

## Clarification

How to express lack of understanding

When you fail to understand what has been said to you you can use these expressions:

- I beg your pardon?
- I beg your pardon, but I don't quite understand.
- I'm not quite sure I know what you mean.
- I'm not quite sure I follow you.
- I don't quite see what you mean.
- I'm not sure I got your point.
- Sorry, I didn't quite hear what you said.
- Sorry, I didn't get your point.
- I don't quite see what you're getting at.



## How you ask for clarification

When you don't understand what someone has said, you can ask for clarification using the following expressions:

- What do you mean by...?
- Do you mean...?
- Could you say that again, please?
- Could you repeat please?
- Could you clarify that, please?
- Would you elaborate on that , please?
- Could you be more explicit?
- Could you explain what you mean by...?
- Could you give us an example?
- I wonder if you could say that in a different way.
- Could you put it differently, please?
- Could you be more specific, please?



## Clarifying one's point or idea

To clarify your idea you can use the following expressions:

- Let me explain that...
- Let me explain that in more detail...
- Let me put it in another way...
- Sorry let me explain...
- In other words...
- To say this differently...
- To put it differently...

**When talking with close friends, it's appropriate to say, "Huh?" If you're in the southern U.S., the best response is "Ma'am?" or "Sir?"**

*I'm sorry. Could you repeat that please?*

*I'm sorry I didn't hear you. Could you please say that again slowly?*

*You said.... ?*

*Did you say X or Y?*

*Pardon?*

*Excuse me?*

*What was that?*

*Say that again please?*

*I'm sorry, I don't understand what \_\_\_\_\_ means.*

Certain common expressions can have other meanings. For example, if students responded with "What did you say?" the listener might be confused and think that the student was offended rather than confused.

**A dialogue in a fast food restaurant as shown in a book might look like this:**

*Cashier: Hello. Welcome to Fast Food Heaven. What would you like to order?*

*Customer: I would like a number 5 please.*

*Cashier: Would you like fries or a salad with that?*

*Customer: I would like fries please.*

*Cashier: What would you like to drink?*

*Customer: A coke.*

*Cashier: Great. So that's a number 5 with fries and a coke. Your total is \$6.95. Are you paying with cash or credit card?*

*Customer: Cash. Here you go.*

*Cashier: Thank you. Your order can be picked up at the end of the counter. Have a great day.*

**In reality, most fast food conversations go like this:**

*Cashier: Hi.*

*Customer: Can I have a number 5 please?*

*Cashier: Fries or salad?*

*Customer: Fries.*

*Cashier: Drink?*

*Customer: A coke.*

*Cashier: \$6.95.*

*Customer: Okay.*

*Cashier: Pick it up over there.*

