## How to make telephone calls

**General rules**

When making a formal call, three rules should influence your choice of words:

- Be brief. Do not waste the receiver’s time.

- Be clear. Explain the background and purpose of your call.

- Be polite. Recognize the receiver’s point of view.

These rules can sometimes conflict. If you are too brief, you may confuse the receiver or appear impolite. Try to balance the three rules.

**Making a call to someone you do not know**

The most difficult calls to make are calls to people that you do not know. Usually, the purpose of your call will be to make a request for information or a meeting. This kind of call can be divided into sections according to the function each serves:

- Locate the person

- Make request

- Make arrangement

- Close the call

In the following examples, we will imagine that you are calling Mr. Smith to arrange a visit to his office.

**Locate the person**

If the person you want to speak answers the call, this part is simple. If the receiver gives his name when he answers your call, you can skip to the next stage. If the receiver does not give his name, you can confirm that you have the right person:

Hello, is that Mr. Smith?

More often the number will connect you to an operator or secretary. In this case you will have to ask to speak to Mr. Smith:

Hello, I’d like to speak to Mr. Smith, please.

If Mr. Smith is not available, you will need to find out when you can speak to him:

Could you tell me when he will be available?

If the person you are calling has a busy schedule, you may have to call several times. When you are finally connected, it is best to pretend that this is your first call. Do not mention how difficult it was to make contact! Sometimes, you will not know the name of the person who might be able to help you. In this case, you can state your request and then say:

Could you put me through to someone who might be able to help me?

Locating someone at a company can be frustrating if you are passed from person to person. Try not to let your frustration show!

**Make request**

Making a request involves three stages: introducing yourself, giving background, and making the request itself. Introduce yourself by giving your name and explaining who you are. If you have been given the receiver's name by someone else, you should also mention this:

Mr. Newton from Eurasia Products suggested that I call you....

Give the background to your request by explaining why you are making it:

I’m doing a project on work experience and I need to arrange a visit to a company in your field....

Make your request politely and clearly. Make sure that the receiver knows exactly what agreeing to your request will involve: how much of their time it will involve and what they will have to do:

I wonder if I could pay a visit to your office for an hour or so sometime in the next two weeks, to talk to one of your staff about....

**Make arrangement**

If the person you are calling agrees to your request, it is important to make a clear arrangement. If you are arranging a meeting, for example, arrange the time and place and make sure you know where to go and what to do when you get there. Make a note of all the information so that you do not need to call back again to find out something you have missed. If the person you are calling cannot agree to your request, he may modify it. Listen carefully and try to fit in with his schedule. If the person you are calling cannot agree to your request at all, ask if he knows someone else who can help:

Do you know anyone else who might be able to help me?

Whether the receiver can help you or not, thank him and close the call politely.

**Close the call**

As the caller, it is your job to close the call when you have got the information you need. Unless the receiver shows that he wants to talk, it is not polite to chat once your business is finished. If there is a difficult silence at the end of the call, it is probably because you are not doing your job of closing the call. You can do this by confirming the arrangement:

So, I’ll come to your office on Monday at 10....

Thanking the receiver:

Thank you very much for your help....

And saying goodbye. In each case, wait for the receiver’s response before you go on to the next stage. Wait until you have heard the receiver say goodbye before you hang up.

## Useful phrases

I am calling about ….

I am calling to confirm that …

Could I leave a message?

Could you ask Mr. X to call me back?



Hang up – terminate a call

Speak up – talk louder

Call back – renew a call

Put through – connect

Hold on – stay on line

Get through – make contact

Get back to – return a call

Take down – make a note

### Dealing with a problem on the phone



* Identify the symptoms
* Diagnose the fault
* Sort out a problem
* Talk the customer through the process
* Escalate the problem to the supervisor
* Arrange a visit from our technician
* Exchange the product
* Give a full refund