

BBC Learning English

How to ...

Making an appointment



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Yvonne: Hello, this is "How to..." from bbclearningenglish.com and I'm Yvonne Archer. In today's programme... how to make an appointment in English! Coming up...some key words and phrases that are useful - whether we need to see a doctor, a dentist, a hairdresser, a lawyer or even a plumber. Listen out for the phrase Hina uses to make a doctor's appointment...

Hina makes a doctor's appointment

RECEPTIONIST: Bushy Hill Surgery?

HINA: Hello, I'd like to book an appointment please.

RECEPTIONIST: Right, we have Thursday morning at 10 or Friday afternoon at 3pm.

HINA: Thursday morning suits me and I'd prefer to see a lady doctor, if that's possible.

Yvonne: Hina said "I'd like to book..." – "I would like to book..." and then adds "an appointment, please" - "I'd like to book an appointment, please." Let's hear that again, but this time, listen out for Hina's special request once she's agreed the day and time for her appointment. It shows that she thought about what she needed before she made her phone call...

Fatima makes a doctor's appointment

RECEPTIONIST: Bushy Hill Surgery?

HINA: Hello, I'd like to book an appointment please.

RECEPTIONIST: Right, we have Thursday morning at 10 or Friday afternoon at 3pm.

HINA: Thursday morning suits me and I'd prefer to see a lady doctor, if that's possible.

Yvonne: Hina decided that she wanted to see a female or a woman doctor, so she said: "I'd prefer to see a lady doctor, if that's possible."

Hina makes a doctor's appointment

HINA: Thursday morning suits me and I'd prefer to see a lady doctor, if that's possible.

Yvonne: Like the word 'please', adding "if that's possible" is also a simple and polite way to soften a request – and that probably encourages the receptionist or the person we're booking an appointment with to be even more helpful!

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Yvonne: Next, Finn has a terrible toothache and wants to make an appointment with the dentist. Again, we hear the same key phrase plus 'an appointment' being used. But what special request does Finn have and how does he make it sound polite?

Finn makes a dental appointment

RECEPTIONIST: Good morning, Northern Dental Surgery.

FINN: Oh hello there, I've got a toothache and I'd like to book an appointment to see the dentist today, if you can.

RECEPTIONIST: Hmm... we're kind of booked up today – oh, actually, we could squeeze you in at 5.

Yvonne: Finn adds "if you can" rather than 'if possible' to his special request so that he sounds polite when asking for an urgent appointment – he wants to see the dentist at very short notice. Both phrases 'if possible' and 'if you can' have the same meaning and do the same job so you can use either!
But back to our key phrase "I'd like to book..." This time, "an appointment" plus the infinitive of a verb - "...to see" - plus the job title of the person he wants to see 'the dentist' are all added. Listen again...

Finn makes a dentist's appointment

FINN: I'd like to book an appointment **to see the dentist** today, if you can.

Yvonne: So it's simple enough to make our key phrase longer when we want to add extra information. Finn didn't know the dentist's name, but if you do know the name of the person you want to see, you can simply add the preposition 'with' plus their name to our key phrase. For example, "I'd like to book an appointment **with Steve**". And if you only know the person's job title, you can say, for example: "I'd like to book an appointment **with the plumber** please".

Here's Finn again as he tries to make another appointment; which noun does he add to the key phrase "I'd like to book..."?

Finn makes an appointment with his hairdresser

RECEPTIONIST: Good morning, "A Cut Above"

FINN: Oh, hello there. I'd like to book a haircut for today please.

Yvonne: Finn wants 'a haircut' so he simply says: "I'd like to book **a haircut**"- and of course, he adds 'please'...

Finn makes an appointment with his hairdresser

RECEPTIONIST: Good morning, "A Cut Above"

FINN: Oh, hello there. I'd like to book a haircut for today please.

Yvonne: So to recap - we can book something, like a service for our car or a haircut...

Finn makes an appointment with his hairdresser

FINN: Oh, hello there. I'd like to book **a haircut** for today please.

Yvonne: But we book an appointment to see someone, like a doctor or a specific named person...

Finn makes a dental appointment

FINN: ...I'd like to book **an appointment to see** the dentist today, if you can.

Yvonne: Well, that's all for today's "How to...", but why not visit us at bbclearningenglish.com for more on how to make an appointment plus test what you've learned with our quizzes, games and other programmes?