

Apologies, excuses and thanks

A

Apologies with common replies

We can **apologise** [say sorry] in different ways in different situations.



A: I'm(terribly/really) **sorry** – I've forgotten your book.

Terribly/really makes you sound 'more sorry'.



B: **Never mind.** That's OK.



A: I **beg your pardon** – I didn't see you there.

I beg your pardon is a more formal apology, often used if you walk into someone.



B: **That's all right.** (also **That's OK.**)



A: (I'm) **sorry to disturb you.**

We use this phrase when we **interrupt** / speak to someone who is busy working.



B: **Don't worry.** Come on in. I can finish this later.



A: (I'm) **sorry to keep you waiting** – I **won't be long.**

We use this phrase when someone is waiting for us. *I won't be long* = I will be with you very soon.



B: OK. Fine.



A: **Excuse me,** I won't be a minute.

We use this phrase when we have to leave a room or go somewhere.



B: OK. Fine.



A: I **must apologise** for the noise last night.

This is a more formal apology, and it is often used in business letters.



B: That's all right. I understand.



A: I'm(really) **sorry I'm late.**



B: Don't worry.

Common mistakes

I'm sorry I'm late. (NOT I'm sorry ~~for~~ be late. OR I'm sorry ~~to~~ be late.)

B

Excuses

We often give an explanation or **excuse** after an apology. An **excuse** is a *reason* for the apology, which may or may not be true. These are excuses students might give for being late for class.

I'm sorry I'm late for class ...

- There was a **delay / hold-up** on the underground. [when a train, plane, etc. leaves or arrives later than you expect]
- I was **held up** in traffic. [**hold up** – cause a delay and make someone late – is often used in the passive]
- My train **was cancelled** [the train company decided not to run the train], and I had to wait half an hour for the next one.
- I **overslept** [slept longer than I planned or wanted to].

C

Thanks and replies

These are some common ways of **thanking** people, with typical replies.

A: **Thanks (very much).**

A: I've brought your books.

B: **Not at all.** (also **That's OK.**)

B: Oh, **cheers.** (*informal*)

A: **No problem.** (*informal*)

A: I'll post those letters for you.

B: Oh, thank you. **That's very kind of you.** (This is polite and slightly more formal.)

Exercises

1 Find three more pairs of phrases that have a similar meaning.

thanks very much I'm terribly sorry don't worry never mind
I was held up cheers I beg your pardon there was a delay

thanks very much / cheers

2 Complete the dialogues with one word. Contractions (e.g. I'm) count as one word.

1 A: I'm *terribly* sorry.

B: That's OK.

2 A: Thanks very much.

B: at all.

3 A: Sorry to you waiting. I won't be

B: That's all

4 A: I'm sorry late. The 7:30 train was, so I had to wait for the next one.

B: That's OK. No

5 A: I gave your parents a lift to the station.

B: Oh, thanks. That's very of you.

6 A: I must for missing the meeting yesterday afternoon.

B: mind. I'll ask Claire to tell you what happened.

7 A: I your pardon. I thought the room was empty.

B: That's OK.

3 What could you say in these situations? If it is an apology, give an explanation.

1 You walk into someone by accident and he/she almost falls over.

I'm terribly sorry. OR I beg your pardon. I didn't see you.

2 You arrange to meet some friends in town at 9 am but you are twenty minutes late.

3 Your car has broken down. You're pushing it to the side of the road and a man offers to help.

4 You need to speak to your boss but she's working. What do you say when you enter her office?

5 You have to leave a meeting to take an important phone call. What do you say to the others?

6 You are on the phone but a customer is waiting to talk to you. What can you say to them?

7 You are late for an appointment because you had to wait half an hour in traffic.

8 Your company promised to send some information to a customer last week. You still haven't sent the information and you must now write to explain. Write the first sentence of your letter.