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Test Your Vocabulary Skills

Polite, Neutral or Rude Language 3

Read the situations below and decide which type of language is *most likely* to be used – polite, neutral or rude. Compare the different responses and consider why they may or may not be appropriate:

Situation 9 Buying a train ticket:

- a) Polite: "Please would you be so kind as to sell me a ticket which will allow me to make a return journey to the fine city of Newcastle-upon-Tyne today? I shall remain forever in your debt."
- b) Neutral: "I'd like a day return to Newcastle, please. I've got a railcard."
- c) Rude: "Give me a ticket for Newcastle. Return? Of course I want a return. I'm not going to stay there indefinitely, am I? How stupid can you get?"

Situation 10 You are in the pub with your friends when a stranger accidentally spills your drink:

- a) Polite: "Oh my goodness! I see that there has been an unfortunate mishap. Allow me to help you mop up the spillage."
- b) Neutral: "Oops. Oh dear. I'll just go and get a towel from the bar to clear it up."
- c) Rude: "You've ruined my trousers! You idiot! Don't just stand there gawping at me – go and get some towels or something from the bar!"

Situation 11 Deciding what to watch on TV tonight:

- a) Polite: "I really don't mind what we watch, my dear. The choice is entirely yours."
- b) Neutral: "What do you want to watch? I fancy "Ugly Betty". How about you?"
- c) Rude: "We're watching "Ugly Betty" and that's final. It's my TV anyway and I pay the licence as well as half the rent for this flat, so what I say goes. Got it? If you don't like it you can move out – and good riddance to you!"

Situation 12 Asking a friend if they want to go to the cinema:

- a) Polite: "Would it be an enormous inconvenience if you were to attend the cinema with me this evening, at a time which will be arranged so as to be mutually agreeable to the both of us?"
- b) Neutral: "Do you want to go to the cinema later?"
- c) Rude: "Liam is busy so I suppose I've got no choice – I'll have to go to the cinema with you. You're paying. And you can get me some popcorn too. A big tub."

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Answers:

Situation 9

b) Neutral: "I'd like a day return to Newcastle, please. I've got a railcard."

Situation 10

b) Neutral or c) Rude – depending on how you choose to handle the situation!

b) Neutral: "Oops. Oh dear. I'll just go and get a towel from the bar to clear it up."

c) Rude: "You've ruined my trousers! You idiot! Don't just stand there gawping at me – go and get some towels or something from the bar!"

Situation 11

b) Neutral: "What do you want to watch? I fancy "Ugly Betty". How about you?"

Situation 12

b) Neutral: "Do you want to go to the cinema later?"