

Rule Book

How to get a GP appointment By Telephone

This guide is specially designed to help you have the best experience when booking a GP appointment. Follow the instructions, and you'll have a high chance of securing a phone call and an appointment!

1. **Become a Morning Bird**
2. **Practice Some Yoga**
3. **You're Our Lucky number 7!**
4. **Our Trusty Robot will leave a message**
5. **Choose your Menu Option**
6. **No Service = No Appointment**
7. **Don't Lose Patience – Accidents May Happen**
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18. **Age Quicker Maybe?**
19. **Scrap your day-off**

1. Become a Morning Bird

Wake up at 8:00am. Sharp.
Start calling your GP practice.
Sometimes we pick up, sometimes we *don't*.

Our website says our contact centre is only available
9am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday.
So... It depends on how busy our staff is.

It's a bit like playing a game of chance. You know?
I mean, if you have work... Might as well skip it.

“Yep, call in at 8:00, place 17 in the queue, get to speak to a human after 25 minutes & get told to ring back the next morning as there are no more appointments.”

“Every time I rang up, for a whole fortnight, I was told that all of the appointments had gone. I was asked to ring back again tomorrow at 8am but I was just told the same thing again every day. I waited over a month to get an appointment.”

2. Practice Some Yoga

Wait for 20 minutes.

You're lucky you only need to wait for 20 minutes!

According to Healthwatch Liverpool's statistic analysis, the average waiting time is 47 minutes for someone to answer the phone.

To improve your health:

Here's a list of things you can do in 47 minutes:

- A yoga class
- Read a book
- Guided meditation
- Journal
- Take a nap
- Go to the spa
- Take a nice, hot bubble bath
- People watch
- Go on a walk or run

Or, if you don't want to leave your phone call, our phone line will play you a song, so you won't get bored. Its like being in a concert, believe me!

****In telephone appointments, 'Muzak' (recorded background music) is used as a time filler to replace the 'waiting period' when answering receptionists are busy. Since the activity of listening to music is totally unrelated to the service activity to come, this results to added annoyance and frustration.**

3. You're Our Lucky Number 7!

Don't you worry, we haven't forgotten about you.
We will assign you a number.

To make sure we don't get you mixed up in our busy
phone line of course. You will have your very own
number and place to wait for your turn. I'm guessing,
your Call Number would be 32, or maybe 108 if it's a
busy day. Isn't that great?

You're almost there! You'll see our staff soon.

4. Our Trusty Robot will leave a Message

We know it's tough not being able to talk to a real person right away. But don't worry, our trusty speaker here is ready to relay your message.

She's an absolute pro at this—never misses a line, never takes a break, and doesn't even need a coffee to keep going! She's amazing and we rely on her a lot.

She's probably a bit more patient than the average human too. No small talk, gets straight to the point. We all like that don't we?

****Automated and pre-recorded messages are played to convey the sense that the '*service has started*'. It serves as the preparation/pre-process for patients to make their first human contact with a receptionist. When this happens, patients develop a fear of being 'forgotten'. One's anxiety level is much higher while waiting to be served. This results to impatience, and uncertainty. Anxiety is induced in this process of waiting.**

5. Choose Your Menu Option

There's just so many options!

This is the hardest part! Yes, it can be confusing!
But hey, take your time, patience is key.

We've offered you so many choices because we know how much you enjoy calling us. We value your support.

It's a little all over the place, like a maze, but you'll get there at the end. Honestly, it's not as complex as it seems, you just have to listen.

6. No Service, No Appointment

Unfortunately, this is a 'you' issue.

Your Wi-Fi problems and sluggish internet connection are beyond our control. We specialize in fixing your health, not giving you more data. Perhaps it's time to have a chat with your parents or family about upgrading that ancient router?

While we can't speed up your internet, we can promise to be here for your appointment once you finally get through. Good luck! You're almost there.

7. Don't Lose Patience

This *might* be our issue.

We *may* accidentally hang up. It's because we're so overwhelmed with calls. Accidents may happen and we're truly sorry. Sometimes, it may be due to your poor internet connection.

But if you call again, you'll be put through.
No matter what, just call. We'll pick up.

Eventually.

****Role of Uncertainty – Long waiting times and lack of communication means that the patient is put on hold without a finite time. This creates the illusion where patients feel they are 'stuck waiting' for nothing. There is a lack of information explaining where the receptionist is or what they are doing.**

This results in patients feeling uncertain and spends the whole time in a state of nervous anticipation, unable to settle down and are afraid to leave/hang up in case a receptionist finally comes back on the phone. Patients are being forced to wait and are not being dealt with honesty. There is no knowable limit on how long a patient should wait.

8. Remember, You are Not Alone

There's a whole community of fellow patients experiencing the joy of waiting for an appointment, just like you.

Do not feel isolated in your struggle, that will make it worse. So, take comfort in knowing you're not alone.

****Wait in Solitude – Patients feel excluded during the waiting process – it creates a feeling of powerlessness which results in visible irritations and frustration. (Being ignored on a telephone adds to the feeling of being demoralized) Waiting alone and in isolation on the telephone feels longer than waiting as a group.**

9. Call Again, We Are Busy

You may be calling at an inconvenient time for us. Please consult our opening times schedule. Be mindful of our lunch break. It's best to avoid calling in the afternoon.

If you come back again later, I'm sure there will be someone available for you.

10. Don't Give Up

It might seem like you're stuck in a loop of repetition, but don't lose hope! You're seriously almost there—keep going, and don't give up.

The greatest tip: call again.

and again.

and again.

and again.

and again.

and again.

and again.

and again.

and again.

and again.

and again.

and again.

and again.

and again.

and again.

and again.

and again.

Soon, you'll be connected to our receptionist.

11. Greet the Human

You'll hear a human voice speaking.

This is our receptionist, who will assist you in connecting with your GP.

Please greet them with respect. You have now entered the booking appointment processes and we are fully committed to serving you – and only you.

****Triage System:** All patients' first human contact is a receptionist. They will be asked questions about their name and symptoms. They will then decide whether or not the patient should be treated by a registered GP or seen by a doctor. This is a time-consuming process and usually used as a 'time-filler' strategy to give a sense that the patient has entered the system and is ready to receive the service.

12. Don't Be Secretive

There's this saying: "*Death by a thousand questions*"

Feel free to share everything with our staff. Tell us about your life, your concerns, and any symptoms you may be experiencing.

Our receptionist is not only here to assist but is also genuinely curious and eager to help.

They may ask questions to better understand your situation and ensure you receive the appropriate care.

Helpful Tip:

Our receptionist do tend to respond more promptly to symptoms that are described with a bit of dramatic flair. So, don't be afraid to paint a vivid picture of your discomfort. Maybe search for Google references?

13. Don't Panic.

You may not exist in our system

Error:

"You have been de-registered from our system"

If you see this, don't panic, that's just one of our many minor issues in the management system.

Sometimes you might get de-registered unexpectedly – but that's because we haven't heard from you in two years. It's a measure we take to ensure that our records remain up-to-date and accurate. Not sure if we can find your records though.

It's about time to re-register on our system don't you think?

14. Ever Tried the NHS App?

5% of patients booked an appointment through the NHS app

TIP:

Even if you managed to talk to our receptionist, you may still find yourself *gently* directed towards the NHS or AskMyGP app by our ever-helpful staff.

After you've set up your account, just log in and navigate to the appointment booking section.

It's really not that hard to use – unless you happen to be part of the "elderly" demographic, in which case, well, let's just say technology might pose a bit of a challenge.

GENTLE WARNING!!

There might be misinformation on the app and website though. Apparently when it says same-day appointment, it's not actually same day...

Reminder:

You must be aged 13 or over to use the NHS App.

15. Half Dead? Even Better!

If you feel unwell, then that's a good sign.
Tell us your symptoms and health conditions.

We will determine whether your condition is urgent
and whether you will need an appointment with one
of our GPs.

Tip:

If your routine / follow-up appointments exceed your
usual waiting period, you can claim your problem is
urgent in order to be seen more quickly.

****Being ranked in order of importance/urgency of
their health condition - Breaks from the FIFO (First in
First Out) system where people are being served
according to the 'first in first out' rule.**

16. Check Your Notifications

Don't you have a phone or a laptop handy?

Our emails are sent out at the *most* convenient times, (at least for us its convenient)

So, it's essential to check your inbox *regularly*—at least *five times a day*. This simple action can help us avoid the need to send additional messages, such as notifications about you being deregistered from our system.

Your emails are not missing, they're probably just in your spam.

17. Find a Translator

You must speak English.

We're sorry as we can't help with translating English. We have a lack of translation services.

Do you have relatives or friends that can help you with that?

18. Age Quicker Maybe?

A way to secure a GP appointment easier is if you're 80+.

Elderly have higher advantage of getting an appointment due to their complex health conditions.

There are people with only one long-term condition, which can be relatively stable over the next 10 years, but the number of people with multiple long-term conditions is rising – this increases by age (aged 85 and over)

19. Scrap Your Day-Off

If you are working, you have no choice but to queue at 8am. I'm afraid that is the only time convenient for us.

Working people – it's a good idea to take a short vacation or unpaid leave to make your call. Since the waiting might take up your whole day.

We won't ask when you're available.
So please make time for us.