

# Put it in your diary



## Modals of possibility

### Reading: What's 'late'?

**1** You have these appointments in your diary. What time will you really arrive? Be honest. Are you generally punctual?

- 1 a 10 a.m. job interview
- 2 a 9 a.m. meeting with your team
- 3 a 7 p.m. party invitation

**2** Do you know any countries where people have different attitudes to time keeping? Read the article and find some.

**3** Find words and phrases in the article that mean the following.

- 1 two
- 2 at the right time, without being late
- 3 a very sad event that shocks people
- 4 arrive
- 5 not polite (find two words)

**4** Answer these questions.

- 1 Why isn't it polite to complain if someone arrives ten minutes late in some countries?
- 2 How far behind schedule was the Japanese train? In your opinion, was it late?
- 3 How late might guests arrive at a party in Peru? Do people generally arrive on time for events in your country?
- 4 What does 'late' mean to people in your country? And what does it mean to you personally?

## What do you mean by 'late'?

**Y**OU'VE ARRANGED TO meet a friend at a certain time. They call you and say, 'I may be a couple of minutes late'. Will they be just two minutes late? Or might they mean ten or 15 minutes? Could they mean an hour?

Your answer may depend on where you live because what's 'late' in one culture may be perfectly OK in another. In countries with strict time keeping, a 9 a.m. business meeting will start promptly at nine and it's rude to arrive late. But in other countries there may be a ten-minute 'courtesy time', so when people show up at 9:10 a.m., you shouldn't suggest that they are late.

In Amagasaki, Japan, a train driver was worried that his train was 90 seconds late and he speeded up. It was a tragedy. The train derailed\* and 94 people died. But 90 seconds might not matter in other parts of the world. Some people could think that a train that's 90 seconds late is still 'on time'.

Take Peru, for example. The expression *hora peruana* (Peruvian time) means about one hour behind the time on the clock and *manana* (tomorrow) means an indefinite time in the future. Guests often turn up several hours late for a party and it's not impolite. The party happens when it happens.

*derailed*: came off its tracks

