

Apology Profile

Read each of the following twenty hypothetical scenarios, and check the one response you would most like to hear if that particular situation were to occur in your life. Assume that, in each scenario, you and the other person have a relationship in which it is in both of your best interests to maintain a respectful and considerate attitude.

In other words, if the relationship is damaged in some way by the other person, assume that the relationship is important enough that you feel it necessary to receive the other person's apology when he/she has offended you. Also, assume that the "offender" is aware of his/her offense because you have expressed your hurt in some noticeable, direct way.

Some responses are similar. Focus less on their similarity and more on choosing the response that most appeals to you, and then move on to the next question.

1. Your spouse failed to acknowledge your wedding anniversary. (If you aren't married, assume you are.) He/she should say:

- ◇ "I can't believe I forgot. You and our marriage are so important to me. I am so sorry."
- "There's no excuse for me forgetting. What was I thinking?"
- △ "What can I do to prove my love for you?"
- "You can bet I won't forget next year! I'm going to circle the date on my calendar!"
- ☆ "I know you are hurt, but can you ever forgive me?"

2. Your mother knew how you felt about a matter and knowingly went against your wishes. She should say:

- "If I had only thought about what I was doing, I would have realized it was wrong."
- △ "What can I do to regain your respect?"
- "I won't take your feelings for granted in the future."
- ☆ "Will you please give me another chance?"
- ◇ "I knew how you felt but went against your wishes anyway. I wish I had not done that."

3. You were in a crisis and needed help, but your friend ignored your need. He/she should say:

- ◇ "Saying, 'I'm sorry' doesn't feel like it is enough. What more can I say or do to mend our friendship?"
- "I realize now that I could have been more help to you, and I promise that I'll do everything I can do to help you if ever you are in trouble again."
- ☆ "I am sincerely sorry and ask you to forgive me."
- ◇ "I should have been there for you. I'm so sorry I let you down."
- "I let you down when you needed me the most. I made a terrible mistake."

4. Your sister made an insensitive remark about you. She should say:

- "While I will likely say wrong things again in the future, what I've learned from this experience will help me avoid hurting you with insensitive comments"
- ☆ "I blew it! Can you forgive me?"
- ◇ "That was so thoughtless of me. I wish I had been more considerate of your feelings."
- "I know what I said was wrong and that I hurt your feelings."
- △ "Would you allow me to retract what I said? I would like a chance to restore your reputation."

5. Your spouse lashed out in anger against you when you had done no apparent wrong. He/she should say:

_____ ☆ "I am truly sorry for yelling at you. I hope that you can find it in your heart to forgive me."

_____ ◇ "I wish I had not hurt you by yelling at you. I feel so bad for how I treated you."

_____ ○ "I was angry, but I had no right to speak to you that way. You did not deserve that."

_____ △ "What can I do or say to make things right between you and me?"

_____ □ "I'm afraid that I'll do this again, and I don't want to. Help me think of ways to avoid blowing up like this in the future."

6. You were proud of your accomplishment, but your friend acted as if it was trivial. He/she should say:

_____ ◇ "You needed me to share your excitement, and I let you down. I hate that I didn't respond more appropriately."

_____ ○ "I spoiled your celebration by not being happy for you. I could make excuses, but really, I have no good excuse for ignoring your achievement."

_____ △ "Is it too late for us to celebrate your accomplishment? I really want to make this up to you."

_____ □ "I promise I'll notice and celebrate your accomplishments in the future. I've learned a hard lesson."

_____ ☆ "I know I failed you before, but will you please forgive me again?"

7. Your business partner failed to consult with you on an important matter of mutual interest. He/she should say:

_____ ○ "I really blew it this time. I was wrong to not include you in this decision. You have a right to be upset with me."

_____ △ "Is there anything I can do to make up for what I did?"

_____ □ "In the future, I plan to consult with you no matter what. I won't bypass you in making decisions again."

_____ ◇ "I know now that I hurt you very badly. I am truly sorry for what I did."

8. A coworker unintentionally poked fun at you and embarrassed you in front of others in your workplace. He/she should say:

_____ △ "Is there any way I can repair our relationship? Would you like for me to apologize to you in front of the staff?"

_____ □ "It's easy to take others' feeling for granted, but I want to be more considerate of you and others in the future. Will you help hold me accountable?"

_____ ☆ "I didn't intend to hurt you, and now all I can do is ask for your forgiveness and try not to repeat my same mistake again."

_____ ◇ "I deeply regret embarrassing you like I did. I wish I could go back in time and say something more appropriate."

_____ ○ "That was so thoughtless of me. I thought I was being funny, but obviously, hurting you like I have is not funny."

9. You were trying to tell your friend something important, and he/she acted disinterested. He/she should say:
- _____ "I messed up this time, but in the future, I promise to give you my full attention when you say you have something important to tell me."
- _____ "I'm sorry I wasn't listening. You don't have to forgive me, but I hope you will."
- _____ "I feel really bad that I didn't listen to what you were saying. I know how it feels to have something important to say, and I regret that I didn't listen to you."
- _____ "Listening is such an important part of a strong relationship, but once again, I blew it. You needed me to hear you, and I basically just ignored your need."
- _____ "Can we back up and try again? You talk, and I'll listen. You'll have my undivided attention."
10. Your brother learned that he had previously been wrong about a significant point of conflict between the two of you. He should say:
- _____ "I apologize. Will you please forgive me?"
- _____ "I am upset with myself over how I handled our disagreement. My behavior threatened our relationship, and that scares me. I regret the way I acted."
- _____ "I admit that I was wrong. If I had only known then what I know now, I could have saved us a lot of heartache."
- _____ "What can I do to mend our relationship. I feel like I need to do or say something to restore your respect for me."
- _____ "If we disagree over an issue in the future, I plan on gathering all the facts before I make any judgments. That may save us from unnecessary arguing."
11. Although you had expressed your annoyance with a particular habit many times before, your spouse continued exhibiting the behavior to spite you. He/she should say:
- _____ "I've taken this too far. I'm very sorry for not being more considerate of your wishes. I wouldn't like it if you did that to me."
- _____ "OK, I admit it; I am annoying you on purpose, and that's neither funny nor fair. I need to act more mature than that."
- _____ "Saying 'I'm sorry' won't take back the fact that I've knowingly tried to annoy you. What more can I do to win back your favor?"
- _____ "I have gotten into the habit of disregarding your wishes, and I don't want to go on doing that. From now on, I'm going to make extra effort to honor your wishes."
- _____ "I've tried your patience, and now I'm asking you to forgive me. Will you allow me a fresh start in honoring your requests?"
12. Your father gave you the "silent treatment" as a way of making you feel guilty about something on which the two of you disagreed. He should say:
- _____ "There is no denying that I'm guilty. I should have handled the situation with more fairness and honesty."
- _____ "I would like to make this up to you somehow, and I want to keep talking with you. May I take you out to dinner?"
- _____ "In the future, I'm going to be more honest about how I feel without trying to make you feel guilty for not agreeing with me."
- _____ "It's your choice, but I really do hope you will forgive me."
- _____ "You are an adult, and I feel really bad about controlling your decisions. I don't want to risk damaging our relationship."

13. A business associate broke a promise and caused you to miss an important deadline. He/she should say:
_____ "It's too late to do anything about it now, but I want so badly to avoid this type of error again. Let's talk about what I can do in the future to make good on my promises."
_____ ☆ "I don't expect you to forgive me considering the trouble I've caused you, but I would greatly appreciate it if you would forgive me."
_____ ◇ "I am so sorry. I promise you I'd come through, and I not only let you down but caused you to miss your deadline. I know this jeopardizes your work and our partnership."
_____ ○ "I've really messed up this time. You missed your deadline because of me."
_____ △ "I don't know what I can do at this point, but is there any way I can compensate you for my part in your missed deadline?"

14. Your neighbor asked you to wait on him/her outside the arena, but he/she never showed up for the concert. He/she should say:
_____ ☆ "Our friendship really is important, and I hope you won't give up on me. Will you forgive me for standing you up?"
_____ ◇ "I'm so sorry you had to stand there waiting on me. You are important to me, and I should have honored you and your time by being there when I said I would be."
_____ ○ "You stood there waiting on me, thinking I would show up at any moment, and I let you down. If I had only managed my time differently, I would have been there. That is totally my fault."
_____ △ "Let's go to another concert, and this time, I'm paying for your ticket as a way of apologizing for standing you up last time."
_____ "In the future, I will manage my time and prioritize my schedule so that I tend to our friendship like I should."

15. A friend's child broke one of your prized possessions while visiting in your home. Your friend should say:
_____ ◇ "I know this was one of your prized possessions, and I feel terrible about what has happened."
_____ ○ "I should have been watching my child more closely. It was my fault for not paying more attention to what was going on. If I had just done a couple of things differently, this would not have happened."
_____ △ "May I pay you for this special item, or can I purchase it somewhere for you? Is there some way I can replace this?"
_____ "I promise that I will be more protective of your possessions in the future and will not allow my child to play in 'off limits' areas when we're in your home."
_____ ☆ "You have a right to be upset, but I hope that you can forgive me and remain my friend despite your disappointment."

16. A church member blamed you with sole responsibility for the failure of a committee project although he/she shared leadership duties of the committee. He/she should say:
_____ △ "There is no excuse for my behavior, and the only way I'm going to feel remotely better is to make this right between us. What do you need me to do or say?"
_____ "I'm either going to learn how to treat my team members more appropriately, or I'm not going to lead any more committees. I want to grow from this experience."
_____ ☆ "Please forgive me. I was wrong to blame you, and I pray you will forgive me."
_____ ◇ "I can't believe I blamed you like I did. I really am embarrassed about my behavior, and I'm sorry."
_____ ○ "I had just as much to do with the failure of this project as you or anyone else. I should have admitted my shortcomings."

- 17.** Despite his/her promise to keep your secret, your coworker broke your trust in him/her by telling others in the office. He/she should say:
- _____ "I told you I would keep your secret, and I broke my promise and damaged your trust in me. I made a terrible mistake."
 - _____ "Help me know what I should do to restore your trust in me."
 - _____ "It may take you some time to rebuild your trust in me, but I'll be working hard from now on to prove that I am trustworthy."
 - _____ "You don't have to answer immediately, but will you consider forgiving me for making this mistake?"
 - _____ "If only I had thought about how much damage I was doing by telling your secret. I feel so bad for not having taken my promise more seriously."

- 18.** Your teammate spoke negatively about you to others on the team. He/she should say:
- _____ "I want to do anything I can to correct my mistake. Shall I apologize in front of the team?"
 - _____ "If I am ever again upset with you, I promise to gather my thoughts and approach you directly and respectfully."
 - _____ "You may not be able to forgive me, at least not now, but I hope you can forgive me someday."
 - _____ "What I said was mean and unkind. I regret what I said, and I wish that I could take it back."
 - _____ "I had a bad attitude and didn't once think about your positive attributes. I should have thought more about what I was saying."

- 19.** Despite your having several positive accomplishments, our supervisor only criticized your performance. He/she should say:
- _____ "You deserve recognition for your hard work. I will try to be more balanced next time."
 - _____ "I hope this won't damage our relationship. Will you accept my apology?"
 - _____ "I am sorry that I focused on the minor flaws of your performance. I regret that I didn't encourage you more."
 - _____ "I neglected to compliment you on the many strengths of your performance, and you may have felt that all your practice was for nothing. As your supervisor, I should be more forthcoming with praise for all the good work that you do."
 - _____ "How can I earn your forgiveness? Shall I write down the strengths of your performance?"

- 20.** At lunch, your server dropped food on you and ruined your shirt. He/she should say:
- _____ "Can you please forgive me for my carelessness?"
 - _____ "I am so sorry about that. I feel bad that I've ruined your shirt and inconvenienced you like this."
 - _____ "I am normally pretty careful, but I wasn't careful enough this time. I accept full responsibility for this mess."
 - _____ "I would like to reimburse you for your dry cleaning or for the cost of a new shirt. What seems most appropriate to you?"
 - _____ "This has taught me a hard lesson. You can bet that I'll be even more careful in the future when serving guests."

Go back and count how many times you checked each of the individual shapes. Then, transfer those totals to the appropriate columns below.



◇ = Expressing Regret

○ = Accepting Responsibility

△ = Making Restitution

□ = Genuinely Repenting

☆ = Requesting Forgiveness