Many ways to say "sorry" in English

Today you're going to learn different ways to say "sorry" in English.

Why should you learn all these different expressions? Because they're used in different situations.

There are many different times we might want to say "sorry," but we'd use different words depending on whether we spilled some coffee, or hurt someone's feelings, or made a mistake at work. Some of these phrases are more informal and casual, and others are more serious.

This means you're not just learning a bunch of equivalent ways to say the same thing – you're learning what you would say in different situations, so that you can be more fluent.

20 different ways to say "sorry" and talk about making mistakes and doing something wrong.

"Looks like I gave you the wrong phone number. **Sorry about that**."

We can use **"Sorry about that"** for minor mistakes, things that are less serious, and easily fixed. We would not use this phrase for something that really hurt someone or caused them major inconvenience.

"I lost the book you lent me. **I'm so sorry!**"

When the problem is more serious, we often say something like **"I'm so/very/really/terribly sorry"** to show that we understand we caused a problem or did something more serious.

"**Oops / whoops** – I just spilled some coffee. I'll clean it up."

We use **oops** and **whoops** to admit minor accidents – small things that don't cause too much harm.

"Oh, I sent you the wrong link. **My bad**."

My bad (informal) and **my mistake** are used to admit you did something wrong, but it was relatively minor.

"**It was my fault** that we didn't get to the airport on time."

You can say **"it was my fault"** for admitting you were responsible for something a little more serious.

"**I take full responsibility** for failing to train the employees properly."

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"I take full responsibility" is a much more formal phrase; this would be use in business or professional situations where you need to admit you caused the problem.

> "I can't believe I forgot your birthday. **I messed up.**"

The expressions **"I messed up / I screwed up"** are informal ways to say you did something wrong.

> **"My apologies for** keeping you waiting. I'm running a little late today."

It's common to say **"My apologies for"** or **"I apologize for"** in business or professional contexts.

> **"I owe you an apology.** I said some horrible things to you."

The phrase **"I owe you an apology"** is often used to open or to begin the conversation. It shows the other person that you know an apology is necessary, and you are going to do that now.

> **"I shouldn't have** taken your camera. **I should have** asked you first."

You can say **"I should have"** and **"I shouldn't have"** to talk about what the correct/right action would have been (which you didn't do).

> "I gave you the silent treatment, and **that was wrong of me.**"

You can say **"It was wrong"** or **"That was wrong of me"** to express that your action was not morally correct.

> "I haven't been helping you around the house at all. **I'm ashamed of** my behavior."

You can say you're **ashamed of** what you said, or ashamed of your actions/behavior, to show you feel bad about it.

> **"I truly regret** my offensive comments."

Saying **"I truly/really/sincerely regret"** is another way to express that you feel very bad about what you did, and you wish you had behaved differently.

> "Our website is not working properly. **We sincerely apologize** for the inconvenience."

In business English, we often use phrases like **"We sincerely apologize"** or **"Please accept our apologies."**

> **"I won't do it again / It won't happen again."**

We can use these phrases to promise that we will behave differently in the future.

"I'm sorry I had to work late, and missed our date. **How can I make it up to you?**"

When you ask **"How can I make it up to you?"** – you are asking what you can do to "compensate" for your mistake and make the other person feel good again.

"I know that what I did was wrong. **I hope you can forgive me.**"

Saying **"I hope you can forgive me"** expresses your desire for the other person to forgive you and not stay angry or upset. You can also ask more directly, **"Will you forgive me?"**

There are other times we say "Sorry" when it's not necessarily that we did something wrong. For example:

Saying "Sorry" to get someone's attention – like if someone's reading a book at a cafe, and there's an extra chair at their table, and you want to take it, you could say:

"Sorry – is anyone sitting here?"

We could also use "Excuse me" in this case.

"Excuse me – is anyone sitting here?"

A lot of English students also say "Sorry?" when they don't understand something the other person said. As an alternative, you could say:

"Pardon?"

Or more informally, **"What?"** or **"I didn't catch what you said."**

Finally, we often use "Sorry" to express our sympathy for someone going through a hard time, or when someone's relative has died. In these situations, we can use these phrases:

"I'm so sorry for your loss" – is a good one to use whenever someone's relative or friend has died.

You can also say **"My condolences"** – this is a little more formal.

"I'm sorry to hear that / I'm sorry that happened to you." – these phrases are for expressing sympathy in other situations, like when someone loses their job, or has a car accident, or goes through an unfortunate situation.

Now you know a whole bunch of different ways to say "Sorry" in English – for minor things and major problems, in formal situations and informal situations, and at times when you want to get someone's attention or express sympathy.