



Interrupting in a foreign language is difficult because when your opportunity comes you often can't find the right word. Read on and see how to interrupt people politely and effectively.

How to Interrupt

I'll start this article saying that it's much better if we never need to interrupt anyone. When possible, keep your opinion until the person has finished and deliver it afterwards just for the sake of politeness. However, if you can't wait these tips should be useful.

We generally interrupt when we disagree, when we'd like to add something, when we want clarification or when we need to share an important message, as in "I'm sorry but I must leave now. I've had an urgent call".

Interrupting is difficult in a language that you don't handle well, because when your opportunity comes you often can't find the phrases you need. Therefore, it's essential to memorise a few examples (see the list below) and use them without delay. Remember that speed is essential, as opportunities to speak rarely last for long and do bear in mind that you'll sometimes need to insist several times until you catch people's attention.

Here are some hints:

Wait for a pause or the end of a sentence. Even the fastest talkers need to breathe so take advantage of that!

Pair your words with body language. Raise your hand, stand up, lean forward, look at speakers in the eye or walk into their vision field.

Raise your voice slightly—or strongly if they pay no notice.

Remember the magic words *please* and *sorry*. Always use these words when you interrupt people, as not saying them could imply that you're being rude or even aggressive.

Ask direct questions about the subject. If you can't get people to stop talking try asking them questions. This will force them to pause, giving you the chance to introduce your comment.

Thank speakers after you've interrupted them. Saying "Thanks for letting me make my point" shows that you're not only respectful but sensitive as well. It will also let speakers know that you have finished and that they can continue.

One of the keys to successfully interrupting other speakers lies in the right mix of forcefulness and politeness so here's a list of expressions you can use.

Very polite

Actually, it was Geraldine who arrived late.

Excuse me, that seems taking matters too far.

May I have a word? Nothing will stop him from doing his job properly.

Sometimes people interrupt you. Use these expressions to allow them to speak.

Let's hear

Let's hear what Virginia has to say.

You may speak

Of course you may speak, Sylvie.

Please go ahead.

Please go ahead, Diana. What is so urgent?

We'd be delighted

We'd be delighted to hear your doubts, Paul.

You're not interrupting

You're not interrupting at all. Everyone is free to share their opinions.

Polite

Can I make a comment? Sam was never involved in this.

Could I say something? If we want lower costs we need other suppliers.

Sorry to interrupt, but someone's phone is ringing.

Strong

Please listen to me. It is important.

I don't mean to intrude, but Stephen is not exactly reliable.

I need to add something here. WTR Ltd should be able to supply us.

Very strong

What are you getting at? Can't you see you'll only cause trouble?

Will you allow me to me speak? You are not the only person here.

Can't I give an opinion? I have every right to state my ideas.

Andrew's how to:

Memorise some expressions. Pick ones that are easy to pronounce.

Wait for a pause in the conversation or for the end of a sentence.

Move your body and slightly raise your voice.

Include *please* and *sorry* in your phrases.

Thank speakers once you've finished.



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