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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## What they really mean

### Disguised requests



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*This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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**Olivia**

Is it 10 o'clock already?

**Claire**

Is Olivia really asking about the time? After all, she did just check her watch.

**Mark**

This is a great party, I love telling my stories, did I tell you about my last camping holiday?

**Olivia**

No, I don't think you did... Is it 10 o'clock already?

**Mark**

Well, yes, it is... anyway, so you wanted to hear about my camping trip....

**Olivia**

Have you got a long journey home?

**Mark**

No, you've been there – it's not far. It won't take me long to get home ... anyway, we were staying in these tents...

**Olivia**

When were you thinking of leaving?

**Mark**

Leaving? Well, I'm going to call a taxi... so – I can stay a while yet. ...anyway as I was saying, we were staying in these tents...

**Olivia**

Can you not take a hint? I need you to go home now. I'm tired... and I could not care less about your camping holiday!

**Mark**

Oh, um... Alright I'll be leaving then....

**Mark**

I'm confused... why was Olivia so angry?

**Claire**

Well, the thing is you ignored all of her hints.

**Mark**

Hints?

**Claire**

The questions she was asking you. You weren't supposed to answer them.

**Mark**

No?

**Claire**

Olivia wasn't asking these questions to get information, she was asking them to highlight something – they were disguised requests. She asked about the time, his journey and the time that he planned to leave. He was supposed to think about these things, and realise that it was quite late, and that maybe she might want to go to sleep. This is less direct and considered more polite than just saying "Can you leave? I want to go to sleep". We can use questions like this in lots of different situations – and you'll see some more examples at the end of the programme.

**Mark**

So what should I do with these questions?

**Claire**

Answer the questions, but then demonstrate that you have understood the hint.

**Mark**

So, did I tell you about my last camping holiday.

**Olivia**

No, I don't think you did... is it 10 o'clock already?

**Mark**

Oh it is. Yes, it is getting a bit late?

**Olivia**

Yes, have you got a long journey home?

**Mark**

Well, it's not too far – but I probably should be getting home soon.

**Olivia**

And when were you thinking of leaving?

**Mark**

Soon... actually, I'll call a cab now.

**Olivia**

Thanks for coming. It was lovely to see you.

**Olivia**

Is there any coffee in that pot?

**Mark**

Is it cold in here?

**Olivia**

Is there anything else on?