

2º ENGLISH

On the phone
Present continuous

On the phone

Business phone conversations may be difficult when you are speaking a foreign language because there is no body language to help you, the audio quality is not always perfect, and there is more time pressure than in face-to-face conversations. You can try to practice these tips to make answering and making calls in English less stressful:

- **Smile.** The other person can notice if you are smiling, it makes your voice sound friendlier.
- **Speak more slowly** and at a lower pitch than you do during face-to-face conversations. It makes you sound confident, helps the other person to understand you better, and calms you down if you are feeling nervous.
- Don't be afraid to ask a caller to **repeat** something. It's better for the caller to repeat something several times than for you to write down the wrong information.

Phone calls can be made and received in many different situations. We are going to **classify** them, according to the **type of context** we may find.

Opening a call

Identifying yourself:

***This is** Michael Swam from Cambridge University.*

***It's** Michael Swam (from) Cambridge University here.*

Explaining the reason for the call:

***I'm calling** about...*

Getting through to the right person

Asking for the person:

***Could I speak to** Michael Swam, please?*

When the person **isn't available**:

Oh, that's a pity. I'll try calling later.

Can I leave a message for him, please?

***Can you ask him to call me** back, please?*

Taking a call

Identifying yourself:

Good morning. Cambridge University. Alice speaking. How can I help you?

Transferring a call:

*I'll **put you through to** Mr. Smith.*

*I'll **just connect you to** Mr. Smith.*

When the person **isn't available**:

*Sorry, she's **unavailable at the moment**.*

*I'm sorry, but she's **on another call**.*

*She's **in a meeting**.*

Calling someone back

*Sorry, I'm **really busy** at the moment. Can I **call you back** later today/in ten minutes?*

Ending the call

Is there anything else I can help you with today?

Thank you for your time.

Thank you for calling

Communication problems

*Could you **repeat that**, please?*

*This is a **really bad line**.*

*Could you **speak a bit more slowly**?*

Messages

Taking a message:

*Can I **take a message**?*

*I'll **make sure he gets** your message.*

Checking the message:

Let me just read that back to you.

Answering machines

Leaving a recorded message:

You've reached IT Consultants. Our normal office hours are 9 to 5, Mondays to Fridays. Please leave your message after the tone.

Leaving a message:

This is Alice Walters for Michael Swan. I'm calling about...

Making arrangements

Suggesting a meeting:

*I **was wondering** if you might have time to meet next week.*

Suggesting time and places:

When would it suit you?

Reacting to suggestions:

I'm afraid Monday is bad for me.

Yes, that would be good for me.

Confirming an arrangement:

Ok, I'll see you on Tuesday at 9 am, then.

Changing arrangements:

*I **was wondering** if we could **reschedule** our appointment.*

Being late for an appointment:

I'm afraid I might be a few minutes late. (Me temo que llego unos minutos tarde).

Now that we have revised expressions for telephone calls, here you have some related vocabulary:

Wrong number: it's when you dial an incorrect telephone number.

Missed call: it's when somebody calls you and you cannot answer the call at that moment.

To **hold on/** to **hang on:** to wait.

To **hang up/** to **ring off:** to finish the call by breaking the connection.

To **ring up:** to make a phone call.

To **pick up the phone:** to answer the phone.

To **call back:** to return a phone call.

To **put through to:** to connect your call to another telephone.

To **get through to:** to contact on the phone the person you want to talk to.

Present continuous

In English, the Present Continuous tense has several forms, according to the type of sentence in which it is used, that is, affirmative, negative and interrogative forms. Basically, we use the Present Simple of the verb **To BE** and we **add -ing** to the **main verb**.

Present Continuous Affirmative

Subject	Verb To BE	Main Verb	Objects
I	am / 'm are / 're	playing buying	football some apples
You			
We			
They			
He	is / 's	playing buying	football some apples
She			
It			

Present Continuous Negative

Subject	Verb To BE	Main Verb	Objects
I	am not / 'm not are not / 're not	playing buying	football some apples
You			
We			
They			
He	is not / 's not	playing buying	football some apples
She			
It			

Present Continuous Interrogative

Verb To BE	Subject	Main Verb	Objects
Am	I	playing	Football?
	you		
	we		some apples?
Are	they	buying	
Is	he	playing	Football?
	she		
	it		some apples?

Otros ejemplos:

Are they **not** going back home for Christmas?

Aren't they going back home for Christmas?

Are they going back home for Christmas?

As it happened in the Present Simple interrogative form, we can use some **adverbs, pronouns and determiners** when making **questions** in the **Present Continuous tense**. The position of these elements in the interrogative sentence is the following:

Interrogative Adverb, Pronoun, Determiner + Verb To BE + Subject + Main verb + Objects

Example:

Where are you eating pizza with your family?

Present continuous:

Use

In general terms, the Present Continuous tense is used in the following situations:

- For actions happening **at the moment** of speaking: *Peter is watching a film in his bedroom right now.*
- For **future plans** with a time reference: *I'm visiting my uncle this afternoon.*
- For **temporary** activities or situations: *She's working in Madrid until the end of July.*
- For **annoying (molestos) habits** (usually with the adverb always): *My sister is always borrowing my clothes without asking!*
- For **changing situations** with verbs like become, grow, increase and expressions like more and more:

More and more people are buying houses lately.

Temperatures are becoming higher all around the world.

The Present Continuous is often used with the following words and phrases:

- now,
- right now,
- at the moment,
- today,
- tonight,
- this week,
- this month...

We must also take into account some important spelling rules when adding -ing to the main verb in the Present Continuous:

- Most verbs just add -ing:

play-playing // start-starting.

- Verbs ending in -e **remove the -e** and **add -ing**:

take-taking // make-making.

- Verbs ending in one **vowel followed by a consonant** double the consonant and add -ing:

*get-get**ting** // run-run**ning**.*

- Verbs **ending in -ie** change -ie to -y:

*die-d**ying** // lie-l**ying**.*

Present Continuous **is not used** with **stative verbs**, which are verbs that describe states (**feelings, thoughts, opinions, senses, possession or existence**). Let's see some examples:

appear,
agree,
believe,
belong to,
depend,
forget,
hate,
have,
hear,
include,
know,
like,
love,
need,
prefer,
remember,
see,
seem,
smell,
taste,
think,
understand,
want,
weigh...

Sometimes we may not know if we have to use **Present Simple** or **Present Continuous**, but we will try to establish **a quite simple difference** between them:

When we talk about **actions in progress**, we use **Present Continuous**:

Put on your coat, it's snowing outside.

But when we talk about **habitual actions** or things that are always true, we use the **Present Simple**:

It rains a lot in Galicia.