

Formal and informal calls

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL
Upper-intermediate

NUMBER
EN_BE_3502X

LANGUAGE
English

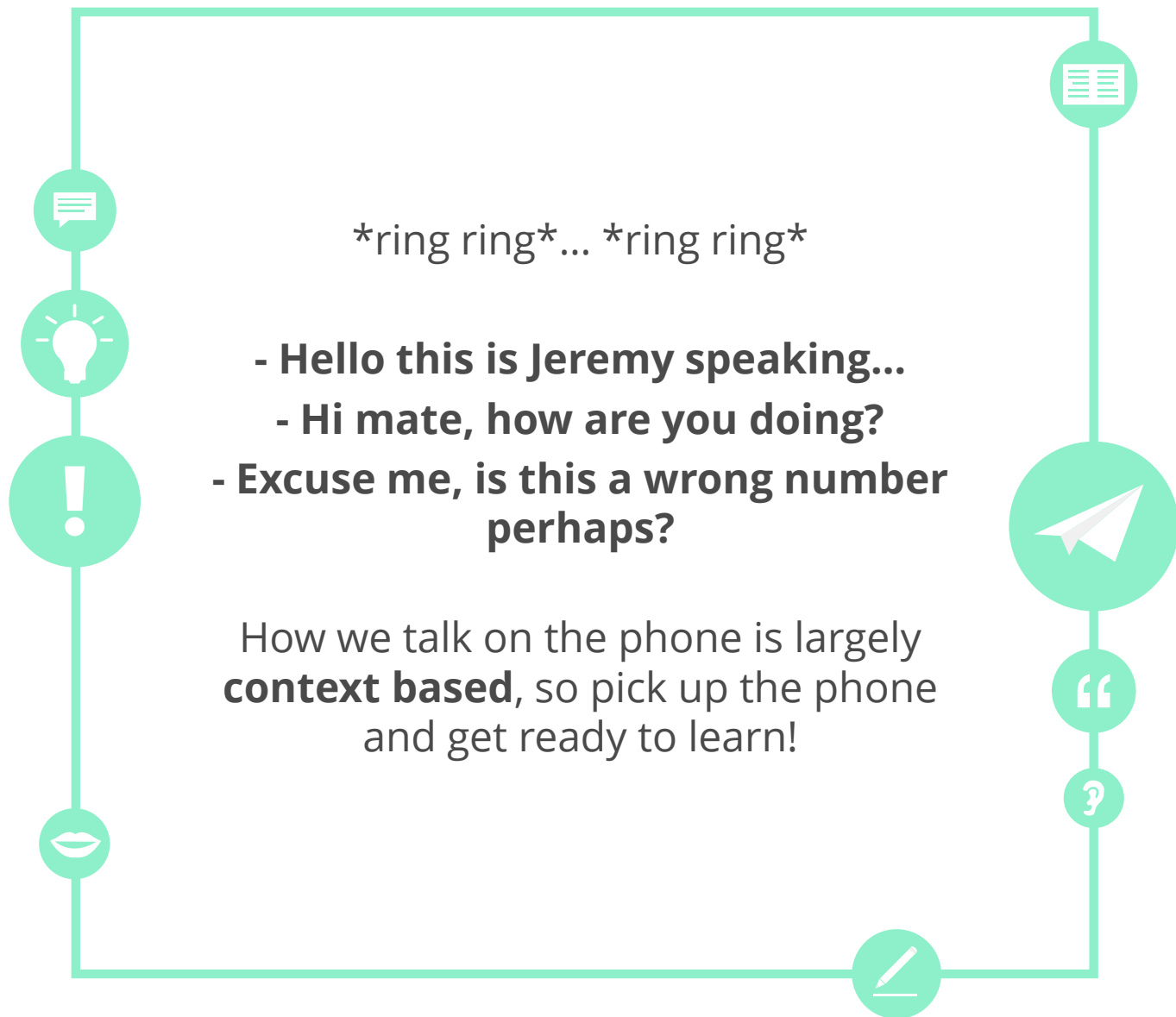




Goals

- Can understand standard phrases and structures for handling business calls
- Can use new terminology and concepts to deal with formal phone calls







Talk to the teacher

What might be different about making a phone call in the office compared to calling a friend?





Warm up

Ring ring! Your boss is giving you a call about your ongoing project!
How will you respond?
Role play with your teacher.



**Boss: Hello, how are you
today?**
**I'm just calling to check on the
progress of the Smith Report.**
How are things coming along?

Employee: _____

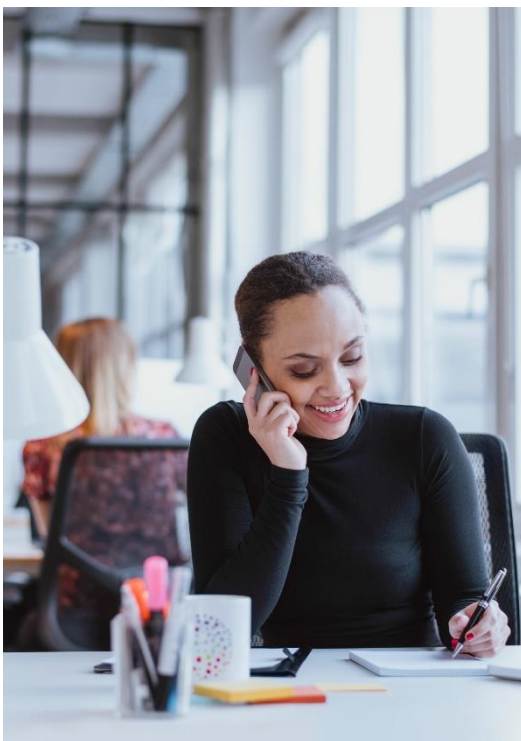


Talk to the teacher

How did you respond?

What are some of the phrases you used?

What are some of the phrases your boss used?



How would you respond differently
if the call had been from your...

mother/father

best friend



Useful vocabulary

wrong number

I think you may have the **wrong number**.

dial

What number should I **dial**?

pick up

Are you going to **pick up** the phone?

just a moment...

Just a moment please.

would you mind...

Would you mind holding the line for a second?

I'm afraid...

I'm afraid I can't talk at the moment.



Issues

As we cannot see the other speaker, conversations over the phone can have an extra degree of complication.

Discuss the potential issues of phone conversations.

Not hearing well

Misunderstanding
or misinterpreting
what someone
has said

Technological
interference

Lack of body
language



Phone issues

**What phrases can
you remember for a
polite business
phone conversation?**

formal phone calls

Phone calls can be considered more **formal** when we take calls from **colleagues**, or people we don't know so well. It is important to use the **right level of formality** – too much and people may not feel comfortable speaking to you, while not enough may be perceived as rudeness.



"Hello, this is Edgar speaking. How may I help you?"



Contexts

- As we **cannot see** our partner during a **phone call**, we often have to provide **context** to make up for this **lack** of **visual** and **physical support**.
- Things like the **tone** of your **voice**, how you **enunciate** and **pronounce** each word.

- Remember to **introduce yourself formally** at the beginning of the conversation.
- **Enunciate** your words clearly and use a polite tone.
- Give a **polite goodbye**.
- Have a **warm** and **friendly attitude**.
- It is also considered polite to **answer** the phone **in as few rings as possible**, and to **call** someone **back** as **soon** as possible if you have missed their call.



Review: politeness

- It's important to remember that **without body language** to aid communication there is an **increased risk** of coming across as **rude** or **impolite** in a telephone call.
- Follow the reminders below to help you avoid this!

- Politeness can be shown by using **modal verbs** like **would, could, can** and **may** when making a **request**.
- Using **please** and **thank you** to show politeness
- Normally you should **explain why** you have **called** in order not to come across as rude.
 - For example: *Hi Dave, I was just calling to let you know about the meeting tomorrow.*



Polite phrases

May I ask...

May I ask who is calling please?

Could I speak to...

Could I speak to Jeremy in sales please?

Can you hold the line?

I'll put you through to him. **Can you hold the line**, please?

Could I take a message?

Ms Baker is out of the office today. **Could I take a message**?

I'm afraid I cannot hear you clearly.

I'm afraid I cannot hear you clearly with this bad line.

Have a nice day

Thank you for calling. **Have a nice day**.



Asking for clarification

- It can be hard to **understand** what someone says over a **telephone line**. Connections can often be crackly, distant, echoed or muffled.
- It may be **intimidating**, but it is better to **ask for help** or **clarification** of something than to pretend you understand something you didn't.
- Use the phrases below to help you clarify things you might have missed.

- Could you repeat that, please?
- Would you mind spelling that out for me?
- Would you mind speaking a little more slowly please?
- So you said...is that right?
- Sorry, this line is bad. Let me try calling you back.





Speaking clearly: quick review

Identify four helpful tips which can help you be understood more clearly over the phone.



informal phone calls

Informal phone calls are more **relaxed** and **casual**, following an informal register.

In an informal phone call you can afford to be more relaxed, using more **colloquial phrases** and slang.

Basic phone etiquette still applies, however. You will want to speak **clearly**, sound **interested** in what the other person is saying and having a **warm** and **friendly** tone will all be appreciated.



Jane: Tom! What are you up to tonight?

Tom: I'm down for whatever!



Common phrases for informal phone calls

How are things?

Roger, **how are things** going?

What's new?

Hey Jerry, **what's new?**

Well, I guess I'd better get going.

All good! **Well, I guess I'd better get going.**

I'd better let you go.

It's late. **I'd better let you go.**

Have I caught you at a bad time?

Sorry, **have I caught you at a bad time?**

Talk to you later.

It's been fun chatting buddy. **Talk to you later.**



Context

Discuss each of the contexts for a phone call below. How would each of these contexts affect your language choices and tone?



Your tutor calls to reschedule your piano lesson

Your best friend is telling you about their night

Your mother is giving you some family news



Dealing with problems

Explain how you would deal with these problems in a telephone conversation. What could you say?

A bad line means you cannot clearly hear what the other person is saying

You don't have time to continue the call and have to hang up

You find it hard to find the right words over the phone

A notepad with a vertical blue line on the left and horizontal lines for writing. The notepad is white with a light blue vertical line on the left side. There are 10 horizontal lines for writing.



Excerpt

A: Hello, this is Sue from Energy X. How may I help you today?

B: Hi, this is Peter speaking. I'm calling about my electricity contract. I'd like to speak to Corey Simpkin if he is available.

A: Oh? I'm afraid he is out for lunch at the moment. Perhaps I can take a message?

B: Yes, could you ask him to call me back as soon as possible? It is quite urgent.

A: Of course, that won't be a problem. Does Mr Simpkin have your number?

B: I think he does, but I might give you my mobile number to make sure. Do you have a pen?

A: Yes, go ahead.

B: My number is 5678 0988.

A: So that is 5678 0988, correct?

B: Yes that's correct.

A: Your name is Peter...

B: Hoskin, that's H-o-s-k-i-n. Hoskin.

A: Marvellous. I will give your message to Mr Simpkin as soon as he is back from lunch.

B: Thank you so much for your help. Have a nice day.

A: You too. Good-bye.

B: Good-bye.

Read this extract of a telephone conversation along with your teacher.



Role play

Mr Simpkin is back from lunch and is calling back Peter Hoskin about his electricity contract. Role play the conversation with the teacher, using the useful phrases learned earlier in the lesson.

Practise using a formal tone throughout the conversation.





Misunderstandings

- We **draw meaning** from many **levels** of **communication**. In a face to face conversation we can read cues from a person's body language or physical attitude. In a telephone conversation these **cues are lost**, making it **easier** to be **misunderstood**.
- Following **correct etiquette** over the phone can minimise the chances of being misunderstood. Follow these guidelines to ensure you are understood clearly.

- **Check** for **understanding** by counterasking.
- **Listen carefully.**
- Focus on the conversation and **don't get distracted**
- Speak clearly into the receiver with an **even tone**.
- Keep your sentences as short as possible and avoid **rambling**.
- If you get the feeling you aren't being followed, **repeat** yourself.





Dos and do nots

**Discuss each of the practices below.
Explain to the teacher whether you think they help or hinder a
telephone conversation.**



Which of the practices below do you personally use
without being aware?

Use *filler words*
(um, like, yeah)

Eat and drink
during the call

Mumbling or
speaking under
your breath

Ask the person
how they are
doing at the
start of a
conversation

Have loud noise
in the
background

Checking if the
other person
understood
what you said



Misunderstandings

How would you resolve these problems over the telephone?

Reception issues

Someone cannot find something after being given directions over the phone

The other person thought you said something you didn't

The other speaker cannot hear you clearly

giving directions

Giving **directions** is much more difficult over the **phone** as we must **visualise** a **space** in our imaginations. Use some of the tips below to help give directions successfully:

- Ask the listener to repeat the directions to you afterwards to confirm they understand.
 - Visualise where the other speaker is.
 - Speak clearly and slowly.
 - Be specific when discussing location.
 - Be patient and polite.



Remember to never give directions if you aren't exactly sure about them.



Phone call challenge

You have just left work to go home for the evening. Unfortunately you have just remembered you left an important report lying around in the office.

Call your coworker Dave to ask him help you. Remember to be polite and use the formal register.



1

Ask Dave if he is still at the office. Describe what you need him to do for you.



Phone call challenge

You have just left work to go home for the evening. Unfortunately, you have just remembered you left an important report lying around in the office.

Call your coworker Dave and follow the steps below. Remember to be polite and use the formal register.



1

Ask Dave if he is still at the office. Describe what you need him to do for you.



2

It's a bad line! Dave didn't hear you properly. Clarify what you need and where it is.



Phone call challenge

Complete the activities below:



1

Ask Dave if he is still at the office. Describe what you need him to do for you.



2

It's a bad line! Dave didn't hear you properly. Clarify what you need and where it is.



3

He has found it! What should he do with it now it is safe? Don't forget to thank him for his time!



Answer the question



What were some challenges in the activity above?
Talk to the teacher.



Ring ring!

You're having a busy day at the office and have to call the following people. Make each call to the teacher and try to get the formality and tone of the conversation right!

Your landlord has been trying to call you about your rental contract.



Your colleague Bob. He needs help writing a report.



Your friend Mina. It's her birthday.



Your manager wants an update on a project you are working on.



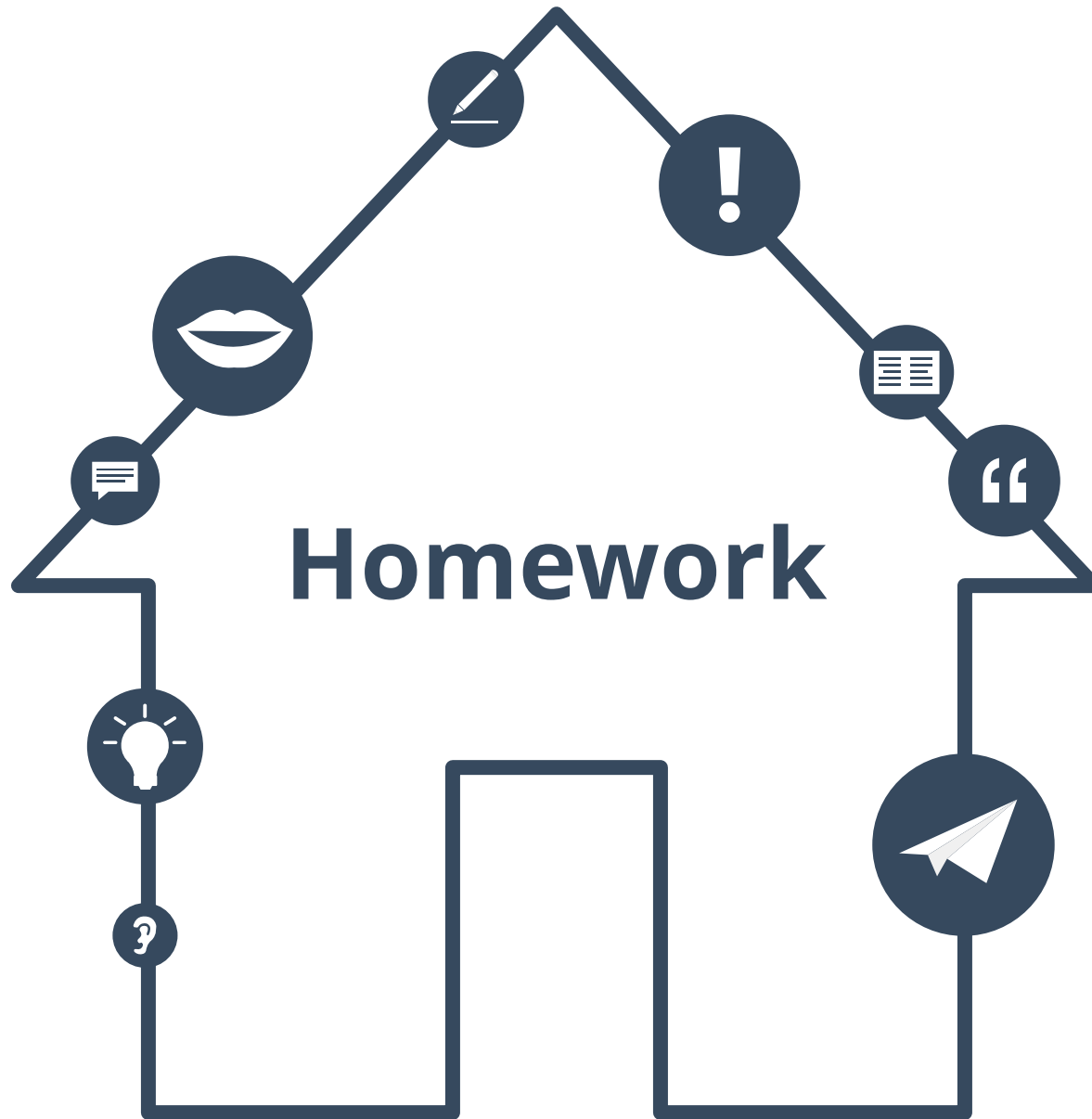


Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!







Homework evaluation activity

**Write two things you enjoyed and learnt about in this lesson.
Write two things which were more difficult to understand.**

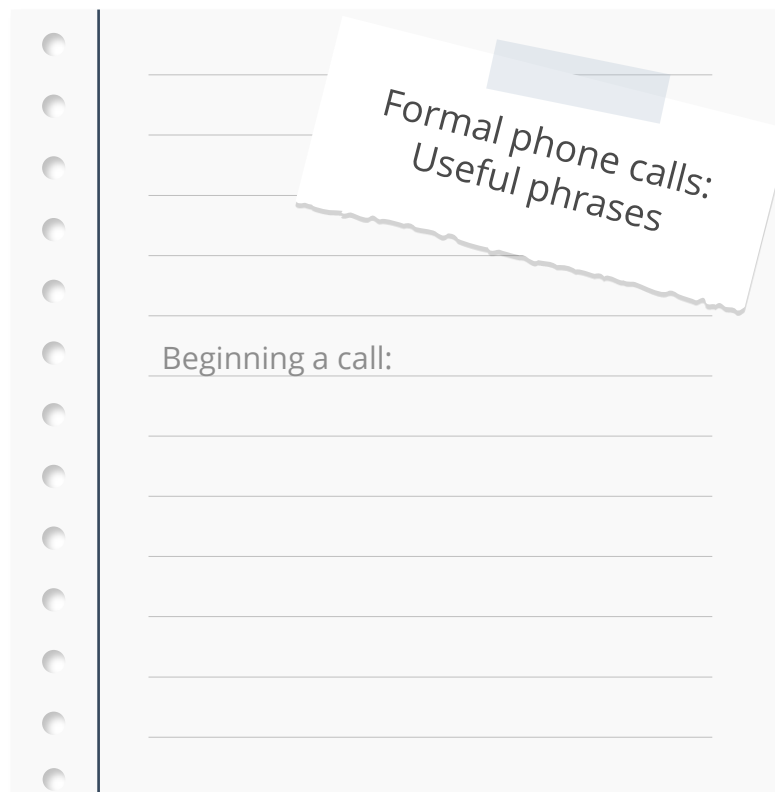
A vertical sheet of white paper with horizontal lines, resembling a notepad or worksheet, intended for students to write their responses.



Formal phrases for phone calls

Write a record of some formal phrases which can help you in a phone call!

A notebook could be very useful to have on hand for some of your first phone calls to help you become familiar with the most useful phrases.





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