

**New York City College of Technology**  
**English Department**  
**ENG 1101 Final Examination: Form B**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Students: Put your name at the top of this reading. You may write on this page. Hand in this page with your blue book on day 1 of the final. You will get back this reading on day 2.

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July 9, 2011  
The New York Times

**Don't Fret. Just Ask for What You Need.**

By Peggy Klaus

“You can't be afraid to ask,” my Uncle Art used to say when recounting tales of his successful 40-odd-year career selling mattresses up and down the East Coast.

My uncle was talking about making a sale, but corporate types need to ask for what they need, too. This is especially true for women, who, in spite of an increase in diversity training, mentoring and sponsorship programs, still lag far behind men in reaching senior management and C-suite positions. In fact, in 2010, only 14.4 percent of the executive officer positions at Fortune 500 companies were held by women.

Whether from fear of being perceived as too aggressive or too selfish, women tend not to be comfortable asking for what they want. And when they do ask, it can be in ineffective ways. Often, women's speech is peppered with timid phrases that scream a lack of confidence, such as, “I'm not really sure, but you could try it this way,” or, “Now, I'm not an expert, but ...” or, “I think this is a good idea — do you?”

Many women have also adopted an upward sing-song at the end of sentences, a regrettable habit popularized by the Valley Girl. It turns a strong declarative statement into a question, conveying weakness, uncertainty and a request for approval.

In addition, and perhaps most important, professional women sometimes forget to build their case around the things that matter most to their employer — principally, the impact on the company's profit. That was true for one high-producing client of mine, who needed a more flexible schedule that would allow her to work from home one day a week.

While she knew she could make the change work perfectly for her clients, she was still very reluctant to ask. She worried that her boss would demote her to part time and cut her salary.

After addressing her fears of the possible consequences, we went to work on perfecting her “ask.” We prepared a brief, clear account of why she needed to make this change and described how she could do her job without harming clients, colleagues or the firm's profitability.

The dreaded conversation with the boss lasted exactly 10 minutes. It was cut short the moment he told her: “I have no doubt we can make this work. In fact, if you should need to work another day at home, just let me know, and we'll see how we can manage it.”

It just goes to show you: you've got to ask.

Another client, a managing director of an international investment bank, says women need to be bold and straightforward when stating what they need to achieve their goals.

“My 25-year career path has included several job changes,” she said. “And with each new job, there was always a male colleague who was responsible for introducing me around the firm. In every case, my cordial host would introduce me almost exclusively to women. I know they thought they were helping me, but, in fact, it was the introductions to the men I couldn’t manage on my own.”

She was quick to add that the “women only” introductions had nothing to do with trying to undermine her success. The men had simply assumed that she’d be more comfortable with other women.

But how will a business see a return on investment if women build relationships only with other women? The answer is: It won’t.

From her previous experiences, my client had learned to ask for the help she needed. A few years back, when male colleagues welcomed her into the company with an offhanded yet well-meaning “Let me know if I can do anything for you,” my client knew exactly how to respond:

Introduce me to the top 10 people in the firm. Include me when you and the guys go out for dinner. Arrange a breakfast with the firm’s top traders, and let me introduce myself and my team. Count me in when the firm signs up for any corporate sponsorships. Invite me to your quarterly top-client events.

In addition to these requests, my client had the courage — some might call it the nerve — to schedule an appointment with the chief executive and tell him what kind of support she was seeking. When colleagues asked why she had gone to see the Chief Executive officer, she told them: “The firm’s paying me a lot of money to do a great job. What C.E.O. wouldn’t want to help me do that?” The act of putting your stake in the ground — stating exactly what you want — is scary for most women. We worry that if we’re too direct, we’ll lose the very audience we’re trying to win over.

Unfortunately, in the corporate world there is a narrower band of acceptable communication for women than for men. Even so, we can find ways to ask for what we need. Unfair as it may seem, women do have to be more attuned to the listener and more careful in determining the best way to say what needs to be said. But look on the bright side: for a gender with an ability to zero in on the feelings of others, we’ve got a head start.

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Part 1 – Form B**

In your own words, summarize “Don’t Fret: Just Ask for What You Need” by Peggy Klaus. The essay was published on July 9, 2011 in The New York Times. Be sure to state clearly the article’s thesis and three or four of the supporting points. You must include one or more brief quotations from the article to convey the flavor of the author’s style and thought, but be sure that the summary is expressed in your own words. Your summary should consist of one well-developed paragraph.

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**Part 2 – Form B**

**Choose A or B and write a well-developed essay of about five paragraphs.**

- A. In her essay, Peggy Klaus writes that women in the workplace need to be more direct in order to become as successful as their male counterparts. Consider, however, that her belief in directness is good for anyone, male or female, trying to succeed at something. Think of a particular experience when you asked for what you wanted. Write an essay about how being direct helped you to succeed.

An alternative is to write about a time when you failed to ask for what you wanted and it put you at a disadvantage.

Your writing should be energetic and detailed, giving specifics to support how either asking or not asking for what you wanted affected the outcome of your situation. Describe the setting in which you had to express your wishes, the people involved and how you went about asking for what you wanted. If you like, instead of referring to your own experience, you may write about the experience of someone you know or someone you've read about. In the course of writing your essay, you must state clearly what Klaus's essay says, what she is basing it on, and how it compares to what you have written about.

You may address this question in any order, but be sure to respond to all parts of this assignment and to connect your thoughts into a single, clearly organized essay.

- B. In her essay, Peggy Klaus writes that women in the workplace need to be more direct in order to become as successful as their male counterparts. The essay is calling attention to how differences between people, in this case men and women, can lead to or hinder success. Think of a group (connected to school, work, church, sports) of which you are a member. Write an essay about a difference you see between men and women, cultures, or generations within the group. Your writing should be energetic and detailed, giving specifics to support how that difference led to or hindered success. Describe the difference in question, what occurred, and why. If you like, instead of referring to yourself and people you know, you may write about people you've read about. In the course of writing your essay, you must state clearly what Klaus's essay says, what she is basing it on, and how it compares to what you have written about.

You may address this question in any order, but be sure to respond to all parts of this assignment and to connect your thoughts into a single, clearly organized essay.