



École de la fonction
publique du Canada

Canada School
of Public Service

ÉCOLE DE LA FONCTION
PUBLIQUE DU CANADA
CANADA SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC SERVICE

W

ELCOME TO

INTERACTION CANADA

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS AND GRAMMAR



ROLE PLAYING FOR CONSOLIDATION

ROLE PLAYING FOR CONSOLIDATION

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CREDITS

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Unit 1

SMALL TALK

LANGUAGE SUMMARY

SMALL-TALK OPENERS

Job

How's your job going?
How's work these days?

How're things going at work?

Are you still working in personnel?
Are you still working at the plaza?

Are you still putting in a lot of overtime?

Transportation

Any problems getting here?

Did you find your way OK?

Did you have trouble finding the place?

How did you get here?
Did it take you long to get here?

Accommodations

Where're you staying while you're in town?

What hotel are you staying at?
What motel are you staying in?

What're your accommodations like?

Is your suite/room nice?
Is your inn far from here?

News

Did you hear about the robbery?

Did you see that article about the prison escape?

Isn't it extraordinary the way those people were saved?

Have you been following the Stanley Cup Playoffs?

What did you think of the election results?

That fire was pretty awful, wasn't it?

That earthquake was pretty awful, wasn't it?

That plane crash was pretty awful, wasn't it?

That landslide was pretty awful, wasn't it?

Weather

The weather's sure been nice lately, hasn't it?

The weather's sure been awful lately, hasn't it?

We've had a lot of snow this month.

It's been really warm the last couple of days.

This cold (spell) can't last forever.

This heat (wave) can't last forever.

This rain's got to let up soon.

Holidays/Vacation

Are you ready for the holiday season?

How were your holidays? / How was your vacation?

Did you go away for the holidays?

How did you enjoy the long weekend?

Did you have a good/happy Diwali/Eid-ul-Fitr/Naw Ruz/Pesach/Thanksgiving?

Got any plans for your vacation?

You must be looking forward to your vacation.

Unit 2

DESCRIBING YOUR JOB

LANGUAGE SUMMARY

STATING YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

I'm in charge of word processing.
I'm responsible for the maintenance of radar facilities.
I look after training for new employees.
I take care of all the bookkeeping.
I handle complaints.

DESCRIBING YOUR JOB TASKS

We usually use the **simple present** to describe our job duties.

I design opinion polls.
I occasionally write letters for my boss.
I process job application forms.

We also sometimes use "**have to.**"

I have to prepare a report every month.
I have to check the figures the secretary gives me.

COMMENTING ON YOUR JOB

When describing our job we often talk about what we like and what we don't like about it.

I get to meet a lot of people.

I (really) enjoy working in/on a team.

There's a lot of pressure.

We don't get many perks.

I don't (really) like doing the same thing every day.

I (really) hate going before a competition or review board.

Unit 3

REQUESTING

LANGUAGE SUMMARY

MAKING REQUESTS

POSITIVE ANSWERS

These expressions can be used when making most types of requests.

Can/Could you help me?

Yeah,/Sure,/Yes, what do you want me to do?

Do you think you could lend me your dictionary?

Certainly./ Of course.

Would you mind getting the phone?

Not* at all. / No* problem. /Done.

I was wondering if I could use the lounge for a meeting.

Please, go right ahead.

I wonder if we could get together tomorrow.

Sure, what time?

REFUSING REQUESTS TACTFULLY

When we refuse a request we often apologize and give a reason.

I'm really sorry, but I'm short of cash today.

I wish I could see you right now, **but** I have a meeting in a few minutes.

I'd like to help you, but I'm not supposed to lift anything heavy.

I'd like to accommodate you, but two others have already asked for leave at that time.

I'd gladly give you a hand, **but** I won't be here tomorrow.

ASKING FOR SOMETHING

Are there any extra binders?
I need some masking tape.

ASKING PERMISSION/AUTHORIZATION

Do you mind if I open the windows?
Is there any chance I could use your laptop?

Could I take a couple of /few days off?
Would it be possible for me to leave early tomorrow?

Is it all right if I don't attend the meeting this afternoon?
Would it be OK if I didn't go to the reunion?

When asking for permission in more formal situations, we sometimes begin with **an opener** to soften the request.

I have something to ask you. Would it be all right if...?
I'd like to ask you something. May I...?

Could I talk to you for a minute?
Could I see you about something?

ASKING TO MEET/SPEAK WITH SOMEONE

We should get together to set up next month's schedule.

We have to get together to set up next month's schedule.

We need to get together to set up next month's schedule.

I've got to talk with Sonia **about** the new policy.

I'd like to see you for a minute.

Any chance of seeing you this afternoon?

ASKING SOMEONE TO DO SOMETHING

Would you watch the phone for me for a while/minute?

I'd appreciate it if you'd get me a coffee while you're at the cafeteria.

Will/Would you do me a favour and have another copy made?

Would you be good enough to have another copy made?

If it isn't too much trouble, could you have another copy made?

If you have a chance, would you update the phone list?

If you have (the) time, could you update the addresses too?

Can I get you to check over the figures in the report?

Could I ask you to verify the totals?

Is there any chance you could pick it up from them after work?

Sometimes we ask someone to do something in a more direct way.

I want you to call Mrs. Wesley and cancel my appointment.

I'd like you to reorder the desk; this one is damaged.

Send a copy to Gord as soon as you can, please.

* The "negative-looking" answers are actually positive. Full sentence versions could be written:
I do not mind getting the phone for you at all. / I have no problem getting the phone for you.

Unit 4

DESCRIBING PEOPLE

LANGUAGE SUMMARY

DESCRIBING PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER

Vocabulary

appreciative	fair	picky
boring	flexible	phony
bright	friendly	pleasant
cheerful	fun-loving	practical
competent	fussy	pushy
confident	generous	reasonable
conscientious	hard to please	reliable
co-operative	hardworking	reserved
crabby	honest	resourceful
creative	kind	serious
diplomatic	laid-back	sincere
direct	moody	strange
discreet	narrow-minded	stuck-up
down-to-earth	nice	tactless
efficient	nosy	understanding
easygoing	outgoing	uptight
easy to get along with	persistent	weird

In describing personality and character, we often mention preferences, tendencies, or habits.

He likes to be on time.

She doesn't like people sitting around doing nothing.

He becomes/gets upset **when** things don't go his way.

She tends to get nervous **when** under a lot of pressure.

Mrs. Brooks **always** gets to work early in the morning.

My boss never seems to take a break.

DESCRIBING PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

BUILD	HAIR
<p>stocky heavyset chubby plump Rubenesque fat overweight on the heavy side a lardo*</p> <p>slim thin skinny</p> <p>well-built muscular broad-shouldered a hunk** a babe**</p>	<p>colour</p> <p>Tom has blond hair. Tom has red hair. Tom has brown hair. Tom has black hair. Tom has grey hair. Tom has salt-and-pepper hair.</p> <p>Tom is a blond. Tom and Monica are blonds. Josh and Zane are red heads. Zara and Trish are brunettes.</p> <p>Monica is (a) blonde. Monica is fair-haired. Monica is going grey.</p>
	<p>style</p> <p>straight shoulder-length short wavy curly frizzy</p> <p>He's*** partly bald. He's*** (completely) bald. He's ***got a shaved head.</p>

We often use the expressions that follow to make our descriptions more vague or less direct.

She's **kind of** blond.
Her hair's **sort of** curly.
He's **a bit** on the heavy side.

AGE

He's about thirty (years old).
He's in his 50's.
He's middle-aged.
He's getting on.
He's (rather) young.
He's (fairly) old.
He's 24 (years old). [exact age]

HEIGHT

She's on the short side
She's (of) average height.
She's (of) medium height.
She's (rather) tall.
She's five foot six.
She's five foot six inches tall.
She's five foot six.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

He has sideburns.
He has a beard.
He has a mustache.
He has thick/bushy eyebrows.

He's clean-shaven.

a scar
a mole
dimples
freckles
dark skin
fair skin
olive skin
a cleft chin
a fair complexion

She has gold grannie glasses****.
She wears gold grannie glasses****.

When we describe someone's physical appearance, we often compare the person to ourselves or to someone else.

He's (about) my age.
She's (about) your build.
He's built like Marco/ his father.
He's the same height as John.
She has (got) about the same hair colour as me.
Her hair is straight like yours, only/but a little longer.

* Slang: Do not call a person a **lardo** to their face. Use only when speaking with people you know very well.

** Familiar: Use only with people you know well when describing someone else.

*** Note that 's equals **is** in the first two items and **has** in the last.

**** We sometimes describe the glasses when describing the person.

Unit 5

EXPLAINING HOW

LANGUAGE SUMMARY

GIVING INSTRUCTIONS

First of all, you set the margins.

After that, you insert your paper.

Next, choose the number of copies you need.

Then you push this button.

Finally, remove the copies.

EMPHASIZING CERTAIN INSTRUCTIONS

You should always proofread your letters.

You have to get the people to sign their forms.

Remember to use capital letters for the important words.

Don't forget prepositions of over three letters have capitals too.

Be sure to check the postal codes.

WARNING WHAT NOT TO DO

Be careful not to turn off this switch.

Make sure you don't lock the keys inside.

Never remove the back plate, it will void the warranty.

Whatever you do, don't write in this space.

REASSURING SOMEONE

It's really easy to use.

All you (have to) do is push this button.

It's not that difficult.

EXPLAINING WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS A PROBLEM

If there's not enough paper, this button will light up.

If the machine gets stuck, you'll have to get the technician.

If you need help, call the secretary.

Unit 6

DESCRIBING YOUR WORKPLACE

LANGUAGE SUMMARY

DESCRIBING YOUR WORK LOCATION

Building

brick
concrete
glass
stone
wood/wooden

old
new
modern

Surroundings

garden
courtyard
park

shopping/stores nearby

on the main/ground/top floor
on the first/third/ninth floor
on the 10th/11th/23rd floor

on Floor 3 / Floor 10 / Floor 44

in the basement

reception area
staff lounge
lunchroom
conference room
open area
cubicles
partitions
closed offices

Location

downtown
in the town centre
in a suburb
in the west end
on a commercial street
in the financial district
in a residential area
in the outskirts
in the boonies/boondocks

Facilities

cafeteria
good restaurants
fast-food places

indoor/inside parking
outdoor parking
underground parking
free parking

Office Space

DESCRIBING YOUR WORK AREA

Furniture	Decor
metal bookcase	fluorescent/halogen lighting
modular desk	floor/table lamp
storage cabinet	desk light/lamp
ergonomic chair	picture
swivel chair	painting
straight-back chair	poster
upholstered chair	calendar
leather chair	(wall) clock
armchair	(potted) plant
stool	carpet
coffee table	waste basket
work table	blinds
drafting table	curtains
light table	drapes
three-drawer (filing) cabinet	Venetian blinds
five-drawer (filing) cabinet	
coat rack	
coat tree	
Equipment	Other
computer	bulletin/message board
printer	flipchart
scanner	safe
cell phone	cash box
photocopier	vending machine
fax (machine)	air conditioning
digital camera	
calculator	fire-safety equipment
shredder	sprinkler system
electric pencil sharpener	fire escape
3-hole electric punch	
postage machine	thermometer
(conference) telephone	
	Internet access, e-mail
	software

Unit 7

GIVING INFORMATION AT WORK

LANGUAGE SUMMARY

BUSINESS GREETINGS

On the phone

Jim Meyers, **good morning.**

Customer Service, **good afternoon.** Mike Lang **speaking.**

Joanne Murray **here.**

Stockroom, **can I help you?**

Accounting Department.

In person

Yes, madam. What can I do for you?

Good afternoon, sir. Can I be of any help?

Can I help you with anything/something?

Is there anything I can do for you?

GIVING INFORMATION

According to the new regulations, you have to sign it in triplicate.

As far as I know, you have nothing to worry about.
From what I can see, there is nothing really wrong.

Our records show that exports were up significantly last year.

The latest information I have is that the plane landed safely.

DELAYING GIVING INFORMATION

Asking someone to wait on the telephone

One moment, please. I'll just get your file.
Just a moment, please. I'll just get your file.
Excuse me for a minute. I'll just get your file.

If you'll (just) hold the line a minute/moment, I'll check that out.

Informal

Hold on a moment/mo/minute/second. I'll see if the figures have come in yet.
Hang on a second. I'll pull the file.

Could/Can you hold/ hang on a moment/mo/sec? I'll get Josh; he knows.

Promising to call back

Give me your name and number and I'll look up the information and call you (right) back.

I'll have to check on that **and get back to you.**
Maybe I could check on that **and get back to you.**
I think I'd better check on that **and get back to you.**

I don't have the information right now, but I'll try and find it and call you back today.

I'll get back to you ASAP*.

Could I call you back on that?

REFERRING

Giving specific information

You'll have to go to Head Office **for that information.**

You'll need/have to call Head Office **for that information.**

You can get that information from the Accounting Department.

Go to the fifth floor. **Someone there (at reception) will look after you.**

Go to Personnel **and ask for** Ms. Singh.

See Mr. Fakhar. **He'll be able to give you all the information you need.**

I'll give you Angela's **number. She'd know that (for sure).**

Brenda Carpenter **can help you with that.**

Brent's **the one to see for that.**

Suggesting possible help

You might be able to get some information from Library Service.

You could always check with Johanna. **She might know.**

You might try our suburban office.

Have you tried the main office?

Why don't you try the main office?

The best thing to do might be to call Steve Molnar.

Have you been to our other location? **I can call and see if** they know/
have it?

* as soon as possible

Unit 8

DESCRIBING THINGS AT WORK

LANGUAGE SUMMARY

DESCRIBING THINGS

Size

About four **by** nine would be fine.

Around ten centimetres / four inches **wide** and (about) this **long**.

It's (really) **quite** big.

It's **rather** small.

tiny

medium-sized

enormous

huge

humongous

Colour

I'd like **the** yellow **ones**.

It's bluish.

It's reddish brown.

I like **the** grey-coloured **ones**.

silver

gold

navy

rust

beige

pink

lime

Shape

I need **a** round* **one**.

I need **some** square* **ones**.

It's star**-shaped.

It's shaped like a saucer**.

The box above **is** (almost) square, **with** rounded corners.

round

oval

square

rectangular

oblong

triangular

cylindrical

heart

diamond

crescent

star



Composition

It's made (out) of clear plastic.
It's painted wood **with** a frosted glass door.
It's corrugated cardboard.
They're made from recycled tires.

metal
leather

fabric- cotton
silk
polyester
wool

plaster
brick
cement
stone
rubber
paper

Function

They're good for sketching.
It's great for drawing.
They're used for painting.

We use this to clean the furniture.

Brand

It comes from Tubular Design.
OfficeTech **makes them**.
It's a Brown-Wesler.

Other features

It's got a knob that you turn.
There's a window **to** show the address.
It's the swivel kind/type.
It's green **with a** push-button dial.
It can take about five centimetres of paper.
It comes with a (built-in) flash.
It's handy for finding phone numbers quickly.

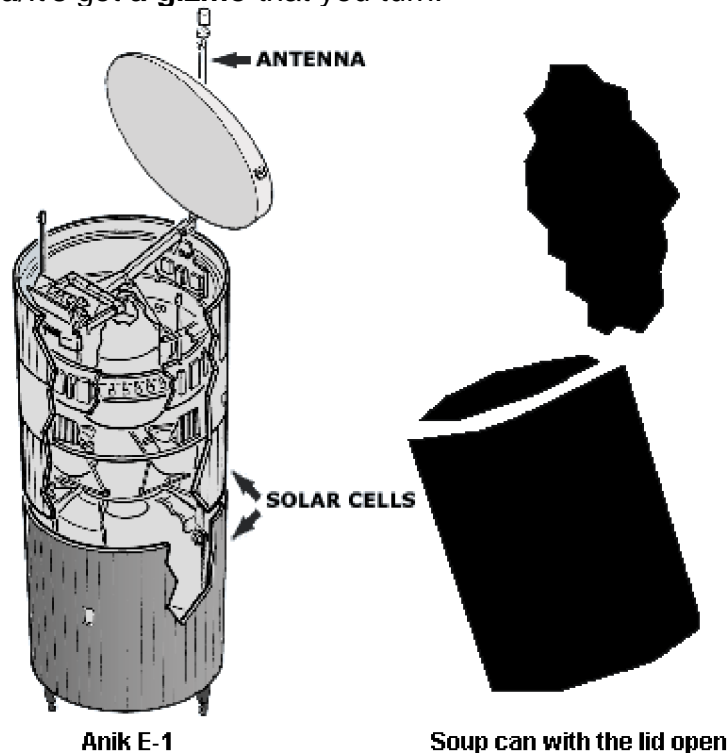
OTHER WAYS OF DESCRIBING THINGS

Comparisons

I need some envelopes **like** the ones you gave me yesterday.
The Anik E-1 satellite **looks something like** a(n open) soup can. (See the image below.)
They're **bigger than** the notebooks we usually get.
I need the **biggest** ones you can find.
This kind is **easier to** use.

When we do not know a precise term or description, we often use expressions such as the ones below.

It has **a kind of** button that you push.
It's got **kind of a** knob that you turn.
It's **sort of** beige.
It's **kind of** rough.
It's **kind of a** burning feeling.
It's **sort of a** strange brown.
It has **a/It's got a thing** that you turn.
It has **a/It's got a thingy** that you turn.
It has **a/It's got a thingamabob** that you turn.
It has **a/It's got a thingamajig** that you turn.
It has **a/It's got a doohickey** that you turn.
It has **a/It's got a doodad** that you turn.
It has **a/It's got a gizmo** that you turn.



* Adjective
** Noun

Unit 9

REACHING A CONSENSUS

LANGUAGE SUMMARY

MAKING SUGGESTIONS

AGREEING

DISAGREEING

When we disagree with a suggestion, we often suggest an alternative.

Since this concerns everyone, **maybe we could** set up a committee.
This is important, **I suggest we** take a vote.

OK./Right.
Good idea.
I agree with you.

I'm not sure that's a good idea.
What about talking to the people involved?

I say we should reprimand them.
In my opinion we ought to play tough.
If you want my opinion, we (should) act.
If you ask me, I think we (should) move on.

That's what I think (too).
I was thinking the same thing.

I don't think that would work. It might be better to (just) wait and see.
What if we just wait and see.

Let's (just) speak to them.
Why not get their input first?
Why don't we have a meeting?

That sounds like a good idea.

Wouldn't it be better (for us) to adopt flexible work hours?
I don't know (about that); maybe we should go for flexible hours **instead.**

What if we met each person individually?

I'd be in favour of that.
I'm for that.
I could/would/'d go for that.

Mmm, I don't know. Calling a meeting **might work better.**
It might make more sense to call a meeting.

Since this is an important issue, **it might be a good idea to** send out a memo.

That makes sense.

I disagree. I'd rather talk to someone.

EXPRESSING OPINIONS	AGREEING	DISAGREEING
Frankly, I think we should hire Caroline. Personally, I('d) say we send Frank.	I agree (with you). I couldn't agree with you more.	I disagree. I don't agree with you.
In my opinion, Rafe is the best for the job. If you ask me, Luong is the one. As far as I'm concerned, Matt's it. If you want my opinion, I'd go for Joe.	That's exactly what I think. My sentiments exactly.	I'm not so sure. I wouldn't say that.