BBC LEARNING ENGLISH
How to ... change people's behaviour

Quiz

1) I wondered _____ we could have a quick chat about the washing up?
   A. how  
   B. if   
   C. what

2) I hope you don't ____ me mentioning this...
   A. want  
   B. mind  
   C. care

3) Would you mind ______ the bathroom?
   A. clean  
   B. to clean  
   C. cleaning
Answers

1) B  
2) B  
3) C

TRANSCRIPT

Neil
Hello. Welcome to How To with me, Neil Edgeller. This programme is all about asking people to change their behaviour. Perhaps a flatmate or a colleague does something that annoys you. How do you ask them to do things differently without starting an argument? Well, I spoke to my flatmates, who don't like some of my habits and want me to change my ways. Listen to them and try to hear things they want me to do differently.

EXAMPLE
Neil, I hope you don't mind me mentioning this, but would you mind keeping the toilet seat down after you've used the toilet? It's just me. I really don't like to leave it open.

To be honest, I think, you know, the state you've been leaving the bathroom in is far from perfect. All I'm saying is would you mind cleaning the bathroom when you've finished in there?

I wondered if we could have a quick chat about things, specifically about the washing up, because it's beginning to bug me a bit. The thing is, there are always big piles of washing up left. I mean I do mine but yours is there. If you're cooking dinner you ought to do it as well. It would be good if you could do that, otherwise we're just going to end up with things like cockroaches.

Neil
As you can hear, I'm not the best flatmate in the world. The first person asks me to make sure I put the toilet seat down after I use it. The second wants me to clean the bathroom after I use it. The third wants me to do the washing up after I cook.
Now we'll hear them again. Here's the first time someone asks me to change my behaviour. How does he introduce the topic and then how does he ask me?

**EXAMPLE**
Neil, I hope you don't mind me mentioning this, but would you mind keeping the toilet seat down after you've used the toilet. It's just me. I really don't like to leave it open.

**Neil**
He says, I hope you don't mind me mentioning this, and then asks for me to change my behaviour - in this case, to put the toilet seat down after I use it. I hope you don't mind me mentioning this is a polite way of starting a conversation about a sensitive matter. He doesn't want to upset or offend me.

**EXAMPLE**
Neil, I hope you don't mind me mentioning this.

**Neil**
Then he asks me to change my behaviour. Listen to how he does it.

**EXAMPLE**
Would you mind keeping the toilet seat down after you've used the toilet. It's just me. I really don't like to leave it open.

**Neil**
He says, Would you mind keeping the toilet seat down after you've used the toilet? - Would you mind followed by a request. This is a polite way of asking someone to do something.
Make sure you use the ing ending. So, Would you mind turning the music down? or, Would you mind being quiet? You can add not for a negative meaning: Would you mind not smoking?

**EXAMPLE**
Would you mind keeping the toilet seat down after you've used the toilet.

**Neil**
In the next example, my flatmate wants me to clean the bathroom after I use it. He uses the same way of asking me as in the first example.
EXAMPLE
To be honest, I think, you know, the state you've been leaving the bathroom in is far from perfect. All I'm saying is would you mind cleaning the bathroom when you've finished in there?

Neil
In the next example, my flatmate wants me to do the washing up after I use the kitchen. Listen to how she starts the conversation.

EXAMPLE
I wondered if we could have a quick chat about things, specifically about the washing up, because it's beginning to bug me a bit. The thing is, there are always big piles of washing up left. I mean I do mine but yours is there. If you're cooking dinner you ought to do it as well. It would be good if you could do that, otherwise we're just going to end up with things like cockroaches.

Neil
She says, I wondered if we could have a quick chat about things. This is another way of starting a conversation about something sensitive. She doesn't want to say directly, You're dirty. Please clean the kitchen, because it might upset me. But she does want me to change my behaviour and do the washing up more often. This is a way of starting a conversation like that.

EXAMPLE
I wondered if we could have a quick chat about things.

Neil
She also says, The thing is, there are always big piles of washing up left. The thing is is used to introduce the problem: in this case, I never wash up.

EXAMPLE
The thing is, there are always big piles of washing up left.

Neil
She says, It would be good if you could do that. Again, it's a polite way of asking someone to do something.

EXAMPLE
It would be good if you could do that, otherwise we're just going to end up with things like cockroaches.

Neil
To recap, if you want to ask someone to change their behaviour in a polite way, without upsetting them, you can use these phrases to help you: I hope you don't mind me mentioning this.

EXAMPLE
Neil, I hope you don't mind me mentioning this.

Neil
Would you mind?

EXAMPLE
Would you mind keeping the toilet seat down?

Neil
I wonder if we could have a quick chat about...

EXAMPLE
I wondered if we could have a quick chat about things.

Neil
It would be good if you could...

EXAMPLE
It would be good if you could do that.

Neil
Well, my flatmates have been so polite with their requests I think I'm going to change my disgusting behaviour.