Quiz

Test your understanding of this lesson with our quiz! For each question choose the correct sentence.

1. Which of these sentences would you be most likely to use if you were talking to a friend?
   a) My view is that we should go to the party.
   b) I think we should go to the party.

2. You are working in a restaurant and have accidentally given a client the wrong change. Which of these phrases would be more appropriate?
   a) The fact is, it was a mistake.
   b) I can assure you that it was a mistake.
   c) Look, it was a mistake.

3. A very direct way to say that someone doesn't understand what you're trying to say is...
   a) You're taking the point.
   b) You are hiding the point.
   c) You are missing the point.
Answers

1. You would probably use B if you were talking to a friend. Remember, 'my view is...' sounds more formal than 'I think...'

2. The correct answer is B. This phrase - 'I can assure you...' - would be best as it's the most polite, the others would sound too aggressive.

3. The correct answer is C. But remember: 'you are missing the point' is very direct and, depending on context, can sound aggressive.

Transcript

Jackie
Hello - welcome to the programme, with me, Jackie Dalton. This programme is all about expressions you can use when you're having a discussion or disagreement with someone, and you want to tell them what you think about something. We're going to do this with the help of the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair.

EXAMPLE
My view is that...
The fact is, it is disastrous what is happening at the moment...
All I'm saying is...

Jackie
He recently had quite a heated discussion with John Humphrys, a BBC journalist. Both Tony Blair and John Humphrys used some good expressions as they argued with each other and we're going to look at some of those expressions. Let's start with one of the simplest ways you can express your view about something.

Tony Blair
I think we should be immensely proud of the work that we're doing there...

Jackie
I think followed by a statement or opinion - very simple.
Tony Blair
I think we should be immensely proud of the work that we're doing there...

Jackie
Now we'll hear Tony Blair use a slightly more formal way of saying I think.

Tony Blair
My view is that the only way you protect your security today is to...

Jackie
My view is that - it has exactly the same meaning as the previous phrases, but it's just more formal. You wouldn't hear it used much in discussions between people who know each other well. A similar formal phrase you might hear is in my opinion.
In my opinion, it would be better to let them do the project.

Jackie
So, those are our first three phrases for today: I think, my view is that, in my opinion followed by the idea you want to express. If you want to make a firm statement about something which you believe to be true, you could start the sentence like this:

John Humphrys
The fact is, it is disastrous what is happening at the moment.

Jackie
You would use the fact is followed by the statement. Listen to Tony Blair using it now:

Tony Blair
The fact is, it was a terrible situation.

Jackie
Sometimes in a discussion you may feel that the other person isn't listening to the main message you want to get across. You may want to bring them back to focus on what you're trying to say. Listen to how Tony Blair does it here:

John Humphrys
You'd already decided by then.
Tony Blair
That is really not true, you know, we're never going to agree on that.

John Humphrys
Alright, alright...

Tony Blair
The point, however, is this...

Jackie
Tony Blair tries to bring John Humphries back to the message he wants to get across with the phrase the point is this.

Tony Blair
The point, however, is this...

Jackie
The point - the single fact or idea that Tony Blair sees as the main part of the discussion. Listen to some more examples:

Voice
I know I didn't tell you that he'd gone missing straight away, but that's not the point. The point is: he's safe.

Tony Blair
The moment you remove...

John Humphrys
History tells us that.

Tony Blair
Well, I know, but John, the point I'm trying to make is this: the moment you remove...

Jackie
If you want to tell someone in a very direct way that they don't understand what you're trying to say, you could put it like this:
You're missing the point.
Jackie
In this interview, Tony and John even end up arguing about what the main point in their discussion is.

Tony Blair
That's a completely different point.

John Humphrys
No, it isn't. It's exactly the point.

Tony Blair
No, it is - it is.

Jackie
To tell someone they're **missing the point** could be seen as quite rude, so be very careful about using it. The expression Tony Blair is about to use is also a bit direct for polite conversation.

Tony Blair
*Look*, I was there, discussing this.
*Look*, the charge against my position is...

Jackie
Again, *look* is a way of focusing someone's attention on what you're about to say. Here, Tony Blair said it quite impatiently, as if he was getting annoyed. The same goes for this example:
*Look*, this is nothing to do with you so leave me alone!

Jackie
If you're talking to a friend and say it more softly it sounds OK.
*Look*, you shouldn't worry about her so much. She'll be fine.

Jackie
Now we're going to hear a bit more of that last clip from Tony Blair. What expression does he use to show he wants John to believe that what he's saying is true?

Tony Blair
Look, I was there, discussing this and **I can assure you that** the idea that there had been a sort of irreversible decision taken...
Jackie

*I can assure you that* - a fairly formal phrase that you might want to use when you want to convince someone that something is true.

*I can assure you that* we'll do everything we can to help him.

*I can assure you that* this is the best quality we have.