



La Mansión
del Inglés

CURSO DE INGLÉS

AVANZADO

Lección 3



Mastering Social Arrangements: Plans, Changes & Excuses (C1 Advanced)

Advanced Idioms & Politeness Strategies



"Something's come up"

Use this vague phrase to politely cancel plans without over-explaining personal details.



"Can we take a rain check?"

A versatile American-origin idiom used to suggest postponing an invitation to a later date.



Strategic Indirectness

Use "I'm afraid I won't make it" instead of "I can't" to sound professional.

The C1 Toolkit: Phrasal Verbs & Register



To "Call off" vs. "Rearrange"

Use "call off" for total cancellations and "rearrange" when you intend to meet later.



Put off vs. Postpone

Use "put off" for informal social plans and "postpone" for formal or professional contexts.



"Shall" for Suggestions

In British English, "Shall we...?" is the standard polite way to propose a group plan.

Punctuality Norms Across Cultures

Context	Punctuality Norms	Cultural Perception
Spain	Flexible (+10-15 mins)	Socially acceptable and relaxed.
UK	"The 5-Minute Rule"	Arriving slightly late is polite; 15+ mins is rude.
USA	Strict Punctuality	Lateness requires an immediate apology and explanation.

Lesson facilitated by La Mansión del Inglés

Spanish vs. English: Key Differences



Reflexive vs. Non-Reflexive

Unlike the Spanish "quedamos," the English "meet up" is never used reflexively.



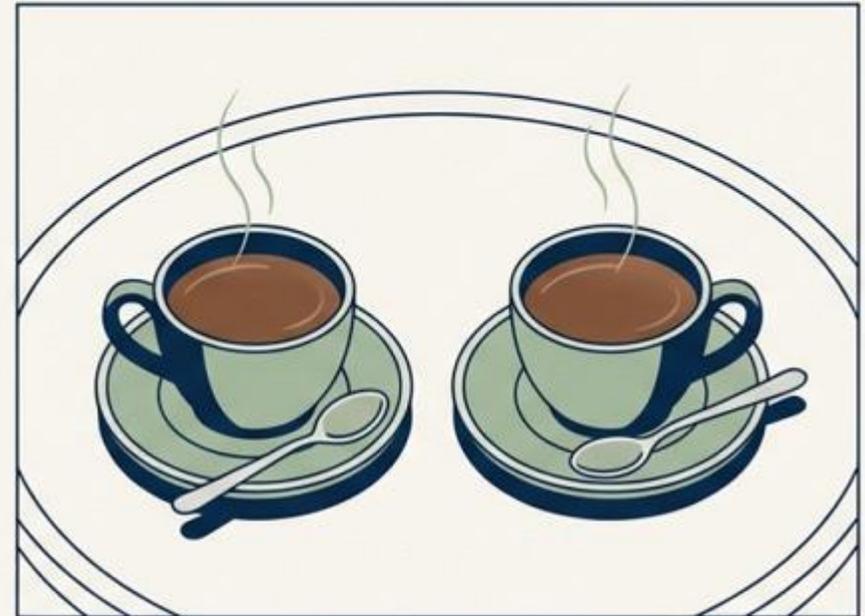
The Literal Trap

Avoid interpreting "We'll see" or "Let's do lunch" literally; they often function as polite refusals.



Pronunciation Focus: The /ʃ/ Sound

Ensure a clear distinction between "Shall" /ʃæl/ and "Shell" /ʃel/ to avoid confusion.



Lesson 3: The Art of Social Logistics

Making Plans, Excuses, and Polite Refusals in English (C1 Advanced)

Facilitated by La Mansión del Inglés

The Case Study: Emma & Liam

Hey, are we still on for dinner tonight at 8?

Yeah, absolutely. I'm looking forward to it.

Great. I'll see you at the restaurant.

🕒 1 Hour Later

Emma, I'm really sorry, but **something's come up**.

Oh no! Is everything okay?

Yes, nothing serious. My sister just called, and she needs help with something urgent. I won't be able to make it tonight.

I see. That's a shame.

Can we take a **rain check**? I promise I'll make it up to you.

No worries, we'll sort something out. Let's rearrange for another day.

Thanks for understanding.

Of course. Let's **play it by ear** and text tomorrow.

Sounds good. I'll be there in a jiffy next time!

The 'Soft' Cancellation



The English Concept

I'm really sorry, but something's come up.

- **Subject:** Vague ('Something').
- **Value:** Privacy & Indirectness.
- **Why?** British culture values softening the blow over specific details.



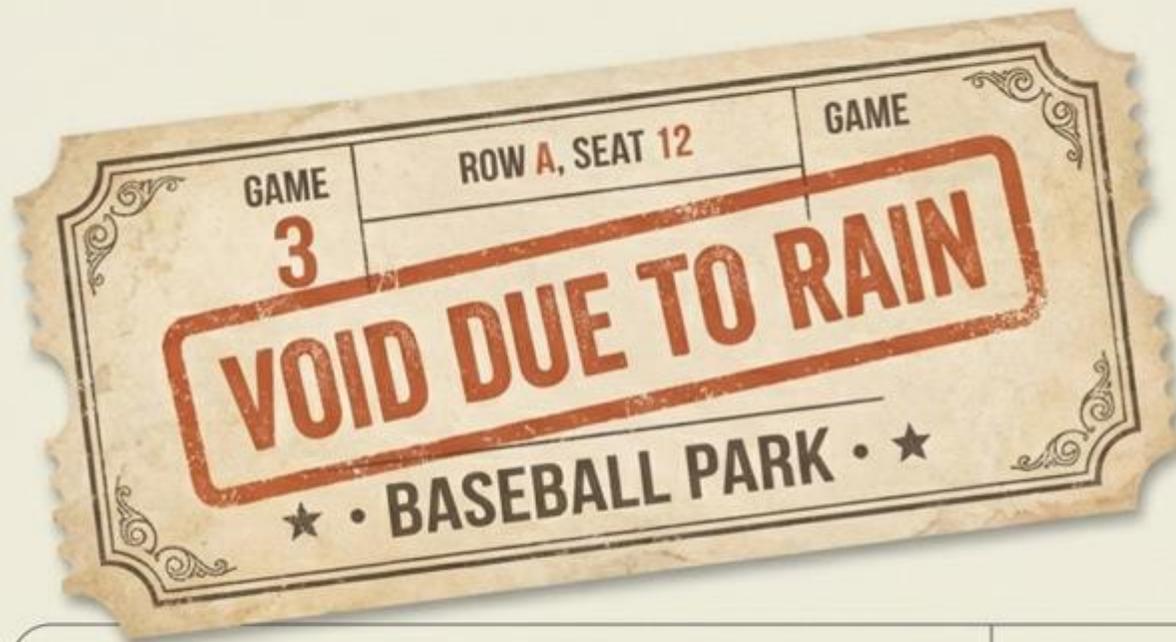
The Spanish Concept

Me ha surgido algo.

- **Direct Translation.**
- **Comparison:** Often used, but English speakers rely on this vagueness to avoid judgment.

Insight: Being specific can sometimes be seen as 'over-explaining' in the UK.

Idiom Deep Dive: The Rain Check



Phrase:
Can we take a rain check?

Definition:
A metaphor for postponing an event. It is not about the weather.

Origin:
US Baseball tradition.

English

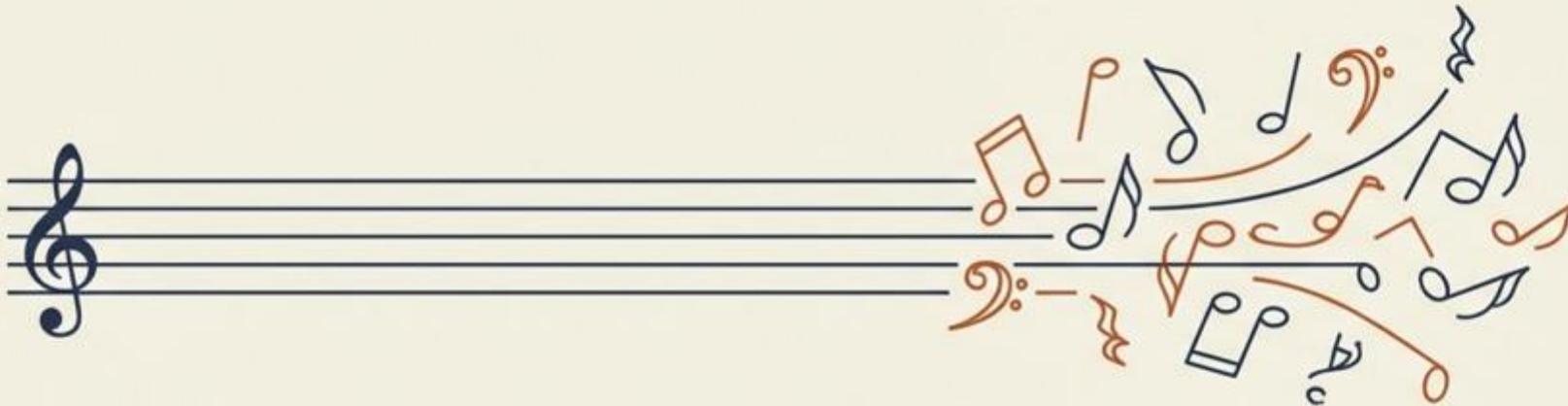
Can we take a rain check?

Español Equivalent

¿Lo dejamos para otro día? / ¿Lo aplazamos?

While American in origin, this is globally understood as a polite promise to reschedule.

Flexibility & Uncertainty



Play it by ear

Según surja / Improvisar.

Deciding details as you go. Use with caution in the US, where concrete plans are preferred.

I'm easy

Me da igual / No me importa.

Means "I have no strong preference."
IMPORTANT: Tone must be relaxed, not bored.

The Vocabulary of Logistics



In a jiffy

Meaning: Very soon (Informal).
Not a literal minute.

Translation: En un momentito.

Stuck in traffic

Meaning: The universal, socially acceptable excuse.

Translation: Atrapado en el tráfico.

No-show

Meaning: A person who doesn't appear and doesn't call. A professional taboo.

Translation: No se presentó.

Register Shift: Latin Roots vs. Phrasal Verbs

Formal / Latin

Informal / Social

Postpone (Posponer)

Put off

Use 'Put off' for drinks/dinner. 'Postpone' is for business meetings.

Cancel (Cancelar)

Call off

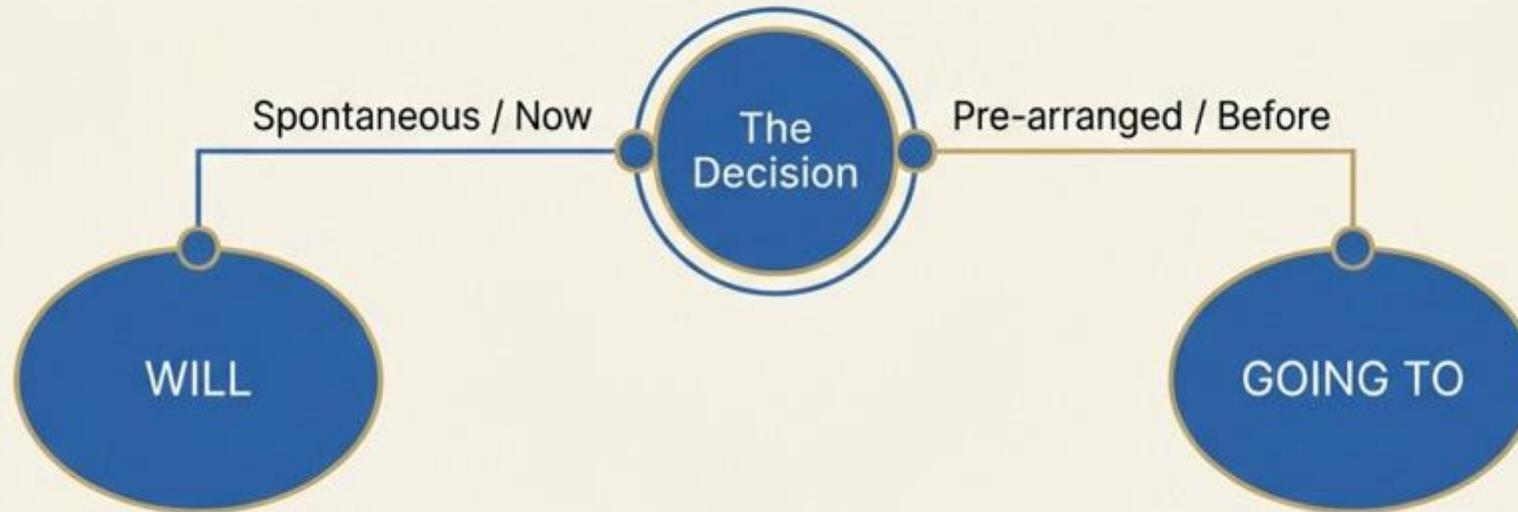
'Call off' implies the event is dead/final.

Meet (Reunirse)

Meet up (Quedar)

English does not use reflexive "we meet us" structures.

Grammar Focus: Future Intentions



Example: "Okay, I'll pick you up."

Spanish Trap: "Te recojo (Present Tense)."

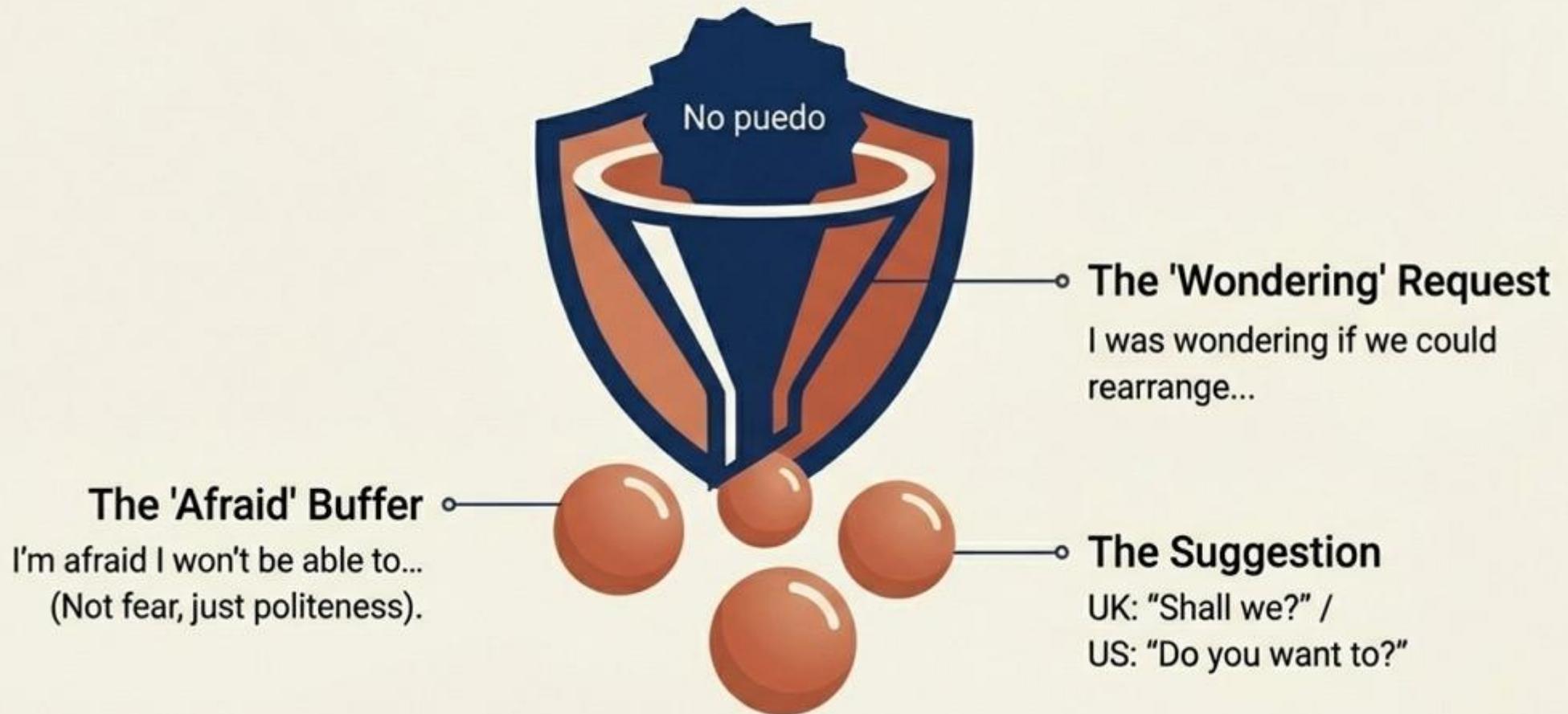
Usage: Promises, Offers, Instant Decisions.

Example: "I'm going to have dinner with Emma."

Spanish Trap: "Ceno con Emma (Present Tense)."

Usage: Plans made yesterday or earlier.

The Politeness Filter



Cultural Context: The Rules of Punctuality



UK

5 mins late = Polite.
15+ mins = Rude.



USA

Strict punctuality. Late?
Apologize immediately.



Spain

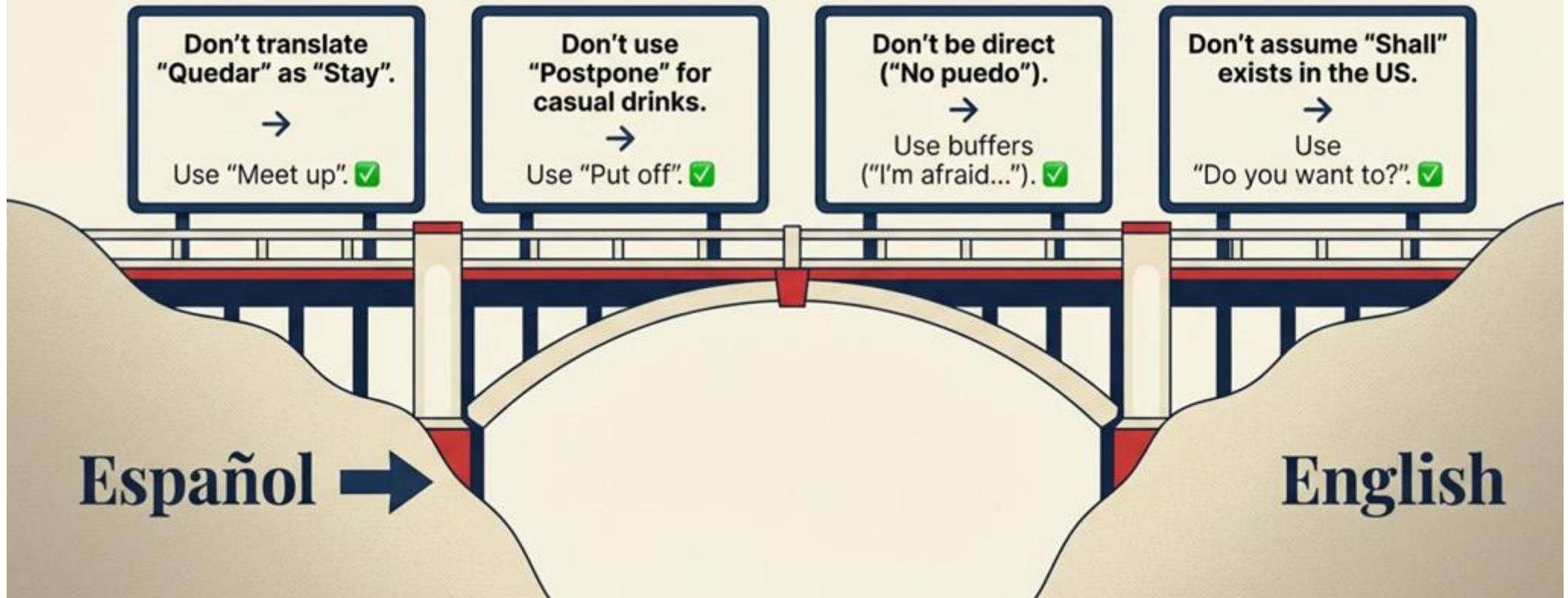
Flexible. 15 mins late is
often socially acceptable.

Risk: Applying Spanish norms in the US makes you look unreliable.

Decoding 'False' Invitations' in Playfair Display



Summary: The Spanish-to-English Gap



Pronunciation & Tone Notes

"I'm easy"



Tone must be relaxed. Abruptness = Dismissive.

"We'll see" in Inter



Falling intonation usually signals a 'No'.

"Schedule" in Inter

UK: "Shed-yool"

US: "Sked-yool"



UK: 'Shed-yool' vs. US: 'Sked-yool'.

Final Review: Key Expressions

- ✓ **The Excuse:** 'Something's come up.' (Vague & Polite)
- ✓ **The Postponement:** 'Can we take a rain check?' (Reschedule)
- ✓ **The Solution:** 'No worries, we'll sort something out.' (Problem-solving)
- ✓ **The Improvisation:** 'Let's play it by ear.' (Decide later)
- ✓ **The Register:** 'Put off' (Casual) vs. 'Postpone' (Formal)

Master the nuance. Speak with confidence.

You now have the tools to manage plans, cancellations,
and social expectations like a native speaker.

Course provided by La Mansión del Inglés.

Lesson 3: Meeting Up with Friends – Making Plans, Last-Minute Changes and Excuses

In this lesson, we will explore how to make plans with friends in English, how to deal with unexpected changes, and how to cancel politely without sounding rude. We will analyse a realistic dialogue, study essential expressions such as “I’m really sorry, but something’s come up” and “Can we take a rain check?”, and examine key vocabulary related to postponing and rearranging plans. We will also focus on phrasal verbs frequently used when talking about social arrangements, as well as important grammatical points such as the difference between “will” and “going to” for future intentions. Throughout the lesson, we will compare English and Spanish usage, paying special attention to cultural expectations around punctuality and politeness in the UK and the US.

Dialogue: Cancelling Dinner Plans

Emma: Hey, are we still on for dinner tonight at 8?

Liam: Yeah, absolutely. I’m looking forward to it.

Emma: Great. I’ll see you at the restaurant.

(An hour later)

Liam: Emma, I’m really sorry, but something’s come up.

Emma: Oh no! Is everything okay?

Liam: Yes, nothing serious. My sister just called, and she needs help with something urgent. I won’t be able to make it tonight.

Emma: I see. That’s a shame.

Liam: Can we take a rain check? I promise I’ll make it up to you.

Emma: No worries, we’ll sort something out. Let’s rearrange for another day.

Liam: Thanks for understanding.

Emma: Of course. Let's play it by ear and text tomorrow.

Liam: Sounds good. I'll be there in a jiffy next time!

This dialogue contains several expressions that are extremely common in informal English, especially in British and American contexts.

Essential Phrases and Their Nuances

“I'm really sorry, but something's come up.”

This is a very natural and polite way to cancel or change plans. “Something has come up” means that something unexpected has happened. In Spanish, we might say “Me ha surgido algo.” Notice that in English, the subject is often vague (“something”) because the speaker may not want to give details. English culture, particularly in the UK, values indirectness in delicate situations. The phrase softens the cancellation.

“Can we take a rain check?”

Originally an American expression from baseball, this phrase means “Can we postpone this and do it another time?” In Spanish, the closest equivalent would be “¿Lo dejamos para otro día?” or “¿Lo aplazamos?” The metaphor of “rain” comes from outdoor events being cancelled due to bad weather. In the UK, the phrase is also understood, but it is more typically associated with American English.

“No worries, we'll sort something out.”

“No worries” is very common in British English and Australian English. Americans might say “No problem” more often. “We'll sort something out” means “We'll find a solution.” In Spanish, “Ya encontraremos una solución” or “Lo arreglaremos.” The phrasal verb “sort out” suggests resolving a situation through discussion or organisation.

“I’m easy.”

This means “I don’t mind” or “I have no strong preference.” For example: “Italian or Thai food?” – “I’m easy.” In Spanish, we might say “Me da igual.” However, be careful: in some contexts, “easy” can have other meanings, so tone and context are important.

“Let’s play it by ear.”

This idiom means “Let’s decide as we go” or “Según surja.” It suggests flexibility. In Spanish culture, this flexible approach is common socially, but in Anglo-Saxon cultures, especially in the US, people often prefer to confirm details in advance.

“I’ll be there in a jiffy.”

“A jiffy” means “very soon.” It is informal. In Spanish: “En un momentito.” Be careful: it does not mean a specific time.

“To be stuck in traffic.”

Example: “Sorry I’m late, I was stuck in traffic.” In Spanish: “Estaba atrapado en el tráfico.” This is a common and socially acceptable excuse, though overuse can sound suspicious.

Basic Vocabulary Related to Plans

To postpone: to delay something until later.

“We’ve decided to postpone the meeting.”

In Spanish: “Aplazar.”

To rearrange: to organise something again at a different time.

“Can we rearrange our dinner for Friday?”

Spanish: “Reorganizar” or “cambiar la fecha.”

A no-show: a person who does not appear for an appointment without cancelling.

“He was a no-show.”

Spanish equivalent: “No se presentó.” In English-speaking cultures, being a no-show is considered very rude, especially in professional contexts.

Last-minute: something happening at the last possible moment.

“A last-minute cancellation.”

Spanish: “De última hora.”

A get-together: an informal gathering.

“We’re having a small get-together on Saturday.”

Spanish: “Una reunión informal.”

Note that English distinguishes clearly between formal events (“meeting,” “appointment”) and informal ones (“get-together,” “hangout”). Spanish sometimes uses “reunión” for both, but English prefers more specific vocabulary.

Phrasal Verbs for Plans

Phrasal verbs are essential at C1 level. They often create difficulty for Spanish speakers because Spanish does not use verb + particle combinations in the same way.

Put off: to postpone.

“We had to put off the wedding.”

This is informal but widely used. Compare with “postpone,” which is more formal. Spanish speakers often overuse “postpone” because it resembles “posponer.” At advanced levels, it is important to use both.

Call off: to cancel completely.

“They called off the match due to the storm.”

Spanish: “Cancelar.” The nuance is stronger than “put off” because it implies that the event will not happen at all.

Meet up: to meet socially.

“Let’s meet up after work.”

Spanish: “Quedar.” Notice that Spanish uses a reflexive structure (“quedamos”), while English does not.

English relies heavily on phrasal verbs in informal speech. At C1 level, sounding natural requires choosing the appropriate phrasal verb rather than always using Latin-based formal verbs.

Grammar Focus: “Will” vs. “Going to”

English distinguishes between spontaneous decisions and prior intentions.

“Will” for spontaneous decisions:

“Ok, I’ll pick you up.”

The decision is made at the moment of speaking. Spanish uses the same future tense (“Te recojo”), so context determines meaning. English makes the distinction clearer.

“Going to” for plans or prior intentions:

“I’m going to have dinner with Emma tonight.”

This implies a pre-arranged plan. Spanish also uses the present tense (“Ceno con Emma esta noche”) or “ir a + infinitivo.” However, English speakers rely heavily on “going to” for planned future events.

At advanced level, learners must also understand subtle uses:

“Will” for promises: “I’ll call you.”

“Will” for offers: “I’ll help you.”

“Going to” for predictions based on evidence: “Look at those clouds. It’s going to rain.”

Cultural Comparison: Punctuality

In the UK, arriving exactly on time to someone’s home can feel slightly abrupt. Being five minutes late is often considered polite, as it gives the host time to prepare. However, arriving 15–20 minutes late without warning is impolite.

In the US, punctuality is generally stricter. Being late, even by five minutes, may require an apology. Americans often confirm plans clearly and expect reliability.

In Spain, social punctuality is more flexible. Arriving 10–15 minutes late for a casual dinner may not be considered rude. However, this flexibility does not translate well into English-speaking contexts. A Spanish speaker who applies Spanish timing norms in the US may unintentionally appear unreliable.

Language reflects culture. Expressions such as “Sorry I’m late” are used frequently in English. Apologising for minor delays is common and expected.

The Use of “Shall” in Suggestions

“Shall we go?” is common in British English when making suggestions. In American English, “Shall” sounds formal or old-fashioned. Americans prefer “Should we go?” or “Do you want to go?”

For Spanish speakers, “shall” can be confusing because it does not have a direct equivalent. It is not simply the future tense. In modern British English, it is mainly used in questions for suggestions: “Shall we meet at seven?” It implies collaboration and politeness.

Politeness Strategies and Indirectness

English often softens negative messages. Instead of saying “I can’t,” speakers say:

“I’m afraid I won’t be able to make it.”

“I was wondering if we could rearrange.”

“I’m afraid” does not literally mean fear. It functions as a politeness marker. Spanish may use a direct structure: “No puedo.” At C1 level, mastering indirect language is essential for sounding natural.

Advanced Nuances and Register

Formal vs informal:

“Postpone” (formal) vs “put off” (informal).

“Cancel” (neutral) vs “call off” (informal).

“Gathering” (neutral/formal) vs “get-together” (informal).

British vs American spelling differences:

“Rearrange” is spelled the same, but vocabulary differs slightly in usage frequency. “Take a rain check” is more American. “No worries” is more British/Australian.

Tone also differs. British English tends to understate problems. An English person might say, “That’s a bit inconvenient,” meaning it is very inconvenient. Americans are often more direct.

Interpreting Meaning Beyond Words

When someone says, “We’ll see,” it can mean uncertainty or even polite refusal. Spanish learners often interpret it literally. Context and intonation are key.

Similarly, “Let’s do lunch sometime” in American English may not be a concrete invitation. It can be a polite formula without real intention. Spanish tends to treat invitations more literally.