

LESSON PLAN GUIDE

PictureBook English Reading Series — Grammar Fluency

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Category	Fluency in Key Grammar	Title	Grammar Book 14 – If You Want to Be Polite: Would, Could, May
Ages	6–9	Theme	Modal Verbs for Polite Requests + Softening If-Clauses + Sing-Along

INTRODUCTION OF THE BOOK

In this book, children trade bossy commands for polite requests — and they do it by singing! To the tune of 'If You're Happy and You Know It', children work through 25 real-life scenarios, learning how the same request can sound completely different depending on the modal verb they choose. Would, Could, and May are the keys to social-emotional intelligence in English.

The musical approach is no accident: the rhythm and melody of polite English is part of what makes it sound natural. When children feel the clap-clap rhythm of 'Could you help me, please?' they are internalising not just the words but the music of polite conversation.

THE POLITENESS LADDER — FROM BOSSY TO BEAUTIFUL

Level	Form	Example
Bossy ❌	Imperative — command	<i>Don't eat here!</i>
Polite ✅	Could you...?	<i>Could you eat somewhere else, please?</i>
Polite ✅	Would you...?	<i>Would you eat outside, please?</i>
Very polite ✅	Would you mind...?	<i>Would you mind eating outside, please?</i>
Asking permission	Could/May I...?	<i>Could I eat here? / May I eat here?</i>
Softest ✅	Modal + if-clause	<i>Could you help me, if you don't mind?</i>

SOFTENING IF-CLAUSES — MAKING REQUESTS EVEN GENTLER

Softening if-clause	Softening if-clause
<i>...if it's okay with you</i>	<i>...if you have a moment</i>
<i>...if you don't mind</i>	<i>...if you want / if you'd like</i>
<i>...if it's not too much trouble</i>	<i>...if you're interested</i>
<i>...if you can</i>	<i>...if possible</i>
<i>...if you feel like it</i>	<i>...if you have time</i>

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Children will be able to:

- Use Could you, Would you, and May I to make polite requests
- Transform bossy imperative commands into polite modal questions
- Use 'Would you mind + gerund?' for especially soft requests
- Soften requests further with if-clauses — 'if you don't mind', 'if possible', and more
- Sing 25 real-life polite requests to the tune of 'If You're Happy and You Know It'

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Clap out the rhythm while singing

Encourage your child to clap or tap the table as they sing through the book. The physical rhythm helps the brain lock in the word order of modal questions — which can be tricky for English learners. Sing together: 'If you want to be polite, say Could you — clap clap! If you want to be polite, say Would you — clap clap!' When the body moves, the grammar sticks!

2. Play the Politeness Remix game

After reading, connect to Book 13's warning and prohibition signs. Take a bossy command — 'Don't eat here!' — and challenge your child to remix it step by step up the politeness ladder: 'Could you eat somewhere else, please?' → 'Would you eat outside, please?' → 'Would you mind eating outside, please?' → 'Could I eat here?' Each step makes the request softer and more natural.

3. Add a Conditional Kindness ending

Introduce the softening if-clauses from the table above. After your child makes a polite request, challenge them to add an if-clause to make it even gentler: 'Could you help me... if you don't mind?' or 'Would you like to join us... if you're interested?' Go through the full list of if-clauses and practise adding each one to a different request. This builds the flow of truly natural, thoughtful English conversation.

4. Role-play real-life polite scenarios

Act out 25 everyday situations from the book — at the dinner table, at school, in a shop, with a friend. For each scenario, one person gives the bossy version and the other remixes it into a polite request using a modal and an if-clause. Take turns and try to use a different modal each time. The more natural the role-play, the more confident the grammar becomes.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Play a Politeness Points game. For one whole day, every time someone in the family makes a request, they must use a modal verb — no imperatives allowed! Every polite request earns a point. Every bossy command loses a point. At the end of the day, count the points. The player with the most polite requests wins! This game makes the grammar live in real family conversation — and usually produces a lot of laughter when someone slips up and says 'Pass the salt!' instead of 'Could you pass the salt, please?'

Try the fun online learning activities for this book on our website!

[Click here to try the online learning activities](#)

TEACHER'S NOTES AND TIPS

Politeness in English is not just a matter of vocabulary — it is a matter of grammar, intonation, and rhythm working together. This book is unusual and valuable because it teaches all three simultaneously through song. The if-clause softeners are a particularly sophisticated feature that even many adult learners do not use naturally — introducing them here, in a musical and playful context, gives children a significant head start. For classroom settings, the Politeness Points game works brilliantly as a class-wide challenge over a whole week, with a class tally on the board. The reminder that even small everyday requests are opportunities to practise makes the grammar feel genuinely useful rather than academic.