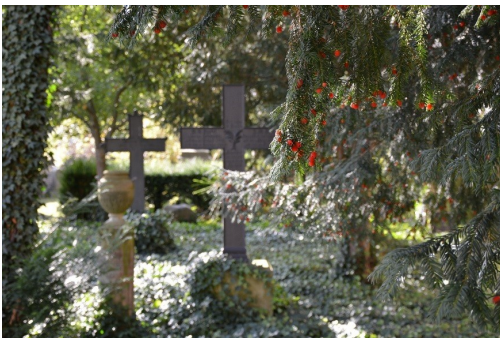


How to express condolence in English

Created: Sunday, 15 October 2017 15:47 | Published: Sunday, 04 February 2018 15:43 | Written by [Shailja Varma](#) | [Print](#)

It is difficult to talk to a person when they have lost someone. It is even more difficult if English is your second language and you don't know what to say. Don't fret, a lot of native speakers can also make mistakes at this time as it is very difficult to talk to a bereaved* person. Mostly, people make the mistake of using present tense verb, instead of past tense. If you are worried about making these mistakes, then here are some tips that will help you express condolence in English.



Acknowledging the loss

You have to acknowledge the loss in some form. There are many phrases you can use to express your care and concern for the bereaved person or family. A helpful tip is that always name the person who has died. This makes your sentence sound like you actually mean what you are saying. If you knew the person who passed away, say a few nice words about him/ her or his/ her personality. Sharing a fond memory also helps. If you knew the person really well, express how sad you are about the fact that you will never get to meet him or her again.

A few phrases you can use:

- I am very sorry to hear about your loss.
- I feel heartbroken with the news of
- He/ she will be sorely missed.
- I will never forget the time when..... (talk about a fond memory)
- Let me know if you need anything (then make a very specific offer like you can help with, like looking after the kids, feeding the pets, or taking them out for shopping)
- I am sorry, but I am at a loss of words (if you can't think of anything to say, use this phrase)
- I am here if you need anything, or someone to speak to.

- I am truly sorry to hear about (name the person and whatever happened to them, sudden death, illness or an accident)

Offering condolence through writing

When offering condolence through writing, make sure that you keep it warm and precise. Talking at length about the person might trigger the bereaved into grieving a lot more. The easier way would be to use a 'sympathy' card that talks about death and loss. A few phrases you can use to write in the card are:

- Kindly accept my/ our sincere condolence for the loss of (name of the person)
- I would like to express my grief and sincere condolences on the death of (name of the person). He/ she was (describe the person or their qualities that you admired)
- Accept my apologies for not being able to convey my condolence in person, I truly wish I could be with you/ your family during this time.

To end your condolence note or while taking leave, you can say either of these:

- I will pray that you find strength to deal with the loss.
- You/ your family will be in my thoughts and prayers.
- Your loss is irreplaceable, I wish you find peace.

When you offer your condolence with a sincere feeling, it helps the bereaved person find a little comfort.

***bereaved** (noun): person who is grieving the loss of a loved one (adjective= "bereaved").

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- By Shailja Varma

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