

## Sorry, I don't understand

### Questions of clarification (1)

The best way to improve your speaking skills is obviously to speak English as much as possible. This is why you should always speak English in class, and this is also why you should try to speak English as much as possible outside of class. At the supermarket, waiting for a bus, ordering a pizza, renting a video... There are lots of situations outside of class where you have the opportunity to practice speaking English. However, there will sometimes be problems or breakdowns in communication. Maybe the person you are speaking to is speaking too quickly or too quietly, perhaps they are using certain words or phrases which you don't understand. As learners of English it is essential that you do not let these small breakdowns in communication end your conversation, because if you don't speak you don't learn and you don't improve.

Discuss with your classmates what you think you should say to repair the breakdown in communication described in each situation below. When you all agree on what you think the best thing to say is, write it below the relevant situation.

1. You don't understand what somebody is saying. You say...

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2. You don't understand what somebody is saying because they are speaking too quickly. You say...

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3. You don't understand what somebody is saying because they are speaking too quietly. You say...

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4. You want somebody to repeat what they said. You say...

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5. You don't understand the meaning of a word somebody has said (for example the word 'florist'). You say...

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6. You would like somebody to tell you how to spell a word (for example the word 'florist'). You say...

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7. You would like somebody to tell you how to pronounce a word (for example the word 'florist'). You say...

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8. You want to know if somebody speaks your first language. You say...

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9. You want somebody who speaks your first language to translate a word into English (for example the French word 'cheval', which means 'horse' in English). You say...

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10. After a person has helped you to understand something they've said, you should always say...

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## Questions of clarification (2)

Can you match the ten speech bubbles below with the ten situations on Page 1 and Page 2?

Do you speak French /  
Russian / Portuguese /  
Vietnamese?

Sorry, how do you  
pronounce 'florist'  
again, please?

Sorry, could you tell  
me how to spell  
'florist', please?

Sorry, I don't  
understand. Could you  
speak a little more  
slowly, please?

Thank you.

Sorry, I don't understand.

How do you say 'cheval'  
in English, please?

Sorry, I don't understand.  
What does 'florist' mean?

Sorry, could you repeat  
that, please?

Sorry, I don't understand.  
Could you speak up,  
please?

