Lindsay: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 89: “What NOT to Do If You Don’t Understand English Conversation.”

Gabby: Welcome to the All Ears English Podcast, where you’ll finally get real, native English conversation with your hosts, Lindsay McMahon, the ‘English Adventurer’ and Gabby Wallace, the ‘Language Angel,’ from Boston, USA.

Lindsay: In this episode, you’ll get eight ways to stop being rude when you ask for repetition in English.

Gabby: Hi Lindsay. How are you?

Lindsay: WHAT?

Gabby: I said “Hi Lindsay. How are you?”

Lindsay: WHAT?

Gabby: (Um) that’s a little rude Lindsay asking me “What?” like that. I just wanted to say “Hello.”
Lindsay: Yeah, but I just, I, I, I didn’t – first of all, I didn’t know it was rude and I couldn’t hear you, (like) I couldn’t hear you and I couldn’t understand you, so I said “What?”

Gabby: Well, you know there’s (there are) more polite ways to ask me what I said.

Lindsay: Oh really. Like, like what? (I mean) I, it would be good to know.

Gabby: Yeah. Well, you could say (um), you could say “Sorry?”

Lindsay: Yeah “sorry?” would be a polite way. So, so the reason that we’re going into this today guys is that (um) (you know) for me, I’ve worked with students -- sometimes occasionally when a student doesn’t know what I said, a student will say “What?” But actually when I hear that from someone, I feel really (like) “Whoa”, a little offended.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: It’s very direct.

Gabby: And Lindsay’s, Lindsay’s not just sensitive. This is true for most people. “What?” is really direct. It’s really, I don’t know …

Lindsay: It’s rude.

Gabby: …it’s totally rude, yeah.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: It’s really informal, really rude.

Lindsay: Yeah. So we, we want to remind you not to use that phrase and just – we want to show you some other ways to say it. So here we go. “Can you say that again?”

Gabby: (Mm-hm). (Um) “Pardon.” That’s kind of old….

Lindsay: Yeah. Something my grandmother would say.

Gabby: …but, but “Pardon” -- you could use it if you want to be really formal.
Lindsay: Yeah, sure. Another (kind of) casual thing to say is “Come again?” (Um) but that’s also a little bit old-fashioned. So what are some more modern ways to say this?

Gabby: “What was that?”

Lindsay: That’s a good one. “One more time?”

Gabby: (Uh) did you already say “Can you say that again?”

Lindsay: We did. We said that one. Yeah.

Gabby: What else? Oh, “Excuse me.” (Um), so actually my, my intonation was not that good for that. You, you’d have to say “Excuse me?”

Lindsay: Right.

Gabby: Is that right?

Lindsay: Exactly.

Gabby: ‘Cause (because) there’s (there are) different ways of saying “Excuse me.” We were talking about this before. (You know), if, if I don’t hear you I would say “Excuse me?” But let’s say (um), okay for example, (uh) (um), “Lindsay I hate your sweater.”

Lindsay: “Excuse me?”

Gabby: Thank you. I don’t hate your sweater. It’s actually really pretty, but I just wanted to, (you know) (like) insult you because that’s when you would say “Excuse me?” Right.

Lindsay: Exactly. So it’s all about the intonation.

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: It’s all about the way you deliver it.

Gabby: Yeah. Or one other way with excuse me is (like) (um) if someone is blocking your way and you want, you want them to move, of course you
would say “Excuse me.” Or if you’re really forward about it and you want to be rude, you might say “Excuse me.”

**Lindsay:** So there are three ways, three different things to communicate with that phrase.

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** And it all depends on your tone of voice.

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** Interesting.

**Gabby:** Yeah. So, so show them once more (like) how you would use it to (um), to ask what I said (like) if I was (were) talking to you like this.

**Lindsay:** “Excuse me?”

**Gabby:** I said if I was (were) talking to you...

**Lindsay:** Yeah. “Excuse me?” So (kind of) more of an upward intonation.

**Gabby:** Right.

**Lindsay:** Polite. Not so intense, not so sharp.

**Gabby:** Yeah, same thing with “sorry”, right. (Um) “sorry” can be used in a lot of ways.

**Lindsay:** Right.

**Gabby:** Yeah.

**Lindsay:** Yeah.

**Gabby:** “Sorry?”

**Lindsay:** Good. Okay and one last one was (uh) “Could you repeat that?” Did we say that one already?
Gabby: I don’t think so. “Could you repeat that?” Yeah. Well we’re repeating it anyway if we, if we already said it. So there’s (there are) lots of ways that you can ask for repetition instead of “WHAT?”

Lindsay: Right. So just avoid the “WHAT?”

Gabby: Yeah.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Gabby: So, (you know), just to repeat (um) maybe you can repeat after me, “Can you say that again?”

Lindsay: “Come again?”

Gabby: I can’t read your handwriting. What is this?

Lindsay: “Pardon?”

Gabby: “What was that?”

Lindsay: “One more time?”

Gabby: “Excuse me?”

Lindsay: “Could you repeat that?”

Gabby: Okay. Cool. So you guys have several new options. (Um) did we say “Sorry”? 

Lindsay: Yeah. “Sorry?”

Gabby: “Sorry?” So try using some of these instead of “WHAT?”

Lindsay: Right. All right thanks for listening today guys.

Gabby: Thanks guys. See ya (you).

[Instrumental]

Gabby: Hey Lindsay. I heard that (uh) one of your students was talking about the transcripts.
Lindsay: Yeah. So (um) a student of mine in Spain was saying that he is really a visual learner, so he needs to not only listen to All Ears English every day, but he also needs to see the words.

Gabby: Yeah, that’s really helpful, I think, for a lot of people to read as they listen. So yeah, we wanted to remind you that we have the transcripts available at our website, www.allearsenglish.com/conversations. And the transcripts are just the text of what you’re hearing.

Lindsay: Yeah. Just every word that we’re saying spelled out for you. So there are no secrets. You’ll know exactly what you’re saying, we’re saying. So come on over.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: If you want to put your ears into English more often, be sure to subscribe to our podcast in iTunes on your computer or on your smartphone. Thanks so much for listening and see you next time.