

Survival English / Clarification Phrases



[Intermediate]

When you don't understand:

English phrase		Notes
Sorry? Pardon?		
"Word?" - A: <i>I like hot springs.</i> - B: <i>Hot springs?</i>		
I'm sorry, Sorry, Excuse me,	I don't (quite) understand.	
	I don't (really) understand the question.	
	I don't (quite) follow you.	

→ Tip: Words like "quite" and "really" act as a cushion to make the phrase softer.

When you want the speaker to REPEAT what they said:

English phrase		Notes
Sorry? Pardon?		
I'm sorry, Sorry, Excuse me,	could you repeat that (please)?	
	could you say that again (please)?	
	I didn't (quite) catch that. I didn't (quite) catch what you said.	

→ Tip: "I didn't hear that." could seem rude. It could mean that you didn't listen well or the speaker didn't speak loudly enough. It's not recommended to use this phrase.

When you want the speaker to REPHRASE what they said:

English phrase		Notes
I'm sorry, Sorry, Excuse me,	could you rephrase that (please)?	
	could you say that in a different way (please)?	

When you want the speaker to SPEAK SLOWER:

English phrase		Notes
I'm sorry, Sorry, Excuse me,	could you speak more slowly (please)? could you speak slower (please)?	
	could you say that more slowly (please)?	Asking for repetition.
	you're speaking (a bit) too quickly (for me). you're speaking (a little) too fast (for me).	More direct.

→ Tip: Words like "a bit" and "a little" act as a cushion to make the phrase softer.

When you want to CONFIRM / CLARIFY what the speaker said:

English phrase	Notes
Did you say...?	Repeat what the speaker said
Do you mean...? Are you saying...?	Rephrase what the speaker said
Could you give me an example? Could you give me more details?	
Does [English word] mean [Japanese word] / [English word]? - Does <i>for example</i> mean 例えば? - Does <i>to clarify</i> mean <i>to confirm</i> ?	Useful phrases for English lessons or when speaking to someone who knows some Japanese.

When you have questions about NEW WORDS:

English phrase	Notes
What does [English word] mean? What is the meaning of [English word]? What is another word for [English word]? - What does <i>motivated</i> mean? - What is the meaning of <i>motivated</i> ? - What is another word for <i>motivated</i> ?	
What is [Japanese word] in English? How can I say [Japanese word] in English? - What is 楽しい in English? - How can I say 楽しい in English?	Useful phrases for English lessons or when speaking to someone who knows some Japanese.

How can I use <i>[English word]</i> in a sentence? - How can I use <i>motivation</i> in a sentence?	
What is the difference between <i>[word]</i> and <i>[word]</i> ? - What is the difference between <i>borrow</i> and <i>rent</i> ?	
How do you spell <i>[English word]</i> ?	
How do you pronounce this word? How do I say this word?	(Indicate a word when saying "this")

When you want to show that you're ACTIVELY LISTENING:

English phrase	Notes
Non-verbal / Body language: Nodding, Eye contact, Facial expressions	
Mmm hmm... Uh huh... Mmm... I see.	Shows that you're listening.
That's interesting.	Shows interest.
Ah. Okay. Got it. I understand. That makes sense.	Shows understanding.
Right.	Shows agreement.
That's <i>[positive adjective]</i> . - That's <i>great / amazing / fantastic / cool / etc.</i>	Positive situations.
That's <i>[negative adjective]</i> . - That's <i>terrible / horrible / sad / too bad / etc.</i>	Negative situations.
Wow. Really?	Shows surprise, disbelief, amazement and shock. For positive and negative situations.
I didn't know that. That's the first time I've heard that. That's new to me.	Explains that this is new information for you.