

Communication Skills: Being polite

In English there are many ways to show politeness and respect. It all starts with body language and the tone of your voice. But naturally there are words and phrases you need to know and use to be confident in your everyday conversation.

Rules of politeness vary but a friendly tone of voice and a smile, as well as looking other people in the eye usually take you a long way.

Addressing people

If you are unsure of what to call someone, you can ask:

- What should I call you / your mother / the manager?
- Is it okay if I call you...?
- What's your name? (in a casual situation when first names are used)

Sometimes people may not know what to call you. If they seem unsure about that, help them out:

- Please, call me... / You can call me...

To be *on a first name basis* or *on first name terms* with someone means you are close enough to use somebody's first name.

Don't be surprised if shop assistants or bus drivers call you 'love', 'dear' or even 'duck' in the UK. It's just a normal way of being friendly. If you are visiting the USA, you may hear children address their father as 'Sir' and mother as 'Ma'am'.

- Formal address
 1. Sir (adult male)
 2. Ma'am / Madam (adult female)
 3. Mr + last name (any man)
 4. Ms + last name (any woman)
 5. Dr + last name
 6. Professor + last name (in an academic setting)



Please

The magic word *please* is often used when asking for something for yourself.