

## How to ask for directions to a coffee shop?

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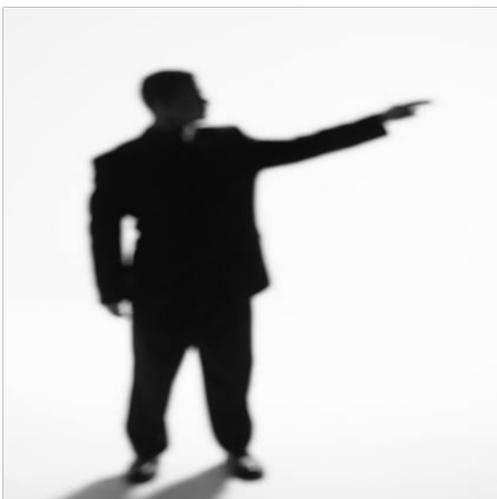
You have landed in a new city for a job interview. The interview was strenuous and you wish to have a cup of coffee to refresh yourself. Looking around for a coffee shop nearby, you find there is none. You wish to ask for directions, but are not sure how to start. Strong command over any language is a pre-requisite for confidently asking directions. However, conversing in English always scores a brownie point over other languages. Asking directions in English will highlight your confidence, vocabulary and sophistication.



### Guidelines for conversations

#### Keep it short and polite

Any conversation for directions should be kept short and polite. This approach works better as you don't want to find yourself grasping for words to speak. Politeness works at any level and situation. Open your conversation with a polite "Hi", followed by either "May I" or "Can you". Even a short "Where is the coffee shop" followed by a smile works wonders.



## **Approach shops and building guards**

As far as possible, try to approach shops or building guards for directions for local coffee shops. You are likely to get an accurate direction. As numerous people ask them directions every day, they are quite accustomed to such questions. Asking roadside strangers is risky as there are chances for you to be misguided.

## **Avoid unnecessary details**

You are just asking for directions and not giving a profile interview. Usually, we take help from strangers for directions. Hence, it is essential to keep the conversation to specific questions only. There is no need to tell them where you came from, your family background etc. If your prospective helper is getting too inquisitive, politely ask him/her for directions again and move on.

## **Active Listening**

You should always be an active listener. Active listening involves listening to directions attentively and responding appropriately. In case you are not clear on the first reply, there is no harm or shame in clarifying. Most individuals will gladly help to get your directions clear. Keep in mind that politeness is the key. Once your query is answered, respond with a bright thanks.

## **Sample Conversation**



Situation: You have just finished your business meeting with a client held in the client's location. You are in a new city and wish to take a break. You approach an office supply shop.

You: Hi, Can you tell me where the nearest hotel or a coffee shop is?

Shop owner: Of course, go straight ahead, take the second left. Head straight and take the first right. You will find a coffee shop there.

You: Ok. You mean go straight and take left?

Shop owner: No, take the second left.

You: And from there?

Shop owner: From there, go straight and take the first right.

You: Thanks a lot. How much time will it take from here?

Shop owner: Its 10 minutes walking distance from here.

You: You have been kind and very helpful, thanks again!

Shop owner: No problem.

As you can see, the above conversation is simple and to the point. Simplicity and politeness is the key for getting directions from strangers. You can practice this conversation with a friend or even in front of a mirror. Keep practicing until you are fluent and there is no hesitation in initiating a conversation.

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**- By Monika Agarwal**

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