

English Ladder

Student Workbook

Requesting Advice

A polished self-study handout designed for print or tablet use. Read the concept, notice the pattern, and then complete the matching practice set on your own.



Grammar Concept Understanding the Dialogue Role A: The Process of Requesting Advice Role B: The Art of Giving Advice Practical Applications:

Visual anchor

Use the concept poster to spotlight the main language pattern in **Requesting Advice** and keep the explanation visible during practice and discussion.

ENGLISH LADDER

Concept #44 ► **Requesting Advice**

When friends or colleagues are discussing a problem that requires a solution, the conversation is often of the form below:

- A** • Clearly describe the problem.
- A** • Request suggestions for a solution.
- B** • Suggest a solution.
- A** • Accept or reject (with reasons) the suggested solution.

Continue with this process until a suggestion has been accepted.

► **Role A Phrases**

- Say, Linda. Could you give me some advice on an issue?
- Excuse me, Linda. Could I ask you to advise me on an issue?
- What do you recommend I/we do?
- How might we solve this problem?
- I'm afraid that won't work because Y.
- Yes, that might be worth trying.
- That sounds like a great idea!

► **Role B Phrases**

- It seems to me that Xing might/would solve this problem.
- How about Xing? Would that work?
- Why not X, Susan?
- Why not try Xing, Susan?
- Would it be possible for you/us to X?
- I suggest/recommend Xing.
- I suggest/recommend you X.
- Xing seems to be a possible solution.

englishladder.com



Core Idea

When engaging in conversations where one party seeks advice on a problem, a structured approach facilitates clear communication and effective problem-solving. The framework presented in Concept #44 delineates a methodical process involving two roles: Role A (the advice seeker) and Role B (the advice giver). This structured interaction is not just a casual exchange but a deliberate strategy to navigate complex problems by leveraging the collective intelligence of both parties involved.

Understanding the Dialogue Structure

The dialogue process typically involves iterative cycles between Role A and Role B, where the problem is dissected, analyzed, and addressed through a systematic exchange. Here's a step-by-step breakdown of this conversational structure:

- **Role A Initiates the Request for Advice:** Clearly describe the problem: The onus is on Role A to present the problem in a manner that is both comprehensive and precise. This includes outlining the context, the specific issue at hand, and any constraints that might affect potential solutions. Request suggestions for a solution: This request should be direct, inviting Role B to engage critically with the problem and offer their insights.
- **Role B Proposes a Solution:** Suggest a solution: Role B's responsibility is to provide a well-considered solution or a series of potential solutions. This suggestion should be based on a thorough understanding of the problem as described by Role A.
- **Role A Evaluates the Solution:** Accept or reject the suggested solution with reasons: Role A must critically evaluate the proposed solution. If the solution is rejected, Role A should provide clear and logical reasons, further refining the problem's parameters or highlighting aspects that were not considered by Role B.

This cycle can repeat multiple times, allowing for the refinement of ideas and the development of a solution that is both effective and acceptable to Role A.

Role A: The Process of Requesting Advice

Role A holds a critical role in initiating the dialogue and ensuring that the conversation remains focused and productive. The following are phrases commonly used by Role A, along with an analysis of their function within the dialogue:



- "Say, Linda. Could you give me some advice on an issue?" Function: This phrase serves as an informal yet respectful opener. It signals to Role B that Role A is seeking counsel and establishes the context for a problem-solving dialogue. Analysis: The use of "could you" softens the request, making it polite and less direct, which is essential in maintaining a cooperative tone.
- "Excuse me, Linda. Could I ask you to advise me on an issue?" Function: Similar to the previous phrase, this one adds a layer of deference, acknowledging that Role B's time and input are valued. Analysis: The structure "could I ask you" emphasizes Role A's request for permission to seek advice, which can be crucial in hierarchical or formal contexts.
- "What do you recommend I/we do?" Function: This question directly solicits a recommendation, indicating that Role A is open to suggestions and values Role B's expertise. Analysis: The choice between "I" or "we" signals whether the problem is personal or collective, which can influence the type of advice given.
- "How might we solve this problem?" Function: This inclusive phrase encourages collaborative problem-solving, inviting Role B to become an active participant in finding a solution. Analysis: The use of "we" fosters a sense of shared responsibility and can lead to more innovative solutions through joint brainstorming.
- "I'm afraid that won't work because Y." Function: This phrase is used to respectfully reject a suggestion while providing a rationale, which keeps the dialogue constructive. Analysis: By providing a reason, Role A ensures that Role B understands the constraints or issues with the proposed solution, paving the way for a more targeted recommendation.
- "Yes, that might be worth trying." Function: This phrase signals tentative approval of a suggestion, indicating that Role A is willing to test the proposed solution. Analysis: The phrase "might be worth trying" reflects a cautious optimism, allowing for flexibility if the solution does not yield the desired results.
- "That sounds like a great idea!" Function: This is an unequivocal acceptance of the advice, demonstrating Role A's enthusiasm and confidence in the proposed solution. Analysis: Such positive reinforcement can strengthen the collaborative relationship and encourage more open exchanges in the future.

Role B: The Art of Giving Advice

Role B plays a pivotal role in the problem-solving process by offering informed and thoughtful suggestions. The phrases commonly used by Role B are not mere responses; they are strategic interventions designed to guide Role A toward a viable solution.

- "It seems to me that Xing might/would solve this problem." Function: This phrase introduces a potential solution while maintaining a degree of humility, as it presents the suggestion as a possibility rather than a certainty. Analysis: The use of "might/would" allows Role B to offer advice without imposing it, which is critical in maintaining an open and non-confrontational dialogue.
- "How about Xing? Would that work?" Function: This phrase proposes an idea while immediately seeking Role A's input on its feasibility, thereby encouraging dialogue. Analysis: The phrase "would that work?" shifts the focus back to Role A, emphasizing that the final decision rests with them, which is essential in maintaining respect for Role A's autonomy.



- "Why not X, Susan?" Function: This rhetorical question encourages Role A to consider a new option, often one that may not have been initially apparent. Analysis: By framing the suggestion as a question, Role B subtly nudges Role A toward reconsidering their current approach, fostering an environment of exploration and openness.
- "Why not try Xing, Susan?" Function: This variation adds a proactive element, encouraging Role A to take action and experiment with a proposed solution. Analysis: The suggestion to "try" emphasizes a low-risk approach, which can be particularly effective when Role A is hesitant or uncertain.
- "Would it be possible for you/us to X?" Function: This phrase proposes a solution while acknowledging potential limitations or constraints, inviting Role A to assess the practicality of the suggestion. Analysis: The inclusion of "possible" demonstrates Role B's awareness of possible barriers, showing sensitivity to Role A's situation.
- "I suggest/recommend Xing." Function: This direct recommendation conveys confidence in the proposed solution, offering clear guidance to Role A. Analysis: The straightforwardness of this phrase is useful in situations where Role A is seeking decisive input and clarity.
- "Xing seems to be a possible solution." Function: This phrase introduces a solution as one of several possibilities, encouraging further discussion and consideration. Analysis: The wording "seems to be" allows for flexibility and invites Role A to explore the suggestion further, rather than presenting it as a definitive answer.

Practical Applications:

The structured dialogue framework outlined here is applicable in a wide range of scenarios, from workplace discussions to personal dilemmas. Let's examine two detailed examples that illustrate the rigorous application of this process.

Example 1: Professional Setting

- Role A (Manager): "Say, Emily. Could you give me some advice on an issue? We're facing a tight deadline on this project, and I'm not sure how we can meet it without overburdening the team."
- Role B (Team Lead): "It seems to me that reallocating some of the tasks to other departments might solve this problem."
- Role A (Manager): "I'm afraid that won't work because the other departments are also stretched thin. Do you have any other suggestions?"
- Role B (Team Lead): "How about extending the deadline by a week and negotiating with the client? Would that work?"
- Role A (Manager): "Yes, that might be worth trying. I'll speak with the client and see if they're open to an extension."

Example 2: Personal Dilemma



- Role A (Student): "Excuse me, Tom. Could I ask you to advise me on an issue? I'm really struggling to balance my studies and my part-time job."
- Role B (Mentor): "I suggest creating a more structured weekly schedule. Would it be possible for you to dedicate specific hours to each task?"
- Role A (Student): "That sounds like a great idea! I'll draw up a schedule tonight and see how it works out next week."

Conclusion:

The rigor of the advice-requesting process lies in its iterative nature and the deliberate use of language that fosters mutual respect, clarity, and cooperation. Both Role A and Role B must engage in a thoughtful exchange where each suggestion is carefully considered, refined, and either accepted or rejected with clear reasoning. This methodical approach ensures that the dialogue is productive and that the final solution is one that has been thoroughly vetted by both parties. By adhering to this structured framework, individuals can navigate complex problems more effectively, leading to more successful outcomes in both personal and professional contexts.

Dialogues

Dialogue 1: Career Advice

A:

Hey, Sarah. I've been thinking about changing my career path, but I'm not sure where to start. Can you help?

B:

It seems to me that you should first assess your skills and interests. Would it be possible for you to take a career aptitude test?

A:

That sounds like a great idea! I'll look into finding a good test online.



Dialogue 2: Health and Fitness

A:

Mark, I've been trying to lose weight, but nothing seems to work. What do you suggest?

B:

I suggest focusing on a combination of diet and exercise. Why not try a meal plan and a daily workout routine?

A:

Yes, that might be worth trying. I'll start by planning my meals for the week.

Dialogue 3: Academic Decision

A:

Excuse me, Professor. I'm not sure which elective to choose for next semester. Can you advise me?

B:

How about taking something that complements your major? Would a course in data analysis be beneficial?

A:

That sounds like a great idea! It could really enhance my understanding of research.



Dialogue 4: Personal Finance

A:

Tom, I'm struggling to save money each month. Do you have any suggestions?

B:

It seems to me that creating a strict budget might help. Why not track your expenses and set specific savings goals?

A:

I'm afraid that won't work because my expenses vary a lot. Do you have any other ideas?

B:

Would it be possible for you to automate your savings? That way, you save a fixed amount each month without thinking about it.

A:

Yes, that might be worth trying. I'll set up an automatic transfer to my savings account.

Dialogue 5: Relationship Advice

A:

Emma, I'm having trouble communicating with my partner lately. What do you think I should do?

B:

I suggest setting aside time for an open and honest conversation. Would it be possible for you to have a heart-to-heart talk this weekend?

A:

That sounds like a good plan. I'll make sure we have some quiet time to talk things through.



Dialogue 6: Travel Planning

A:

Jane, I'm planning a trip to Europe, but I'm overwhelmed with the options. Do you have any advice?

B:

How about focusing on a few key cities rather than trying to see everything? Would that make the trip more manageable?

A:

Yes, that might be worth trying. I'll pick three cities to visit and plan around them.

Dialogue 7: Team Management

A:

John, I'm having difficulty managing my team. They seem unmotivated. What do you suggest?

B:

It seems to me that setting clear goals and providing regular feedback might help. Why not try holding a team meeting to discuss expectations?

A:

That sounds like a great idea! I'll schedule a meeting for tomorrow.

Dialogue 8: Time Management

A:

Sophia, I've been struggling with time management lately. I can't seem to get everything done. Do you have any tips?

B:

I recommend prioritizing your tasks and using a planner. Would it be possible for you to set aside specific times for each task?

A:

Yes, that might be worth trying. I'll start using a planner and see how it goes.