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The **Podcast** That Will Help You **Speak** English Fluently.
With No Grammar and No Textbooks!

Episode #224

How to ask for clarification
in English

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Are you having a hard time following conversations in English? Don't worry. Today, I'll show you some expressions you can use confidently in situations where it isn't easy to follow a conversation.

Welcome to [Speak English Now](#) podcast, with your host, Georgiana. The podcast that will help you speak English fluently with no grammar and no textbooks.

Hi, I am Georgiana, your English teacher and founder of [SpeakEnglishPodcast.com](#). My mission is to help you speak English fluently.

Do you know how you can help me? You can share the podcast with your friends and family. Tell them to go to [SpeakEnglishPodcast.com](#) and get my free mini-course.

That would mean a lot to me. Thanks.

Oh, by the way, remember that you can check out the **transcript** on my website: [speakenglishpodcast.com/podcast](#)

Okay, let's start!

When we learn a new language, we are eager to practice speaking with another person. But what happens when the conversation is difficult for some reason? Maybe it's hard to keep up or follow what they tell us.

Or if you are in a conversation with people who speak very fast, and you can't hear those words at all, or you don't recognize them, you feel uncomfortable.

Although you may be embarrassed to interrupt in these situations, you can politely say that you don't understand what they have said.

So today, I will show you some expressions you can use confidently in situations where it isn't easy to follow a conversation.

Let's get started!

#1. Asking for clarification:

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Sorry, I'm afraid I don't follow (you.)

By using this expression, you are suggesting that you must have it re-explained or explained differently.

Examples:

"Sorry, **I don't follow** (you)—what exactly do you want me to do next?"

"Do you understand? No, I'm afraid **I don't follow.**"

Here are some more phrases to ask for clarification:

"I'm not entirely sure what you mean; could you explain it again? Or..."

"Could you please say that a little slower?"

"Sorry! That went straight over my head. Could you explain it differently?"

#2. When someone asks for your opinion:

If **someone asks for your opinion** on a topic for which you feel unprepared, you can use the following phrases:

"It's hard to express my ideas about this topic in English, but I'll try my best.

"It's really fascinating listening to you talk, but to be honest, I don't know much about this topic."

#3. How to end the conversation:

This is a little beyond me.

By using this expression, you are ending the conversation. You are not asking for clarification; you are saying that the conversation is too difficult for you.

Examples:

"I'm sure it's fascinating what you're saying, but I have to admit that **it's beyond me.**"

I hope you are enjoying yourself.
These expressions can be very useful when we find ourselves in difficult situations and have to ask for clarification.

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Now it's time for you to learn grammar in context with a point of view story.

POV-Story

(Learn grammar in context)

I'll tell you a short story more than one time. Every time, I'll change a grammar point. I can change the tense or the person. This way, you'll notice the changes in context.

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Come on, let's get started!

First, let's hear the story from Tony's point of view:

Hi, I'm Tony, and I want to improve my English by using more advanced expressions. So last week, I listened to the latest Speak English Now podcast episode and wrote down 6 of my favorite expressions in a notebook.

The problem is that I didn't listen to the episode enough to learn how to use the expressions in context.

And since I'm not willing to listen to the same episode again, I decided I am ready to use them in conversation.

Yes. I have not mastered the expressions, but I came up with a cool idea. I numbered the expressions and rolled the die in the middle of the conversation. I used the expression depending on the number on the die.

As you imagine, this created all kinds of funny situations.

And since I wanted to practice, I went to an English-speaking restaurant for lunch yesterday. When I walked in, the receptionist said hi, and after rolling the die, I replied: **"It's fascinating listening to you talk, but to be honest, I don't know much about this topic."**

Next, when the waiter asked me to follow him, I took the opportunity to roll the die again and replied to the waiter, **"I'm sorry, I don't follow you."**

Later I ordered some coffee, and when the waiter asked if I wanted sugar in my coffee, I rolled the dice again and answered: **"It's quite hard to express**

my ideas about this topic in English, but I'll try my best."

People at the restaurant didn't know what to think of me. Some thought I was a madman. If you asked the waiter's opinion, he would probably say, "It's **beyond me.**"

Ok! Let's listen to the same story in the future tense:

Two years from now, Tony will be an English learner who will want to use new English expressions. After listening to the latest episode of the Speak English Now podcast, he will write down 6 of his favorite expressions in a notebook.

The problem is that Tony won't listen to the episodes enough to learn how to use them in context.

Since he won't listen to the same episode again, he'll decide that he's ready to use them in conversation. And even though he won't master the expressions, Tony will come up with an idea. A crazy idea. He will number the expressions and roll a die in the middle of the conversation. In this way, Tony will use the expression that the die indicates.

As you can imagine, this will create all kinds of funny situations. Since he is going to want to practice, he will have lunch at an English-speaking restaurant. When he enters, the receptionist will greet him, and after rolling the die, Tony will respond: **"It's fascinating listening to you talk, but to be honest, I don't know much about this topic."**

Next, when the waiter asks to follow him, Tony will take the opportunity to roll the

die again and reply to the waiter, **"I'm sorry, I don't follow you."**

Later, Tony will order some coffee, and when the waiter asks if he wants sugar in his coffee, Tony will roll the die again and reply, **"It's quite hard to express my ideas about this topic in English, but I will try my best."**

The people at the restaurant won't know what to think of Tony. Some will think he is a madman. If you ask my opinion, I'll say, **"It's beyond me."**

Ok! That's the end of this short exercise. Notice that the changes between grammar points are subtle but important.

My suggestion is that you **avoid memorizing grammar rules**. It's better to see the changes in the proper context. And with a story, it is much easier to remember all this.

It is one of the techniques that I use in my [premium courses](#).

I recommend you to you take a look at:
SpeakEnglishPodcast.com/courses

Ok! We have reached the end of this episode.

Repetition will help you improve your English fluency. So make sure you listen to my podcast episodes several times.
See you soon! Bye! Bye!



Georgiana

founder of
SpeakEnglishPodcast.com

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