

# BBC Learning English

## 6 Minute English

### *Business English: Asking permission & polite requests*



NB: This is not a word for word transcript

**Feifei:** Hello and welcome to another episode of 6 Minute English with me Feifei,

**Neil:** And me Neil.

**Feifei:** And how are you today Neil?

**Neil:** It's all good today thank you! I've got a really good question for you today...

**Feifei:** Ooh a question – ask away!

**Neil:** Which do you prefer Feifei: Open-plan offices or small private offices?

**Feifei:** Open-plan offices or small private offices? Ooh, I much prefer open-plan offices – much friendlier.

**Neil:** Yes of course because you're a very friendly person... let's hear from some of our friends and colleagues to find out what kind of office they prefer...

#### **Insert**

**Vox 1:** In my opinion as a Brazilian, open-plan offices can be very good and effective because it's easy for people to

communicate and put ideas across; but at times we need some quiet space to concentrate and get the job done.

**Vox 2:** In China, people would love to have their own private offices because we are very noisy and people arguing quite a lot sometimes, there is a lot of noise. So to have your own private space would be great, but unfortunately nowadays what we get is open-plan offices.

**Vox 3:** In Indonesia, there are more open-plan offices these days, the good thing is that we can improve collaborations with other teams or departments. However, we sometimes face problems, for instance, as it's really hot in Indonesia lots of people prefer to have air conditioning be set really cold whereas there are also people who can't really stand cold air like me. So this can create a tension among staff.

**Feifei:** Air conditioning! It drives me crazy! Actually it isn't the air conditioning that drives me crazy Neil, it's you: I keep asking you to turn it down and 2 minutes later you turn it back up again!

**Neil:** Feifei you always turn it too low. And you drive me crazy because you never ask me if you can turn it down. You just do it without saying anything. It really annoys me. It's so rude!!

**Feifei:** Rude? Do you think so? I think this is a case for Business Betty...

**Neil / FF:** It's Business Betty!!!

**BB:** Hello! Is everything alright?

**Feifei:** We need your help Betty. Neil and I keep arguing about the A/C. He says I'm rude!

**Neil:** A/C meaning air conditioning. She is rude!

**BB:** Calm down both of you and let me help. If you're working in an open-plan office, it's really important to consider the needs and feelings of the people working around you. If you want to ask someone to do something, it's always a good idea to use a very polite request. Start with the phrase 'Would you mind...' and follow it with an -ing verb. Can you give us an example Feifei?

**Feifei:** Would you mind turning off the air conditioning?

**BB:** Very good. Neil?

**Neil:** Would you mind opening a window?

**BB:** Lovely. If you want someone to stop doing something, use the word 'not' before the -ing verb. Neil?

**Neil:** Would you mind not smoking in the kitchen please?

**BB:** Excellent. Feifei?

**Feifei:** Would you mind not using my computer?

**Neil:** Would you mind not leaving the door open?

**BB:** If you want your co-workers' permission to do something, say 'Is it ok if I...' and then say what you want to do. Examples please?

**Feifei:** Is it ok if I turn the air conditioning on?

**Neil:** Is it ok if I use your phone?

**Feifei:** Is it ok if we have a meeting in here?

**BB:** If someone asks your permission, you can say yes. Neil, how would you do that?

**Neil:** Sure, no problem, go ahead.

**BB:** Very good. Of course, you might decide to say no, Feifei:

**Feifei:** I'd rather you didn't, if you don't mind.

**BB:** And remember, the English words please, thank you and sorry always make a big difference! Both together now:

**Neil / FF:** Please, thank you, sorry.

**BB:** Very polite. Well done. Now: Is it ok if I leave?

**Neil:** Yes of course, go ahead.

**FF:** Thanks Betty!

**BB:** Goodbye.

**Neil:** There she goes. Radiant as ever! Do you think she was a bit angry with us?

**Feifei:** Noooo.... So Neil. Do you think it's about time we did a role-play?

**Neil:** Only if I'm the boss!

**Feifei:** Sorry, there's no boss this week.

**Neil:** What do you mean there's no boss? There's always a boss...

**Feifei:** We're co-workers in an open-plan office. You want to open the windows and use my computer and -

**Neil:** - and things like that. So I have to make some polite requests, right?

**Feifei:** That's right! Ready?

**Neil:** Bring it on!

### **Role-play**

**Neil:** Hello, Feifei. How are you today?

**Feifei:** Fine thanks, just finishing this report. What can I do for you?

**Neil:** I just wanted to ask: Would you mind turning off the air conditioning?

**Feifei:** Oh, ok, sure.

**Neil:** It's just a bit cold in here, thanks.

**Feifei:** Oh, sorry, of course, no problem.

**Neil:** And I wanted to say, we've got some visitors coming over this afternoon, so is it ok if we have a meeting in here?

**Feifei:** Yes that's ok with me, but would you mind keeping the noise down please?

**Neil:** Yes, of course.

**Feifei:** And would you mind tidying up after the meeting? It was left in a bit of a mess last time.

**Neil:** Sure, I'm busy all afternoon though, so I'll have to leave it until the evening.

**Feifei:** I'd rather you didn't, if you don't mind. We need to use the room again at 4pm.

**Neil:** Oh, ok, I'll do it sooner then.

**Feifei:** Thanks.

**Feifei:** And that's the end of today's role-play! How was it for you?

**Neil:** It was very, very polite!

**Feifei:** That's British culture for you!

**Neil:** And that's all we've got time for today. Feifei, would you mind joining me soon for another episode of 6 Minute English?

**Feifei:** Of course! See you next time.

**Neil:** Join us again, wherever you're working.

**Feifei:** Bye!

## Asking permission & polite requests: Key phrases

<b>Asking people to do things</b>	Would you mind turning off the air conditioning?
	Would you mind opening a window?
	Would you mind not smoking in the kitchen please?
	Would you mind not using my computer?
	Would you mind not leaving the door open?

<b>Asking permission to do things</b>	Is it ok if I turn the air conditioning on?
	Is it ok if I use your phone?
	Is it ok if we have a meeting in here?

<b>Saying yes</b>	Sure, no problem, go ahead.
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<b>Saying no</b>	I'd rather you didn't, if you don't mind.
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<b>Polite expressions</b>	Please.
	Thank you.
	Sorry.