Quiz

For each question choose the one correct answer.

1. I'm sorry. I didn't mean _____.
   a) to hurt your feelings
   b) hurting your feelings
   c) upset your feelings

2. I'm ____ sorry. I won't do it again.
   a) seriously
   b) so
   c) such

3. Sorry ____ eating all the cake. I didn't know you hadn't had any.
   a) with
   b) to
   c) for

4. I was _____. I know it's no excuse, but I am sorry.
   a) in the order
   b) out of order

Answers
1. a
2. b
3. c
4. b
How to
bbclearingenglish.com

Transcript

Amber
Hello. I’m Amber and this is How To, the series from bbclearingenglish.com that gives you useful language to do things in English. In this programme, we look at different ways of saying sorry in everyday situations.

First, let’s recap the simplest way to tell someone that you’re sorry for doing something wrong. It’s just a one-word exclamation:

EXAMPLE
Sorry!

Amber
Now imagine you're playing music very loudly in your room and your flatmate is trying to revise for his exams. He shouts:

EXAMPLE
Turn it down! I've got an exam in the morning!

Amber
You should shout back:

EXAMPLE
Sorry!

Amber
And turn your music down. Listen again:

EXAMPLE
Complaint
Turn it down! I've got an exam in the morning!

Apology
Sorry!

Amber
Now, sometimes, especially with people you don’t know, it's more polite to say ‘I’m sorry’. For example, imagine you’re in a library and you step backwards without looking and step on someone’s foot. In this situation, it would be polite to say:
EXAMPLE
Ah! I’m sorry!

Amber
Just ‘sorry’ would do, and in a busy situation, like a crowded train, just ‘sorry!’ would be enough.

Now, if you need to say sorry for doing something wrong to someone you know well or care about a lot, we often add the words ‘really’ or ‘so’ to emphasise how we feel. For example:

EXAMPLES
I’m really sorry, Pete — I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings.
I’m so sorry – I forgot your birthday, Oliver!

Amber
Those speakers do sound truly sorry, don’t they? Listen again to how we add the words ‘really’ and ‘so’ to stress how we feel.

EXAMPLES
I’m really sorry, Pete – I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings.
I’m so sorry – I forgot your birthday, Oliver!

Amber
And just a note about body language: in British culture, when we say sorry to people we know well and care about a lot, it’s usual to make eye contact, and we might even put a hand on the person’s arm as we speak.

Now, so far we’ve looked at short and simple ways to say sorry. These will get you a long way, but when you’ve done something more serious, you might want to say sorry and to say what you’re sorry for.

So let’s practice three ways to do this. It’s worth learning these three patterns because even in informal, everyday situations, it’s polite, in English, to explain what you’re sorry about – people expect it!

Here’s an example of the first pattern. Imagine you’re late for your English lesson. When you arrive, you tell the teacher, ‘I’m sorry I’m late.’
EXAMPLE
I'm sorry I'm late!

Amber
Now you try. You look in your bag and you've forgotten your textbook. How could you say sorry for this to the teacher?


Now here are two more easy ways to explain why you’re sorry. They use the words ‘about’ and ‘for’. First, here are some examples using ‘about’:

EXAMPLES
Sorry about the mess. I'll clean up later!
I'm sorry about the trouble I've caused.
I'm so sorry about last night.

Amber
And here are two examples of how to say why you're sorry using the word ‘for’.

EXAMPLE
Sorry for eating the last piece of cake!
I'm really sorry for taking your DVD!

Amber
Notice that we say sorry for doing something!

EXAMPLE
Sorry for drinking all the milk!
I'm sorry for lying.

Amber
And finally, it might be a good idea to give a reason for your behaviour when you say sorry. This is something we often do in English.

EXAMPLE
I'm sorry for lying, but it seemed the best thing to do at the time!

Amber
And now to end the programme, here's part of an episode of The Flatmates, where you can hear lots of conversational English. You'll hear Helen say sorry to
her friend and flatmate, Tim. Helen is sorry for shouting angrily at Tim a few days before, when he’d asked her a polite question about the rent.

Notice that Helen doesn’t actually say the words ‘I’m sorry’ at first; instead she says, ‘I want to apologise for – ’ and this is something people often say as a way of saying sorry without actually saying the words ‘I’m sorry’! You can say: ‘I want to apologise for – ’ Listen.

**EXAMPLE**

Helen
Tim, have you got a minute?

Tim
Well, it's not like I've got a ton of things to do, is it?

Helen
No, no, it's not. Tim, I want to apologise for the way I spoke to you the other day.

Tim
Oh yeah?

Helen
Yeah. I was well out of order. I've been having a hard time lately but that's no excuse. I'm sorry.

Amber
Well, I hope you won’t be lost for words, the next time you want to apologise in English! There's more functional English in *How To*, from bbclearningenglish.com.