

Apologies

An apology is a statement that expresses regret over an action or asks pardon for a fault or offense. An effective apology both acknowledges responsibility and expresses remorse. Statements such as "I am very sorry," "How can I make up for this?" and "I won't ever do that again" are examples of the ways in which we can admit that we are at fault and that we regret our actions.

Good apologies can prevent some problems from escalating and are a necessary part of positive conflict resolution. An effective apology can ease tension, restores trust, and benefits both parties. However, an insincere apology can make matters worse. Most people can sense when someone is being insincere. When individuals feel that they have been harmed and fail to receive a sincere apology, they often continue to feel hurt, begin to build resentment, and are more likely to seek revenge or punishment. Thus, it becomes much more difficult to resolve the offense and to move forward.

How To:

Are you involved in a conflict in which you must apologize to someone? Here are some elements you might want to include.

- Acknowledge what you did. "I was playing my music really loud at 3 o'clock Tuesday morning."
- Take responsibility for your actions and admit that you made a mistake or behaved inappropriately. "I know that people were trying to get rest for midterms. My floormates told me they had a big exam coming up in the morning. I know I didn't listen and that I did was against our community standards."
- Acknowledge the impact that your actions may have had on other people. This might include bruised feelings, inconvenience, stress, or other costs. "I know I disturbed a lot of people on the floor with my music and that because of that people did not perform as well as they would have wanted to on their exams."
- Apologize for having caused pain or having done damage. "I am sorry for the disruption I caused and for interfering with your academics ."
- Repair the damage and state your future intentions. An effective apology must include corrective action and convey your desire not to repeat this mistake. "I would like to make up for my absence by offering to help people study for their next exam. In the future, I won't play my music after quiet hours and be sure to educate other about the impact."
- Don't make excuses! Sometimes we find it easier to offer excuses or to try to justify our actions than to say we are sorry. Excuses such as "I lost track of time," and "it has never been an issue before," allow us to avoid blame. Although we may acknowledge that a mistake occurred, excuses enable us to deny responsibility for the mistake.

Adapted from: (<https://offices.mtholyoke.edu/ombuds/apologies>)