

Apology: HOWTO, Attempt At

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Sources

My head ("intra-personal communication")

<https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-apologize-more-sincerely-3144467>

<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/how-to-apologize/>

<https://www.wikihow.com/Apologize>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/valley-girl-brain/201709/7-ways-truly-say-youre-sorry>

<https://time.com/5400607/how-to-apologize-loved-ones/>

<https://www.fatherly.com/love-money/how-to-apologize-the-6-steps-of-the-perfect-apology/>

The Ideas

- **Think about the nature of the apology.** Different people, and different relationships, benefit from different kinds of apologies (see, e.g., <https://time.com/5400607/how-to-apologize-loved-ones/>). What is the right apology for *you*, based on your life experiences and your current context, may not be the right apology for *someone else*, based on their experiences and context, or may inadvertently make things worse.
- **Understand the goals in apologizing**
In addition to mending a situation in a relationship, by apologizing, you are able to:
 - a. Open up a line of communication with the other person
 - b. Express your regret and remorse
 - c. Acknowledge that you were wrong
 - d. Discuss what is allowed and not allowed in your relationship
 - e. Learn from your mistakes and find new ways of dealing with difficult situations
- **Know when to apologize.** An apology offers you the chance to "own" mistakes you made, but re-establish what you think was okay (and not okay).
- **Create a safe space for reflection.** Find a quiet time and space where you're not hurried and less likely to be interrupted.
- **Step-By-Step**
 - a. **Say you're sorry.** Not, "I'm sorry, but . . .", just plain ol' "I'm sorry." "But" negates and minimizes the phrase that precedes it, associating it to a separate condition or excuse.

- b. **Own the mistake.** It's important to show the other person that you're willing to take responsibility for your actions. Not "I'm sorry if you", but "I'm sorry that I".
- c. **Acknowledge the negative impact it had.** This is the hardest part, because it requires reflecting on our role in creating negative situations. This can feel impossible if we don't really think we did much wrong, or if our intentions were good.
 - Ask yourself: How is the other person feeling? What did I do that caused that feeling? Could I have done something differently?
 - Then acknowledge these things. Empathize with the offended person; the most important thing is that you demonstrate that you are trying to understand how they feel.
- d. **Don't expect reciprocity.** Apologies often may need to come from both sides of the relationship; but should not be dependent on one another.
- e. **Don't blame them or others.** Your apology is a chance for you to reflect on yourself and your role in creating a negative situation with another person. Save the (constructive) criticisms for another conversation, they detract from the goals in apologizing.
- f. **Describe what happened.** The person you're apologizing to needs to know that you understand what happened and why it was hurtful to them. Make sure you remain focused on your role rather than deflecting the blame.
- g. **Admit you were wrong.** It takes a big person to own up to being wrong. But you've already reminded yourself that you're a big person. You've got this.
- h. **Explain what went wrong on your end.** The appropriateness of this fundamentally depends on the relationship. It can be useful to ask if they would like to hear what you think went wrong on your end. If it is appropriate for the relationship, for example, a child to a parent, or between two friends, try to let them know that whatever mistake you made, there was a reason behind it. This can go a long way toward letting them see what your thinking was behind your actions and perhaps change their perspective on why they're upset. If they think you did something wrong because you're thoughtless or don't care, but then hear your actual reasoning behind your error, it can soften them up a lot.

"It's trying to help the other party understand how this happened in a way where they can understand that it was a mistake or an error," says Lewicki [M note: whoever that is]. "It's an effort to put them in your shoes to get a sense of how and why it happened."
- i. **Make Amends.** Let the wronged person know how you intend to fix the situation. Part of the sincerity of an apology is a willingness to put some action into it. If you broke something of someone's, see if you can replace it. If you said something hurtful, say some nice things that can help to generate more positive feelings. If you broke trust, see what you can do to rebuild it. Whatever you can do to make things better, do it.

If you're not sure what would help, ask the other person what you can do to help them to feel better, perhaps by saying things like:

- “How can I make this up to you?”
- “What can I do that would make this right between us?”

“When apologizing to a friend, it may be appropriate to offer to repair your wrongdoing,” says Morin [M note: whoever] who suggests offering to take your co-worker to lunch after that missed coffee date. “While you can’t undo what you did wrong, you can offer to do something that shows you value the relationship and you’re invested in doing whatever you can to make it work.”

A [friend](#) wants to know you’re dedicated to preserving the friendship too.

- j. **Ask for forgiveness.** A little vulnerability goes a long way toward proving that you mean what you say.
 - **Be ready to apologize multiple times.**

“To apologize and expect life to return to normal because you said sorry is unrealistic,” he says [M note: whoever `he` is]. “This contrition will help reduce the [anger](#) that the other may be feeling and help rebuild the trust.”
 - **Be patient.** If you feel ready to move on, that does not mean the other person does. To be sincere in an apology, that apology holds and is active while the person you’re apologizing to becomes ready to move on.
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