

SPOKEN CORRESPONDENCE

Basic Phone Call & Online Meeting Conversation

Learning Objectives

Module: Spoken Correspondence

Topics: Basic Phone Call & Conference Call Conversation

Duration: 90 minutes


Grammar Points:

- Modal Verbs

General Expressions

- Introduction
- Answering and clarifying
- Handling problems

Objectives

- Students know how to correspond verbally in English on the phone and video-conferencing platforms.
 - Students are able to handle problems that occur while speaking English on the phone and video conferencing platforms.
 - Students can speak English in an appropriate and respectful manner on the phone and video conferencing platforms.
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Lesson Plan

Stage Aim	Time	Interaction	Activities and Detailed Procedure
Pre-activity	5'	Teacher	Asking the students about their experience having a phone call and conference call in professional business setting.
Introduction to a Phone Conversation	20'	Teacher-Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listening to the actual phone conversation.• Teacher will ask the students if they understand the conversation and to discuss what they are talking about.• Teacher will explain about the general rules or flow of a spoken correspondence, that usually happen in the phone or in an conference call.

Lesson Plan

Stage Aim	Time	Interaction	Activities and Detailed Procedure
Grammar points: Modal Verbs	15'	Teacher Teacher-Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher will introduce "Modal Verbs" to the students, by referring to the previous conversation.• Teacher will have each student to practice how to use Modal Verbs through Google Meet annotation/verbal communication.
General expressions of Spoken Correspondence	20'	Teacher Teacher-Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher will explain about the general rules and expressions/key phrases that the student can use when doing correspondence in English.• Teacher may ask the students to read the phrases out loud, to keep them engaged. There might be questions coming from the students at this stage

Lesson Plan

Stage Aim	Time	Interaction	Activities and Detailed Procedure
Speaking Practice/Role-Play	20'	Teacher-Student	Teacher will pair the students and ask each pair to choose a scenario (or playing a lucky draw for fun). Then the students will be asked to enter a breakout room and prepare the dialogue for 5-10 minutes. After that, each pair will have to perform in front of the others
De-brief and Q&A session	10'	Teacher-Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher (and students) will summarize the takeaways from today's class. Teacher may repeat some important points that needs to be highlighted.• Teacher will ask the students if there are some vocabulary that is new for them.• Teacher will open Q&A before closing the sessions.• (Optional) Teacher will give a short teaser on what the next class is.

Spoken Correspondence



Spoken correspondence is one of the basic skills of English conversation. It is important to sound clear and polite both on a phone call or during an online meeting conversation. People need to understand you when you speak to them, and you need to understand others when they speak to you.

Despite the variety of messaging and video telephony platforms used by platforms, ultimately it is the way you correspond that speaks volume to your professionalism.

PRE-ACTIVITY

What do you usually talk about when doing correspondence via telephone or during online meetings? With whom do you usually speak?

Tell us how it goes!



Listening Practice



Listen to a two-minute phone conversation between a business representative and a customer.

Audio link to be accessed [here](#).

What are they talking about?
How do they resolve the problems?

Listening To A Phone Conversation - Transcript

Dave : N & P Printers, good afternoon. Dave Marshall speaking. How can I help you?

Maria : Hello, it's Maria Safarini from East Bay Services.

Dave : Oh, hello Ms Safarini. How can I help?

Maria : Well, I'm ringing because we're having some problems with one of our printers, and I hope you can help. **Dave**
: Can you give me the model number, please?

Maria : Yes, it's a PX920 printer.

Dave : And when did you buy it?

Maria : Oh, we've only had it about six months, so it's still under warranty, I'm sure. We bought three other identical printers at the same time, and there's nothing wrong with those.

Dave : What seems to be the problem?

Maria : Well, it works, so I don't think it's that a part has gone wrong or anything like that, but the quality and speed of the printing are nothing like as good or as fast as on the other three printers. This machine is slower and what it produces just doesn't look very good. The point is, we can compare it with the other printers, and it's obvious there must be something wrong with it - we just don't know what.

Listening To A Phone Conversation - Transcript

Dave : Well, we need to arrange a time for a service engineer to come and have a look at it.

Maria : Yes, that's what I was hoping for, obviously.

Dave : I'm just looking at our appointments diary. I'm afraid we're very busy at the moment. It looks as if the first day he could come would be next Wednesday, the 5th. How does that sound?

Maria : Is that really the soonest you can manage? I was hoping you could send someone tomorrow or the day after.

Dave : I'm afraid not. One of our service engineers is off sick at the moment, so next Wednesday is the earliest we can manage.

Maria : OK. What sort of time would he be able to come?

Dave : He could come to you as his first appointment of the day, at 8.00, if that's convenient.

Maria : Yes, that would be fine. I'll just make a note of that - 8 a.m next Wednesday. Thanks very much. Bye.

Dave : Thanks for calling, Bye.



Listening Practice

- What are they talking about? What are their issues?
- What went well during the phone call?
- Based on their conversation, **what do you think is important to discuss when corresponding by phone?**



General Rules: **Phone Conversation**

Information that we should give:

- Greeting
- Company/department/division name
- Your name
- "How may I help you?"
- "I am calling you because..."

Information that we want to receive:

- Who we are speaking to
- Department/company
- What they need or what they can do to help us

Example: Phone Conversation

Information that we should give:

Dave: N & P Printers, good afternoon. Dave Marshall speaking. How can I help you?

Dave: Oh, hello Ms Safarini. How can I help?

Information that we want to receive:

Maria: Hello, it's Maria Safarini from East Bay Services.

Maria: Well, I'm ringing because we're having some problems with one of our printers, and I hope you can help.

Information that we should give:

Dodi : "Hello, good afternoon. Am I speaking with Wina from the Digital Marketing department?"

Dodi : "Hello Wina, my name is Dodi and I am part of the Product Development team. I received your number from Tania."

Dodi : "I want to follow up about the customer behaviour modelling. Have you received my email regarding our request to add an additional data point on their average order value?"

Information that we want to receive:

Wina : "Yes, it's me. Excuse me, but may I know who this is?"

Wina : "Oh, hi Dodi, nice to hear from you. Yes, she told me about you yesterday. How may I help you?"

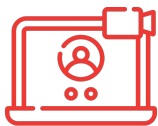
Wina : "Yes, I have read your email and I understand that there are some additional requests for the campaign." May I get a more detailed explanation regarding the requests?

Online Correspondence



In an era where working from anywhere is the new norm, coordination or correspondence through online meeting platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams have become a part of daily working life.

Even though we meet other people virtually, we need to show respect and courtesy by communicating using professional language. Also, don't forget to turn your camera on when possible!



Example: Opening A Video Conference



Silvia

Good morning everyone, I am Silvia Annisa, but you may call me Silvi. I am the Senior Fullstack Developer and the Head of Project Sunshine from XYZ Company. I'll be the host of today's meeting, as we discuss this project. Firstly, thank you all for coming to the meeting and allowing me to introduce my teammates who are present with me. They are Bryan, the front-end developer, Rian, the back-end developer and Rusi, the UI & UX designer.

Hi everyone, nice to see you all



Rian



Bryan



Rusi



Silvia

Thank you Bryan, Rian, and Rusi for coming. Before I start the meeting, perhaps Yogi, the representative from ABC Company, could introduce his team. I know most of you from last year's project but I see a few unfamiliar faces today.



Silvia

Sure thing, Silvi. Thank you for introducing your team to us. Hello everyone, my name is Yogi Rianto, or simply Yogi. I am the Head of Social Media Marketing for Project Sunshine from Media and Marketing Division. Today, I came with Alia, the Head of Performance Marketing.



Yogi

Hello everyone. I am Alia. I'm glad to meet you all.



Alia

Thank you Yogi and Alia for coming. Allow me to begin the meeting by stating today's agenda. Our goal today is to review the first draft of the project's website. At the end of our discussion today, we should have a decision on which area that we want to adjust, based on the goals that we have agreed to, prior to the project. There are a few items to discuss:

- To begin, we can discuss the general overview of the website;
- Next, the important links and buttons that we want to embed;
- and finally, the front banner that we want to include.

Is everything clear? Perhaps, someone has a question or wants to add to the agenda?



Silvia

Noted, Yogi thank you for your confirmation. I would like to let you know that we will record the meeting, just in case any of our internal team members, who are unable to join today, want to know the details of our discussion. As we have many details to cover, I would prefer if you have any questions during the meeting, please let me know by using the raised hand emoji. If by any chance any of you need to leave early, just let us know by sending a quick message through the chat box. Rusi has agreed to take the minutes for today and she'll send everyone a copy after the meeting. Alright, so... let us start with the first item on the agenda...

I think the agenda is pretty clear. We're good to go, Silvi



Yogi

Can you identify the **general rules** from the conversation?



General Rules: **Video Conference**

Introduction for an online meeting:

- Greeting
- Your name and company name
- Your roles/job title at the company
- Your roles during the meeting

plus, if you lead the meeting:

- Meeting agenda
- Establish ground rules
- Roles calls (if necessary)
- Allocating roles (if necessary)
- Asking everyone to introduce themselves (if necessary)



General Rules: **Video Conference**

INITIAL CALL OR MEETING

We want to receive:

- Request
- What they need
- Timeline

We should give:

- ★ Our job details and capacity
- ★ Next steps
- ★ Reiterating their requests and our
- ★ solutions so that both parties are clear
- ★ (summarizing meeting points)
- ★ Thank you

SECOND/FURTHER CALLS OR MEETING

We want to receive:

- Follow-up to requests/concerns/changes
- The other party's confirmation on our shared plan/proposed strategy

We should give:

- ★ Clarify current situation from our end
- ★ Current challenges/roadblocks/obstacles
- ★ (if any)
- ★ Our solutions
- ★ The time needed to complete the task
- ★ Thank you / sorry / please

Grammar **Points**

Modal Verbs

Looking through the list of standard telephone phrases, you'll notice that many of the questions are formed using modal verbs such as can, may, and could.

We use these three modal verbs when making offers and requests. They help the language we use sound more polite, in a softer tone, especially when used in a question.

"What's the model number?"



"**Can** you give me the
model number, please?"

Grammar **Points**

Types Of Modal Verbs

A modal is a type of **auxiliary (helping)** verb that is used to express: ability, possibility, permission, or obligation.

There are many types of modal that usually used in daily conversation, such as:

Type	Modal Verbs	Examples in Sentences
Ability	Can, Could	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Wina <i>can</i> write an SEO-based article.Arvin <i>could</i> make a game apps when he was in high school.
Permission	Can, Could, May, Would	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Could</i> I borrow your laptop, please?<i>May</i> I call you later after the meeting ends?
Advice	Should	<ul style="list-style-type: none">I think you <i>should</i> learn Phyton and R. Both of the language are widely used in many start-ups.
Obligation	Must, Have to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">You <i>must</i> check your spelling before submitting the doc!Linda <i>have to</i> do self-study after her absence.
Possibility	Might, May, Could, Can	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The website design looks nice, it <i>might</i> be expensive.Such an error <i>could</i> happens, sometimes.

Modal Verbs

Form:

In a statement the word order is:

Subject	Modal	Main Verb
<i>I</i>	<i>can</i>	<i>help.</i>

Question:

In questions, the word order changes

Modal	Subject	Main Verb
<i>Can</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>help?</i>

Offers:

May and *can* are used to make offers.

You should offer to help a caller when you answer the phone on behalf of your company.

In certain calls, where the person the caller wants to speak to is unavailable, you should also offer to take a message.

"Can I help you with this proposal?"

"Can I develop the system using this work process?"

"May I change the banner in our homepage?"



Modal Verbs

Neutral Requests:

When using **can** to make a request, the request may sometimes sound a little direct.

It depends a lot on the tone of your voice, however. So if you use **can** to make a request, make sure you use a polite and friendly tone.

Can you explain more about the issues the client is facing right now?



Can you add more words to the description?

Polite Requests:

Could is the most commonly used modal verb when making requests. Requests formed using **could** sound more polite.

Could you please postpone this meeting until next week?

Could you provide the sales data of the first Quarter by the end of the day?



Grammar Practice

Fill in the blanks with the suitable modal verbs

1. **(Can/Should)** you please delete this product from the database?
2. I am stuck in traffic right now. I **(might/have to)** arrive late to the meeting.
3. Andi not only understands SQL, but he **(would/can)** also analyze data with Python.
4. I like this interface better than your previous proposal. **(Could/Might)** you revise it and send it to me by EOD, please?
5. Our supervisor is not happy with your report. You **(have to/can)** apologize and fix it as soon as possible.
6. Many of our customers complain about this feature. It **(can/might)** needs to be removed.
7. **(Would/should)** you mind giving me a lift to the office?
8. **(Have to/can)** I use this plugin to gain insight about website visitors?

Grammar Practice

Fill in the blanks with the suitable modal verbs

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7. **Would** you mind giving me a lift to the office?
8. **Can** I use this plugin to gain insight about website visitors?

Grammar **Points**



Key Phrases

To be able to speak effectively, you need to remember some key phrases, or sentences that are often used in a professional business setting.

If you want to be fluent in English quickly, you need to practice using these key phrases outside of the class with your classmates.



General **Key Phrases**

Greetings and introduction:

Calling someone:

Good morning/afternoon/evening/Hello/Hi,
my name is **[your name]**. I am from **XXX Company/**
from **XXX Department**. Is this **[recipient's name]**/May I
speak with **[recipient's name]**?



Answering a call:



"Good morning/afternoon/evening/Hello/Hi,
Yes, this is [your name]. With whom am I speaking with?"



"Good morning/afternoon/evening/Hello/Hi,
I am sorry but I think you have the wrong number."



General **Key Phrases**

Generally, the attitude is that you should **show that you are polite and ready to help the person you are corresponding with**. The tip is that you can begin by asking specific questions using **5W1H**, for example:

- **Who** is involved in the programming team?
- **When** is the due date of the assignments?
- **Where** do you want to set up the meeting?
- **How** will you design the layout of the website?
- **How** many hours do you need to build this feature?

Moving forward to the point:

Beginning with a question:

- How may I help you, [recipient's name]?
- What can I do to help you with this project?



Clarity: **Making Sure The Information Is Correct**

Asking for clarification:

If you are unsure of what a caller means or you need more elaboration, simply ask them to explain or elaborate more on what they said before.

Could you please clarify how the set of data that you received was not defined?



Summarize to clarify:

Another way to clarify information is to shorten what you think the caller meant to say.



I'm not sure I understand. Did you mean you want to change the user-interface of the apps?



Accepting/Rejecting **A Request**

Accepting a request:

A: "Can you please create a new table in our database for the customers outside the greater Jakarta area?"

B: **"Sure, that's not a problem."**

A: "Thank you."



Declining a request:

A: "Can you add a new feature to access our users' data directly from this dashboard?"

B: **"I'm sorry, but I don't think I can do that."**

It is supposed to be confidential, even with our internal team."

A: "Ah, I understand your point. Thank you for letting me know."



Deferring/Agreeing **To A Decision**

Agreeing to a decision:

A: "This feature is no longer needed by our customers. Let's just remove it from our apps"

B: "I am with you. Our customer never use that anyways. Do you want me to remove it now?"



Deferring to a decision:

A: "Due to the budget constraints, we have decided to reduce the manpower for this project."

B: "I understand your consideration, but can you please give me some time to discuss about this with my team so I can offer a better solution regarding this manpower shortage?"





Common Issues When Speaking **On The Phone**

Bad Examples Alert:

Refrain from reacting like this when the problem occurs
in an online meeting or while speaking on the phone:

A: "... can you hear my voice clearly? Your picture doesn't seem to move."

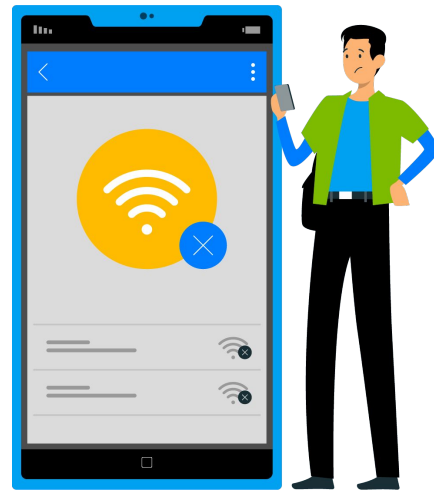
B: "Oh no way.. what happened? Hello? Hello? Can you see me? Can you hear me? Hellooooo....?"

A: "... can you hear my voice clearly? Your voice is breaking up."

B: "Really? I can hear you though."

A: "Hello?"

B: "YES, I CAN HEAR YOU. CAN YOU HEAR ME?"





Common Issues When Speaking **On The Phone/ During** **An Online Meeting**

When Experiencing Bad Network Connections:

"I'm sorry I can't hear you. Could you please repeat that?"

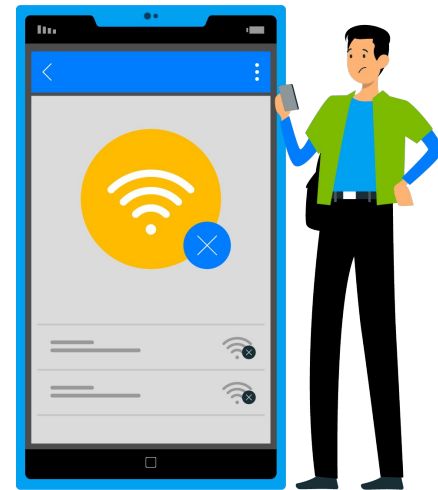
"I'm sorry, (I think) you're breaking up. Could you say that one more time?"

If the network connection is too poor, use this phrase if you would like to end the call and try again in a few minutes:

"Can I call you back in five minutes?"

"I'm on the train and the reception is not great. We might lose the connection.

If we do, I'll call you right back."



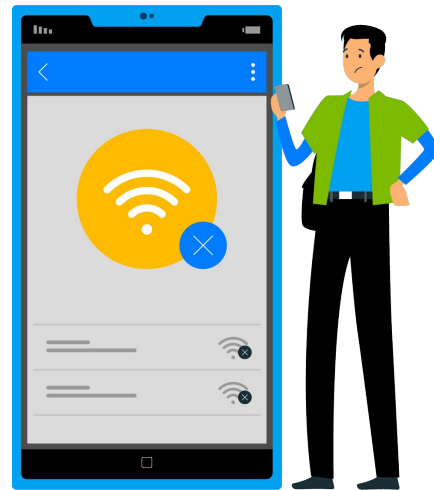


Common Issues When Speaking **On The Phone/ During** **An Online Meeting**

Bad Network Connections:

If it happens during an online meeting, use this phrase to give a solution verbally or through a chat box:

- "I am sorry, I think the internet reception is not really good in my place. May I turn my camera off so you can hear my voice better?"
- "I apologize for the difficulties. May I leave the room first and then re-enter?"
- "I think the problem is with my headphone. Please give me five minutes to change the devices."





Follow Up: **Make Or Break The Relationship**

Follow-up something you discussed in the past:

If a lot of time has passed since the subject was last discussed, add detail to remind the other person.

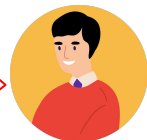


Hi Rama, first of all, thank you for your time. **I would like to follow up our conversation about** the annual data science project ideas you mentioned last week. Do you have any thought on how you want to run it?

Giving an update:

If you want to give an update, make sure you include a specific milestone and the specific time you can deliver the request or information.

My idea for the project is we create a data science competition, and then collaborate with a data science communities to get many participants register for the event. **Currently, the proposal has been made and is expected to be reviewed by the Program Manager tomorrow at 10 AM.** I will keep you in the loop and send you an email every time we've got an update.



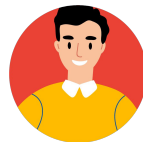


Follow Up: Giving A Negative Information

The deliverables can not be completed based on the plan:

If there's a condition where deliverables couldn't be met based on the time frame, you need to explain the reason and give the solution.

We can all agree that this feature has more complexities compared to the ones before, and it reflects on the amount of time we need to complete it. We have discussed it with our team and here's our plan to mitigate the issues



A project is in the bottleneck:

If there's a condition where the project or a process is stuck, and there is little you can do about it (though you have tried), you can explain the situation and encourage understanding.

We're halfway in the product roadmap, though it seems we require more manpower to be able to reach the next stage. We have escalated this issue to our Head of HR and currently is waiting for her confirmation.





Let's **Practice!**

To speak effectively, you need to practice using these key phrases, so it becomes natural to you.

Try create a daily conversation with your colleagues at the workplace!

Speaking practice - **Business Call Role-Play**

Scenario 1:

Reggy: You would like to speak with Tria from ABC software development agency. You call her because you know that she is working as a Web Developer and you are interested in how to build an interactive website for your own e-commerce.

Jamie: You are the Web Developer at ABC software development agency. You knew Reggy from a networking event and think that he might be a potential client. You try to explain to Reggy about the details of the product and services, even though sometimes your connection is unstable.

Speaking practice - **Business Call Role-Play**

Scenario 2:

Livia: You are working as the Head of Marketing. You are calling to schedule a meeting with Kevin, the Head of the Business Intelligence department at your company. You want to meet on Tuesday morning to discuss about the customers insight and behavior related to the newly launched apps. The meeting is urgent because you need the data soon.

Kevin: You are the Head of the Business Intelligence department. You are going to be out of the office until next week. You try to meet halfway with Livia so she is able to get what she needs.

Speaking practice - **Business Call Role-Play**

Scenario 3:

Create your own scenario!

You may create a hypothetical scenario about two or three people having a business phone call or online meeting, either to ask about a product/services, to arrange a meeting, to follow-up a sales proposal, or any scenario that you see fit.

Don't forget to use important key phrases & grammar that we have learned, so you can practice and remember it.



What Have You Learned Today?

- What are the general rules when speaking on the phone or joining an online meeting?
- What are the general rules when receiving and following up a request?
- What are some examples and functions of Modal Verbs?
- Which part do you find the most challenging in learning about spoken correspondence?
- Are there any questions?

Thank You

See you in the next class