

# 53 Requests and suggestions; offers, promises and warnings *can, could, would, will, shall*

## 1 Requests

We use *can* to make requests in most situations:  
*Can you help me with these bags? Yes, of course (I can).*  
*Can we have two coffees, please? Certainly/Sure.*

We usually add *please* to requests to make them polite:  
*Can we have two coffees, please?*

We put *please* in front of the verb to make a request stronger:  
*Can we please have a menu? Would you please be quiet?*

We often use *will you* with people we know well:  
*Will you give me a hand with this?*

**FORMALITY CHECK** We use *could* or *would* for more polite or formal requests:

*Excuse me. Could you help me with this? (in a shop)*  
*Would you sign this form? (talking to a customer in a bank)*

⚠ But we don't use *could* or *would* to reply to requests:  
*'Would you help me?' X 'Yes, I would.' ✓ 'Yes, of course.'*



## 2 Suggestions

SUGGESTIONS AS STATEMENTS	<i>We/You could</i>	<i>watch</i>	<i>a DVD.</i>
	<i>Let's</i>		
SUGGESTIONS AS QUESTIONS	<i>Why don't we</i>	<i>watch</i>	<i>a DVD?</i>
	<i>Shall/Should we</i>		
	<i>How/What about</i>	<i>watching</i>	

We often use *we/you could* and *should we* when we are not sure that the listener will like the suggestion. *'We could try that new Japanese restaurant.'*

We can agree or disagree with the suggestion. If we disagree, we usually give a reason:  
*'Shall we get a pizza?' 'Yes, let's do that. / That's a good idea. / Great.'*  
*'How about meeting up for coffee on Sunday?' 'Oh, I can't, I'm really busy. I'm sorry.'*

## 3 will for offers, promises, warnings

to agree	<i>'Will you sign this for me?' 'Yes, I will.' (X Yes, I'll.)</i> <i>'Will you have some more cake?' 'No, thanks, I won't. I'm on a diet.'</i>
to offer or promise to do something	<i>We'll drive you to the station if you like.</i> <i>We won't forget how kind you've been to us.</i>
to say if someone else agrees or is able to do something (or not)	<i>Take it to Marco – he'll fix it for you.</i> <i>Ask my teacher about it – she'll help you.</i> <i>Don't ask Carol. She won't know the answer.</i>
promises/warnings	<i>I'll be with you in a minute. Don't touch the cooker – you'll get burnt.</i>

We can also make offers with *shall I/we* or *I/we could*. We use these forms when we are not sure that the listener will want to accept:

*'Shall we help you with that?' 'No, thanks. I can manage on my own.'*  
*'I could get Lucy's present for you.' 'That's kind of you, but I'd rather do it myself.'*

⚠ We don't use the present simple to make offers:  
*'My hair's wet.' X 'I get you a towel.' ✓ 'I'll get you a towel.' ✓ 'Shall I get you a towel?'*

🔊 **Pronunciation** ▶ 1.27