

5 English phrases to avoid in conversation and display greater social awareness

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Emotional intelligence (used interchangeably with emotional quotient) and social awareness are increasingly important attributes that have a bearing on how one is perceived in a social or professional environment. The words and phrases we use are manifestations of our social awareness and therefore, require careful thought. Following are 5 English phrases that people avoid for their likelihood of being misinterpreted.



We list below five of these phrases to avoid using in your casual conversations with professional colleagues.



1. "You look tired..." This is often used as an expression of genuine concern by a well-wisher. However, it seems that the person hearing this could interpret it negatively and feel offended. It is better to instead just ask if the person is ok. It can be a good conversation starter and can lead to a deeper conversation.
2. "You always..." or "You never..." The problem with this phrasing is the tone of absolute finality that comes with the use of the words 'always' or 'never'. Depending on what follows, there may also be an accusatory sound to the use of these phrases. Using the word 'often' instead of always or never, especially when you are pointing out a cause of problem or annoyance, is a better option.
3. "It's up to you" or "Whatever you want": This phrase is likely to be heard during office meetings or contentious discussions. The problem is that it can be perceived as either passing the buck completely or being indifferent to the decision that is to be made. Either way, they do not send out positive signals. The alternative to this could be admitting that you don't have a strong opinion either way. It will be even better if you can

provide some suggestions or advice while still communicating your neutrality.

4. "As I said before..." This gives the impression of you being impatient or conveying that the listener doesn't seem to 'get it'.
5. "Wow, you've lost a ton of weight": While this expression might be intended as a compliment, it can be deemed really offensive. One will have to be extremely sensitive to such an expression in current times. The suggested alternative is to say something like "you are looking great" which doesn't implicitly compare how a person looks now with how the person looked previously.



This is obviously not an exhaustive list of English phrases to avoid in a conversation, but we hope you will get an idea of the kind of words and phrases that you should pay careful attention to.



Are there any English phrases you are not sure if it is ok to use? Let us know and our expert English tutors will provide their insights.

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-By Chander Madan

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