

How to Buy Time When Speaking English: 4 Natural Expressions

English learning resource · EN

Key words & expressions · English

9 learning entries

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

1

Let me think

DEF

A neutral phrase used to create a short pause before answering.

Natural in informal and professional conversation; it signals that you still intend to answer.

Let me think. Friday afternoon should be possible.

Let me think before I choose.

2

Give me a second

DEF

An informal request for a very short amount of time.

Common with friends and colleagues; tone determines whether it sounds friendly or abrupt.

Give me a second. I think I saw your keys.

Just give me a second, please.

3

How can I put this?

DEF

A phrase used before expressing a difficult, delicate or complex idea.

It signals careful wording and can soften criticism or sensitive information.

How can I put this? The project needs a clearer direction.

How can I put this? Your previous style suited you better.

4

What I mean is...

DEF

A phrase used to clarify or reformulate a message.

Use it after an unclear statement or misunderstanding; it introduces the intended meaning.

What I mean is, perhaps we should choose another day.

I am not refusing. What I mean is, I need more time.

5

That's a good question

DEF

A response that acknowledges a thoughtful or difficult question while creating thinking time.

Often sounds appreciative; it should be followed by a real answer, not used to avoid one.

That is a good question. I have never considered it.

That is a good question. Let me think.



6

Let me see

DEF

An informal phrase used while remembering, checking or deciding something.

More active than Let me think: it often suggests mentally or physically checking information.

Let me see. I may have the address here.

Let me see which train arrives first.

7

Bear with me for a moment

DEF

A polite request for patience while you think, check or complete something.

Useful when the delay affects the listener; slightly more formal than Give me a second.

Bear with me for a moment while I open the file.

Please bear with me while I check the figures.

8

Let me gather my thoughts

DEF

A phrase used when you need time to organise several ideas before speaking.

Suitable for reflective, emotional or complex answers; longer pause than Let me think.

Let me gather my thoughts before I answer.

The news surprised me. Let me gather my thoughts.

9

I need a moment to think about that

DEF

A clear statement that a question or decision requires reflection.

Direct but respectful; useful when a quick answer would be unwise.

I need a moment to think about that before I decide.

That is an important offer. I need a moment to think about it.

