Test Your Vocabulary Skills
Polite, Neutral or Rude Language 2

Read the situations below and decide which type of language is most likely to be used—polite, neutral or rude. Compare the different responses and consider why they may or may not be appropriate:

Situation 5  Complaining to your manager about a new work colleague:

a) Polite: “I just wanted to have a little word with you about one of our more recently employed colleagues, a Mr. Anthony R. Brown. We have found ourselves in something of a disagreement regarding the utilisation of space within our shared working environment.”

b) Neutral: “Can I have a word with you about Anthony? He’s started using my desk without asking me first.”

c) Rude: “That new guy has nicked my desk. It’s so out of order. I had a go at him about it yesterday. You’re the manager—you’re supposed to sort these things out, not just stand there gurning like an imbecile.”

Situation 6  Asking for a loan at the bank:

a) Polite: “We’d like to apply for about ten thousand pounds, if that’s possible.”

b) Neutral: “We’re going to need about ten K, I think.”

c) Rude: “Give us the ten grand or we’ll be taking our business somewhere that appreciates us!”

Situation 7  Asking when the next bus is due:

a) Polite: “I wonder, dear sir, if you could perhaps find your way towards informing me of whether there is a bus due to be arriving where we are now standing, within a suitably short period of time?”

b) Neutral: “Excuse me, do you know whether there’s a bus due soon?”

c) Rude: “Can you get out of the way? You’re blocking the bus timetable, you big fat oaf.”

Situation 8  Thanking your grandmother for the expensive birthday present that she has sent you:

a) Polite: “Thank you so much for the earrings. They are absolutely wonderful. It was so kind of you to think of me. You really shouldn’t have, grandma!”

b) Neutral: “Thanks for the earrings. They’re nice.”

c) Rude: “Is that all I’m getting this year? You’re so mean—and you’re getting worse!”

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Answers:

Situation 5
b) Neutral: “Can I have a word with you about Anthony? He’s started using my desk without asking me first.”

Situation 6
a) Polite: “We’d like to apply for about ten thousand pounds, if that’s possible.”

Situation 7
b) Neutral: “Excuse me, do you know whether there’s a bus due soon?”

Situation 8
a) Polite: “Thank you so much for the earrings. They are absolutely wonderful. It was so kind of you to think of me. You really shouldn’t have, grandma!”