Present Progressive
with Future Meaning

to Make Polite Refusals

Materials developed by Bryan Woerner

- **Target Structure:** First-person present progressive with future meaning
- **Function:** Making polite refusals
- **Target Students:** Intermediate Level Adult Learners; mainly Spanish speaking and southeast Asian
- **Type of Institution:** Free ESL, Adult Literacy-GED Program through the local community college
- **Lesson Also Appropriate For:** More advanced and beginning level adult ESL learners who need to make polite refusals at work; ESL students who need to make polite refusals in an academic/college setting
I'm sorry, I'm working this weekend.  
Making polite refusals.

**Situation 1:** Juan and Carlos are at work. Carlos asks Juan if he can work on Saturday. Today is Wednesday.

Carlos: Hey Juan, can you work for me on Saturday if I work for you on Friday?

Juan: Hmm, no, I'm sorry. I'm visiting family in Philadelphia this weekend.

Carlos: Ok, thanks anyway.

*When does Carlos want Juan to work for him? Mark answer on the timeline.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9
Situation 2:  Susan, the manager, asks her employee, Silvia, if she can work late tomorrow. Today is Tuesday.

Susan: Silvia, can you stay late tomorrow? We need to finish this project soon.

Silvia: I’m sorry, I can’t. I’m taking my kids to the dentist tomorrow. I can stay late on Thursday.

Susan: Ok, Thursday it is.

When does Susan want Silvia to stay late? Mark answer on the timeline.
I'm sorry. I'm working this weekend. Making polite refusals.

Situation 3: Lela and her brother John are at the store. He asks her if she can watch his kids this weekend. Today is Wednesday.

Lela: I have to go out of town. Can you watch the kids this weekend?

John: I’m sorry, I can’t. I am working all weekend.

Lela: That’s OK. I’ll ask Nina.

When does Lela need John to watch her children? Mark answer on the timeline.
I'm sorry, I'm working this weekend.
Making polite refusals.

Situation 4: Luis and Steve arrive at work in the morning. Luis asks Steve for a ride home after work. It is 8 AM.

Luis: My car is in the shop. Can you give me a ride after work tonight?

Steve: Sorry, I can't. I'm leaving early to pick up my kids from school after work.

Luis: Ok, I'll ask Juan then. Thanks anyway.

When does Louis need Steve to give him a ride? Mark answer on the timeline.
I'm sorry, I'm working this weekend.  
Making polite refusals.

Situation 5:  Two neighbors, Freddo and Mo, talk outside their houses. Freddo invites Mo to his party on Sunday. Today is Thursday.

Freddo: Can you come to the party on Sunday?

Mo: I'm sorry, I can't. I'm helping my brother move to Virginia this weekend.

Freddo: Ok. I hope it goes well.

When is Freddo's party? Mark answer on the timeline.

[Timeline with bars labeled 'Past', 'Now', 'Future']
I'm sorry, I'm working this weekend. Making polite refusals.

Situation 6: Two friends, Daisy and Nina are at the mall. Daisy invites Nina on Friday with her friends. Today is Thursday.

Daisy: Can you go to the movies with us on Friday?

Nina: Sorry, I can’t. I’m babysitting my sister’s kids that night.

Daisy: Ok, maybe next time then.

When is Daisy going to the movies? Mark answer on the timeline.
Highlighting: Part 1

Directions: Underline the first response after the question. Next, use the dialogues to fill out the chart below. The first one has been done as an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
<th>When?</th>
<th>I'm sorry</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Complement</th>
<th>Time Expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>no, I'm sorry</td>
<td>I'm visiting</td>
<td>family in Philadelphia</td>
<td>this weekend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Highlighting: Part 2

Directions: Work with a partner and use the information from the grid to help you answer these questions.

Write a rule to help you form the first-person present progressive.

When do these events take place?

Why do the people say they're sorry when they answer the request? Is their response a positive response or a negative response?

What is the speakers' intention when they say "I'm sorry, I'm verb-ing?"
Activity 1

Practice: Complete all the dialogues. When finished check your answers with a partner and practice the conversations out loud with your partner.

REMEMBER: Use the form I'm Verb + -ing. Use the verbs in the box. There are 4 extra verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb Bank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pick up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>babysit</td>
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<tr>
<td>go</td>
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<tr>
<td>watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Situation 1: *Your boss, Alex, asks you if you can stay late tomorrow. Today is Wednesday.*

Alex: Can you stay late tomorrow?

You: I'm sorry, I can't. ________________ my kids to the doctor's tomorrow. I can stay late today.

Alex: Ok, that's fine. Thanks.

Situation 2: *Your friend Carlos invites you to his party this weekend. Today is Thursday.*

Carlos: Can you come to my party this weekend?

You: I'm sorry, I can't. ________________ to Baltimore to visit my brother and his wife.

Carlos: Ok, have fun!
Situation 3:  *Your friend Lela invites you to the movies on Friday. Today is Tuesday.*

Lela: Can you go see “A Shark Tale” with us on Friday?

You: I’m sorry, I can’t. ________________ late that night.

Lela: Ok, maybe next time then.

Situation 4:  *Your neighbor, Sarah, has to go out of town and asks you to babysit her kids on Sunday. Today is Thursday.*

Sarah: I have to go out of town on Sunday. Can you watch my kids?

You: I’m sorry, I can’t. ________________ my sister and her family move to Virginia.

Sarah: Ok, thanks anyway.

Situation 5:  *Your coworker, Donna, needs a ride home from work tonight. It is 9:30 AM.*

Donna: Can you give me a ride home after work? My car is in the shop.

You: I’m sorry, but ________________ my niece at the airport after work.

Donna: Ok, I’ll ask John. Thanks anyway.
Situation 6:  Nina, your friend, invites you to a restaurant later this evening. It is 5:30 PM.

Nina: Can you go to Joe’s with us later tonight?

You: I’m sorry, I can’t. _________________ for my English class tomorrow night.

Nina: Ok, maybe next time. Good luck!

Situation 7: Your coworker, Luis, asks you to work his Friday night shift for him. Today is Tuesday.

Luis: Can you work for me on Friday night?

You: I’m sorry, I can’t. _________________ right after work on Friday to visit family in Richmond. Sorry.

Luis: That’s ok. I’ll ask someone else. Thanks!

Situation 8: Your friend, Juan, invites you to dinner tomorrow night. Today is Monday.

Juan: Can you come over for dinner tomorrow night?

You: I’m sorry, I can’t. _________________ my brother’s kids.

Juan: Ok, another time then.

Directions: There are four verbs left. Write them out using the I’m verb + -ing form.

__________________________  ____________________________
Activity 2

Directions: Use the phrases in the boxes to create your own dialogues with your partner. Use the previous exercises and the frame to help you.

REMEMBER: Use the form I’m Verb + -ing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can you...</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>I can’t...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>come to my party</td>
<td>tonight</td>
<td>pick up wife/husband from work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give me a ride</td>
<td>tomorrow</td>
<td>study for English class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watch my kids</td>
<td>this weekend</td>
<td>work late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work for me</td>
<td>on Sunday</td>
<td>babysit sister’s kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stay late</td>
<td>on Monday</td>
<td>take my wife/husband to the doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go to the movies</td>
<td>on Tuesday</td>
<td>help my brother move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come to dinner</td>
<td>on Wednesday</td>
<td>visit family in Virginia Beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go to Rio Grande</td>
<td>on Thursday</td>
<td>leave early to pick up kids from school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on Friday</td>
<td>drive to Baltimore to see my family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on Saturday</td>
<td>watch my neighbor’s pets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>have friends over for dinner</td>
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Dialogue Frame:

Classmate A: Can you ..................................................?

Classmate B: I’m sorry, I can’t ....................................

Classmate A: * Ok maybe next time
              * Ok, thanks anyway.
              * Have fun!

Practice at least 5 dialogues, and then switch roles.
Activity 3

Directions: Think of at least four new invitations or requests (Can you...?) to ask a classmate. Next, think of at least four polite refusals. After you have your questions and responses, talk to at least four classmates. You can always talk to more people (including the teacher 😊)

Questions: Can you...

1. ..............................................................
2. ..............................................................
3. ..............................................................
4. ..............................................................
5. ..............................................................
6. ..............................................................
7. ..............................................................
8. ..............................................................

Responses: I’m sorry, I’m verb + -ing

1. ..............................................................
2. ..............................................................
3. ..............................................................
4. ..............................................................
5. ..............................................................
6. ..............................................................
7. ..............................................................
8. ..............................................................

Classmates I talked to:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
**Highlighting: Part 1**

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<td>3.</td>
<td>this weekend</td>
<td></td>
<td>I’m sorry, I can’t</td>
<td>I’m working</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>all weekend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>after work tonight</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sorry, I can’t</td>
<td>I’m leaving</td>
<td>early to pick up my kids from school</td>
<td>after work</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>I’m helping</td>
<td>my brother move to Virginia</td>
<td>this weekend</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sorry, I can’t</td>
<td>I’m babysitting</td>
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Directions: Work with a partner and use the information from the grid to help you answer these questions.

Write a rule to help you form the first-person present progressive.

I'm verb-ing

When do these events take place?

In the future

Why do the people say they're sorry when they answer the request? Is their response a positive response or a negative response?

Answers may vary - Main Idea - They can't do the request. Their response is negative, but polite.

What is the speakers' intention when they say "I'm sorry, I'm verb-ing?"

Answers may vary - They are making a polite refusal.
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Lela: Ok, maybe next time then.

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Sarah: I have to go out of town on Sunday. Can you watch my kids?
You: I’m sorry, I can’t. ______ I’m helping ______ my sister and her family move to Virginia.
Sarah: Ok, thanks anyway.

Situation 5: Your coworker, Donna, needs a ride home from work tonight. It is 9:30 AM.

Donna: Can you give me a ride home after work? My car is in the shop.
You: I’m sorry, but ______ I’m picking up ______ my niece at the airport after work.
Donna: Ok, I’ll ask John. Thanks anyway.
**Verb Bank**

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**Situation 6:** Nina, your friend, invites you to a restaurant later this evening. It is 5:30 PM.

Nina: Can you go to Joe's with us later tonight?

You: I'm sorry, I can't. **I'm studying** for my English class tomorrow night.

Nina: Ok, maybe next time. Good luck!

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Juan: Can you come over for dinner tomorrow night?

You: I'm sorry, I can't. **I'm babysitting** my brother's kids.

Juan: Ok, another time then.

**Directions:** There are four verbs left. Write them out using the *I'm verb + -ing form.*

*I'm visiting*  *I'm watching*  *I'm playing*  *I'm having*