

THE IMPERATIVE

Definition: Imperatives are verbs used to give orders, commands, warning or instructions, and (if you use "please") to make a request. It is one of the three moods of an English verb (indicative, imperative and subjunctive).

For example:

- Give me that tape, please.

- ▶ To make the imperative, use the infinitive of the verb without "to"
 - Come here!
 - Sit down!

- ▶ To make a negative imperative, put "do not" or "don't" before the verb:
 - Don't go!
 - Do not walk on the grass.

- ▶ You can also use "let's" before the verb if you are including yourself in the imperative. The negative of "let's" is "let's not".
 - Let's stop now.
 - Let's have some lunch.
 - Let's not argue
 - Let's not tell her about it.

1. Orders

- ▶ Adults do not usually give each other orders, unless they are in a position of authority. However, adults can give orders to children and to animals. The intonation of an order is important: each word is stressed, and the tone falls at the end of the sentence:
 - Sit down now!
* "Sit", "down" and "now" are all stressed, and the tone falls on "now".

2. Warnings

- ▶ You can use the imperative to warn someone of danger. All the words in the warning are stressed, but the last word has a higher tone than the first word:
 - Watch out!
 - Look out!
 - Don't cross!

3. Advice

- ▶ When you give advice using the imperative, the words are stressed normally.
 - Don't tell him you're resigning now! Wait until Monday when he's in a better mood.
 - Don't drink alcohol
 - Don't eat heavy meals

4. Requests

- ▶ You can also use the imperative to make a request, but you should use a polite word before the verb:
 - Please take a seat.
 - Please wait here.
 - Please hold the line.
 - Please don't smoke here.
- ▶ We can use the imperative on signs and notices.
 - Push.
 - Do not use.
 - Insert one dollar.
 - We can use the imperative to make an invitation.
 - Come in and sit down. Make yourself at home.
 - Please start without me. I'll be there shortly.
 - Have a piece of this cake. It's delicious.

Notes:

Note that an imperative sentence does not require a subject; the pronoun "you" is implied.

- ▶ If we talk to more people, we use the pronoun *you* to make the distinction between them.
 - *You take these bags and you park the car.*
 - *You wait here and I'll call the police.*

5. Emphatic imperative

- ▶ In writing it is not usual to use an exclamation mark in the imperative. If we put it at the end of the command, it becomes more urgent.
 - *Wait! Don't do that!*
- ▶ We can make an emphatic imperative with *do* and imperative. It is common in polite requests.
 - *Do sit down.*
 - *Do be reasonable.*

- ▶ On the other hand, *do* before the imperative can express the irritation of the speaker.
 - *Do be quiet.*
 - *Do come on time.*
- ▶ *You* before the imperative also shows the speaker's anger or even rudeness.
 - *You get out of here.*
 - *Don't you follow me.*
- ▶ In a different context, however, it can show your positive emotions.
 - *Don't you be so sad.*

a. The first person imperative

- ▶ The English language makes the first person imperative with *let + me* or *let + us*.
 - *Let me do it for you. Let me see.*
 - *Let us go. Let's take our car.*
- ▶ For the negative we put *not* before the imperative.
 - *Let us not be worried.*
- ▶ In spoken English it is possible to use *don't* at the beginning of the sentence.
 - *Don't let's be worried.*

b. The third person imperative

- ▶ We make it with *let + him/her/it/them* and the infinitive without *to*.
 - *Let him go.*
 - *Let her explain it.*
 - *Let it be. Let them try it.*
 - *Let the customers pay immediately.*
- ▶ This form is not very common in modern English. It is more usual to say the same in a different way.

• <i>He must go.</i>	• <i>They can try it.</i>
• <i>She should explain it.</i>	• <i>The customers must pay immediately.</i>
• <i>Leave it alone.</i>	
- ▶ The negative imperative in the third person is archaic. We use more common forms instead.
 - *They mustn't stay here.*
 - *Mary is not to travel alone.*

6. Polite requests

- ▶ We can make a polite request in English if we put *shall we* or *will you* at the end of the imperative. This is used in positive requests.
 - *Let's get started, shall we?*
 - *Be careful, will you?*
- ▶ If you want to be even more polite, you can use questions instead of commands.
 - *Will you pass me the salt, please?*
 - *Will you help me?*
 - *Could you do it for me?*
 - *Would you mind opening the window?*

Exercise 1: Put the words in brackets into the gaps. Mind the positive or the negative forms.

Example: _____ your books. (*to open*)

Answer: *Open* your books.

- 1) _____ upstairs. (*to go*)
- 2) _____ in this lake. (*not/to swim*)
- 3) _____ your homework. (*to do*)
- 4) _____ football in the yard. (*not/to play*)
- 5) _____ your teeth. (*to brush*)
- 6) _____ during the lesson. (*not/to talk*)
- 7) _____ the animals in the zoo. (*not/to feed*)
- 8) _____ the instructions. (*to read*)
- 9) _____ late for school. (*not/to be*)
- 10) _____ your mobiles. (*to switch off*)

Exercise 2: Rewrite the sentences in imperative. Keep the same meaning.

Example: You can't step on the grass. - Don't step on the grass.

We must revise some new words. - Let's revise some new words.

1. He should have a job. _____!
2. We mustn't stop now. _____!
3. You must go to bed. _____!
4. You should get up early. _____!
5. You mustn't stand here. _____!
6. She can have a drink. _____!
7. They must clean the carpet. _____!
8. We needn't wait for him. _____!
9. We must have a shower first. _____!
10. You can't park in this street. _____!
11. You must be here soon. _____!
12. They should taste this cake. _____!