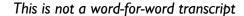
## **BBC LEARNING ENGLISH**

# How do you... say sorry?





## Finn

Hi this is Finn, with another guide to real, spoken English. This time, how to say **sorry**. Now, we all make mistakes, but how we say sorry is very important.

Being polite people, the British do say sorry quite a lot. I'm sorry, have you got the time?, I'm sorry – do you know where Oxford Circus station is? But this is more like saying excuse me. I'm sorry, have you got the time? is like: Excuse me, have you got the time?

Now, let's look at a few situations where people really do mean **sorry**, and the different ways the word is used.

Rob and Neil are going to apologise to each other quite a lot in these examples.

So, first, Neil apologises to Rob. They've agreed to meet at a cafe. What does Neil say?

#### Neil

Hi Rob, **sorry I'm late**. The train was supposed to get here 30 minutes ago. But you know how it is... horrible delays, I'm afraid.

## Rob

That's ok.

#### Finn

**Sorry I'm late**. That might be the most common apology you'll hear in English! Sorry I'm late! You could also use this pattern **sorry I'm...** to say things like **sorry I'm slow**, or **sorry I'm not very good at this**.

Right. Now's it's Rob's turn to apologise to Neil. Rob borrowed Neil's bike – but something bad happened. What was it?

## Rob

Neil, I've got something to tell you. You know how you lent me your bike? Well, I don't have it. It was stolen. And I'm really sorry.

## Neil

Right.

#### Rob

I'm so sorry about this.

#### Neil

Rob, you're an idiot.

#### Finn

The bike was stolen. And Neil sounds a bit angry. And did you notice how Rob apologised? Well first, he prepared Neil for the apology by saying:

## Rob

Neil, I've got something to tell you.

## Finn

When someone hears this, they know something serious is coming next. Next, the apology itself. And this was just a simple sentence.

## Rob

I'm really sorry.

#### Finn

I'm really sorry. You could also say I'm so sorry. Or just, I'm sorry. Or just sorry.

## Rob

Well, I don't have it. It was stolen. And I'm really sorry.

#### Neil

Right.

#### Rob

I'm so sorry about this.

## Finn

**I'm so sorry about this**. In English, you often say you're sorry 'about' something – listen to these...

I'm sorry about the flowers.

I'm sorry about the cake. I cooked it for too long.

I'm sorry about the mess on the floor.

Right, we're almost there – but remember Neil called Rob an idiot? Well, Neil feels bad. Neil's turn to apologise to Rob. How does he do it?

#### Neil

Rob. I really want to apologise for what I said earlier.

#### Finn

So Neil said: "I want to apologise for what I said". Lots of people do this in English. It's a way of saying sorry, without using the word 'sorry'. I want to apologise for being late, I want to apologise for the mess on the floor.

But Neil actually did say sorry afterwards. He said:

## Neil

I'm really sorry for calling you an idiot.

## Finn

Sorry for calling you an idiot. Sorry for... can be followed by a verb in the –ing form, like Neil used it there: "Sorry for calling you an idiot". Or followed by a noun. Listen to these these:

**Sorry for** making you late. **Sorry for** the mess on the floor.

There we go – lots of different ways to say sorry:

I'm sorry
I'm really sorry
I'm so sorry
sorry about something
sorry for something
and I want to apologise for something.

And there we are. I'm really sorry but I have to go now. Bye.

Here's the whole conversation of Neil and Rob again:

#### Rob

Neil, I've got something to tell you. You know how you lent me your bike? Well, I don't have it. It was stolen. And I'm really sorry.

## Neil

Right.

## Rob

I'm so sorry about this.

## Neil

Rob, you're an idiot.

Rob. I really want to apologise for what I said earlier. I'm really sorry for calling you an idiot.