

4.4 Is that what you meant?

READING Getting things wrong

- 1 Work in pairs. What mistakes do you remember making (or others making) when you began to learn English? Were they mistakes that affected the meaning?



Getting things wrong

The TV news last night featured a report of a protest in London where a woman was holding up a placard saying 'Stop to arrest innocent people'. Inadvertently, the placard writer had ended up saying the exact opposite of what they had intended. Getting things slightly wrong in a language doesn't usually have such extreme consequences. Often the mistakes are just amusing: 'I put my name and address on the backside to make sure the letter didn't get lost.'; 'Kate and Jake love themselves very much.'

Fixed (and idiomatic) expressions in particular are a minefield for non-native speakers, because you have to get them exactly right. Consider these two mistakes: 'Give a ring to me sometime' and 'It's very good for you to help me.' Mistakes with English are not, of course, confined to those using it as a second language. Increasingly native speakers use language imprecisely or change grammatical forms, for example, 'If I'd have known that before ...'

- 2 Read an extract from an article about language. Look at the five examples of language mistakes mentioned and discuss the questions with your partner.

- 1 What do the sentences in the article mean as they stand?
- 2 How would you correct the mistakes to give the meaning the speaker intended?

LISTENING Saying the right thing

- 3 15 Choose the options that most appropriately complete the sentences. Then listen to ten short conversations and check your answers.

- 1 Thanks, that's very good *for / of* you, but I can manage.
- 2 OK. I'll give *her a ring / a ring to* her later.
- 3 Thank you, but I really need to speak to her *in person / personally*.
- 4 I don't *mind / care* really. Up to you.
- 5 Yes, I'd like to *pay / pay for* the room now.
- 6 Great. Eight o'clock *suits / fits* me perfectly.
- 7 Oh, thank you for doing that. You *mustn't / shouldn't* have.
- 8 That's kind of you, but I don't want to put you *off / out*.
- 9 Oh, *that's a pity / I'm really sorry to hear that*. I hope he can find another job.
- 10 If it's *on / in* your way, that'd be great, thanks.

- 4 Complete the questions or statements from the conversations you heard in Exercise 3. Use two words per space.

- 1 Here – let me give you _____ with that suitcase.
- 2 Could I possibly have a _____ with Sarah, if she's free?
- 3 I'm sorry. She's _____ at the moment. Perhaps I can help you?
- 4 Do you _____ round for a drink later?
- 5 Hello, Sir, can I help you _____?
- 6 When _____ meet?
- 7 Thanks for the use of the car. By _____, I filled it up.
- 8 Can I _____ anything from the shops?
- 9 _____ . My brother lost his job yesterday.
- 10 Can I _____ off at the station?

Pronunciation Appropriate intonation

- 5 15 Listen to the conversations again and check your answers to Exercise 4. Notice how expressive the speakers' intonation is in their comments and responses. Practise the conversations with your partner using similar intonation.

SPEAKING **Everyday conversations**

6 Work in pairs. Act out the following four situations as four-line dialogues. Then make up one more of your own. Use appropriate everyday expressions and responses. Use the expressions in the Useful language box to help you.

- 1 You're on a bus and someone picks up your jacket and starts to put it on.
- 2 A friend arrives for dinner with a large box of chocolates.
- 3 A colleague says they will collect you from the airport when you arrive.
- 4 A colleague invites you out for dinner and asks where and when you'd like to eat.

EVERYDAY EXPRESSIONS

Question	Response
Can I / Let me give you a hand / a lift?	That's very kind of you, but I think I can manage.
Excuse me. That's my seat.	Oh sorry. I didn't realize.
This is just a little something to say thank you.	Oh, thank you. You shouldn't have.
I'll see Malcolm when I'm in Toronto.	Oh. Please say hello from me. / Please send him my best wishes.
Thanks so much for your help.	Not at all. / Don't mention it.
Sorry I missed your party.	Never mind. Another time.

7 Act out your dialogues in front of another pair. Discuss the differences in your dialogues.

WRITING **A formal letter or email**

8 Look at the guidelines for clear letter writing. Then read the letter. Match the guidelines with features of the letter. Then compare your answers with a partner.

Guidelines for clear letter writing

- 1 Greet the recipient warmly but correctly.
- 2 First establish the purpose of your communication.
- 3 Use bullet points for action points or points for consideration.
- 4 Explain further details of the situation concisely.
- 5 Display any instructions or directions clearly on the page.
- 6 Highlight the next steps.
- 7 End the letter by showing appreciation.

Dear Bill,

Thank you very much for your recent email expressing your concerns about the new supplier delivery scheduling system. Here is an update of where we are with it and some reassurances for the future.

- The system is in its testing phase from 11 April to 10 May. Thereafter, we aim to use feedback such as yours to iron out any glitches.
- The full working version will be up and running from 21 May.
- The system is already being used successfully by several of our competitors.

If you would like to be more closely involved in discussions around its development, you would be most welcome to join us at our supplier event at:

11 a.m. Wed February 22: Jackson Conference Centre

If you are not able to attend, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time by phone or email with your ideas or suggestions.

In the meantime, thank you once again for your comments.

Best regards

Michael

9 Work in pairs. What do you think the relationship is between Bill and Michael? What indicates this?

Writing skill **Checking for errors**

10 It is very important to check your writing for errors. Work in pairs. Look at the sentences (1–5) and identify a) the function of each sentence in a letter and b) the mistake it contains.

- 1 I look very much forward to hearing from you.
- 2 I will wait to hear what the outcome of these negotiations are.
- 3 Thank you for taking a time to write to me.
- 4 This is a brief reminder to the upcoming sales event.
- 5 Any suggestions for discussion topics must to be sent to ...

11 **21st CENTURY OUTCOMES**

Write an email to a business colleague you know well. Include the following points. Write 150–180 words.

- Thank them for inviting you to speak to a group of their employees.
- Outline the topic(s) you will talk about and ask if this is OK.
- Say what day and time would suit you.
- Suggest a phone call to discuss it in more detail.

12 Work in pairs. Exchange emails with your partner. Check that they have included the points in Exercise 11. Then check their email for any errors.