

1. Make questions more polite by adding 'excuse me' to begin your question.

*Excuse me, when does the bus leave?*

*Excuse me, what time is it?*

2. Questions with 'can' are made more polite by using 'could':

*Excuse me, could you help me pick this up?*

*Pardon me<sup>1</sup>, could you help me?*

*Pardon me, could you give me a hand?*

3. Another way of making direct questions more polite is to add 'please' at the end of the question:

*Could you fill in this form, please?*

*Could you help me, please?*

*Can I have more soup, please?*

NOT

Please, can I have more soup?

#### **4. Indirect Questions: Very Polite**

Using indirect question forms is an especially polite way of asking polite questions. The information requested is the same as in direct questions, but are considered more formal. Notice that an indirect question begins with a phrase (I wonder, Do you think, Would you mind, etc.) the actual question is then placed in positive sentence form:

##### ***Construction Chart***

Introductory phrase + question word (or if) + positive sentence

*I wonder if you could help me with this problem.*

*Do you know when the next train leaves?*

*Would you mind if I opened the window?*

<http://esl.about.com/od/grammarstructures/a/Asking-Polite-Questions.htm>

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<sup>1</sup> "Pardon me" isn't used very much nowadays. "Pardon?" can be used when you haven't quite heard somebody.