

Yes, no and maybe in negotiations key words activities

Listen to your teacher and raise the “Yes” card or “No” card that you have been given depending on what you think about the meaning of what you hear. If your teacher says “dot dot dot”, that means a sentence that can be finished in different ways, but always with the same basic meaning.

Do the same, but also listen for phrases where the meaning isn’t clear (ones which mean “Maybe”), in which case you should raise both cards.

Cards to hold up

Yes	No



Negotiating phrases to classify

Label each line below with “Y” for “yes”, “N” for “No” or “?” for less clear meanings (“Both yes and no”, “Maybe”, etc). Each line has a different function (so they can’t be both “Y” and “Y” if there are two lines, they can’t all be “N” if there are three lines, etc)

- **Absolutely!**/ That would be **absolutely** wonderful./ If we **absolutely** must.
- That’s **absolutely** out of the question./ That’s **absolutely** my last word on the matter.
- I’m sure you don’t (really/ honestly) expect us to **accept...**/ There’s no way I can **accept...**/ I’m (totally) unable to **accept** that.
- I reluctantly **accept...**
- I’m willing to **accept...** if...
- I think that will be **acceptable**./ That seems **acceptable**.
- To make that **acceptable**,...
- I simply can’t **agree** to.../ We would find this (somewhat/ rather/ very/ extremely) difficult to **agree** to.
- I will **agree** to that, providing.../ I might be able to **agree** to that, depending on...
- Okay, we **agree** to...
- **As** I explained to you earlier,...
- I’ll let you know **as** soon as I can.
- (I’m afraid) that’s the **best** I can do.
- I’ll do my **best**.
- I’ll ask my **boss**, but I think I can imagine his reaction.
- This is just a formality, but I’ll need to talk to my **boss** first.
- You **can’t** just demand...
- I **can’t** see any problem with that.
- (I’m sorry but) I can’t **compromise** (at all) on this point.
- Okay, I’m prepared to **compromise** on that.
- That would be acceptable if you could **compromise** on...
- (I’m afraid) I can’t even **consider** that.
- I’ll **consider** it.
- I think we have a **deal**./ It’s a **deal**./ You have a **deal**.
- That doesn’t sound like a very good **deal**.
- I really **expected** something (a bit/ quite a lot) better.
- To be honest, that is better than we **expected**.

- Before I make a **final** decision,...
- I'm sorry but that was my **final** offer.

- I think we've already been (fairly/ quite/ very) **flexible** on this./ I can be **flexible** on (almost) everything apart from that.
- Okay, I can be **flexible** on that.

- Thank you. That's very **generous**.
- I think we are already being (quite/ very) **generous**.

- I'm (fairly/ really quite/ really) **happy** with that./ I'm not very **happy** about this, but...
- (I'm sorry but) I'm not (very) **happy** with...

- I'm (very) glad to **hear** that.
- That was not (really) what I wanted to **hear**.

- That wasn't (quite/ really/ at all) what I was **hoping** for./ I was **hoping** for something (a bit/ considerably/ quite a lot/ a lot/ much/ far) better.
- I was **hoping** you might say that.

- Can we discuss that at a **later** meeting?/ I'll confirm that **later**.
- I'll probably regret this **later**, but...

- I'll **let** you know by Friday.
- **Let** me know if you change your mind.

- Our present circumstances **mean** that/ Our present situation **means** that...
- Could you clarify what you **mean** by...?/ Does that **mean**...?

- I can **move** on that.
- I'm not going to (be able to) **move** (at all) on this./ I can't **move** on this./ While we are glad to see that you have **moved** (somewhat) from your original position,...

- That is an **option**.
- That is not an **option**.

- There doesn't seem to be much **point** in discussing this further./ That **point** is not negotiable./ I hope you can see our **point** of view.
- There is no **point** in discussing this (further/ anymore/ at the moment) unless...
- You have a **point**. Taking that into account,...

- I can understand your **position**, but.../ While I (completely/ more or less) understand your **position**,.../ I'm (really) not in the **position** to (be able to)...
- Just to make sure that I understand your **position**,...

- I can't **promise** (anything/ much), but...
- What about your previous **promise** to...?
- Okay, I can **promise** you that.

- Taking what you **said** into account,... – Y
- But you **said**... – N

- I'd need to **see** (all of) that written down./ I'll **see** what I can do.
- I can't **see** any way round this./ That is not how we **see** it.

- We **seem** to have come to (some kind of) a stalemate./ You don't **seem** to be meeting us halfway./ That **seems** (a bit/ far) too.../ That doesn't **seem** to be... enough.
- We **seem** to be in agreement.

- That **sounds** (fairly/ very) reasonable.
- That **sounds** (rather) unappealing.

- (I'm afraid) I'm **sticking** to my (original) position.
- The **sticking** point for us is...
- That doesn't have to be a **sticking** point.

- I'm not **sure** that we can do that./ Are you **sure** that's your final offer?
- Just to make **sure** that I understand your offer,...

- If you can give me some time to **think** about it,...
- I don't **think** we would benefit (much/ at all/ enough) from that.
- I **think** we've found some common ground.

- That is (really) as far as I am **willing** to go.
- I'm **willing** to consider that./ We would be **willing** to consider that.

- That (just/ simply) won't **work**./ I'm not sure that would **work** (for us).
- That would **work** for us./ We still need to **work** out the details, but...

- I think... **would** be fairer. / That **wouldn't** go down (very) well at head office.
- We **would** accept that if you were able to.../ You **would** need to...
- That **would** be perfect./ That **would** be wonderful./ That **would** be great.

Compare your answers as a class or with the suggested answers below.

Circle expressions above which mean "Yes" but are used when someone isn't really happy.

Test each other on the language:

- Play the same holding up cards game
- Say phrases with the same key word missing until your partner can complete them
- Give your partner a key word and help them make phrases with different meanings

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Suggested answers

Other phrases are possible, so please check if you wrote something different.

- **Absolutely!**/ That would be **absolutely** wonderful./ If we **absolutely** must. – Y
- That's **absolutely** out of the question./ That's **absolutely** my last word on the matter.– N
- I'm sure you don't (really/ honestly) expect us to **accept...**/ There's no way I can **accept...**/ I'm (totally) unable to **accept** that. – N
- I reluctantly **accept...** – Y
- I'm willing to **accept...** if... – ?
- I think that will be **acceptable**./ That seems **acceptable**. – Y
- To make that **acceptable**,... – ?
- I simply can't **agree** to.../ We would find this (somewhat/ rather/ very/ extremely) difficult to **agree** to. – N
- I will **agree** to that, providing.../ I might be able to **agree** to that, depending on... – ?
- Okay, we **agree** to... – Y
- **As** I explained to you earlier,... – N
- I'll let you know **as** soon as I can. – ?
- (I'm afraid) that's the **best** I can do. – N
- I'll do my **best**. – ?/ N
- I'll ask my **boss**, but I think I can imagine his reaction. – N/ ?
- This is just a formality, but I'll need to talk to my **boss** first. – Y/ ?
- You **can't** just demand... – N
- I **can't** see any problem with that. – Y
- (I'm sorry but) I can't **compromise** (at all) on this point. – N
- Okay, I'm prepared to **compromise** on that. – Y
- That would be acceptable if you could **compromise** on... – ?
- (I'm afraid) I can't even **consider** that. – N
- I'll **consider** it. – ?
- I think we have a **deal**./ It's a **deal**./ You have a **deal**. – Y
- That doesn't sound like a very good **deal**. – N
- I really **expected** something (a bit/ quite a lot) better. – N
- To be honest, that is better than we **expected**. – Y
- Before I make a **final** decision,... – ?
- I'm sorry but that was my **final** offer. – N

- I think we've already been (fairly/ quite/ very) **flexible** on this./ I can be **flexible** on (almost) everything apart from that. – N
- Okay, I can be **flexible** on that. – Y
- Thank you. That's very **generous**. – Y
- I think we are already being (quite/ very) **generous**. – N
- I'm (fairly/ really quite/ really) **happy** with that./ I'm not very **happy** about this, but... – Y
- (I'm sorry but) I'm not (very) **happy** with... – N
- I'm (very) glad to **hear** that. – Y
- That was not (really) what I wanted to **hear**. – N
- That wasn't (quite/ really/ at all) what I was **hoping** for./ I was **hoping** for something (a bit/ considerably/ quite a lot/ a lot/ much/ far) better. – N
- I was **hoping** you might say that. – Y
- Can we discuss that at a **later** meeting?/ I'll confirm that **later**. – ?
- I'll probably regret this **later**, but... – Y
- I'll **let** you know by Friday. – ?
- **Let** me know if you change your mind. – N
- Our present circumstances **mean** that/ Our present situation **means** that... – N
- Could you clarify what you **mean** by...?/ Does that **mean**...? – ?
- I can **move** on that. – Y
- I'm not going to (be able to) **move** (at all) on this./ I can't **move** on this./ While we are glad to see that you have **moved** (somewhat) from your original position,... – N
- That is an **option**. – Y/ ?
- That is not an **option**. – N
- There doesn't seem to be much **point** in discussing this further./ That **point** is not negotiable./ I hope you can see our **point** of view. – N
- There is no **point** in discussing this (further/ anymore/ at the moment) unless... – ?
- You have a **point**. Taking that into account,... – Y
- I can understand your **position**, but.../ While I (completely/ more or less) understand your **position**,.../ I'm (really) not in the **position** to (be able to)... – N
- Just to make sure that I understand your **position**,... – ?
- I can't **promise** (anything/ much), but... – ?
- What about your previous **promise** to...? – N
- Okay, I can **promise** you that. – Y

- Taking what you **said** into account,... – Y
- But you **said**... – N

- I'd need to **see** (all of) that written down./ I'll **see** what I can do. – ?
- I can't **see** any way round this./ That is not how we **see** it. – N

- We **seem** to have come to (some kind of) a stalemate./ You don't **seem** to be meeting us halfway./ That **seems** (a bit/ far) too.../ That doesn't **seem** to be... enough. – N
- We **seem** to be in agreement. – Y

- That **sounds** (fairly/ very) reasonable. – Y
- That **sounds** (rather) unappealing. – N

- (I'm afraid) I'm **sticking** to my (original) position. – N
- The **sticking** point for us is... – ?/ N
- That doesn't have to be a **sticking** point. – Y

- I'm not **sure** that we can do that./ Are you **sure** that's your final offer? – N
- Just to make **sure** that I understand your offer,... – ?

- If you can give me some time to **think** about it,... – ?
- I don't **think** we would benefit (much/ at all/ enough) from that. – N
- I **think** we've found some common ground. – Y

- That is (really) as far as I am **willing** to go. – N
- I'm **willing** to consider that./ We would be **willing** to consider that. – Y/ ?

- That (just/ simply) won't **work**./ I'm not sure that would **work** (for us). – N
- That would **work** for us./ We still need to **work** out the details, but... – Y

- I think... **would** be fairer. / That **wouldn't** go down (very) well at head office. – N
- We **would** accept that if you were able to.../ You **would** need to... – ?
- That **would** be perfect./ That **would** be wonderful./ That **would** be great. – Y

Key words to make yes/ no/ maybe phrases from

Choose one of the key words below and try to think of or remember positive, negative and ambiguous phrases using that word. All can make at least two of those three kinds of expressions, and some can be used in all three kinds. You can start with the easiest. You can change the key words a little if you like, for example in the way given in brackets. Some words can be put together in phrases.

absolute(ly)
accept(able)
agree(d/ing)
as
best
boss('s)
can('t)
compromise
consider(ed)
deal(ing)
expect(ing/ed)
final
flexible/ flexibility
generous/ generosity
happy / happier
hear(d/ing)
hope/ hoping/ hopeful/ hopeless
late(r)
let
mean(s/t)
move(d)/ moving
option(al)
point(less)
position
promise(d)/ promising
say/ said
see
seem(ed/s/ing)
sound(s)
stick(ing)
sure(ly)/ unsure
think/ unthinkable
willing(ly)
work/ workable/ unworkable
would

Compare with the suggested answers above. Many other phrases are possible, so please check if you wrote something different.

Use the words above as you roleplay negotiations, ticking off as you use them.