BBC Learning English
How to…
Disagreeing

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Jackie:	Hello, welcome to the programme, with me, Jackie Dalton. This programme is all about expressions you can use when you think someone is wrong about something and you want to disagree with them.
	We're going to do this with the help of British Prime Minister, Tony Blair. He was recently interviewed by John Humphries, a BBC journalist. Tony Blair disagreed with quite a lot of the things John Humphries said and we're going to look at some of the language he used when he did this – language you could use in all kinds of situations when you disagree with someone. In the first example, Tony Blair responds to John Humphries by using one of the simplest words in the English language.

Tony Blair

Shouldn't you be apologising to those people?

No, I don't think we should be apologising.

Jackie:	'No' – a direct way of disagreeing. Be careful about how you use such direct language. As with a lot of language we'll hear today, your tone of voice can be very important in how you come across. This person disagrees quite politely.

Example

You always come to work late.

No, I don't.

Jackie:	But here, she sounds more aggressive.

Example

No I don't.

Jackie: Listen to this next clip. What phrase does Tony Blair use in these examples to express his disagreement?

Tony Blair

You see, I mean, I don't agree with that. I understand that's the argument against what we've done, but I don't agree with it.

Well, I don't agree with that at all…

I'm a great admirer of Kofi's, but we obviously disagree about this issue.

Jackie: He uses the verb 'to agree' in the negative - 'I don't agree' and he uses the verb 'to disagree' - 'I disagree'. Now we'll hear Tony Blair using a slightly more formal structure:

Tony Blair

And, it's made this country a more dangerous place.

Well I don't accept that, either.

Jackie: 'I don't accept that' – another way of saying you don't agree with something that's just been said.

Tony Blair

The failure of that responsibility-

Well, I don't accept that we failed in that responsibility.

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Jackie: Sometimes you may agree with part of what someone says, but disagree with other parts. What structure does Tony Blair use to do that here?

John Humphries and Tony Blair

…many of them loyal to their own warlords.

Well, I think that although it is true to say that there are far too many parts of the police that are sectarian and so on-

They're…

Jackie: Tony Blair shows that he agrees with some of what John Humphries has said, but he tries to go on to say that there are other things he disagrees with. We know he disagrees with part of what John has said because he uses the word 'although' at the beginning of his sentence: 'Although it's true to say …' He never quite finishes his sentence to tell us what he doesn't agree with so let's listen to a more complete example of that phrase in use.

Example

He doesn't work hard enough and he's bad for the company!

Although it's true to say he doesn't work as much as he should, I think he's very clever and could help the company a lot.

Jackie: You could also use 'while' instead of 'although'.

Examples

While it's true to say he doesn't work as much as he should, I think he's very clever and he could help the company a lot.

Jackie: In this next clip, John Humphries says something that Tony Blair disagrees with. What's the phrase that Tony Blair uses to interrupt him?

John Humphries and Tony Blair

…elected their own government, we're now telling-

Well, hang on a minute John! They excluded…

Oh no well you added those bits-

Well hang on-

You added those bits-

No, no, before any of those things…

Jackie: 'Hang on a minute…' this sometimes just means 'wait', but here it's a way

of saying 'Stop, I don't agree and there's something I want to say.' He

then corrects him.

<u>**Tony Blair**</u>

…elected their own government, we're now telling-

Well, hang on a minute John! They excluded…

Oh no well you added those bits-

Well hang on-

You added those bits-

No, no, before any of those things…

Jackie: Let's end on some very strong statements of disagreement.

<u>**Tony Blair**</u>

…process but-

You'd already decided by then.

That is really not true but, I mean…

I most certainly do not accept that he was not a threat.

Jackie: Both Tony Blair's words and his tone of voice make it very clear he

disagrees. He uses the adverbs 'really' and 'most certainly' to show how

strongly he disagrees with what's been said.

Tony Blair

That is really not true but, I mean…

I most certainly do not accept that he was not a threat.

Jackie: Finally, there are some very strong informal – and sometimes quite rude
- ways of disagreeing with someone that you might come across,
although be careful about when you use them. Here they are.

Examples

That's nonsense!

That's rubbish!

Jackie: Again, these expressions can be made stronger, this time, with adjectives.

Examples

That's complete nonsense!

That's absolute rubbish!

Jackie: Although Tony Blair did seem to get quite cross in this interview, he
never got quite angry enough to use those words.