Business Writing
Intermediate

Session 4: Asking for Clarification and Confirmation
Learning Objectives

Intermediate

In this session, you will:
• Use common expressions to ask for clarification.
• Ask for confirmation of your understanding.
The coach and learner can role play co-workers Henry and Radha as they talk about a meeting. Listen closely then say whether the statements about their conversation (on the next slide) are ‘True’ or ‘False.’

**Henry:** That was a long meeting, wasn’t it? I had trouble staying focused after a while.

**Radha:** Yeah, me too.

**Henry:** I’m afraid I didn’t take very good notes, and there are some things I’m not clear on. Like choosing a new vendor. I didn’t catch what Paula said.

**Radha:** She said she’s postponing that.

**Henry:** Okay. So for now, are we supposed to keep ordering from our current vendor?

**Radha:** I’m not sure. You’d better email her and double-check.

**Henry:** Right. And there’s another thing I’d like her to clarify: What did she mean by that phrase “the triple bottom line”?

**Radha:** I wasn’t sure about that either. Can you ask her in your email?

**Henry:** Sure. Or we can ask her when we meet tomorrow. We are meeting again tomorrow, right?

**Radha:** We are?

**Henry:** I think so! But I’d better confirm that with Paula.
Let’s Discuss

Intermediate

Based on Henry and Radha’s conversation, say whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False.'

1. Henry and Radha both attended the same meeting.
2. Henry took good notes during the meeting.
3. Radha explains the meaning of the triple bottom line.
4. Henry and Radha are confused about when the next meeting is.
Ways to Ask for Clarification and Confirm Your Understanding

### Intermediate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways to Ask for Clarification</th>
<th>Ways to Confirm Your Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Could you please clarify something for me?</strong></td>
<td><strong>As I understand it, . . .</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I did not understand your point about . . .</strong></td>
<td><strong>If I understood correctly, . . .</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I would like to understand what you meant by “. . .”</strong></td>
<td><strong>Could you confirm something for me? I believe (that) . . .</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I am not clear on what you meant by “. . .”</strong></td>
<td><strong>Just to confirm, . . .</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I didn’t catch what you said about . . .</strong></td>
<td><strong>Is that correct?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I’m sorry, but I’m afraid I didn’t understand what you meant about a possible delay.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Do I have that right?</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Let’s Discuss

IntermEDIATE

Read Henry’s email to Paula. She ran the meeting that Radha and he attended. Answer the questions (on the next slide) about Henry’s email.

From: Henry Young  
To: Paula Ramone  
CC: Radha Sloane  
Subject: Following up on today’s meeting

Hi Paula,

I’d like to ask you to clarify a couple of things from this morning’s meeting for Radha and me.

1. I know that you’re postponing a decision on a new vendor, so are we supposed to keep ordering from the same vendor for now?

2. I’m sorry, but I didn’t understand what you meant by “the triple bottom line.” Can you please explain?

Just to confirm, we’re meeting again tomorrow, same time, same place—is that right?

Thanks,

Henry
Let’s Discuss

Intermediate

1. Why does Henry Cc Radha on the email to Paula?
2. What is Henry doing in his second question?
3. Why do you think Henry starts the second question with an apology?
Let’s Practice
Intermediate

The coach and the learner take turns speaking aloud the following lines asking for clarification or confirmation. Then take turns completing the last four lines.

1. In our meeting this morning, I’m afraid I didn’t catch what you said about the timetable. What’s changing?

2. Could you please clarify something for me? I read the Employee Handbook, but I’m not sure I understand company policy regarding leaves of absence.

3. Thanks for your message. There was one thing I didn’t understand. Would you please explain what you meant by “360-degree feedback”?

4. At the start of the meeting, unfortunately, I missed the part about the photocopier. Sorry, but would you mind telling me?

5. You wrote that I’m supposed to monitor my team. I’m afraid that I’m not clear on the meaning of “monitor.”

6. Would you please elaborate on something for me? You spoke about increasing efforts to retain customers. What specifically do you have in mind?

7. As I understand it, (pause) ...

8. If I understood correctly, (pause) ...

9. Could you confirm something for me? I believe that (pause) ...

10. Just to confirm, (pause) ...
Apply It!
Intermediate

Follow the directions in brackets to complete this email asking for clarification. Try several different ways if there is time.

Phil,

Thanks for your message.

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________[Start with an apology; then ask for a clarification]

Would you give me a call?

Thanks,
Eduardo