Participating in Meetings
Intermediate

Session 6: Interrupting Politely
Learning Objectives
Intermediate

In this session, you will:

• Practice polite expressions used to interrupt during a meeting.
• Respond appropriately to interruptions.
• Learn how to join in on a conversation.
Let's Discuss

Intermediate

In your culture, when is it appropriate to interrupt someone when they are talking? Consider the following situations and say whether it would be polite or impolite to interrupt:

- When two friends are chatting.
- When the CEO is giving a speech.
- When your colleague is giving a presentation.
- When you are attending a training session and you have a question.
Let's Discuss

Intermediate

1. What are some common reasons for interrupting?
   - To add an opinion
     *I’m sorry to interrupt, but don’t you think we need to ask Maria?*
   - To clarify something
     *Excuse me, but did you say the deadline is in two weeks?*
   - What other reasons can you think of?

2. How can you deal with interruptions?
   - Allow an interruption
     *Sure. Go ahead.*
   - Promise to answer later.
     *Let me come back to that later.*
   - Ignore an interruption
   - What else?
# Interruptions

## Intermediate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interrupting for Another Purpose</th>
<th>Interrupting Another Person to Join the Conversation</th>
<th>Allowing Interruption for Another Purpose</th>
<th>Allowing Interruption for a Point of View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pardon/Excuse my interruption, could/can you (take a phone call)?</td>
<td>Could/Can I say something?</td>
<td>How can I help?</td>
<td>Of course, go ahead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I’m) sorry to interrupt, but (Mr. Anders is on the phone).</td>
<td>Could/Can I add something?</td>
<td>What can I do for you?</td>
<td>No problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardon/Excuse me, could/can I interrupt for a moment?</td>
<td>Could/Can I jump in?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sure, what do you think?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I’m) sorry to interrupt, but (don’t you think...)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Continuing after an Interruption

| As I was saying, (I think...) |
| To get back to what I was saying, (I think...) |

## Ignoring Interruption

| Please let me finish my thought. |
| Let me finish my thought. |
| Please let me finish. |

## Postponing Interruption

| Let me get to that later. |
| Just a moment and I’ll get to that. |
# Let’s Practice

## Intermediate

Match up these situations with their target responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. You are an administrative assistant and you need to give your boss an important message.</td>
<td><em>Just a moment and I'll get to that.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Two colleagues are discussing their summer vacations at work. You’d like to ask a question about the time of a meeting next week.</td>
<td><em>Can I jump in here quickly?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A colleague wants to know about next week’s presentation, but you are discussing a hiring decision.</td>
<td><em>Excuse me. Could I speak to you for a moment?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. You received an important phone call during a meeting. You return to the meeting after the call and continue.</td>
<td><em>Sorry to interrupt, but did you hear what time our meeting will start next Monday?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. You want to add your opinion to a discussion in progress.</td>
<td><em>As I was saying, I think we need to concentrate on sales.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Let's Practice
Intermediate

In this activity, your coach will ask you for advice about an issue he/she is having at work. You should offer suggestions and give opinions. You may need to politely interrupt to add your suggestion or opinion.

**Learner A:** You manage a large team of people. Recently, members of your team have been missing deadlines and leaving tasks incomplete. In addition, some team members have stopped attending team meetings. This has left you very angry and frustrated. You decide to ask Role B, who is also a manager at the same company, for advice.

*Can I have a minute of your time?*

*Could I run something by you?*

**Learner B:** One of the managers in your department is having trouble managing their team. They have come to you to ask for your advice and for your opinions. However, you may need to politely interrupt them in order to do this.

*Sor to interrupt, but have you thought about . . .*

*I hope you don't mind if I stop you there for a minute.*
Apply It!

Intermediate

• The coach and the learner take turns interrupting a conversation politely three times to express their own opinion on an important issue. Make sure to listen carefully and choose the right time and situation.

• Use the phrase *As I was saying...* or *To get back to what I was saying...* to continue after the other person interrupts you.