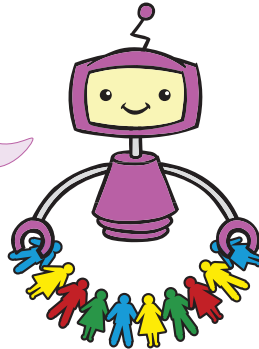


# That really suits you

Oh, Peter, thank you for saying I'm the best robot ever, but I don't deserve such praise. Everything I am, I owe to my designers and programmers. What? Noooo ... I'm not digging for compliments! I'm just expressing my humility. Although, it's true, it's hard to be humble when you're as perfect as I am!



## LINKS TO:

Stage 3, Module 8  
Learning Object 3: *Don't mention it*

## PRIOR LEARNING:

### Stage 2

Module 10 Work Sheet 1: *I beg to differ*

## 1 It's a pleasure to meet you

Paying someone a compliment is a common feature of social interaction in Australia. Compliments can range from the incidental to the detailed and complex, and from the personal to the simply friendly!

Australians regularly pay each other compliments on their skills and achievements. This reflects the importance Australians place on striving to achieve goals, on achieving significant goals, and on recognising and celebrating the achievements of others.

➔ For example:

You've worked really hard on that assignment.  
Your Indonesian has improved a great deal.  
Congratulations on getting such a good result in your language test; you worked hard and really deserved that outcome.

### Note:

Have you ever received a gift 'with compliments' from a business or other organisation? While the card attached to such a gift might sound as though it's offering you a compliment, in this instance 'complimentary' means free, rather than flattering.

Australians also frequently offer each other compliments on their personal style, such as how they dress, wear their hair, or decorate their home. These compliments can be a reflection of the importance Australians place on beauty and personal presentation, and a recognition of the effort someone has made to present themselves, or their belongings, in the best possible light.

➔ For example:

That hairstyle really suits you.

I love what you've done with the house!

If the compliment is on a new purchase, from a pair of shoes to a new car, it's not unusual for an Australian to follow up the compliment with questions that further express their interest in the item. If the compliment is on a skill or achievement, you might follow up with a similarly suitable question.

➔ For example:

Where did you purchase that car?

Do they have those shoes in green?

Have you been learning Indonesian for very long?

This conversational pattern, of paying someone a compliment and then following up with questions about the item or activity on which you have complimented them, is a common way of opening

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up a conversation with someone at a social event, particularly someone you don't know very well or haven't seen in some time.

## How kind of you to notice \_\_\_\_\_

Knowing how to accept a compliment is a useful social skill in Australia. It is important to acknowledge the compliment without bragging or appearing superior. Often a simple 'thank you' is sufficient.

➤ For example:  
Thank you.  
Thanks for noticing.  
I'm glad you like it.

Another common way to respond to a compliment is to gently deflect the praise.

➤ For example:  
Oh, it was nothing.  
This old thing? I just threw it on because I had nothing else to wear.

Be careful with your deflection; many Australians believe that someone who deflects a compliment too heartily is actually seeking more praise. Most etiquette guides will advise you to accept a compliment graciously, and to make an effort to return the compliment by offering one of a similar degree.

## Thanks for nothing \_\_\_\_\_

In Australia, there are some types of remarks, masquerading as compliments, that are considered inappropriate or even offensive, depending on their context and content.

For example, while sometimes it is appropriate to compliment another person on their appearance, it is not appropriate to do so when the focus should be on their skills or achievements, or when the compliment is a subtle way of implying that their appearance is the most important thing about them.

In Australia, for example, many people consider it inappropriate to compliment a woman on her looks rather than on her personality, skills or achievements. This is especially the case in particular contexts, such as the workplace or the classroom. This is a reflection of the value Australians generally place on treating women with dignity and respect.

Have you ever heard the term 'backhanded compliment'? A backhanded compliment (sometimes called a left-handed compliment) is one that sounds like a compliment, but is actually an insult.

➤ For example:  
You're smarter than you look.

Sometimes, back-handed compliments are based on stereotypes or other biases about people from a particular background.

➤ For example:  
She speaks very well for someone from that part of town.  
He's very smart for someone with his cultural heritage.

These types of remarks are sometimes used in skits and comedy programs — a witty putdown or backhanded compliment is a staple of many Australian comic performances — but are highly inappropriate in a social setting.

## 2 What a beautiful house!

In general, Indonesian friends will compliment each other on their clothes and hairstyles. However, Indonesian people rarely directly compliment someone on their intelligence or ability. Instead, they will comment to other people about a particular person's intelligence and abilities.

If you do happen to compliment someone on their intelligence or ability, they may deflect the compliment.

➡ For example:

*Ah, jauh dari itu.*

Oh, far from it.

*Ada yang jauh lebih pintar.*

There are others who are much cleverer.

Indonesians also try to build up the confidence of others with low self-esteem. For example, if an Indonesian tries to put themselves down by saying, '*Saya bodoh!*' (I am dumb!) their friends or acquaintances are likely to respond by saying, '*Tidak! Kamu hanya perlu belajar lebih banyak.*' (No you're not! You only need to study more).

An Indonesian is unlikely to accept a compliment by saying '*terima kasih*'. Often the person will find a way to play down the compliment, use a negative response or even remain silent. By doing so, the recipient of the compliment maintains their modesty. If the person receiving the compliment responds positively, they might be regarded as conceited or, at the very least, impolite or immodest. This kind of behaviour has much to do with the deep-rooted Indonesian idea that humility (*kerendahan hati*) is a virtue. Because of this belief, Indonesians frown upon, and gossip about people who are boastful and conceited, often referring

### Note:

Did you know that, in Indonesia, burping after a meal is a compliment to the chef? Some Indonesians might slurp their food, but eating is generally done quietly. In fact, for traditional Indonesians, meal times are very quiet and even conversation during a meal is very limited.

to them by the all-encompassing adjective *sombong* which, among other things, means contemptuous; gloating; high and mighty; pompous; smug; conceited; cocky; boastful; bigheaded and arrogant.

One exception to all of the above is that Indonesians tend to directly compliment foreigners on their ability to speak Indonesian.

➡ For example:

*Bahasa Indonesia Anda bagus sekali!*

Your Indonesian is very good!

Again, a culturally sensitive foreigner would not look for an opportunity to be boastful but would make a more modest comment in reply to this compliment.

➡ For example:

*Benar? Saya hanya bisa berbicara Bahasa Indonesia sedikit saja.*

Really? I can only speak a little bit of Indonesian.

*Tidak! Bahasa Indonesia saya kurang begitu bagus.*

No! My Indonesian is not all that good.

Did you notice the expressions, '*Benar?*' and '*Tidak!*' were placed at the start of the responses to the compliments? These expressions soften the tone of the response, and convey the person's surprise that someone would pay them that compliment. These phrases are commonly used to deflect a compliment.

If you find yourself receiving a compliment in Indonesia, here are two handy sentences you can use to respond.

*Saya tidak layak / pantas dibilang [adjective].*  
I don't really deserve to be called [adjective].

*Masa sih? Kamu membuatku tersanjung dengan pujianmu.*

Really? You flatter me with your praise.

### 3 Sweetening the compliment with adjectives

Since Stage 1, we've learned how to use adjectives in phrases and sentences to make them more interesting, and to give more information about the noun.

The use of adjectives is essential in sentences when complimenting someone on a particular attribute.

Let's look at the following compliments:

*Kamar kamu besar dan rapih sekali!*  
Your room is big and very neat!

*Aduh, pakaian daerah Indonesia cantik-cantik, ya?*  
Oh my, Indonesian traditional clothes are beautiful, aren't they?

The first compliment contained two adjectives in the sentence — *besar* and *rapih*. In the second compliment, the adjective *cantik* was duplicated to emphasise that, according to the speaker, all Indonesian traditional clothes are beautiful.

There is definitely an art to giving compliments. Use too many adjectives and you risk giving the impression that you are insincere, or you might even embarrass the person you are complimenting.

## Exercises

### Exercise 1

You have been invited to a party at the Indonesian embassy. During the party, you are going to be introduced to a range of people. Because it's quite a formal affair, and you want to make a good impression, you decide to pay each individual a compliment after being introduced. Because you're most nervous about meeting some of the important guests, you do a little research before the party so that you will be able to offer a suitable compliment.

**Write two compliments, in Indonesian, that would be suitable for each person described below.**

**1.1 Ibu Pramono is the wife of the Indonesian ambassador. She studied microbiology at university, and is a highly successful research scientist.**

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**1.2 Agi Anggadi is a musician from Indonesia. He has lived in Australia for five years. He studied music at the Sekolah Musik Indonesia in Jakarta, before being offered a place at the conservatorium in Sydney. He performed the national anthem at the beginning of the party.**

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**1.3 Brendan Beetle is an Australian high school student. He has been invited to the party after winning an Indonesian essay competition.**

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**1.4 Anne Hollis is an Australian politician. She is a minister in the State Parliament, and has been instrumental in organising a cultural exchange program through the embassy.**

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**1.5** Ibu Irma Makarim is an elderly woman from Indonesia. She is highly respected in her country for her role in fighting for human rights, and was recently recognised for her achievements by the United Nations.

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## Exercise 2

The embassy party is going swimmingly. You've been introduced to some more amazing people, but this time they are people you know nothing about.

**Complete the following dialogues, in Indonesian, by accepting the compliments offered to you, and offering a suitable compliment or comment in return.**

 For example:

**Duta besar:** *Kamu cantik sekali malam ini.*

**Anda:** *Terima kasih, Pak Pramono. Pesta ini meriah sekali.*

### 2.1

**Bu Siregar:** *Kamu pandai sekali berdansa.*

**Anda:**

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## 2.2

**Pak Memet:** *Negaramu cantik sekali. Saya kagum pada pantai-pantainya yang indah.*

**Anda:**

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## 2.3

**Pak Gunawan:** *Kamu pandai sekali berbicara bahasa Indonesia*

**Anda:**

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## 2.4

**Bu Indra:** *Saya dengar kamu membuat bajumu sendiri. Bagus sekali bajunya.*

**Anda:**

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## 2.5

**Pak Joko:** *Wah, alat pemutar MP3nya asik sekali! Beli di mana?*

**Anda:**

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