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**College of Administrative Sciences**

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**The Patterns of Asking for Help Politely**

**English Language for 3ed class**

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## Ability or Polite Request

"Can," "could," "will," "may" and "would" are modal verbs that are often used to form polite questions, but they have different nuances in terms of meaning and level of politeness. Here's a breakdown of how they work in polite questions:

### 1. Can (Ability or Permission)

- **Meaning:** "Can" is used to ask about ability or permission. It's often seen as informal or casual.
  - "Can you help me with this task?"
  - "Can I borrow your pen?"

**Note:** "Can" can be polite in casual conversations, but it might be considered less formal in certain contexts.

### 2. Could (Past Ability or Polite Request)

- **Meaning:** "Could" is often used as a more polite or formal version of "can," especially when making requests. It can also express a hypothetical situation or past ability.
- **Polite Example:**
  - "Could you please help me with this?"
  - "Could I have a moment of your time?"

**Note:** "Could" is generally seen as more polite than "can," especially in requests.

### 3. Will (Willingness or Future Action)

- **Meaning:** "Will" expresses willingness, or something that will happen in the future. It can sound more direct than "would," but still polite in many cases.
- **Polite Example:**
  - "Will you help me with this project?"
  - "Will you be able to attend the meeting?"

**Note:** "Will" is direct, but still polite depending on the context. It's more about asking someone's intention or willingness.

#### **4. Would (Polite Request or Hypothetical Situation)**

- **Meaning:** "Would" is often used to make polite requests or ask hypothetical questions. It's typically the most polite form of these modals.
- **Polite Example:**
  - "Would you mind helping me?"
  - "Would it be possible to extend the deadline?"
  - "Would you like some coffee?"

**Note:** "Would" is usually the most formal and polite choice for requests. It softens the tone and makes the question sound more respectful.

The Patterns of Asking for Help Politely::

1. To ask questions in a very polite way, use:

Would you/ Could you (please) + simple verb +

For example:

Would you please email that document to me? I need it.

Could you explain that again, please? I didn't understand.

2. To ask questions in a polite but more casual way, say:

Will you/ Can you (please) + simple verb +...?

For example:

-Will you please answer the phone? I'm working.

- Can you hold my books for me? My hands are full.

3. We do not use the word "may" in a polite question when "you" is the subject.

For example:

- May you please close the door?                      Wrong!

- Could you please close the door?                      Right!

- May I go to hospital? Right!

The word "please" makes the request more polite and less direct

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### Comparing the Politeness of These Modal Verbs:

Modal	Example	Level of Politeness	Usage Context
<b>Can</b>	"Can you pass the salt?"	Informal, but polite	Casual situations, direct requests
<b>Could</b>	"Could you pass the salt?"	Polite	More formal than "can," used for requests
<b>Will</b>	"Will you help me with this?"	Neutral	Asking about willingness or a future action
<b>Would</b>	"Would you mind helping me?"	Very polite	Used for polite requests, formal situations

### Conclusion

In general, "could" and "would" are the most polite and formal, while "can" is more casual, and "will" is typically used to inquire about someone's willingness.

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