



Excerpted from [Adulting Made Easy: Things Someone Should Have Told You About Getting Your Grown-Up Act Together](#), published by Get Creative 6 on March 23, 2021.
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The Art of Apology

Sometimes you'll say or do things you shouldn't have. Giving a genuine apology is part of adulting. As kids, we're taught to say, "I'm sorry," when we hurt someone's feelings. But it doesn't mean anything if there's nothing else with it. It's a way of telling someone, "I said the words, now get over it." Saying, "I'm sorry," without context isn't the only way to not apologize. You've definitely seen or heard a non-apology. It's why the phrase, "Sorry, not sorry" is a thing. Just look at some of the statements celebrities put out when they do or say something insensitive or awful. They may say, "I apologize if you were offended," or "I apologize for saying X, but what I meant was..." The first puts the responsibility on the person offended, not the person who did the offending. The second says there was a good explanation for why you did something rotten.

Steps to Making a Genuine Apology: SORRY

So how do you apologize and actually mean it? Just keep the word SORRY in mind. Each letter is a step in building a genuine apology.

S = Stand up

Recognize what happened and how it made the other person feel. Acknowledge you did harm, no "buts" about it. "I'm sorry I called you that name."

O = Own it

Once you acknowledge you caused harm, own your actions. It's not just that another person was offended. You're responsible for that offense. "I was angry and I overreacted."

R = Respond differently

Think through how you wish you'd handled it instead, and say it out loud. "I should have taken a moment to collect myself before I spoke."

R = Repair the damage

Sometimes it's easy to fix the damage. If you break something, you replace it. If you fail to do something and it's not too late, do it. Other times, there's no fixing it, so you may need to ask what you can do to make the situation better. "What can I do to help you move past this?"

Y = Yield to the other person's feelings

You can't make someone forgive you. You can say the right things, but that doesn't erase the hurt. "I know you're still upset and not ready to forgive me."

Staying in Communication

Communication is a two-way street. When you're out on your own for the first time, it's easy to forget that not everybody in your life knows each other. It's also hard to remember that sometimes you're going to have to be the one to reach out to others.

Create an Emergency Contact List

In our smartphone society, many people don't have landlines or numbers memorized. Update the medical ID or In Case of Emergency (ICE) contacts in your phone. You never think you'll need them until something happens.

Like getting heatstroke when you're on a work trip, causing you to barf in front of your colleagues, and then pass out while sitting at a high-top table in a restaurant with your ankles wrapped around the stool's rungs because you're too short to touch the floor. When you hit the ground, passed out, you also break your ankle. And because you're unconscious, having your ICE set on your phone is the only way someone knows how to get in touch with your emergency contact. That's a true story. The punch line now is, "It was the first time the EMTs had ever picked up a sober person from the floor of a bar!" The punch line then was, "Oh, crap!"

Put the names of the people you want contacted in an emergency, with their phone numbers and relationship to you in your phone. You can even just put it there as a saved memo. Make sure you have a written copy or a document saved to the cloud, too, in case you need to reach people and your phone is stolen, missing, or dead. You may even want to keep a piece of paper with the info in your wallet or purse.

Getting in Touch

Lots of communication is done without talking to someone. I love that I can text my hairstylist to set up an appointment, she can text me to confirm, and I pay her through Venmo. I don't really have to

talk to her at all if I don't want to, although I do when she's cutting my hair. But not all communication should be done without talking to someone. Let's look at when it's OK to call vs. text vs. email.

When Do I Need to Call?

- Emergencies: Including apartment maintenance emergencies, like a broken pipe or a thermostat that won't turn on in winter.
- Older relatives: Check with them, but if your relative signs a text message, "Love, Aunt Barbara," it's probably a good chance you should be calling her instead of texting or emailing.
- Time-sensitive issues: Like getting prescriptions filled, making sure your employer knows you won't be coming in that day, or making a doctor's appointment when you're really sick.
- A return phone call is required if somebody asks you to call back. (But you're off the hook when it comes to telemarketers who leave random messages.)

What to Say When You Call

Phone calls can be unnerving, especially if it's somebody you don't know. Just keep it simple. Here are a few basic phone scripts:

- "Hi, my name is Lauren. I live at 55 Hope Lane in apartment 2C. I'm calling about a plumbing issue. I'm at 555-5555. Thanks."
- "Hi, I'm [NAME]. I'm calling for [NAME]. Are they available?"
- "Hi, [NAME], this is [NAME], I'm calling to follow-up on [THING YOU BOTH KNOW ABOUT]."
- "Hi, I'm calling to see if you have [THING YOU NEED] in stock? You do? Great. Can you put it aside for me?"
- "Hi, this is [NAME]. I'm a patient of Dr. Expert's. I'd like to make an appointment, please."

When Is It OK to Text?

Text anybody who would text you instead of calling. In fact, I prefer you text me to tell me you'll call me, so I have time to prepare. You can text anybody who says they're easier to reach by text, whether it's your landlord, boss, or hairstylist. If they said so, it's OK to do it. And it's OK to text to check with someone you'd normally call if you don't have the time, energy, or privacy for a phone call. Let them know it's a quick check-in so they don't freak out that you're avoiding them.

When Is It OK to Email?

Emailing a business to ask a question you don't need a fast answer make sense if they have their email address on their website. You can email your doctor's office for non-time-sensitive questions, too. And it's fine to email friends, but not to e-blast all of them about something, put all their email addresses on cc, and open everybody up to the dreaded Reply All. If you have something you want to email blast, like a party invitation, at least put people on bcc. Any correspondence you want to keep a record of that doesn't need a formal letter should be emailed, including emails to your employer,

landlord, ex, and the airline you're trying to get a refund from. If you wouldn't want anybody to see what you've written in an email, a good rule of thumb is to not send an email. You never know who forgets to delete the previous thread before forwarding an email, who will forward an email without thinking about it, or who would forward an email if you made them mad enough.

Dos and Don'ts

You probably won't need to make small talk, speak up, apologize, make phone calls, email, and text all in one day. But keep these basics in mind.

DO: Be Clear

Say what you need, why you're talking to someone, and what you are hoping to gain from the communication. Use specific words as opposed to vague ones like "thing," "stuff," and "it."

Expressing yourself clearly cuts down on people misreading you. Re-read emails and texts to make sure your meanings are clear.

DON'T: Be Passive-Aggressive

Passive-aggressive is when you say and act as if you're OK with something, but you're not. It's passive-aggressive to expect others to know what you need or want and then be angry when they don't meet an unvoiced expectation. Don't expect people to know what you mean if you say the opposite. Most people take what others say at face value. If you say, "It's fine, I don't mind doing the dishes," don't expect them to guess if you're really not fine, or understand why you're angry at them later for something they didn't know bothered you.

DO: Say What You Mean

Say what's on your mind (as long as it's appropriate). This is the opposite of being passive-aggressive. Instead of expecting people to read your mind and follow your unspoken expectations, tell them what you need and want. You can also tell them what you don't need and don't want.

DO: Let Things Go

Other adults will do things that bother you, or make you mad. Deal with those feelings and fix what needs fixing in the relationship, and then let it go if you can. You don't have to forget; you just have to stop dwelling. If you can't, it may be time to rethink the relationship.

DON'T: Be Unresponsive

If somebody tries to communicate with you, don't ignore them (unless you have a restraining order, or have told them outright to stop contacting you). If you can't talk, send a text saying you'll get back to them. If you need space, say so. If you don't have the mental bandwidth to consider their request, ask them to call or email you back in a few weeks. Showing that you're willing and able is a big adulting win.