

Telephone Terminology

1

Here are some words and phrases related to telephoning. Write the correct letter on the lines to match each word to its meaning.

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|--------------------------|--|
| 1. ____ airtime | a. the sound the phone makes when you pick up the receiver |
| 2. ____ unlisted number | b. a complete list of phone numbers published in a book or online |
| 3. ____ digit | c. an old-fashioned type of telephone with a circular dial that turns |
| 4. ____ busy signal | d. a phone number that the subscriber chooses not to have published in the public directory |
| 5. ____ call display | e. another word for number |
| 6. ____ voice mail | f. a symbol that looks like this (*) on a telephone key pad |
| 7. ____ collect call | g. a phone line that requires a wire or fibre optical cable to make connections |
| 8. ____ conference call | h. a beeping sound that tells you the person you are calling is on the phone with someone else |
| 9. ____ to dial | i. a telephone call in which three or more persons in different locations participate |
| 10. ____ dial tone | j. a telephone on which you press number keys to make a call |
| 11. ____ directory | k. the sound the phone makes when somebody calls |
| 12. ____ landline | l. the amount of time spent talking on a cell phone |
| 13. ____ pound key | m. a system for recording telephone messages where the messages are saved in a central location |
| 14. ____ star key | n. another name for the number sign (#) key on a telephone |
| 15. ____ ring tone | o. a feature of your phone that allows you to see the name and/or phone number of the caller |
| 16. ____ rotary phone | p. a long-distance telephone call made through the operator which is paid for by the person receiving the call |
| 17. ____ touchtone phone | r. to select numbers on the phone to make a telephone call |

Grammar in Context: Telephone Phrasal Verbs

1 The following are common phrasal verbs we often use while on the telephone. Match the correct meaning with each phrasal verb.

1. ____ hold on

2. ____ put (a call) through

3. ____ get through

4. ____ hang up

5. ____ call up

6. ____ hang on

7. ____ call back

8. ____ pick up

9. ____ get off (the phone)

10. ____ get back to (someone)

11. ____ cut off

12. ____ switch off/turn off

13. ____ speak up
- a. put the receiver down

b. return someone’s call

c. answer a call, lift the receiver to take a call

d. stop talking on the phone

e. connect one caller to another

f. deactivate (a cell phone)

g. wait

h. talk louder

i. to be disconnected abruptly during a telephone conversation

j. to be connected to someone on the phone

k. return someone’s call

l. make a telephone call

m. wait

2 Some phrasal verbs are separable (e.g., *call someone back*); others are not. Complete the chart below by putting the phrasal verbs above in the correct column.

Separable	Not separable
<i>Put a call through</i>	

3 | Fill in the blanks with the correct phrasal verbs.

1. **Caller:** Hello. Could I speak to Lucia Rodriguez, please?
Receptionist: She's not in the office at the moment. Can I _____ you _____ to her voice mail?
Caller: Yes, thank you.
2. **Caller:** Could I speak to Emma, please?
Emma's mother: Sure. _____ a second and I'll get her.
3. **Automated Operator:** Please _____ and try your call again. This is a recording.
4. **Mother:** Magdalena, could you _____ the phone? I need to call Dad.
Daughter: Okay, mom.
5. **Chairperson of a meeting:** I would appreciate if everyone could _____ their cell phones. We have a lot of important things to discuss and we don't want to be interrupted.
6. **Caller:** Hi, it's Ahmed Mohamed calling. Could I speak to Martin Switzer please?
Receptionist: I'm sorry. He's not in at the moment. Can I take a message?
Caller: Yes, could you ask him to _____ me _____ when he gets in? It's urgent.
Receptionist: Certainly.
7. **Voice mail recording:** Hi, you've reached Josh Wills in Accounting. I will be out of the office until July 2 but will be _____ my messages while I'm away. So please leave yours at the sound of the tone. Thanks and have a great day!
8. **Voice mail recording:** You've reached Julia and Ben. We're not available to take your call right now, but if you leave a message, we'll _____ to you as soon as we can. Thanks.
9. **Caller:** I can't seem to _____. The line is always busy.

Identifying Yourself on the Phone

Many companies have their own guidelines for how employees answer the phone. For example, an employee may answer the phone by giving just his/her first name, his/her first *and* last names, or the name of the department or company he or she works for. It often depends on the workplace culture and the size of the company. Here are some examples of typical workplace greetings:

- *Cooper Accounting Services. How can I help you?*
- *Good afternoon. Dr. Ramen's Office.*
- *Human Resources. Michael Best speaking.*
- *Town of Grimsby Public Works. Tamara Bolnik speaking.*
- *Good morning. Economy Movers.*
- *Norman Walker speaking.*
- *Hello, Benefits Department.*

1 With a partner, discuss possible greetings for each of the following situations.

1. You are an assistant accountant in a large corporation (Billings and Sons Inc.). You do not receive calls from outside clients.
2. You are the receptionist at your LINC centre. You receive calls from outside callers requesting information.
3. You are responsible for taking orders in a small manufacturing company (Tops Manufacturing). You take calls from customers all day.
4. You do the payroll for a small printing company (Major Press). Usually you receive just calls about payroll issues from staff.
5. You work in the appliance department of a large department store (Zee's Department Store). You receive calls from other staff at the store as well as customers enquiring about the availability of certain appliances.

2 Match each greeting with a situation. Then, discuss in what situations you would not need to identify yourself when making a phone call. Explain why.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. ____ Hi. It's Joan. | a. You say this in when the person you're calling does not know you and you need to introduce yourself. |
| 2. ____ Joan Andrews speaking. | b. You may say this when answering the phone at work. |
| 3. ____ My name is Joan Andrews and I'm calling from ABC company. | c. You say this when answering the phone at work. |
| 4. ____ You have reached Joan Andrews. | d. You say this in a phone call to request information. |
| 5. ____ This is Joan Andrews. We spoke last week at the conference. | e. You say this on your voice mail greeting. |
| 6. ____ Here is Joan Wallis. | f. You say this when the person you're calling knows you very well. It's informal. |
| 7. ____ Hello. I wonder if you could tell me if you have any quarter-inch plywood in stock? | g. You say this in a phone call or in a voice mail message when the person you are calling knows you but not well, and you want to be more formal. |
| 8. ____ Sudsy Carpet Cleaning. How may I help you? | h. We don't use this expression on the phone. |


Recording Personal Voice Mail Greetings

Most voice mail services and answering machines have a default greeting. You can use the default greeting or record your own. Here are some examples of personal voice mail greetings:

- *You have reached 555-347-2109. Please leave a message at the sound of the tone. Thank you.*
- *Hello. We can't come to the phone right now. Please leave a short message and we'll get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you for calling.*
- *You have reached the voice mail for Jim and Celia. We're not available right now, but if you leave a message, we'll get back to you as soon as we can. Thank you.*

If you are looking for a job and employers may call your home, you may want to have a professional-sounding voice mail greeting, such as one of the above messages. The message should be in English, it should be recorded by an adult, and should not include music or jokes.

- 1** Write your own personal voice mail greeting. Then practise reading it aloud to a partner. Be sure to enunciate clearly. If you include your phone number in your message, say the numbers clearly: 5-5-5 pause 2-3-7 pause 2-1 pause 0-9.

- 2**  **Audio 7.6:** Listen to two workplace voice mail greetings and fill in the blanks. Answer the questions below.

1. What information is included in the greetings?
2. How are they different from the personal voice mail greetings above?

Voice Mail Greeting 1

Hello. You have _____ the voice mail of Susan Walker in _____ . Today is _____ July 3 and I am _____ all day today. Please leave your name and number and a _____ and I will return your call as soon as possible. For _____ press 235 to speak to my _____ , Cheryl Smith.


Voice Mail Greeting 2

Hello. This is Jim Henderson in _____. I'm not _____ to take your call right now. Please leave a _____ message and I will _____ to you before the _____. Thank you for calling.

Voice Mail Messages

1 You will hear two voice mail messages. Before listening, discuss the following questions.

- 1. What information do people usually give when they leave a voice mail message?
- 2. What order does the information follow? What information comes first, second, next, etc.?

2  Audio 7.7: Listen to two voice mail messages and take notes on the details. Then answer the questions below.



- 1. Which message is personal and which is professional? What are the similarities and differences in the two messages?
- 2. Write the words and expressions the speakers use for each part of the voice mail message.

	Personal call	Professional call
a) greeting and identifying self	_____	_____
b) stating day and time of call	_____	_____
c) stating purpose of the call	_____	_____
d) details	_____	_____
e) making a request	_____	_____
f) closing	_____	_____

Here are some common phrases for leaving voice mail messages.

Identifying yourself

- *Hello, this is Jane Cooper calling from Central Laboratories. (more formal)*
- *Hello, my name is Jane Cooper and I'm calling from Central Laboratories. (more formal)*
- *Hi Andrew, it's Lisa calling. (informal)*
- *Hi, it's me. (informal)*
- *Hi, this is Irving Nanas calling. I'm a LINC student at your centre.*
- *Hi, this is Marina Livingston. I'm a patient at your clinic.*

Identifying who the message is for and stating day and time of call

- *Hi, this message is for Barbara Brown.*
- *It's Tuesday at 4:00 p.m.*

Leaving the message

- *I'm returning your call.*
- *I'm calling to let you know ...*
- *I just wanted to let you know ...*
- *I'm calling about ...*
- *I was wondering if you would like to ...*

Making a request

- *Give me a call when you get a chance. (informal)*
- *Give me a call. (informal)*
- *I'd appreciate it if you could return my call. I can be reached at 555-442-5681. (formal)*
- *Could you please call me back at 555-870-2217?*
- *My number is 555-382-8753.*

Ending your message

- *Talk to you later; Bye; Thank you.*

3

Discuss the questions.

1. What do you find difficult about leaving voice mail messages?
2. What do you think a person can do to overcome their fear of leaving voice mail messages?

Grammar in Context: Prepositional Collocations

1 Fill in the blanks with the correct prepositions.

at	from	to	of	on
for	about	in	until	

1. Jacob isn't _____ right now. Can I take a message?
2. Please call 555 633 6363 _____ more information.
3. Unfortunately, no one is here to take your call _____ the moment.
4. I'd appreciate it if you could get back _____ me.
5. This is Marilyn Bell calling _____ Jack Brenner.
6. I'm calling _____ your ad for a used car.
7. I'm currently out _____ the office. I'll be returning _____ Monday, June 15.
8. My name is Michael Cooper and I'm calling _____ Darton Contractors.
9. You have reached Jessica Parker. I'll be out _____ the office _____ January 5. If you need immediate assistance, please dial ext. 3431 to speak _____ Henry Porter.
10. Please leave a message _____ the sound of the tone.
11. I'm calling to enquire _____ the used sofa you have for sale.
12. I'll put you through _____ the manager. One moment please.
13. Maggie is downstairs. Hold _____ and I'll get her.
14. John is _____ a meeting right now. I'll tell him _____ call you when he gets back.

What Would You Do or Say?

1

In small groups, discuss what you would do and/or say in the following situations. Make a list of expressions that could be used in each situation and present them to the class.

1. You have been on the phone with someone for a few minutes but didn't write down their name at the beginning of the conversation. You need to ask them for their name again.
2. You are calling for information and the person is speaking too quickly.
3. You are on the phone trying to write down the details about a job interview (e.g., time, location). You didn't understand the street name and the speaker has already repeated the name twice.
4. You didn't hear a phone number that the caller gave you.
5. You are talking to someone on the phone and not sure if they are listening because there is silence at the other end.
6. You want to make sure you have understood the directions to a location.
7. Someone wants to leave a message, but you don't have a pen and paper handy.
8. You are in the middle of an important task and you receive a telephone call. You need to finish what you are doing before you can talk to the person.
9. You are on the phone with someone and receive a call on another line. What do you say to the person you are speaking to?
10. Someone has kept you on hold for the last 10 minutes. When they finally get on the line, they apologize for the long delay.
11. You are listening to an automated voice menu that is too fast for you to understand.
12. You are talking to a friend on the phone and suddenly get disconnected.
13. You call a friend to chat. A few minutes into the conversation, you hear her turn on the tap and rattle some plates. What could you ask?
14. You are returning a friend's call. Your friend called you four days ago.
15. You are a receptionist in a large company. There is a call for your boss and you know that he is in the washroom.

Professional Calls



Audio 7.10: Listen to a receptionist answer the telephone in a medical clinic. Complete the table below. In the left-hand column, write the expressions you hear in the dialogue; in the right-hand column, write additional expressions you could use for each purpose.

The receptionist says:	You could also say:
To put a caller on hold:	
To explain that a person is not available:	
To take a message:	
To transfer a call:	
To respond to a wrong number:	

2 

Listen to the telephone dialogue again. Complete the table on the left with the expressions used by the caller. On the right, write additional expressions you could use for each purpose.

The caller says:	You could also say:
To identify self:	
To state purpose of call:	
To ask to speak to someone:	
To leave a message:	
To return a call:	

3

With a partner, prepare and role-play two calls to a medical office.



Call 1

Student A: Receptionist

- Answer the phone with a professional greeting.
- Give the caller three possible dates and times.
- Book the appointment.

Student B: Caller

- Identify yourself and state the reason for your call (to make an appointment).
- Agree to one of the dates and times given.
- End the call appropriately.

Call 2

Student A: Caller

- Identify yourself and ask to speak to a doctor.
- Leave a message for the doctor regarding a prescription renewal.
- End the call appropriately.


Student B: Receptionist

- Answer the phone with a professional greeting.
- The doctor is with a patient. Offer to take a message and take down all relevant information.

Telephone Strategies


Understanding others on the telephone can be difficult. Misunderstandings can happen easily, partly because we can't see the speaker's body language, facial expressions or lip movements. You can avoid miscommunication by using various strategies. For example:

- Repeat back or paraphrase what the other person said to confirm understanding: *So the school is on Birch St. Is that correct? Or: So, your number is 555-233-5678?*
- Ask questions to clarify information: *Is the office on the first floor or the third floor?*
- Ask for repetition: *Could you say that again?*
- Use a spelling alphabet (using words that stand for specific letters): *My last name is Kast. That's K as in key, A, S as in sorry, T.*

1  **Audio 7.13: Listen to the recording and write the specific expressions the customer service representative uses to do the following:**

Repeat information back to confirm understanding:
Ask questions to clarify information:
Ask for repetition:
Use the spelling alphabet:

2 **With a partner, prepare and role-play a dialogue for the following scenario.**



Student A

You have a job interview at NYB Trucking. The secretary will call you to give you information about the date, time and location of the interview. He/she will also tell you the names of the people who will interview you.

- Take down the information
- Use any of the strategies above to clarify information you do not understand

Student B

You are the secretary at NYB Trucking. Call your partner to invite him/her to a job interview on September 9 at 10:15 a.m. at 68 Trethewey Ave (near Yonge and Sumach Streets). The interviewers are Nick Popodopolous, Tina Campanelli and Dafna Weisner.

- Begin your call with a professional greeting
- Clarify information your partner does not understand
- End the call appropriately