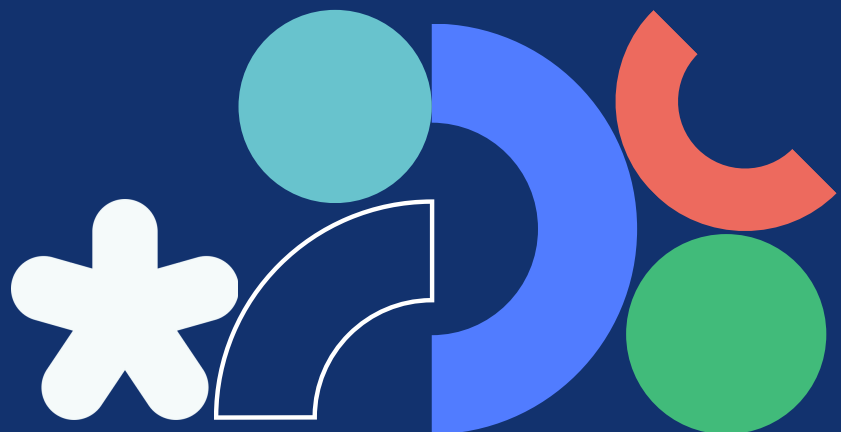


THE POLITE- BUT-ASSERTIVE PHRASEBANK

Twenty-five phrases for CELPIP Speaking Task 6: difficult situations

Created by Bailey with E2





The hardest part of CELPIP Speaking Task 6 isn't speaking English. It's saying a difficult thing while staying polite. This phrasebank gives you twenty-five expressions, sorted by situation, that you can practise now and have ready on test day. They map straight onto the 4-part framework from the video.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOUR PR:

On Express Entry, lifting Speaking from CLB 7 to CLB 9 is worth up to 14 CRS points from this one skill (single applicant, first official language), and if Speaking is your weakest skill, reaching CLB 9 can unlock far larger skill-transferability bonuses. Tone is what gets you there on Task 6. (Figures per IRCC criteria; verify your own profile at canada.ca.)



How to use this phrasebank

- Pick three phrases from each section that feel natural in your own voice.
- Practise them out loud, in full sentences, until they stop feeling forced.
- On test day, you won't be reaching for words; they'll already be there.

Remember: these are building blocks to adapt, not a script to memorise. Raters reward natural, situation-specific language, so swap in the real details every time.



Situation 1: Complaints (faulty service or product)

Use these when something went wrong: wrong order, late delivery, broken item, or poor service.

Opening lines

- "I'm calling about a recent issue with [product/service] that I'd like to bring to your attention."
- "I wanted to reach out regarding an order I placed with your company on [date]."
- "I'm hoping you can help me sort out a situation with my recent [purchase/service experience]."

Explaining the problem

- "Unfortunately, when the order arrived, I discovered that [the specific problem]."
- "I was under the impression that [X], but instead [Y] happened."
- "There seems to have been an error with [the specific detail]."

Making the request

- "I'd really appreciate a prompt resolution to this."
- "Would it be possible to arrange either a refund or a replacement?"
- "Could you let me know what options are available to me?"



Situation 1: Complaints (faulty service or product)

Use these when something went wrong: wrong order, late delivery, broken item, or poor service.

Opening lines

- "I'm calling about a recent issue with [product/service] that I'd like to bring to your attention."
- "I wanted to reach out regarding an order I placed with your company on [date]."
- "I'm hoping you can help me sort out a situation with my recent [purchase/service experience]."

Explaining the problem

- "Unfortunately, when the order arrived, I discovered that [the specific problem]."
- "I was under the impression that [X], but instead [Y] happened."
- "There seems to have been an error with [the specific detail]."

Making the request

- "I'd really appreciate a prompt resolution to this."
- "Would it be possible to arrange either a refund or a replacement?"
- "Could you let me know what options are available to me?"



Situation 2: Refusals and declining requests

Use these when you need to say no: declining an invitation, refusing extra work, or turning down a request.

Opening lines

- "I really appreciate you thinking of me for this, but I want to be honest with you..."
- "Thanks so much for the offer. I've thought about it carefully, and/but..."
- "I'd love to be able to help; however, [the reason]."

Explaining the no

- "Unfortunately, my schedule is just too full at the moment."
- "I'm not in a position to commit to this right now."
- "It wouldn't be fair to either of us if I said yes when I can't fully follow through."

Softening the refusal

- "Please don't take this as a reflection on [the project/the invitation] itself."
- "I hope we'll have a chance to work together on something else in the future."
- "If anything changes on my end, I'll be the first to let you know."



Situation 3: Corrections (pointing out a mistake)

Use these when you need to say no: declining an invitation, refusing extra work, or turning down a request.

Opening lines

- "I think there may have been a small misunderstanding."
- "I wanted to flag something that doesn't seem quite right."
- "There appears to be an error on [the specific item] that I'd like to discuss."

Explaining the correction

- "According to my records, it should be [X], not [Y] as listed."
- "I believe the original agreement was for [X]."
- "The amount I expected to be charged was [X], but I was charged [Y]."

Asking for the fix

- "Could we arrange to have this corrected?"
- "I'd appreciate it if we could update this on your end."
- "What would be the best way to resolve this?"



Situation 4: Delivering bad news

Use these when you have to tell someone something they don't want to hear: a missed deadline, a cancellation, or a reduction in service.

Opening lines

- "I'm sorry to have to bring you some difficult news."
- "I want to give you a heads-up about something that's come up."
- "I wish I had better news to share, but [the situation]."

Explaining what happened

- "Despite my best efforts, [the situation]."
- "Circumstances have changed, and unfortunately, [the outcome]."
- "I really wanted to make this work, but [the reason]."

Closing with care

- "I want to thank you for your understanding."
- "I'm genuinely sorry for any inconvenience this causes."
- "Please let me know if there's anything I can do to help with the transition."



The 4-part framework (pair your phrases with this shape)

Part	What to do
1. Set the scene (10–12 sec)	Greeting + who you are + what this is about
2. Explain calmly (25 sec)	What happened, with specific details (dates, names, amounts)
3. Make the request (20 sec)	What you need them to do, directly but politely
4. Close politely (3–5 sec)	Brief thank-you, look forward to hearing back

Timing target: about 60 seconds total. It's a shape to fill, not a script to recite.



Your turn: fill-in practice page

Read the prompt, then write one line for each part using a phrase from this bank. Speak it out loud and time yourself.

PROMPT: You hired a contractor to renovate your kitchen. The work is two weeks behind schedule, and the materials don't match what you agreed on. Call the contractor and explain the situation.

Part	Write your line here
1. Set the scene	_____
2. Explain calmly	_____
3. Make the request	_____
4. Close politely	_____

Model answer (using the phrasebank)

Hi, this is Maria Chen calling about the kitchen renovation we discussed in early March.

I wanted to reach out because the project hasn't gone quite as expected. According to our agreement, the work was supposed to be completed by April 15th, but as of today, we're now two weeks past that deadline. On top of that, when I came home yesterday, I noticed that the cabinets that were installed are oak, not the maple we'd selected together.

I'd really appreciate a prompt resolution to this. Could we set up a call this week to discuss a revised completion date and the cabinet replacement? I'd also like to know what options are available regarding the difference in material costs.

Thank you so much for your time. I'm looking forward to working through this together.



Your turn: fill-in practice page

Want feedback on your own Task 6 answers?

E2's CELPIP courses include expert feedback on your speaking responses, full mock tests, and live classes with trainers who know exactly what raters listen for.

Get started free at [E2Language.com](https://www.e2language.com)