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SL9. Asking for Clarification

Student Name: _____ Student ID Number: _____

Instructor: _____ Level: _____ Date: _____

For media links in this activity, visit [the LLC ESL Tutoring website for Upper Level SDLAs](#). Find your SDLA number to see all the resources to finish your SDLA.

Section 1: Introduction

YouTube



FedEx commercial with John Moschitta

[Watch Section 1 video.](#)

How much of what the man said did you understand? Please circle one:

0% · 25% · 50% · 75% · 100%

Don't worry if you didn't understand much of what the man said. The man in the video, John Moschitta, held the world record for the "Fastest Talker" in the Guinness Book of World Records. It's no wonder it was difficult to understand him.

Another reason why it was difficult to understand him was because you couldn't ask him to rephrase, reword, or repeat what he had said. In everyday conversations, we can ask people to **clarify** what we do not understand. Asking others to clarify what they have said is an important skill that can help you in any situation, whether it is at work, school, home, etc.

Brainstorm: How could you have asked the man to **clarify** (to make something easier/more clear to understand) what you did not understand? Write down some phrases you could have used.

Example: *Excuse me. Could you say that again?*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Section 2: How to Clarify

Part 1 -- Clarification Expressions:

When speaking with other people, you will need to use clarification expressions or questions in the following situations:

Situation 1:

You may need to clarify information when someone does not understand what you said.

You can say...

- To put it differently . . .
- Let me explain that in more detail.
- In other words...
- To clarify, that means ...

Situation 2:

You may need to ask for clarification when you do not understand what someone said. When you ask for clarification, you should think about how formal the situation is. The situation could be...

- Informal – a conversation between friends or family members
- Neutral - any conversation
- Formal – a conversation at work, at school, in a meeting, in an interview, etc.

Informal

- I didn't/don't get that.
- What was that?
- You lost me.
- What did you say?
- Wait. Say that again.
- I don't get it.
- I'm lost/confused.
- What?
- Huh?
- One more time?
- So, you're saying...?

Neutral

- Do you think we can go over that again?
- Would you mind repeating that?
- Could you say that again, (please)?
- Sorry, but I'm not sure I'm following you.
- Excuse me, but I didn't catch the part about...
- I'm sorry, but what did you say about...?
- What did you mean by...?

Formal

- I beg your pardon, but I don't quite understand.
- Pardon me.
- Would you repeat that again, please?
- I wonder if you could say that in a different way.



Part 2 -- Sample Conversations:

[Listen to and read the conversations below.](#) One conversation is more formal and one is more informal. Write all the expressions or questions used to clarify or ask for clarification in the box below.

Conversation 1: The Drive Thru

Employee: Hi, welcome to McDonald's! How can I help you?

Customer: Hi. I'd like a Big Mac and a small Coke.

Employee: What was that?

Customer: I'll have a Big Mac and a small Coke.

Employee: Oh ok. Would you like to make that a combo for two more dollars?

Customer: So, you're saying for two more dollars I can get a large drink and a large fry?

Employee: Yep!

Customer: Okay. I'll do that.

Employee: Okay. So I have a Big Mac combo. That'll be \$7.18 at the second window.

Customer: Wait, what? I didn't get that.

Employee: Your meal will cost \$7.18. You can pay that at the second window.

Customer: Oh! I thought you said \$17.00!



Conversation 2: Cooking Class

Ms. Ramos (Instructor): Okay, so now that we have put our pizza crust in the oven, we are going to make the sauce to put on top! First, we want to finely chop our garlic cloves. Then we will dice our tomatoes and onions. We put all three of those in a pan with olive oil and bring it to a simmer. After that, you want to add the basil leaves and let it simmer for a while before adding the salt and pepper.

Student A: Pardon me. But I didn't catch how many garlic cloves we need to chop.

Ms. Ramos: That's because I didn't say. I usually use 3 to 4 cloves. It really depends on how much you like garlic. In other words, it's completely up to you. You're the chef, after all.

Student B: I'm sorry, but would you repeat the part about the olive oil again? Do we heat the oil in the pan before we add the garlic?

Ms. Ramos: Yes, you want to heat the oil for about 1 minute before you add the other ingredients.

Student A: I'm sorry, Ms. Ramos, but I'm lost. Could you please be more specific about how long we need to simmer the sauce for?

Ms. Ramos: Of course. Let me explain it all in more detail and demonstrate it for you.



Part 3 -- Fill-in-the-blanks

Read the conversation below. Decide whether the situation is formal or informal. Fill in the blanks with an appropriate clarification expression or question. More than one expression or question may be possible for some blanks.

Conversation at a Clothing Store:

Store Clerk: Hi. Welcome to *Charlotte's*. Can I help you find something or are you just looking?

Marianne: I'm not sure. Aren't you having a sale right now?

Store Clerk: We are! Everything with a red sign above it is on sale. And every red sign with a black sticker means that you can get an additional 10% off if you are a member. If you are not a member, you could sign up today to get the 10% off and an additional \$10 coupon just for signing up today.

Marianne: I'm sorry, _____. It sounds too good to be true. _____
_____?

Store Clerk: Sure, _____. If you sign up for our membership card today, you get \$10 off your purchase. All the items in the store with a red sign above are on sale. If the red sign has a black sticker, then you will also get 10% off because you have your new membership card.





Marianne: Wow! That red sign says 40% off, and it has a black sticker. _____ if I get the membership card today, I can get 50% off those items? Can I also use a 10% off coupon that I got from the Internet?

Store Clerk: You sure can!



Section 3: Student Self-Assessment

Complete this table BEFORE meeting with a tutor.

Communication Skill	I can't do this YET. 	I can do this WITH help. 	I can do this WITHOUT help. 	I can TEACH this to a classmate. 
I can clarify information when someone does not understand what I said.				
I can ask for clarification when I do not understand what someone said.				
I can identify clarification expressions and questions in a conversation.				
I can use appropriate clarification expressions and questions in a conversation.				

Here are some words/phrases I need to practice.

Good job!

Now go to the [LLC Tutoring Website](#) and make an appointment with a tutor.




Visit the [Virtual LLC](#) at the time of your appointment.



Section 5: Practice with a Tutor!

Meet with a tutor and share this activity with the tutor. . To make sure you understand how to clarify, the tutor will read you a short story, and you will need to write it down. If you do not understand what the tutor says, you will have to provide an appropriate clarification expression or question. You may also ask the tutor any questions that you might have.

Grading Rubric

Possible Points	Need Practice  (0-1 Point)	Good Job  (2-3 Points)	Excellent Work  (4-5 Points)
Content	Not enough information provided in responses and often does not use correct vocabulary.	Provides most important information in responses and some of the time uses correct vocabulary.	Provides all necessary information in responses and most of the time uses correct vocabulary.
Skill: Speaking	More than 6 mistakes saying words; needs guessing more than 3 times.	Not more than 5 mistakes saying words; needs guessing on 1-2 words or sentences.	Not more than 2 mistakes saying words; needs no guess about meaning.
Oral Fluency	Speaks mostly in phrases, individual words; many pauses.	Sometimes speaks in complete sentences; several pauses.	Speaks in complete sentences; a couple pauses okay.

*Students must receive at least 10 points to move on

Possible Points: _____ / 15

Tutor Comments:

Congratulations! Keep going.

You have successfully completed this SDLA and are ready to continue to the next.

Work on this more.

You have not yet mastered this SDLA. It is recommended that you complete it again.

Tutor Signature: _____

Date: _____