

We can use a **past tense** to talk politely about something in the present.

In English, you can sometimes use **past tenses** to be less direct and more polite.

I wanted to ask you something.

I hoped you'd make lunch.

This isn't the past - 'I want to ask you something now' and 'I still hope you'll make my lunch' but it's less direct.

Using a **continuous** tense can seem less permanent and also less direct.

I'm thinking you should buy the ingredients.

I'm not planning to help you.

To really distance yourself, you can do both:

I was hoping you were going to make dessert.

I was expecting you to do the washing up.

I'm being unreasonable, but I'm using past and continuous tenses as distancing to sound polite while I do it - and now I'm really hungry.