

# 8 phrases that make you sound weak at work

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[Office communication](#) is always a potential minefield.

You want to sound assertive, but not aggressive. You want to exude confidence but not cockiness. You want to contribute your expertise but still, seem open-minded.

Many people choose to err on the side of caution, navigating this dynamic by softening their [language](#) and using less [powerful phrases](#). Unfortunately, that can reflect poorly on you.

Sometimes in an effort to be humble, you unintentionally sound weak or insecure. Erase these eight phrases from your work vocabulary for an instant boost of confidence at your next meeting.

## ***I could be wrong***

Statistically, at some point, you'll be wrong. It could even be the next time you utter this phrase in public. Hopefully, your coworkers understand that you don't believe you're always right about everything – and therefore, you don't need to qualify your ideas with this phrase. Yes, you could be wrong – but that goes without saying. Don't undermine your thoughts before they've even had a chance to land. For those of you who use “I could be wrong” to avoid seeming confrontational, here's yet another reason to erase this from your vocabulary: it actually opens the door to dissension, which can lead to (you guessed it!) confrontation.

## ***Just my opinion***

Look at you, having thoughts and opinions at work, how cute! Wait, that wasn't the reaction you were hoping for? In most meetings and conversations, it goes without saying that you're offering your informed opinion. By qualifying your statement as “just my opinion,” it takes away your power and makes your idea seem insignificant. If you feel the need to belittle your own thoughts out loud, why should your colleagues respect them? Are you afraid of being

wrong? In that case, see above – and please don't ever double up with, "Just my opinion, I could be wrong!"

### ***It's out of my hands***

Some decisions are actually out of your hands – but don't disavow all responsibility to your team. Saying something is out of your hands is another way of saying, "I can't do anything about this." If you are in a leadership role, this sounds weak and erodes trust. If you aren't in a leadership role, it makes you look a little incompetent. Either way, this phrase is meant to placate people – but it actually doesn't make anyone feel better about the scenario.

### ***I'm sorry***

When done right, apologies are important and powerful. They have their time and place at work – but that time and place is not every day for everything. *I'm sorry to bother you... I'm sorry to follow up so quickly...* You didn't do anything wrong, you're not actually sorry, everyone knows this, so why are you apologizing? Really, you're worried that the person you're talking to might get annoyed by you seeking what you need to do your job and you're trying to pre-empt that with an advanced apology. Unsurprisingly, this comes across as weak.

### ***Would it be possible...?***

Nobody likes to be ordered to do something at work, so rephrasing requests as a polite question are commonplace. However, avoid starting that request with "Would it be possible...?" This phrase undercuts both you and whatever you're about to propose. When you question whether something is possible in this way, people automatically hear that it might actually be *impossible* – and whatever you were about to ask takes on several new layers that you never intended. Try something slightly more direct, like "Can you have this done by Tuesday?" or "Could we try it this way?"

### ***I hope that's okay***

People drop this in at the end of a heavy statement or a big ask, because they want to lighten the atmosphere a little. When you say you hope it's okay after you've just made a request... what if it's not okay with the person you're talking to? Does your request still stand? You might genuinely hope that someone is okay with what you've just assigned them, but regardless, in most scenarios the task has to be done whether they are or aren't. Don't give up your authority when you ask.

### ***I feel like...***

Using “I” statements instead of “you” statements is a good idea when navigating a dispute, but it doesn’t work out when you’re chiming in at a meeting. Saying “I feel” **minimizes your contribution** to the conversation by taking away all the power in your statement. “I feel we should start the project like this” doesn’t hold the same weight as, “Let’s start the project here.” If this is a deeply ingrained habit already, scale it back by substituting *I feel* for *I think* or *I believe* in the meantime.

### ***Does that make sense?***

Nothing says “I’m insecure” more than asking a validating question every time you present an idea, like “Does that make sense?” and “Do you know what I mean?” These are the questions of someone who knows she’s right but lacks the confidence to present her ideas as truth. These aren’t exactly rhetorical questions or space fillers – you really do want people to confirm that they know what you mean and that you are making sense. Unfortunately, instead of rallying the troops, this call to action just screams weakness in an office environment. Having the confidence to stand behind your thoughts and ideas rallies the troops more than asking them to constantly approve your every move.