

LINGUA AGENTS

Lesson Summary

AT THE RESTAURANT



Vocabulary

Word / Phrase	Meaning	Example sentence
menu	The list of food and drinks a restaurant offers.	<i>Could I have the menu, please?</i>
waiter / server	The person who takes your order and brings your food.	<i>The waiter recommended the fish.</i>
waitress	The female word for a waiter (server works for anyone).	<i>The waitress brought our starters.</i>
chef / cook	The person who prepares the food in the kitchen.	<i>The chef makes a wonderful dessert.</i>
starter / appetizer	The small first course, before the main course.	<i>I'll have the soup as a starter.</i>
main course	The largest, central course of the meal.	<i>For my main course, I would like the steak.</i>
dessert	The sweet course at the end of the meal.	<i>For dessert, I'll have the apple pie.</i>
the bill / the check	The paper that shows how much you have to pay.	<i>Could we have the bill, please?</i>
tip	Extra money you leave for good service.	<i>We left a tip because the service was great.</i>
cash	Payment with notes and coins.	<i>Can I pay in cash?</i>

Word / Phrase	Meaning	Example sentence
card	Payment with a credit or debit card.	<i>I'll pay by card, please.</i>

Grammar

Polite requests with could

POLITE REQUESTS WITH COULD		
Structure	Use	Example
Could I + noun?	Ask for something politely.	<i>Could I have the menu, please?</i>
Could you + verb?	Ask someone to do something politely.	<i>Could you bring some water, please?</i>
..., please	Soften any request even more.	<i>Could we have the bill, please?</i>

Usage note. Use *could* instead of *can* to sound more polite, especially with staff you do not know. Adding *please* at the end makes the request even friendlier. *Could* works for questions of every kind: asking for something, asking someone to do something, or asking for advice.

Polite requests with would like

POLITE REQUESTS WITH WOULD LIKE		
Structure	Use	Example
I would like + noun	Order or ask for something politely.	<i>I would like the spaghetti, please.</i>
I would like + to + verb	State a polite intention.	<i>I would like to make a reservation.</i>
We would like + noun	Speak politely for a group.	<i>We would like a table for two.</i>

Usage note. *Would like* is the polite form of *want*. In speech, people usually shorten it to *I'd like*. Use it to order food, ask for a table or make a reservation. Remember *would like + to + verb* when a verb follows, as in *I would like to book a table*.

Useful phrases

Phrase	Use it when...
Excuse me.	You want to get the waiter's attention.
I'll have... / I'll take...	You are ordering a dish or a drink.
The [item], please.	You want to order quickly and simply.

Phrase	Use it when...
Yes, please. / No, thank you.	You are accepting or declining an offer politely.
Could we have the bill, please?	You have finished and want to pay.
I would like a table for two.	You arrive and need a place to sit.

Common confusions

waiter vs waitress vs server

Waiter is male, waitress is female, and server works for anyone. Server is the safe, modern choice.

the bill vs the check

Both mean the paper you pay at the end. The bill is common in British English; the check is more usual in American English.

could vs would like

Use could to ask a question (Could I have...?) and would like to say what you want (I would like...). Both are polite.