

Guidelines for Professional Telephoning

1. How to pick up the phone

Remember **four** phrases when answering the phone in English:

- Hello/Good morning/Good afternoon
- **Company**.....(Systems Design)
- (Carol Hunt)..... **speaking**
- What can I do for you / How can I help you

2. Telephone English - The Radio Alphabet

A - Alpha (AL fah)
B - Bravo (BRAH voh)
C - Charlie (CHAR lee *or* SHAR lee)
D - Delta (DELL tah)
E - Echo (ECK oh)
F - Foxtrot (FOKS trot)
G - Golf (GOLF)
H - Hotel (hoh TELL)
I - India (IN dee ah)
J - Juliet (JEW lee ETT) (NOTE SPELLING: 2 T's)
K - Kilo (KEY loh)
L - Lima (LEE mah)
M - Mike (MIKE)
N - November (no VEM ber)
O - Oscar (OSS cah)
P - Papa (pah PAH)
Q - Quebec (keh BECK)
R - Romeo (ROW me oh)
S - Sierra (see AIR rah)
T - Tango (TANG go)
U - Uniform (YOU nee form *or* OO nee form)
V - Victor (VIK tah)
W - Whiskey (WISS key)
X - X-ray (ECKS ray)
Y - Yankee (YANG kee)
Z - Zulu (ZOO loo)

Spelling names:

If you want to spell a name, you can say, for example, 'A for Alpha', 'B as in Bravo', etc.

You may also need these expressions:

- ✓ capital A or upper case A
- ✓ lower case a or small a
- ✓ all one word
- ✓ new word/line
- ✓ dash or hyphen (-)
- ✓ slash(/)
- ✓ dot (.)
- ✓ at (@)
- ✓ pound key/hash (#)
- ✓ star key/asterisk (*)
- ✓ colon/semi-colon (:) (;)

3. Telephone English - The Phrases

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

- **Operator:** Hello, Jack 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...

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- **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 212 456-8965. I need to talk to him about the IT contract, it's urgent.
 - **Frank:** Could you repeat the number please?
 - **Peter:** Yes, that's 212 456-8965, and this is Peter Jackson.
 - **Frank:** Thank you Mr Jackson, I'll make sure Bob gets this asap.
 - **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 phrases below for key language used in telephone English:

Answering the phone

- Good morning/ afternoon/ evening, Jackson Enterprises, Sally Jones speaking.
- This is ... speaking
- How can I help you?
- Could you speak up, please?
- Who's speaking, please?
- Am I speaking to ...?
- Could you spell that please?
- Could you read that back to me please?
- Who would you like to talk to sir/ madam?
- One moment please, I'll see if Mr Jones is available.
- Can I assist you in any other way?

Asking for someone

- I'd like to speak to /with (AE)...(Can I - more informal / May I - more formal)
- Could I speak to someone who ...
- Could you put me through to Mr Jones, please?
- Would you be so kind **as** to put me through to Mr Brain?
- Could I have a quick word with Ms James? Can she be reached by car phone?
- Could I speak to Mr/Ms Brown?
- I'd like extension XX please. Sorry, his name has slipped my mind.
- Can I have extension 321? (Extensions are internal numbers at a company)
- Is Jack in? (Informal idiom meaning: Is Jack in the office?)

The reason for the call

- It's about your quotation. (*es geht um ihr Angebot*)
- I am ringing about your advert./ It is in connection with your advert.
- I am calling in connection with the vacancy.
- I'd like to speak to Mr Onion **on** business./**about** a private matter. (*geschäftlich sprechen*)
- I am calling on behalf of Dr Brain. (*im Auftrag von ..*)

Problems

- I'm sorry, I don't understand.
- I cannot hear you very well. Can you read that back to me, please? (*bitte noch mal vorlesen*)
- It's a bad connection.
- You must have dialled the wrong number. (*verwählt*)
- Number unobtainable (*kein Anschluss unter dieser Nummer*)

- I've tried to get through several times, but it's always engaged.
- May I just read back the details to you to make sure?
- I'm sorry, the line is busy./engaged.
- He is on the other line; do you want to be put on hold?

Putting someone through

- I'll connect you to...
- I'll put ... on the line
- I'm sorry, there's no reply from Mr Jones.
- I'll put you through. (Put through - phrasal verb meaning 'connect')
- I'll transfer you to.../ I am transferring you to his department.

Putting someone on hold

Can you hold the line? Can you hold on a moment?

- Just a moment, please.
- Hold on, please.
- Hold the line, please. You are being connected now.
- Just a second. (US)

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)
- Mrs Jackson isn't in... Mrs Jackson is out at the moment.
- I'm sorry, Mr Jackson is tied up all day.

Asking someone to call back

- Thank you for waiting. I'm afraid Mr Jones is not in at the moment.
- I'm sorry, Mr Jones is in a meeting.
- Can/ Could you call back later in the day?
- I can't reach him on the landline; do you have his mobile phone number?

Taking a message

- Can I take a message for...? Can I pass on a message to Mr Firth?
- Would you like to leave a message?
- Can I give him/her a message?
- I'll pass that on to Ms Child.
- I'll tell Mr Jones that you called.
- I'll make sure Mr Jones rings you as soon as possible.
- At what number can you be reached?

4. Leaving a Message

Sometimes, there may not be anyone to answer the telephone and you will need to leave a message. Follow this outline to make sure that the person who should receive your message has all the information he/she needs.

1. **Introduction** - - - - Hello, this is Ken. OR Hello, My name is Ken Beare (more formal).
2. **State the time of day and your reason for calling** - - - - It's ten in the morning. I'm phoning (calling, ringing) to find out if ... / to see if ... / to let you know that ... / to tell you that ...
3. **Make a request** - - - - Could you call (ring, telephone) me back? / Would you mind ... ? /
4. **Leave your telephone number** - - - - My number is / You can reach me at / Call me at ...
5. **Finish** - - - - Thanks a lot, bye. / I'll talk to you later, bye.

Here's an example:

Telephone: (*Ring... Ring... Ring...*) Hello, this is Tina. I'm afraid I'm not in at the moment. Please leave a message after the beep..... (beep)

Ken: Hello Tina, this is Ken. It's about noon and I'm calling to see if you would like to go to the soccer game on Friday. Could you call me back? You can reach me at 367-8925 until five this afternoon. I'll talk to you later, bye.

As you can see, leaving a message is pretty simple. You only need to make sure that you have stated all the most important information: your name, the time, the reason for calling, your telephone number.



5. Saying numbers

➤ OH, ZERO, LOVE, NOUGHT, NIL!

The above are all ways of saying 0 in English.

We say oh **after** a decimal point 5.03 five point oh three
in telephone numbers 67013 six seven oh one three
in bus numbers No. 701 get the seven oh one
in hotel room numbers Room 206 I'm in room two oh six.
in years 1905 nineteen oh five

We say nought **before** the decimal point 0.02 nought point oh two

We say zero for the number 0 the number zero
for temperature -5°C five degrees below zero

We say nil in football scores 5-0 Spain won five nil.

We say love in tennis 15--0 The score is fifteen love.

Now say the following:

1. The exact figure is 0.009.
2. Can you get back to me on 01244 249071? I'll be here all morning.
3. Can you put that on my bill? I'm in room 804.
4. Do we have to hold the conference in Reykjavik? It's 30 degrees below 0!
5. What's the score? 2--0 to Juventus.

➤ THE DECIMAL POINT

In English; we use a point (.) and not a comma (,) for decimals. We use commas in figures only when writing thousands.

10,001 is ten thousand and one.

10.001 is ten point oh oh one.

In English all the numbers after a decimal point are read separately:

10.66 ten point six six Not ten point sixty six

0.325 nought point three two five

0.001 nought point oh oh one or 10⁻³, ten to the power minus three

You will also hear people say:

0.05 zero point oh five or oh point oh five

But if the number after the decimal point is a unit of money, it is read like a normal number:
£12.50 twelve pounds fifty, EUR 2.95 two euros ninety five

NOTE: This is very important. When you do business on the phone, say nought point three seven five (0.375) and not nought point three hundred and seventy five. If the listener missed the word point, you might lose a lot of money. Say the digits separately after the point.

Now say the following:

1. It's somewhere between 3.488 and 3.491.
2. Look, it's less than 0.0001! It's hardly worth worrying about.
3. I changed all the currency into sterling and I only got £13.60!
4. That's about 14.50 in Swiss francs.
5. Did you say 0.225 or 0.229?
6. The dollar is at 1.95.
7. No, I meant 15.005 not 15,005.

➤ **PER CENT**

The stress is on perCENT

Notice the following when talking about interest rates:

0.5% a half of one per cent

0.25% a quarter of a percentage point

For example:

The Bank of England raised interest rates this morning by a quarter of a percentage point.

Now say the following:

1. What's 30% of 260?
2. They have put the rate up by another 0.5%.
3. 0.75% won't make a lot of difference.

➤ **HUNDREDS, THOUSANDS, AND MILLIONS**

In British English you hear a **hundred and twenty three**.

In American English you usually hear a **hundred twenty three**.

The number 1,999 is said one thousand nine hundred and ninety nine.

The year 1999 is said nineteen ninety nine.

The year 2000 is said the year two thousand.

The year 2001 is said two thousand and one.

The year 2015 is said two thousand and fifteen or twenty fifteen.

NOTE: It is likely that different people will refer to the early years of the 21st century in different ways. Remember that the year 1066 is always referred to as ten sixty six - not one thousand and sixty six.

1,000,000 is a million or ten to the power six. (10⁶)

1,000,000,000 is a billion or ten to the power nine. (10⁹)

Now say the following:

1. Why do you say 175 in Britain? In the States we usually say 175.
2. It's got 1001 different uses.
3. Profits will have doubled by the year 2000.
4. Thanks. You're one in 1,000,000!
5. No, that's 2,000,000,000 not 2,000,000!

➤ **SQUARES, CUBES, AND ROOTS**

10₂ is ten squared.

10₃ is ten cubed.

√ 6 is the square root of 6.

➤ **TELEPHONE AND FAX NUMBER**

We usually give telephone and fax numbers as individual digits:

01273 736344 oh one two seven three, seven three six, three four four

344 can also be said as **three double four**

44 26 77 **double four, two six, double seven**

777 can be said as **seven double seven, or seven seven seven**

➤ **FRACTIONS**

Fractions are mostly like ordinal numbers (fifth, sixth, twenty third etc):

a third a fifth a sixth

Notice, however, the following:

a half a quarter three quarters

three and a half two and three quarters

Now read the following:

In an opinion poll published today, over 3/4 of the electorate say they intend to vote in next month's referendum. 1/4 of voters say they will definitely vote Yes, while 1/3 will vote No. But that leaves over 2/5 of the voters who haven't made up their minds. Both sides remain hopeful. A spokesman for the 'Yes' .campaign said, "At the moment, 2/3 of the electorate won't vote No." A spokeswoman for the other side replied, "That's true, but 3/4 won't vote YES!"

➤ CALCULATING

Remember to pronounce the **s** in equals as **/z/**. It is singular; the part on the left equals the part on the right.

$10 + 4 = 14$ ten plus four is fourteen

ten and four equals fourteen

$10 - 4 = 6$ ten minus four is six

ten take away four equals six

$10 \times 4 = 40$ ten times four is (or equals) forty

ten multiplied by four is forty

$10 / 4 = 2 \frac{1}{2}$ ten divided by four is two and a half

$+$ = add $-$ = subtract (or deduct) \times = multiply \div = divide

Other ways of saying divide are:

per Fr/\$ francs **per** dollar

6% p. a. six per cent **per** annum



*"Now if we proceed downstairs, I'll
continue with the profit chart."*