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Business Telephoning

a Business English course for communicating in English on the telephone



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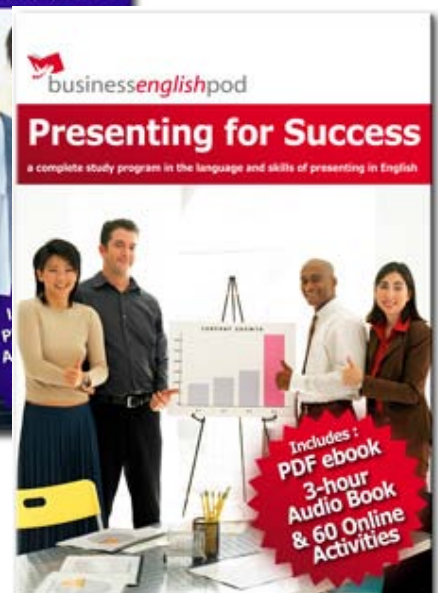
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Business English for Telephoning

A Business English course for communicating effectively on the phone

1st Edition

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Business English for Telephoning

1st Edition

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Business English for Telephoning

This is an e-book brought to you by Business English Pod, the leading provider of on-demand audio and study tools for Business English communication skills, available on the Web at www.businessenglishpod.com.

Talking on the telephone has become an extremely important part of business. You need to be able to answer a call professionally and create a good image of yourself and your company with only your voice. You also need to be able to take a message. Having effective telephone skills leaves a good impression on your customers, clients, colleagues and boss. People are busy, so you want to be very clear, polite and organized.

Business English for Telephoning is targeted for intermediate learners at or around the [Common European Framework \(CEF\)](#) level B2. This corresponds to a BULATS score of 3 or higher or an IELTS score of 5 or higher. The materials are designed, however, to be useful to students at a variety of levels: Intermediate learners will focus initially on language development whereas upper-intermediate and more advanced learners can zoom in on skills development, high-level vocabulary, fluency, confidence and enhancement of overall professionalism.

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Unit 501 - Answering a Call

You're listening to Business English for Telephoning, an eBook brought to you by www.BusinessEnglishPod.com.

In this eBook, we'll look at essential language for many types of business calls, including speaking with customers, making arrangements, dealing with problems and handling angry callers.

For our first lesson, we're going to look at one the most important telephone skills: answering a call. This is something we all do, but we don't all do *well*. We'll begin by looking at a bad example of answering a call and taking a message. We'll discuss *why* it's a bad example, and then we'll go into a *good* example of answering a call. I'm sure you'll see a clear difference.



Before we listen, let's talk a bit about the basics of handling a call. Our tone of voice needs to be pleasant and positive. We don't want to make people feel like they are bothering us. Some people try smiling when they speak even though the other person can't see them. This trick helps you to maintain a good tone. Second, we should always be prepared. Whether you're receiving or making a call, you need to be ready.

We also need to make it clear from the beginning who the person is talking to. This means identifying ourselves and our company. From there, we need to lead the conversation and find out how we can help the caller. The caller should not have to ask for help. And finally, we need to remember that *listening* is half of a conversation. We need to listen and respond to what the other person is saying.

For our bad example, we'll listen as Justin, an employee with Trivesco, calls a shipping company called Daneline. Justin is hoping to speak with Sylvie Petersen, but it is a receptionist named Amy who answers the phone.

Listening Questions – Bad Example

1. How would you describe Amy's attitude?

2. Does Justin seem prepared?

Telephoning

Vocabulary

just a second: we say "just a second" when we want someone to wait for a very short time; "Oh, you need a password for the wireless network? Just a second... I'll find it."

go ahead: begin; when we tell someone to "go ahead," we are saying that he or she can start or do something; "When Tom asked whether he could organize the filing cabinets, I told him to go ahead."

let's see: "let's see" is an empty expression we use when we are thinking about what to say next or when we are looking for information; "So, your annual vacation time will be... let's see... three weeks."

schedule: an organized list of events or activities; "According to this conference schedule, we'll take a break for lunch at 12:30."

handy: conveniently near or within reach; "At networking events, you should always have a stack of business cards handy."

omit: to leave out or not include; "The editor suggested omitting the last paragraph of the report because it didn't add any new information."

on hold: if we put someone "on hold" during a phone call, we silence the call temporarily while we do something else or take another call; "The receptionist put me on hold for 10 minutes while she looked for my file."

Bad Example

Amy: Hello.

Justin: Hi. Who's this?

Amy: Amy.

Justin: Is this Daneline?

Amy: Yes. What can I do for you?

Justin: Hi... Yes. **Just a second** here. Uh huh. There it is. May I speak to Sylvie Petersen?

Amy: Sylvie! Sorry, she's not here.

Justin: Can I leave a message?

Amy: Sure. **Go ahead.**

Justin: Uh. **Let's see.** My name is Justin Thomas. I'm with Trivesco. It's about the construction **schedule** for 2008. And my number is... wait a second... 390-929-2107.

Amy: Sorry could you say that again? I'm looking for a pen.

Justin: Which part?

Amy: All of it. Okay. What's your name?

Bad Example Debrief

This is not the way that a business telephone call should usually go. Neither Amy or Justin did a very good job, did they? So what exactly is the problem? We know the basics of what makes a good call, so what is wrong with Amy and Justin?

Amy: Hello.

Justin: Hi. Who's this?

Amy: Amy.

Justin: Is this Daneline?

Amy: Yes. What can I do for you?

Let's begin with how Amy answers the phone. She simply says, "hello." That may be what you say when you answer your telephone at home, but it's not okay in a business setting. Amy doesn't say her name or her company's name. She also doesn't ask how she can help the caller. And listen to her voice. Is it pleasant? Does it make the caller feel good about the interaction?

Think about the impression this makes. Justin has to ask who is answering the call and make sure that it is actually the right company. Remember, the person who answers the phone should make it clear who the person is calling. Finally Amy asks the caller what she can do.

Justin: Hi... Yes. **Just a second** here. Uh huh. There it is. May I speak to Sylvie Petersen?

Amy: Sylvie! Sorry, she's not here.

Justin: Can I leave a message?

Justin needs to work on his skills as well. He's really not prepared for this call and has to take a moment to figure out who he actually wants to speak with.

Of course, Amy should put Justin on hold while she looks for Sylvie Petersen. But she doesn't. She just puts the phone down and calls out "Sylvie!" Again, this is something that might happen at home but should *definitely* not happen at work. Notice too that it is Justin who asks if he can leave a message. That's something Amy should have asked. And how does she handle it?

Amy: Sure. **Go ahead.**

Justin: Uh. **Let's see.** My name is Justin Thomas. I'm with Trivesco. It's about the construction **schedule** for 2008. And my number is... wait a second... 390-929-2107.

Amy: Sorry could you say that again? I'm looking for a pen.

Neither speaker is really prepared. Justin's not sure of his own number, and Amy doesn't have a pen handy, even though she told Justin to go ahead with his message. Amy really needs to be better prepared and be a better listener.

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Good Example

Now, let's leave the bad example behind. You have seen quite clearly what we should *not* do. We'll listen to a good example of answering a call. This time we'll hear Mark Rand, who has replaced Justin. Mark is calling Daneline, and Amy has obviously received some telephone training.

As you listen, try to answer these questions:

1. What information does Amy include in her first sentence?
2. How does Mark Rand introduce himself?

Good Example Dialog

Amy: Hello, Daneline, this is Amy. How can I help you?

Mark: Hi, Amy. My name is Mark Rand. I'm calling for Sylvie Petersen.

Amy: Just a moment please.

Mark: All right.

Amy: Thanks for holding.

Debrief

This sounds a lot different from the bad example, doesn't it? Mark and Amy accomplish as much in two lines as Justin and Amy did in six.

First, Amy answered the phone very professionally.

Amy: Hello, Daneline, this is Amy. How can I help you?

In this simple sentence, Amy has included the four important parts of answering the phone: the greeting, her company name, her name, and an offer of help.

The greeting doesn't always have to be "hello." There are several other things you can say:

- Hello
- Hi
- Good morning
- Good afternoon
- Good day

"Hi" is slightly more informal than the others, but it is still acceptable in some contexts.

Second, you should say the name of your company. It's not really necessary to say "This is" before the name. Just the name is enough. You may also want to identify your department. For example, you can say "sales department," or just "sales."

Next, say your name. Amy says "this is Amy." Notice that she doesn't say "I am Amy," which is never used on the telephone. And remember that we don't say "this is" in other situations, like when we're answering a door or introducing ourselves face-to-face.

How else can we say our name on the telephone?

- My name is Sebastien.
- This is Ray Turner.
- Pat here.

Finally, you should make an offer to help, like this:

- How can I help you?
- What can I do for you?

These are the four parts of a standard telephone greeting in North America. In some situations, we might omit certain parts, or leave them out. For example, if we know that it is an internal call – I mean from inside your own company – then you might just say your name and department. Still, many companies expect the four-part greeting at all times. And if you're not sure whether the call is external or internal, remember that it's always better to be too formal than too informal.

Why don't we practice this four-part greeting. You will hear a prompt. Use the ideas in the prompt to practice the four-part greeting.

Prompt: morning / Dave / Dixon Construction / help

Learner: _____

Answer: Good morning. This is Dave at Dixon Construction. How can I help you?

Okay, what happens after Amy answers the phone?

Mark: Hi, Amy. My name is Mark Rand. I'm calling for Sylvie Petersen.

Mark starts with a very nice personal greeting for Amy. Then he gives his own name. If you are the caller and you know the person you are calling, you can use "this is." But if we've never met before, it's best to us "My name is..." for your introduction. In this case, you could also mention the company you work for, but it's not necessary.

Mark then states the purpose of his call. He wants to talk to Sylvie Petersen, and he uses the expression "I'm calling for..."

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What are some of the other ways that we can ask for a person on the telephone?

- May I speak to Benedict Struck?
- Is Arnold there?
- Yes, I'm calling to speak to Ravi Montero.

Now, Amy needs to check whether Sylvie is available, and to do this she puts Mark on hold.

Amy: Just a moment please.

Mark: All right.

There are a couple of other ways Amy could have done this:

- Could you hold please?
- Would you mind holding please?

Don't forget to actually listen for the caller's answer when you ask if the person can hold. Mark says "all right" and waits to find out whether Sylvie is in.

And you'll have to wait as well!

To finish of today's lesson, let's practice some useful vocabulary. You'll hear a series of sentences with a word replaced with a *beep*. Repeat the whole sentence, saying the missing word.

For example, if you hear:

Example cue: I'll check my <beep> to see if I am busy on Friday morning.

You can say:

Example answer: I'll check my **schedule** to see if I am busy on Friday morning.

After each response, we'll play the correct answer. Let's begin.

Cue 1: The instructor told us to <beep> the last chapter, which was out-of-date.

Learner: _____

Cue 2: Mr. Collins told me to <beep> ahead and start counting inventory.

Learner: _____

Cue 3: I asked Jackson for a calculator because he always has one <beep>.

Learner: _____

Cue 4: Tammy put the caller on <beep> while she talked to her manager.

Learner: _____

Answer 1: The instructor told us to **omit** the last chapter, which was out-of-date.

Answer 2: Mr. Collins told me to **go** ahead and start counting inventory.

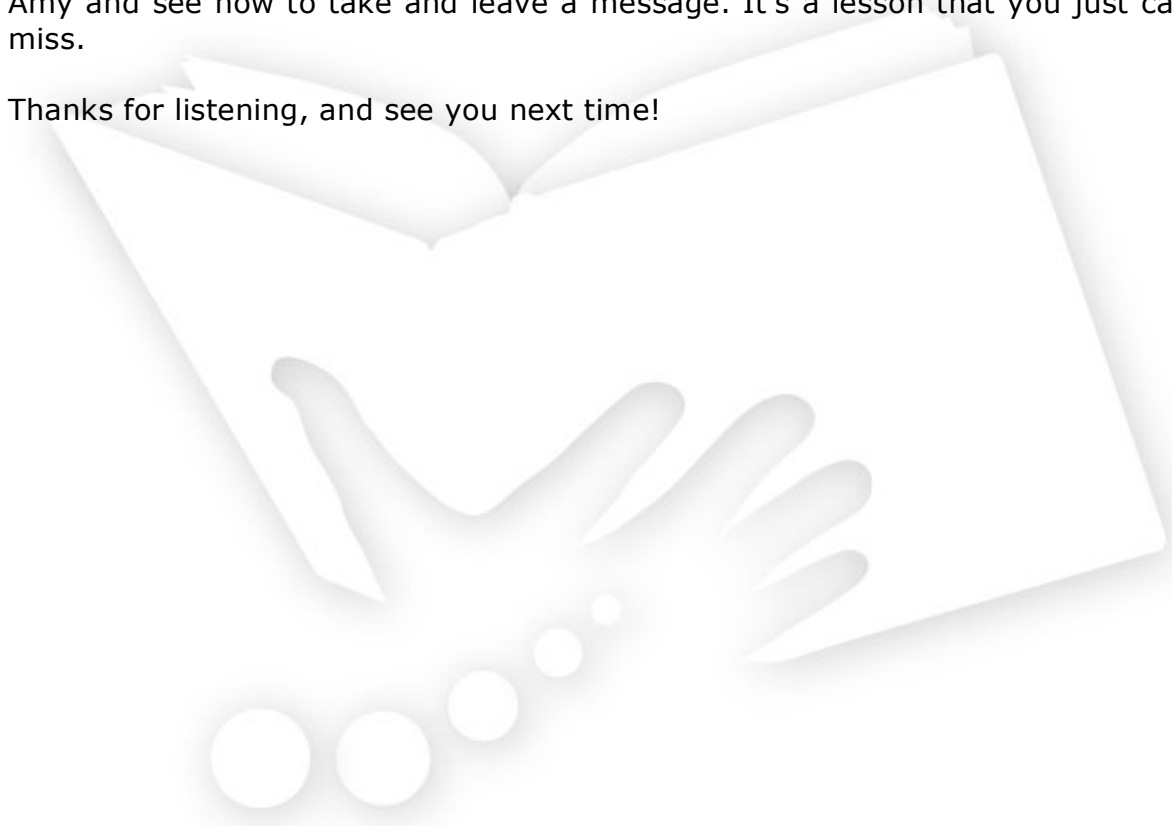
Answer 3: I asked Jackson for a calculator because he always has one **handy**.

Answer 4: Tammy put the caller on **hold** while she talked to her manager.

We've reached the end of this episode, the first of our two-part review of one of our most popular and important podcasts. We've looked at how to answer a call – and make a call – effectively and professionally. We've also seen how *not* to handle a call.

In our next episode, we'll hear the rest of the conversation between Mark and Amy and see how to take and leave a message. It's a lesson that you just can't miss.

Thanks for listening, and see you next time!



Telephoning

Language Review

A. Answering the Phone

Rearrange the jumbled phrases below to make suitable ways to answer the phone.

1. Olga hello how you may speaking I Computer Solutions help

2. hear International Computers Hello is Peter you what can I for this do

3. Dave Dixon Construction is good this morning help at I you how can

4. afternoon with this what is can I for you Ray Turner do good Bradbury's

B. Vocabulary

Fill in the blanks with words from the box below. Be sure to put any verbs in the right tense.

schedule

omit

ahead

handy

second

hold

1. I have to make a quick phone call, so I'll be just a _____ .
2. If you want to go _____ with your plan, I think you should check with management first.
3. According to the conference _____ , we break for lunch at 12:30.
4. At networking events, you should always have a stack of business cards _____ .
5. The editor suggested _____ the last paragraph of the report because it didn't add any new information.
6. The receptionist put me on _____ for 10 minutes while she looked for my file.

Answers

Listening Questions

Band Example:

1. Amy sounds bored and disinterested. Her flat tone of voice doesn't help either.
2. It is pretty obvious that Justin has not prepared for the call as he doesn't even remember who he is calling for.

Good Example:

1. Amy includes a greeting, the company name, her name and an offer to help.
2. Mark greets Amy, and then states his own name and the reason he's calling.

A. Answering the Phone

1. Hello, Computer Solutions. Olga speaking. How may I help you?
2. Hello, this is International Computers. Peter here. What can I do for you?
3. Good morning. This is Dave at Dixon Construction. How can I help you?
4. Good afternoon. This is Ray Turner with Bradbury's. What can I do for you?

B. Vocabulary

1. I have to make a quick phone call, so I'll be just a **second**.
2. If you want to go **ahead** with your plan, I think you should check with management first.
3. According to the conference **schedule**, we break for lunch at 12:30.
4. At networking events, you should always have a stack of business cards **handy**.
5. Sam suggested **omitting** the last paragraph of the report because it didn't add any new information.
6. The receptionist put me on **hold** for 10 minutes while she looked for my file.

Online Practice

Click the "Launch" button to open the **online practice**:

Launch 