



## HOW TO DISAGREE POLITELY

When using English as a medium of instruction, the teacher is passing on not only the knowledge of the field itself but also the way communication is done in English. This can be at times very different from the way students are used to communicate in their native languages. Disagreeing with someone is a typical example.

When you disagree with someone, it can often be a challenge to express your point of view without offending that person. At the same time, it's important to express your honest opinion.

**Rule number one** is to acknowledge the other person's opinion before you disagree. Make sure you make it clear that you understand what the other person is saying and that it is a valid argument before you disagree. This shows you are listening to the other person and makes your argument stronger. To do this, you can use phrases such as:

**"I see what you're saying but..."**

**"I understand where you're coming from, but..."**

**"That's a valid point, but..." / "I see your point, however..."**

**"I feel the same regarding ..., on the other hand ..."**

In short, you should never disagree straightaway and should always find something you can agree with to start your statement with. For example, you can use **an apology to introduce your disagreement**. This is another way of making your disagreement more polite but can soften the impact of your argument. For example: **"I'm sorry but I disagree with you about this."**

It is not a good idea to say that the other person is wrong. Instead, you can add a reason why another idea may be correct. It hurts to be told you are wrong, but finding out something new and useful is a more positive experience, even if you don't agree with the answer.

**Pretending to be unsure about agreeing** is another common way to disagree. Expressions like **"I'm not sure I agree with you about this"** or **"I don't think I have the same opinion as you"** really mean 'I don't agree'.

Finally, you can always **agree to disagree** on a certain topic...