Negotiating politely in English

If we want to communicate our views and desires in an effective manner, in English, it is expected that we use specific phrases and grammar so that we subtly convey our point across without seeming rude. When having a meeting, sending an email, presenting, or trying to negotiate, being able to use language that is constructive, persuasive and powerful is a vital skill in English.

The following techniques are useful:

Using modal verbs: "Would you be interested?"

Using a **modal verb** such as *would*, *could*, *may* or *should* makes what you say less direct and more cautious.

Compare: "I agree" – "I could agree to that".

Using the continuous form of the verb: "I was thinking of going home early today.''

Using the **continuous form of the verb** highlights the amount of effort that has gone into a decision. This puts greater weight onto what is being said with the aim of persuading the person being spoken to.

Introductory words and phrases: "I'm afraid we have a small problem.''

Using an **introductory word or phrase** when speaking lets your listener know early on what your angle on an issue is going to be, for example, if your comment is going to be positive or negative. These phrases are a crucial aspect of effective communication in English and are important to master.

Some of the common introductory phrases are:

To be honest, To be blunt, In fact, Actually, I'm afraid, As a matter of fact,
I see what you are saying but, You have a point there,

Qualifiers: "You cut my hair a bit too short."

In English, if you are blunt in your speech, it can easily offend the person you are talking to, especially in a more formal situation. You can use **qualifiers** to avoid being too blunt or direct.

Common qualifiers are:

a bit	slight	some	a few	maybe	rather	somewhat	quite

Compare: "We have a problem" – "We have a bit of a problem."

Using a negative form of a modal verb: "Wouldn't you prefer to collaborate with someone on this project?''

Changing the phrasal verb in a suggestion to its **negative form** makes it more tentative and open to compromise.

Compare: "Should we wait for her?" – " Shouldn't we wait for her?"

Give a reason for your reply: "I can't attend the conference as I have sprained my shoulder"

Give a **reason** as to why you are giving a negative response.