
- _____ on these new beachfront properties should be between 8 and 10%.
- Paul lives in a _____ village about 100 miles from the nearest town.
- If you can't climb over the fence, try to _____ under it.
- I thought it was _____ of him not to introduce me.
- Kim apologized for her _____ remark.

ANSWERS:

1. turning people away	2. offensive	3. tendency	4. identified	5. concealed	6. affordable	7. attracted	8. rental yields	9. remote	10. crawl	11. rude	12. offensive
1. turning people away	2. offensive	3. tendency	4. identified	5. concealed	6. affordable	7. attracted	8. rental yields	9. remote	10. crawl	11. rude	12. offensive
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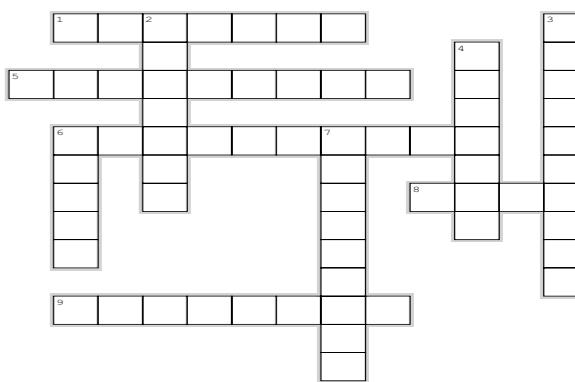
SOLUTION

Across:

- The company's share price rose _____ when its CEO resigned.
- He was arrested for _____ drugs into the country.
- Modern roads are often built using concrete _____ with steel.
- If a bathroom doesn't have a window, it should have a _____.
- I was woken up very early by the sound of _____.

Down:

- My parents are always _____ about money.
- The building is old and in need of major _____.
- Most of the fans were _____, quietly waiting for the race to start.
- The girl to boy _____ at that college is 2 to 1.
- Only _____ of the community are allowed to use the leisure club.



Thais Shocked by Rude Chinese Tourists

The successful Chinese movie "Lost in Thailand" has **attracted** tens of thousands of Chinese tourists to the northern city of Chiang Mai, but they have left **locals** complaining.

Some locals described what they experienced as "**cultural differences**", others simply found the visitors' behaviour **rude**.

In a Letter to the Editor published in Thailand's English daily *The Nation*, one reader wrote:

"Chinese tourists drive too fast on the wrong side of the road, often going against traffic on one-way streets. Chinese tourists also often stop in the middle of busy **intersections** - just to **argue** among themselves about directions. Some hotel and guesthouse operators are **turning them away** because they say Chinese tourists often rent a room for two, but stay overnight in a group of four or five. They also dislike their **tendencies** to **litter** and hang their clothing on the balcony."

The writer then went on to **urge** the Thai government to work with the Chinese consulate to better educate its tourists.

On social network sites and local forums, locals posted more evidence of what they say is



Key Vocabulary

attracted (verb) made people want to visit a place or find out more about something

locals (noun) people living in the area you are talking about

cultural differences (noun phrase) how behavior differs between different cultures for the same situation

rude (adj.) behaving in a way which is not polite and upsets other people

intersections (noun) where two roads meet or cross each other

argue (verb) speak angrily to someone, telling them that you disagree with them

turning them away (phrasal verb) not allowing someone to enter a place

tendency (noun) something that someone often does

litter (verb) throw pieces of paper and other waste in public places

urge (verb) try to persuade someone to do something

offensive (adj.) likely to make people angry or upset

flouting (verb) intentionally not obeying or accepting something

spitting (verb) forcing out the liquid in your mouth

queue-jumping (verb) taking a place in a queue ahead of those already queuing

excrete (verb) getting rid of waste substances from the body

offensive behaviour by the Chinese:

- A tendency to not flush the toilet.
 - Flouting** traffic laws when driving, riding a bicycle, or parking their car.
 - Being loud - even in five-star hotels.
 - Littering, spitting, queue-jumping.**
 - Allowing children to **excrete** in public swimming pools.
 - Terrible English-language skills that lead to difficulties in communication.
- Still, more Chinese tourists will visit Thailand. The Tourism Authority of Thailand expected more than 1.5 million Chinese to visit in 2014.

Report Writing Basics.....

THE SITUATION

Ms Joanne Lui, your office manager, asks you to write a report for her, by the end of the month, on the increase in lateness of many office staff over the last two months.

THE APPROACH

1. The Task

Familiarise yourself with the subject of the report so that you know exactly what you are required to do.

2. The Layout

There are many ways to set out a report. One simple layout useful in many cases is the following:

- Terms of Reference**

State what you are reporting on, who asked you to make the report, and the date by which the report is required if you are given one.

- Procedures**

State what action you took to collect the facts concerning the subject of the report.

- Findings**

State the facts you discovered. It may be helpful to number these.

- Conclusions**

State what you, the writer of the report, think about the facts. Provide comments which will be useful to the person who commissioned the report (Ms Joanne Lui). You may find it helpful, as with the Findings, to number these.

- Recommendations**

State your practical suggestions as to what should be done (to help the office staff arrive at work on time).

You then sign the report and put your position in the company underneath your signature. Finally add the date.

3. Content

When you come to write the report, the terms of reference are in the subject so this part of the report has already been done for you.

You must gather information to enable you to write the findings of the report. It would seem obvious the action to be taken (procedures) would be to question the staff who are late as to why this lateness has occurred over the last two months and then to check their excuses or reasons.

Nothing irrelevant to the subject of the report should be included.

Here we're going to demonstrate the basics of report writing through a mini-workshop.

First of all, we'll present you with the specifications of the report that an employee has been asked to write. The specifications include the aim of the report. Then we're going to take you through the sections of the report step by step and provide advice on how to tackle each section based on the report's aim.

We'll present you with one poorly-written report and one well-written report. And we'll comment on the pros and cons of each one.

Report on the increase in lateness of the office staff

Terms of reference

Report on increase in lateness of office staff

Procedures

I asked staff individually why they had suddenly started coming late to work.

Findings

There are road works on the two main roads coming into Causeway Bay and traffic jams are caused. Our car park is full as office staff come to work later than the workers. There are long delays because of the traffic meeting the road works. The company car park has not been made any bigger to take the extra cars. I think we should have a bigger car park to take the extra cars. These two reasons are causing the staff to be late for work.

Recommendations

Staff could leave for work earlier to get there on time. Why can't the car park be bigger? The company can afford to pay for it to be made bigger. It should be bigger.

COMMENTS

1. LAYOUT

The writer offers no conclusions and fails to sign and date the report.

2. CONTENT

This is poor for the following reasons:

- Part of the terms of reference has been omitted: it should be some office staff, not all, as is implied here. The writer also forgot to add over the last two months.
- The findings are not reported in logical sequence. The writer has mixed the comments on the road works and the car park. It is not at all clear what the writer wants to say.
- The recommendations should be practical suggestions; these are not. Stating that the company can afford to enlarge the car park is irrelevant to the report.

3. MECHANICAL ACCURACY

Poor grammar, paragraphing and punctuation.

Report on the Increase in Lateness of some Office Staff

Terms of Reference

Ms Joanne Lui, Office Manager, has asked me to write this report on the increase in lateness of some of the office workers over the last two months and to submit it to her by 31 January 20xx.

Procedures

I questioned all the office staff individually, asking why there was this sudden increase in unpunctuality, and then checked their replies.

Findings

- The latecomers are those who travel to work by private transport and public road transport. Those who travel by the MTR arrive on time.
- The two main roads leading into Causeway Bay have had major road works done on them for the last eight weeks; this causes unavoidable traffic jams and long delays.
- Two months ago, our company opened its new mail order section. About sixty new employees were recruited. As this new section starts work forty-five minutes before the office staff each morning, the car park gets filled with vehicles belonging to workers in that section. The company has not enlarged the car park to accommodate the additional vehicles. Consequently, many office staff cannot find parking space and have to drive around surrounding roads looking for a parking area.
- I gathered the above information from my individual interviews with staff, and confirmed that it was true by observing the two main roads and the company's car park early every morning for a week.

Conclusions

Obviously, nothing can be done about the road works. I understand that they will be finished by 28 February 20xx.

As people will insist on travelling to work in their own transport, I think the solution is for the company either to enlarge the existing car park or to obtain another one near the office.

Recommendations

As the road works will be finished in February, I suggest that staff be asked to leave home for work a little earlier than usual until then to enable them to arrive on time. I recommend that the company enlarge the existing car park as it is surrounded by company land which at present is fenced off from the car park.

Robert Wong, 25 January 20xx
Deputy Office Manager

COMMENTS

1. LAYOUT

All the sections are clearly shown and identified. The document is signed and dated.

2. CONTENT AND EFFECTIVENESS

- All of the content is relevant to the purpose of the report. Nothing inessential has been included.
- It achieves its purpose: it gives reasons why staff have been late, and offers a solution to the problem.
- It is clear and easy to read.

3. MECHANICAL ACCURACY

Good use of paragraphs to separate points. Grammar and punctuation are accurate.

Vertical Lists

You can use numbers or bullet points in your vertical lists. Vertical lists are a great way of presenting more complex information clearly. Here we're just going to show you three types of bulleted lists. The differences between the three types lies in the way the lists are punctuated.

TYPE 1

The following conditions are necessary for fully-funded training:

- This is your first training course.
- Your employer must sign the enclosed form.
- You have a clean driving licence.

TYPE 2

The initial phrase is a complete sentence but ends with a colon (:) to show that a list follows. Each point in the list is a complete sentence, so it starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop.

The fees include:

- course material
- preparation time
- travelling expenses.

TYPE 3

The initial phrase is a complete sentence but ends with a colon (:) to show that a list follows. Each point in the list is short (a phrase) and so the points do not start with a capital letter and only the last point has a full stop.

The courses are designed for trainees who:

- have a degree in accountancy;
- need work experience; and
- live in the London area.

The initial phrase is a complete sentence but ends with a colon (:) to show that a list follows. Each point in the list is part of a continuous sentence. The points do not start with capital letters and there is a semi-colon (;) separating each point. Before the last point there is 'and' to show that it is part of a continuous sentence.

With this type of list, be careful that the points coming after the introduction are grammatically consistent. Take a look at the following example of a grammatically inconsistent list.

The people:

- who live in London;
- who are over 25; and
- have a degree;
- are eligible.



This list is incorrect because you need another 'who' in the third point to make a grammatically consistent sentence.

The people who:

- live in London;
- are over 25; and
- have a degree;
- are eligible.



This list is correct because "who live", "who are" and "who have" are all plural endings to match 'people'. The list is grammatically consistent.

Telephoning

Speaking



DIALOGUE



Kelly Ho: Kelly Ho speaking. How can I help you?
Joe Turner: Hello Ms Ho. This is Joe Turner of Rimboulds Ltd. Henry Tang said I should...
Kelly Ho: I'm afraid you're speaking too fast for me. Could you possibly speak a little slower, please?
Joe Turner: Oh sorry. Yes. I'm Joe Turner, a friend of your colleague, Henry Tang.
Kelly Ho: Oh yes. (not really understanding)
Joe Turner: He said I should call you about the construction work.
Kelly Ho: Sorry, could you repeat that, please?
Joe Turner: Mr Tang, your colleague said I should talk to you about the construction work you need doing.
Kelly Ho: Sorry, what does construction mean?
Joe Turner: I'm talking about the building work for your office.
Kelly Ho: I see. Yes. The building work. What's your company's name?
Joe Turner: Rimboulds. We've done some work...
Kelly Ho: How do you spell that?
Joe Turner: R.I.M.B.O.U.L.D.S.
Kelly Ho: I remember now. You are a friend of Tang Gung Ho.

BULATS

Business Language Testing Service
www.bulats.org

The Language Key Ltd is an authorised BULATS agent in Hong Kong.

For BULATS preparation courses and tests, please call Niki Ho on: (852) 2893 6134



Communication Problems

Many people in Hong Kong are afraid to speak to native English speakers on the phone. This may be because they feel their English is not good enough or they have problems understanding English speakers. Most native speakers, however, are fully aware of the problems faced by non-native speakers and are willing to adjust their speech – speak slowly, repeat themselves and simplify their sentences – to make communication easier.

Key Phrases

I'm afraid you're speaking too fast for me.
 Inter... what? I'm sorry, I don't know this word.
 What does it mean?
 What do you mean?
 I'm sorry but I don't follow you exactly.
 Could you speak more slowly, please?
 Sorry, could you repeat that?
 Could you explain that again, please?
 Sorry, how do you spell that?
 Excuse me, I didn't catch that.



Leaving Answerphone Messages

Sometimes there may not be anyone to answer the telephone and you will need to leave a message. Follow the outline below to make sure that the person who receives your message has all the information he/she needs.

We've also included a number of sample answerphone messages for your reference.

1. Introduction

Hello, this is Ken Leung of ABC company

2. State the time of day and your reason for calling

It's ten in the morning. I'm phoning (calling, ringing) to find out if ... to see if ... / to let you know that ... / to tell you that ...

3. Make a request

Could you call (ring, telephone) me back? / Would you mind calling me back ...?

4. Leave your telephone number

My number is / You can reach me on.... / Please call me on ...

5. Finish

Thanks a lot, bye. / I'll talk to you later, bye.

Sample Answerphone Messages

Below are a few examples of messages. As you can see, leaving a message is pretty simple. You only need to make sure that you have stated all the most important information: your name, the time, the reason for calling, and your telephone number.

Telephone: (Ring... Ring... Ring...)

Hello, this is Tom. I'm afraid I'm not in at the moment. Please leave a message after the beep.... (beep)

Ken: Hello Tom, this is Ken Leung from The Language Key. It's about 11 in the morning and I'm calling to see if you have decided on the dates for the next batch of Business English courses. Could you call me back? You can reach me on 2517 4737 until six this evening. I'll talk to you later, bye.

Peter: Hello. This is Peter Marshall of Everbright Communications Ltd. It's now just after two in the afternoon. I was just ringing to let you know that I've been caught in traffic and I'll be a few minutes late for our meeting at 3. If there's any change to the arrangements can you call me on 928398838. Otherwise, I'll see you shortly after 3. Bye.

Jane: Hi Tom. This is Jane from Accounts. It's about 9.30 in the morning and I'm ringing to remind you to send me your June petty cash receipts. If you have any questions about this, you can call me on extension 382. Bye.

Amy: Hello. This is Amy Wong calling from AsiaWide Bank. It's 3 p.m. I'm phoning about a matter concerning your current account with us. Would you mind calling me back on 2718 3728 before 5 this evening. Thanks a lot. Bye.

Putting a Caller on Hold

Sometimes you need to place the caller on hold. If the requested person is busy on another line or if you need a moment to grab a file, the hold option seems sensible. Be sure to ask if the caller wishes to hold or prefers to leave a message. Here are some examples:

Mrs Browning is talking on another line. Would you mind waiting, or may I have her return your call?

Bob Harris is working with another customer at the moment. Would you like to hold, or would you prefer to leave a message? I'm not sure how long he'll be, but it may take some time.

When you put a caller on hold, remember the last time you got stuck. That way, you'll be motivated to check often to see if the caller wants to continue to hold or prefers to leave a message or call back. Here are some examples:

I'm sorry, but Mr Jenkins is still on the other line. May I have him return your call later today?

Hello again, Mr Smith. Ms Chan expects to be a few minutes longer. Do you want to continue holding, or would you prefer to leave a message?

Transferring Calls

When transferring calls, always explain what you are about to do and get the caller's permission.

Mary in the accounts payable department will be able to answer your questions, Mr Lam. I'd like to transfer you to her line. Is that all right with you?

There is always a slight risk that you'll lose the caller when you attempt to transfer. Plan ahead for this possibility. Either get the caller's name and number so you can call back, or be sure the caller has the name and number of the proper contact so he can call back if the transfer is unsuccessful.

Mary in accounts payable is at extension 123. I'll transfer your call now.

Executive Coaching

Tailor-made individual or small-group programs designed with the needs of senior managers and executives in mind.

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- ✓ Focused on key language and communication skills;
- ✓ Program content is flexible and based on detailed discussion with the candidate;
- ✓ Flexible schedule with regular reports and guidance;
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For further information, call Lachlan Robertson on 2893 6124.
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Features

English Around the World



This month we spoke to Choi Hyunjae who comes from South Korea. Hyunjae works for Reflex Electronics as a Marketing Executive. He is based in Seoul.

We spoke to him in Hong Kong while he was on a short business trip. We couldn't help notice that although his spoken English was grammatically quite accurate, it was extremely formal and full of old-fashioned words and expressions. He was speaking in a way that would be more appropriate for writing. We pointed this out to him and this is what he had to say in reply.

'Yes, I am not surprised that you mention this. In Korea, we only know one form of English - written English. There are very few native speakers of English and even fewer native speakers who are qualified to teach English. We also have very little access to English language programmes on the radio and television. As a result we have almost no chance to practice.'

'For a short time I took private lessons from the wife of an American soldier based in South Korea. She sounded as if she was speaking another language - not English. There are so many phrases, idioms and colloquial expressions which I am not aware of. One thing I learned from this experience, however, is that the only way to improve and to gain in confidence is to speak and that is what I am trying to do.'

"The Key to Perfect Business Writing"

FREE SEMINAR FOR HR AND L&D PROFESSIONALS

Creating effective English writing to a consistently professional standard is sometimes a challenge. As an HR/L&D professional, you are probably required to write a number of documents to a range of different audience. You can reduce the time and frustration spent on writing by learning a few of these key aspects...

By planning, by understanding your audience, by using the most appropriate language structures, by selecting an appropriate level of formality and choice of vocabulary will allow you to communicate with ease and clarity, avoiding the many pitfalls people experience when communicating through writing.

This free seminar for HR and L&D professionals allows participants to polish their writing skills so that any document meets its aim first time around. This will save you time, brain power and frustration!

You will learn:

- Organisation and planning tips;
- Using tone & style to your advantage;
- Modernising your English writing vocabulary;
- Structural techniques for clear writing; and
- Achieve your writing goals.



Seminar Information
Date: 21 February 2014
Time: 13:00 – 17:00
Place: HKMA, Causeway Bay

Speaker
Lachlan Robertson
Director of Training

Agenda
13:00 – 13:30 Registration
13:30 – 14:00 WETE Demo
14:00 – 15:00 Seminar
15:00 – 16:00 Refreshments
16:00 – 17:00 Seminar

Who Should Attend?
HR and/or L&D Professionals

For registration, please feel free to contact:
Niki Ho
2893-6134
nikiho@languagekey.com



Questions answers and tips with Dr English

If you have any questions that you would like to have answered by Dr English then email us:
editor@languagekey.com

Q Brackets set off material not essential to the meaning of the text. They are used for asides and explanations when the material is not essential or if it is made up of more than one sentence. Brackets may contain a complete sentence or sentences. For example: **He had to go through the usual process to get his bus driver's license (police check, reference check, motor vehicle check, written exam, mechanical test, and driving test).**

In the above sentence, the details could be set off by a colon (:) for more emphasis as it is a list, or by a dash (–) for strong emphasis. But since the sentence says "the usual process," there's no need to emphasise anything.

Brackets should not be used too often as they become a distraction.

Q Is it wrong or poor style to use the phrase **It has been brought to my attention** in business writing?

A It's not wrong to use the phrase, but it's rather out-of-date. In modern English, we tend to use more personal phrases and avoid using the passive voice unless necessary. So, instead of **It has been brought to me attention** we might say: **Richard informed me.... Or: I've just found out/discovered that....**

It's still acceptable to use the phrase: **Thank you for bringing this to my attention.** But, it's even better to say: **Thank you for letting me know about Or: Thank you for informing me about**

Making Polite Requests



When you are asking someone to do something for you or trying to influence their actions, you can often show that you want to be polite by saying things in an indirect way:

Help me file these documents (please). (**Very Direct** – more demand than request)
(Please) will you help me file these documents? (**Less Direct**)
Could you help me file these documents (please)? (**Neutral**)
Do you think you could possibly help me file these documents? (**Indirect**)
I was wondering if you could possibly help me file these documents? (**Very Indirect**)

Generally speaking, the more indirect the expression you use, the more polite you will seem. If you are too direct you may be considered impolite. However, the more indirect expressions can sound "too polite". When deciding which expressions are suitable for which situations it is useful to ask certain questions:

- What is the relationship between the speaker and the listener? More direct expressions are often used between friends or when the speaker is in a position of authority.
- How important is the action to the speaker? Usually, the more important the action, the more indirect the expression.
- How much inconvenience will the action cause for the listener? If, for example, the listener is being asked to make a lot of effort or do something which they do not usually do, the speaker will probably use a more indirect expression.

TIPS

English Advice



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