

GIVING OPINIONS TACTFULLY

- 1** Read the conversations. Which person is being tactful in each one?



1

- A:** Oh, I'm so fed up with this course! My tutors are never happy with my work! All they do is criticise! They get annoyed when I hand work in late, but it's not my fault – they just give us too much to do!
- B:** Hmm. I guess you have been quite busy recently. You know, socially.
- A:** What do you mean?
- B:** Well, the course is quite demanding, isn't it? When you're on a course like this one, it isn't always a good idea to have late nights during the week.
- A:** But I have to see my friends!
- B:** Absolutely! But it might be an idea to stick to the weekends for socialising, so you have a bit more time in the week for your studies.
- A:** Yeah, I suppose you're right.

2

- A:** Can you believe it? People at work were chatting the other day about people they know who have the best taste in fashion, and no one mentioned me! But I love fashion! I buy new clothes every week!
- B:** Yeah, I know, you're really into fashion.
- A:** So, why didn't they talk about me?
- B:** Er, I hope you don't mind me saying, but you often seem to buy clothes that aren't particularly expensive, don't you?
- A:** Of course! Who wants to spend a fortune on new clothes?
- B:** Yes, and of course, it's lovely to have lots of new clothes. But then again, some of the more budget ranges aren't as well-fitting as slightly more expensive ones. Maybe you could consider buying fewer clothes, but paying a bit more and choosing them a bit more carefully, to make sure they really suit you.
- A:** Yes, I guess you have a point there.

- 2** Read the conversations again. Underline in the conversations the tactful ways of saying comments 1–6.

- 1 'You've been going out with friends too much recently.'
- 2 'You should go to bed early during the week.'
- 3 'You should only go out with friends at the weekend.'
- 4 'You always buy cheap clothes.'
- 5 'Cheap clothes fit really badly.'
- 6 'You shouldn't buy so many clothes.'

KEY LANGUAGE FOR BEING TACTFUL

Making suggestions

It might be an idea to ... Might it be an idea to ...? It isn't always a good idea to ... Maybe you could consider ... Would it be worth considering ...? You might want to think about ...

Saying you don't want to offend someone

I hope you don't mind me saying, but ... No offence, but ...

Softening negative adjectives

isn't/aren't as ... as ..., not very/particularly ..., quite/pretty/a bit ...

Disagreeing tactfully

But then again, ... Well, it's not so much that ..., but ...

Being indirect

seem to ..., maybe/perhaps, could/might, I'm not sure ...

- 3** Read the *Key Language* box. Tick [✓] the words and expressions people use in the conversations in Exercise 1.

- 4** We often use adjectives with an opposite meaning to soften a negative comment. Complete the second sentences in 1–6 with softer opinions, using the adjectives from the box and either the structure *not very/particularly ...* or *not as ... as ...*.

attractive	cheap	friendly	talented
tasty	useful		

- 1 That meal was disgusting!
That meal wasn't _____ the ones he usually cooks.
- 2 Jack is rubbish at singing!
Jack isn't a _____ singer.
- 3 That painting is absolutely hideous!
That painting isn't _____ some of the others in the exhibition.

- 4 The train is far too expensive!
The train isn't
- 5 The training workshop was a complete waste of time!
The training workshop wasn't
some others I've been on.
- 6 The waiters were so rude!
The waiters weren't

5 Match the sentence halves to make tactful suggestions.

- 1 It might be an idea to
2 Maybe you could consider
3 Would it be worth
4 You might want to think
5 Might it be an idea
- A joining a gym.
B about increasing the number of hours you work each week.
C talk to Sam before you do anything else.
D to save a bit of money each month?
E considering applying for a new job?

6 Choose the correct word in *italics* to complete the tactful comments.

- 1 I hope you don't *mind / appreciate* me saying, but that colour doesn't suit you particularly well.
- 2 I'm not sure *if / against* you should post that photo on social media.
- 3 The washing machine *seems to be / looks like* broken.
- 4 *No / Not* offence, but you aren't particularly sporty, are you?
- 5 I agree that Sunday isn't ideal. But *other hand / then again*, it's the day when most people are free.
- 6 Well, it's not *too much / so much* that she's selfish, but she just has strong feelings about what she likes and doesn't like.

7 Work in pairs. One of you is Student A and the other is Student B. Read your situations and think of ways you can be tactful when you make suggestions to your partner. Use your own ideas in addition to the ideas given.



Student A

Conversation 1

You start the conversation.

You want to plan a trip with some friends, including Student B. You want it to be something really special. You keep making suggestions, e.g. a weekend in Paris, staying in a nice spa hotel, etc., but no one seems very enthusiastic. Complain to Student B about this.

Conversation 2

Student B starts the conversation.

Student B has a weekend job in a café. They want a pay rise, but this has been refused. You know that Student B is often late for work, and often spends time chatting rather than working. Explain to Student B tactfully that they can't expect a pay rise immediately, but they need to work harder and then maybe they will get a pay rise.

Student B

Conversation 1

Student A starts the conversation.

Student A wants to plan a trip with you and some other friends. You think it's a great idea, but all Student A's ideas are far too expensive. Student A has plenty of money, but most of your friends don't have much to spare. Explain to Student A tactfully that their ideas are too expensive, and they should plan a smaller trip more locally, which everyone can afford instead.

Conversation 2

You start the conversation.

You have a weekend job in a café. You are annoyed because you think you aren't paid enough. Last weekend, you asked for a pay rise, but your boss refused. Complain to Student A about this.

8 Take turns to start your conversations. Use phrases from the *Key Language* box to help you be tactful.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Listen while your partner is speaking. How tactful is he/she? Which words and phrases from the *Key Language* box does he/she use?