Unit 2 · Asking for Permission

STUDY NOTES

The unit in one line

- **ask for permission**; **give** it or **refuse** it politely, with a reason
- a fable (*The Small Bird's Wisdom*), a poem (*May I Go Now?*); **countable and uncountable nouns**; **a, an, some, any**; an **email asking for leave**; a **friendly letter**; **homophones**

Getting started

- **dialogue:** a girl asks *Can I use the mobile phone?* → mother: no, time for bed (a **no with a reason**) → *May I read a story before I sleep?* → *Sure*, but sleep early → *Thank you*
- **song** (Philip Evan Cowlishaw): can't count → can count: food → fish, water → glasses, bread → slices, knowledge → subjects; *How **many** fingers? How **much** money? How **many** people?*
- the countable one is often the **container** or **piece**: *a glass of water, a slice of bread*

Reading I: The Small Bird's Wisdom (a fable)

- **fable** = a short story, often with talking animals, that teaches a lesson
- the steps:
  1. **caught:** a rich man, his spring garden, a small bird in a **net**; it **speaks**: set me free, I love my **freedom** most
  2. **why should I?** too small to eat, gray feathers, not pretty, doesn't sing
  3. **a deal:** freedom for **three pieces of advice**; the man will listen, then decide
  4. the advice (below); "wise words": he opens his hand; the bird flies to a branch **overhead**
  5. **the trick:** it laughs: a **diamond** the size of a **chicken's egg** inside it; the man can't speak, his heart "stops beating"
  6. **the tempting:** winter, deep snow, you will **starve**; come back, I'll keep you warm and fed; the bird laughs again
  7. **the lesson:** the man has forgotten all three; laughing a third time, the bird flies away

Advice	How the man forgot it
1. Don't wish for what you **cannot have**.	wants the bird back; it loves its freedom too much
2. Don't try to change what has **already happened**.	he has already set it free
3. Don't believe in what is **impossible**.	a bird that small can't hold a diamond as big as an egg

- **lesson:** want what you can have; let the past go; think before you believe (a wild story that makes you greedy is usually untrue)
- **order of events:** saw the bird in a net → bird talked → three suggestions → set it free → asked it to come back → laughed a third time, flew away
- **retell as the bird or the man: I / me**, the same order, add feelings

Reading II: May I Go Now? (a poem)

- by **Susan A. Jackson**; the speaker, very old or ill, near the end of life, speaks to a **loved one**; the title asks **permission to die**, to let go
- **1–2:** goodbye to **pain** and **lonely** nights; lived my life, done my best; may I set my **spirit** free?
- **3–4:** fought at first with all my **might**; now a warm, living light **draws** me; but I'll live **one more day**
- **5–6:** that day is for the loved one (I see your **tears**); my spirit will stay close to you
- **7–8:** thank you for loving me, so goodbye is hard; **hold** me once more, and say you'll let me go today
- **rhyme:** lines 2 and 4 of each verse: *right / nights, be / free, might / light, stay / day, know / go, say / today*
- **true / false:** satisfied with life; ready to go, not live forever; the **tears** are the loved one's; going is **hard**
- **might** (noun) = strength; **might** (modal) = perhaps: *It might rain.*

Key words

freedom: the power or right to do what you want.
impossible: that cannot be done or be true.
overhead: above your head; in the sky.
diamond: a clear precious stone, the hardest substance.
beating: a series of regular hits, as of your heart.
starve: suffer or die from not having enough to eat.
wisdom: good sense; knowing what is wise to do.
lonely: with no one to talk to (noun *loneliness*).
spirit: the part of a person with their mind, feelings and character.
draw: pull.
hold: have in your hand or arms.

Pronunciation: long and short vowels

- ː after a symbol = a **long** vowel: hold it

Pair	Sounds	
sing · reach	/ɪ/ · /iː/	short *i*, long *ee*
you · soon	/uː/ · /uː/	the **same**
starve · warm	/ɑː/ · /ɔː/	*ah*, *aw*
just · first	/ʌ/ · /ɜː/	short *u*, long *er*
breath · cream	/e/ · /iː/	both spelled *ea*
laugh · haunt	/ɑː/ · /ɔː/	both spelled *au*

- keep apart: *ship / sheep, live / leave, full / fool*

Grammar I: countable and uncountable nouns

Countable	Uncountable
counted one by one: *a bird, two birds*	stuff, ideas, general words
singular and plural	**no plural**
singular needs *a, an, the* (or *my, one*)	never *a / an*
a feather, three eggs	*water, rice, advice, freedom, money, furniture, homework, information*

- to count the uncountable: a **container** or **piece**: *a glass of milk, two slices of bread, three **pieces** of advice*

- **both** kinds: stuff (uncountable) or one serving / kind (countable)
  - *I love **coffee**. / I'll have **a coffee**.* (one cup)
  - *full of **light** / turn on **a light***
  - *made from **paper** / read **a paper*** (a newspaper)
  - *some **chicken*** (meat) / *a chicken* (the bird)

Grammar II: a, an, some, any; how many, how much

	One countable	Plural countable	Uncountable
+	*a / an* dog	**some** pens	**some** milk
–	not *a* dog	not **any** pens	not **any** salt
?	*a* dog?	**any** pens?	**any** milk?
offer / request		*Would you like **some** biscuits?*	*Could I have **some** water?*
How...?		How **many** chairs?	How **much** milk?

- **any** in negatives and ordinary questions: *Have you got **any** friends?*
- **some** in questions that **offer or ask for** (you expect *yes*): *Would you like some more tea?*

Speaking: asking for permission

Ask	How polite	Then
Can I...?	friendly: family, friends	plain verb
May I...?	polite: teachers, elders	plain verb
Is it okay if I...?	polite, gentle	present simple
Do you mind if I...?	very polite	present simple

Giving permission	Refusing permission
Yes, you can. / Yes, you may.	*I'm afraid you can't.*
Sure. / Sure, go ahead.	*I'm sorry.* + a reason
No problem. / Yes, certainly.	
No, I don't mind. / Not at all.	

- **Do you mind if I...? → No, I don't mind / Not at all** = **yes, you may**; *Yes* = it bothers me
- **Am I / Are we allowed to...?** = do the **rules** let us?

Listening: rules at a new job

- **lunch break: 30** minutes; can't leave 30 minutes **early** instead
- **hours: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.**; no **flexitime** (choosing your own start and finish times)
- a **dress code** (a rule about what to wear): a uniform, no casual clothes, even on Friday
- all **vacation days** at once, with one month's prior **notice**

Writing

- **email asking for leave** (permission to be absent; Sanskriti, Grade 7B, **seven days' leave**, 15th–21st April 2021, sister's wedding):
  1. **To**, **Subject**: *Leave application*
  2. *Dear Ma'am,* + *I hope this finds you in good health.*
  3. who you are, what you ask, the dates
  4. why: one honest reason
  5. a promise: *I will cover all my missed lessons.*
  6. *Looking forward to your positive reply.* · *Yours sincerely,* + full name
- **friendly letter** (Lindsey Shepley's song), five parts:
  1. **heading**: address and **date**, top right
  2. **greeting**: *Dear ...*, + a **comma**
  3. **body**: the message
  4. **closing**: *Your friend,* / *Love,* + a **comma**
  5. **signature**: first and last name
- **letter to your sister** (a school tour to **Lumbini**, the Buddha's birthplace): the plan, cost, who looks after you, *May I go, please?*, a promise; *With love,*
- **project:** a **formal** request to the head teacher (the football ground for a science exhibition): **Subject**, *Respected Sir*, reasons, *Yours obediently*

Extra bit: homophones

homophones = same sound, different spelling and meaning

- air · **heir**
- eye · I
- be · bee
- buy · by
- cell · sell
- cent · **scent**
- dear · deer
- die · **dye**
- fair · **fare**
- flour · flower
- hair · **hare**
- heal · **heel**
- hole · whole
- hour · our
- night · **knight**
- know · no
- mail · male
- principal · **principle**
- right · write
- sight · **site**

principal = head of a school, **principle** = a rule or belief; **fare** = a ticket's price; **heir** = gets someone's money or title; **dye** = to color; **site** = a place; **scent** = a smell

COMMON MISTAKES

✗ She gave me an advice.
✓ She gave me **some advice** / **a piece of** advice.

✗ How many money do you have?
✓ How **much** money do you have?

✗ Would you like any more tea? (an offer)
✓ Would you like **some** more tea?

✗ We don't have some bread.
✓ We don't have **any** bread.

✗ Do you mind if I sit here? — Yes, sit.
✓ — **No, not at all.** Sit down.

✗ I hope this finds you in a good health.
✓ ... in good health.

✗ I request for seven days leave.
✓ I request **seven days'** leave.

✗ Our school principle
✓ Our school **principal**