

Don't say: "My English is terrible."
Say: "I'm working on improving my English."

The focus of the second sentence is positive ("improving") and it shows that you're actively working on making your English better.

Don't say: "Sorry for my bad English"
Say: "English isn't my first language, so please excuse any mistakes."

The second sentence explains that you're not a native speaker and requests patience and understanding – without using the word "bad" to describe your English.

Don't say: "I don't understand."

Say: "Could you repeat that, please?"
"Could you rephrase that, please?"
"Could you speak a little slower so that I can understand you better?"

Asking the other person to repeat means you want them to say it again using the same words.

Asking the other person to rephrase means you want them to say it again using different words.

The last sentence asks the person to speak slower, but still focuses on the positive ("understand you better") and not the negative ("I don't / can't understand").

If The Other Person Doesn't Understand You...

If you say something and the other person looks confused, don't worry – maybe that they didn't hear you, or they weren't paying attention. It's also possible that they're not yet accustomed to your accent.

To check understanding, you can ask:

"Does that make sense?"

If the other person says no, then say:

"Let me try again."

or: "Let me clarify."

Then say your sentence again. You can try:

repeating it using the same words

rephrasing it using different words

speaking slower and being careful with the pronunciation

Extra Tip: Keep An English Success Journal

There's so much to learn in the English language that most people focus on their difficulties and think about all the things they don't know yet. However, you can change your perspective and learn to think more positively by keeping an English success journal.

For example:

Today I learned 3 new words and used them in sentences

Today I understood how to use the present perfect

Today I practiced listening for 15 minutes

Today I remembered a word without using the dictionary

Today I understood some of the phrases in a song or movie

Today I successfully made a phone call in English

These things can be big or small – the important part is that they show progress and improvement.

On days when you're feeling depressed about your English, or when you don't have much motivation, you can read your success journal to see all the wonderful progress you've made. This will help increase your confidence and encourage you to keep going!sm of details.