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## 1. The language of yes

A yes-man is someone who always agrees with those in authority especially when he wants to ingratiate himself with his superiors. But then you don't have to be a yes-man to know the different ways in English of saying 'yes'. Let's take first some examples of enthusiastic agreement that we can use in reply to various questions. To offers such as: "Would you like to try another slice of my apple pie?" — we can react with: "Yes, indeed I would/ I'll say/rather" or for those who like to be thought of as a bit of a comic there's a choice between "I don't mind if I do" and "I wouldn't say no." To a request like: "May I borrow your pen a minute to write that address down?" – we can indicate a friendly response with: "Yes, of course, yes go right ahead" or "yes, by all means." When something of greater substance is under consideration and the speaker expects us to support him but wants positive confirmation all the same as in: "You do think I'm right in refusing to let my future mother-in-law come with us on our honeymoon?" — we would be justified in using one of the following:

- "Yes, I couldn't agree with you more."
- "You bet your life I do" or an emphatic
- "Absolutely."

When the speaker voices an opinion like: "I think the government will make themselves thoroughly unpopular by increasing the rate of income tax", we can show that we endorse this sentiment with one of these two expressions: "That goes without saying" and "You can say that again."

Of course, there are times when we feel obliged to say 'yes', although if we had more choice in the matter we would be inclined to show our disapproval. Here then are some examples of what could be called reluctant agreement, together with their relevant questions:

- "Now tell me, are you going to ring up and ask the Smiths over for lunch next Sunday?" "Yes, I suppose so."
- "You will let me make an appointment for you to go and see the doctor, won't you?" "Yes, all right if you insist."
- "Can I have half an hour off to go and do some shopping please?" "Yes, go on then."

If, after a great deal of coaxing, your services are asked for and the questioner ends by saying: "And I'm sure you'd make a very good treasurer. You will

accept, won't you?" — you could show your reluctant acceptance by saying: "Yes, all right you win."

Finally, we come to cautious agreement. We are, in effect, saying 'yes' but we're not completely convinced. An insurance salesman could be trying to persuade you to give yourself greater protection: "I think," he says, "you should insure the contents of your house. After all, you might be burgled, mightn't you?" Now, you already have enough insurance and anyhow you don't want to encourage him too much so you don't commit yourself when you say: "Yes, you could well be right." When someone is criticising the firm in which you both work and wants you to share his opinion, he could ask: "You do feel the same way as I do about the way the management treats us, don't you?" Perhaps you're after promotion and don't want to get involved in an argument so you simply reply: "Yes, there's a lot in what you say." Even more non-committal would be: "Yes, you do have a point there." Occasionally, we still want to be careful in our reply but would also like to express our point of view. To a question like: "I think the judge was right to recommend that the prisoner should be set free, don't you?" — we could answer: "Yes, that's all very well but..." or "Yes, that may well be so but..." and then go on to state our thoughts on the matter.

Yes, I think that's all I have to say on the matter. Oh, just one word of warning, though. Should the question requiring the reply 'yes' be fired at you while you're in the middle of a mouthful of delicious food, use the international way of expressing it, nod your head. And let that inconsiderate questioner imagine what you might have said.