

How to use English on the phone



Key phrases

- Answering the phone:

*(This is) Internet Service. Good morning.
Hello. Steve Jenkins speaking.
Can I help you?*

- Asking for the person you want to speak to:

*Could I speak to Martin Chapel, please?
I'd like to speak to someone about whiteboards, please.
Can you put me through to the Sales Manager, please?
Could I have extension 4691, please?*

- Giving a reason for the call:

*I'm interested in a holiday in the Bahamas.
I'm calling about the meeting on Friday.
I'm ringing to let you know when I'll be arriving.*



- Asking for information:

*Who's calling? | Who's speaking, please? → My name is Jim Barker.
Could I have your name, please? → Yes, it's Charles Higgins.
Would you spell that for me, please?
Could you give me your telephone number, please?*

- Problems in getting through:

*The line's engaged. Will you hold or will you call back later?
I'm sorry, but there's no reply. Would you like to leave a message?
I'm afraid he's not in the office at the moment. Can I get him to call you back?
I'm sorry, but there's nobody of that name here. I think you have the wrong number.*



- Making apologies:

*Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. I'll make sure that is
put right straight away.
Thank you for letting us know about the mistake.
I'm sorry about the inconvenience.
I'm sorry to have bothered you. (Wrong number)*

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Key phrases (continued)

- Having difficulty:

I'm afraid I can't hear you very well. This is a very bad line.

Could you speak up, please?

I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch that. Could you spell that for me, please?

I'm sorry, but could you repeat that, please?

Would you mind speaking a bit more slowly, please?

- Ending the call:

I'll get Martin Chapel to call you back. And thank you for your call.

So we will see you on Friday at 3 o'clock, then.

Please call again if you need any further information.

Thank you for calling.

Nice talking to you.

Goodbye.



Questions of style

In the English-speaking world, callers usually do not give their names, or even say why they are calling, until they get through to the person they want to speak to (or, at least, the right phone). The switchboard operator therefore addresses them as 'caller':

Hello, caller. The number's ringing for you now.

I'm sorry, caller, but there's no reply.



Danes sometimes seem to finish their calls rather suddenly...

Danes often make the mistake of thinking English-speaking callers are impolite because they do not give their names.

On the other hand, English-speakers often find Danes finish their telephone calls rather suddenly. The custom is to give some advance warning that you think the conversation should end now:

Well, we'll see you on Tuesday, then...

Right, I'd better let you get back to work...

OK, I'll ring you back in about an hour, then.

This gives the other person a chance to say: *Wait a minute; there was something else I wanted to talk to you about...* And, before saying *Goodbye*, it is usual to end with a polite phrase, like:

It was nice talking to you.

Thank you for calling.