Formalities
English Essentials

- Teacher's Insights -

At a Glance
🕐 30-45 minutes

👥 **A0**, A1

🎯 formalities, vocabulary, speaking

Preparation
🕐 0-15* minutes

- Print one worksheet for each student.

- Print the Teacher's Insights.

- *If you are teaching total beginners and do not speak the students' language, prepare translations of some of the phrases.

Exercise Summary

Kickoff: students share formalities from their own language and culture

Vocabulary I: practise pronunciation and translation of common English phrases

Vocabulary II: match pictures and phrases

What's the difference?: discuss the difference between common pairs of phrases

Grammar Focus: learn what "please", "may I", and "could you" mean, and how to use them

Role-Play: six situations to act out

ⓘ This class requires minimal preparation. Depending on your teaching style, you might consider preparing visual aids for the vocabulary exercises or props for the role-play section.

Kickoff: Formalities in your language.

ⓘ This allows you to check students' understanding and, if you have a multilingual classroom, for students to share things from their own language. It is an icebreaker to open the class.

Let's start with your language! Answer the following questions:

1. How do you say "please" and "thank you" in your language?
2. Is there a special word for "sorry" or "excuse me" in your language?
3. How do you ask for something politely in your language?
4. Share a formality that is unique to your culture or language.

Vocabulary I: Listen and repeat. What do these phrases mean in your language?

ⓘ Familiarise students with common English courtesy phrases, their pronunciation, and translation in their native language if necessary. Remind students to pay attention to the stress and intonation patterns in English.

In **Vocabulary II**, you can start to pay attention to how these terms work. For example, after the terms "Thank you" and "Sorry", we can add "for" and a gerund (-ing form). If your students do well with this activity, you can encourage them to create their own short sentences.

The answers are shown on the following page.

Formalities

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1. Please... = E
2. Thank you... = A
3. Sorry... = D
4. May I...? = C
5. Could you...? = B
6. Excuse me.
7. You're welcome.

Vocabulary II: Match the formalities (1–5) with the rest of the sentences (A–E).

A. for helping me.

B. help me?

C. sit here?

D. for being late.

E. follow me.

Vocabulary II: Look at the pictures. Select the correct phrase for each one.

ⓘ The focus here is on contextualising the phrases from the previous exercise and confirming the students' understanding. Visual cues can greatly aid language retention. If your students are able to, ask them to explain what they can see in the images and to justify their answers.

A new expression here is "here you go". You can also say "here you are". Students will be able to find the answer by process of elimination, and from the image they should be able to tell you it's meaning.

1. a. It's nice to see you!

   b. I'm sorry!

3. a. It's nice to see you!

   b. Here you go!

2. a. I'm sorry!

   b. It's nice to meet you!

4. a. Here you go!

   b. It's nice to meet you!

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What's the difference? **Discuss the difference between the pairs of phrases.**

ⓘ The goal of this activity is to deepen students' understanding of the small details between seemingly similar phrases. It's an opportunity to clarify any misconceptions.

1. Excuse me / Sorry = "Excuse me" is to get attention and "Sorry" is to apologise.

2. May I...? / Could you...? = "May I" is to ask for permission and "Could you" is to make a request (ask someone to do something)

3. Thank you / You're welcome = "You're welcome" is the common response to "Thank you"

4. Sorry / Pardon me = Both can express apology. "Pardon me" is more formal.

5. Please / Kindly = Both are for polite requests. "Kindly" is more formal.

Grammar Focus: **"Please", "May I...?", and "Could you...?"**

ⓘ This exercise focuses on the functions of language: "please" to make polite requests or give polite instructions; "May I" to request permission; and "Could you" to ask someone else for something or to do something. Explore the phrases and give plenty of examples.

We use "Please" when we ask for something, "May I" when we request permission, and "Could you" when we need help from someone else.

"I would like a coffee, please."

"May I use your phone?"

"Could you help me with this suitcase?"

Now, make your own sentences using "please", "may I", and "could you".

Role-Play: **Act out the following situations in pairs.**

ⓘ Show students the practical application of the phrases in real-life situations. This activity builds students' confidence in using English for social interaction. As a teacher, give constructive feedback and guide students towards accurate and appropriate language use. And, have fun!

1. You bump into someone by accident.

2. Someone gives you a gift.

3. You meet someone for the first time.

4. You need to get the shop assistants attention.

5. You drop your jacket and someone gives it to you.

6. You buy a coffee at a shop.