

Worksheet 9: Direct and indirect language

1 Have you ever negotiated any of the following with customers, colleagues or your manager?

- prices • delivery times • length of your holiday
- time of a break • discounts on large orders • pay
- refunds • doing a job no one in your workplace likes doing

2 Read these emails. Which of the issues from Exercise 1 do they negotiate?

Thanks for replying so quickly. We're happy with your range and we'd like to place an order. But the total price is too high so please come back with a reduced offer. Also, the delivery time on certain items is long – why is this? Please let me know asap. Thanks.

Further to your email with an outline of your products range and prices, I'd like to express our initial interest in your offer. However, at this stage would you be able to give us a better idea of flexibility in terms of pricing? Could you possibly clarify, for example, whether there are discounts on certain orders? It also seems from your email that orders on certain ranges might take up to a month to deliver. To be honest, I think this could be too late for our summer stock but perhaps you could send more details on this.

I look forward to hearing from you.

3 Discuss the emails in groups. Answer these questions.

- 1 How well do you think the writer in the first email knows the other person? Is the language direct or indirect?
- 2 How well do you think the writer in the second email knows the other person? Is the language direct or indirect?

4 These sentences use indirect and tentative language. Delete words so the sentences are more direct. Your new sentence must have the number of words in brackets. See the first example.

- 1 Thanks for ~~your email with~~ your offer.
(4) Thanks for your offer.
- 2 Could you please send me a price list?
(5) _____
- 3 Further to our phone call yesterday morning, can we meet on Wednesday at 10?
(7) _____
- 4 Could you possibly clarify for example if this price includes delivery?
(6) _____

- 5 I'm very sorry, but we have a delay of 24 hours because of the shipping company.
(9) _____
- 6 It seems that your prices have increased twice in the last six months already.
(6) _____
- 7 Would you possibly be able to send this year's brochure, please?
(5) _____
- 8 I appreciate your offer but we can't agree to it, to be honest.
(5) _____

5 These sentences come from emails to people the writer knows well, so they are direct. Change the sentences so they are less direct and more tentative. Replace the words in bold with these phrases.

It seems that	If you have time, perhaps you should	Could you possibly explain
To be honest, the price you're asking	We'd appreciate it if you would	
I was wondering if you could	Why don't we ... ?	I'm afraid I'm unable to

- 1 **Please** send us a replacement as soon as possible.
_____ send us a replacement as soon as possible.
- 2 **Can you** call me by the end of today?
_____ call me by the end of today?
- 3 **Sorry but I can't** accept your offer.
_____ accept your offer.
- 4 **Maybe you can** call them to discuss their offer.
_____ call them to discuss their offer.
- 5 **I think** this price has gone up.
_____ this price has gone up.
- 6 **Let's** meet to discuss this in more detail.
_____ meet to discuss this in more detail?
- 7 **Your price** is too high.
_____ is too high.
- 8 **What's** the extra ten per cent added to the total price?
_____ the extra ten per cent added to the total price?

6 Write two emails.

Email 1: You have ordered some items you need for your workplace from a regular supplier. The supplier has sent you a price but it is 20% higher than your previous order. Find out why. Use direct language.

Email 2: Your regular supplier seems to be more expensive than normal so you have asked a brand new supplier for prices on the same order. The quote seems to be lower but you want clarification on delivery costs and times and precise details of discounts on large orders. You need to use indirect language.

I CAN

use direct language ☐

use indirect language ☐