

EA S 2024 Part1 Listening comprehension: 4 Judging a Book by its Cover

The following is a conversation between two work colleagues, Janice and David. The recording is in four sections. For each question, decide which of David's responses is the most polite. You can listen to each option three times.

1 Janice: Hi David – Mark said you wanted to talk to me?

- a Ah yes, thanks. I wondered if I could ask a favour.
- b Ah, that's right. I want you to do me a favour.
- c Ah, I certainly do. I need a favour from you.

2 Janice: Well, I'll be happy to help if I can. What can I do for you?

- a Can I photograph the book you were reading at lunch?
- b May I take a picture of the book you were reading at lunch, please?
- c Will you let me take a staff (?) of the book you were looking at during lunch?

3 Janice: Oh, yes, it was a fantasy book. Here it is – would you like to borrow it when I've read it?

- a Thanks, but I'm actually not going to read it. I just like the blue colour.
- b Oh no, I don't read fantasy. I'm only interested in the blue colour.
- c There's no need, it's not for reading. It's for the blue colour.

4 Janice: The colour? I don't understand.

a Well, in that case I'll explain. I want to find paint this exact colour to decorate my bedroom.

b It is quite simple. I'm decorating my house and this colour looks perfect for painting the bedroom.

c Oh, sorry! I'm decorating and I think paint this colour would work great on my bedroom walls.

Here's a detailed account of why the chosen options (1a, 2b, 3a, 4c) are the most polite responses in each case, along with reasoning for why the alternatives are less appropriate:

1. Janice: Hi David – Mark said you wanted to talk to me?

- **Chosen Response (1a):** *Ah yes, thanks. I wondered if I could ask a favour.*
 - **Why it's best:** This option begins with an acknowledgment of Janice's statement, showing attentiveness. It uses indirect language ("I wondered if I could") to frame the request as tentative, which is polite and less imposing.
 - **Why not (1b):** *Ah, that's right. I want you to do me a favour.*
 - This option is more direct and lacks softening language. "I want you to" comes across as a demand rather than a polite request, which may seem presumptuous.
 - **Why not (1c):** *Ah, I certainly do. I need a favour from you.*
 - While it acknowledges Janice's statement, "I need a favour" is forceful and leaves no room for Janice to decline without feeling pressured.
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2. Janice: Well, I'll be happy to help if I can. What can I do for you?

- **Chosen Response (2b):** *May I take a picture of the book you were reading at lunch, please?*
 - **Why it's best:**
 - This option uses formal and respectful phrasing with "May I," which is more polite and deferential than "Can I."
 - The addition of "please" further softens the request and shows courtesy.
 - The phrasing is precise and professional, making it clear what is being asked without ambiguity.
 - **Why not (2a):** *Can I photograph the book you were reading at lunch?*
 - "Can I" is less formal than "May I" and focuses more on the speaker's ability than on seeking permission.
 - While not impolite, it lacks the added layer of courtesy provided by "please."
 - **Why not (2c):** *Will you let me take a staff (?) of the book you were looking at during lunch?*
 - This response is unclear because "take a staff" is likely a typographical or linguistic error, making it confusing and potentially unprofessional.
 - The use of "Will you let me" is more direct and demanding, which can feel less polite in this context.
 - "Looking at" is less precise than "reading," which could lead to ambiguity about the request.

3. Janice: Oh, yes, it was a fantasy book. Here it is – would you like to borrow it when I've read it?

- **Chosen Response (3a):** *Thanks, but I'm actually not going to read it. I just like the blue colour.*
 - **Why it's best:** This response begins with gratitude, softens the refusal ("I'm actually not going to"), and uses neutral language to explain the interest in the book's color. It balances honesty with politeness.
 - **Why not (3b):** *Oh no, I don't read fantasy. I'm only interested in the blue colour.*
 - Starting with "Oh no" can come across as abrupt and dismissive, which may sound rude. "I'm only interested in" also emphasizes personal preference in a way that could seem dismissive of Janice's offer.
 - **Why not (3c):** *There's no need, it's not for reading. It's for the blue colour.*
 - "There's no need" might be interpreted as dismissive or ungrateful. This phrasing does not acknowledge Janice's kind offer and could seem abrupt.

4. Janice: The colour? I don't understand.

- **Chosen Response (4c):** *Oh, sorry! I'm decorating and I think paint this colour would work great on my bedroom walls.*
 - **Why it's best:** This option begins with an apology, softening the potentially unexpected explanation. It uses conversational and enthusiastic language ("would work great") to clarify the context without sounding overly formal or blunt.
 - **Why not (4a):** *Well, in that case I'll explain. I want to find paint this exact colour to decorate my bedroom.*
 - While polite, "Well, in that case I'll explain" might come across as unnecessarily formal or condescending in tone. It suggests Janice needed prompting to understand, which could be misinterpreted.
 - **Why not (4b):** *It is quite simple. I'm decorating my house and this colour looks perfect for painting the bedroom.*
 - Starting with "It is quite simple" risks sounding dismissive or patronizing. This phrasing assumes Janice should have understood immediately, which could be off-putting.

Summary of the Choices:

The chosen options (1a, 2b, 3a, 4c) are the most polite because they:

1. Use indirect and softening language to minimize imposition.
2. Acknowledge the other person's input and efforts (e.g., thanking or apologizing).
3. Avoid abrupt or dismissive phrasing that could seem impolite or ungrateful.