

## Telephone English - Important Phrases

### Introduction

A lot of people find it difficult to make phone calls in a foreign language – and that's understandable. You can't see the person you are talking to, their voice might be unclear, and you might find it difficult to find the right words.

There are a number of phrases and idioms that are only used when telephoning. Let's first take a look at an example dialogue: Here are the most common:

Operator: Hello, Frank and Brothers, How can I help you?  
Peter: This is Peter Jackson. Can I have extension 3421?  
Operator: Certainly, hold on a minute, I'll put you through...

Frank: Bob Peterson's office, Frank speaking.  
Peter: This is Peter Jackson calling, is Bob in?  
Frank: I'm afraid he's out at the moment. Can I take a message?  
Peter: Yes, Could you ask him to call me at 07939132499. I need to talk to him about the Nuovo line, it's urgent.  
Frank: Could you repeat the number please?  
Peter: Yes, that's 07939132499, and this is Peter Jackson.  
Frank: Thank you Mr Jackson, I'll make sure Bob gets this a.s.a.p.  
Peter: Thanks, bye.  
Frank: Bye.

As you can see, the language is rather informal and there are some important differences to everyday English. Look at the chart below for key language and phrases used in telephone English:

### Introducing yourself

This is Ken.  
Ken speaking  
British Airways, Customer Complaints, John Smith speaking

### Asking who is on the telephone

Excuse me, who is this?  
Can I ask who is calling, please?

### Asking for Someone

Can I have extension 321?  
Could I speak to...?  
Is Jack in/there?

### Connecting Someone

I'll put you through  
Can you hold the line?  
Can you hold on a moment?

### How to reply when someone is not available

I'm afraid ... is not available at the moment  
The line is busy... (*when the extension requested is being used*)  
Mr Jackson isn't in... Mr Jackson is out at the moment...

### Taking a Message

Could I take a message?  
Would you like to leave a message?