

Unit 3

Handling Telephone Calls in an Office

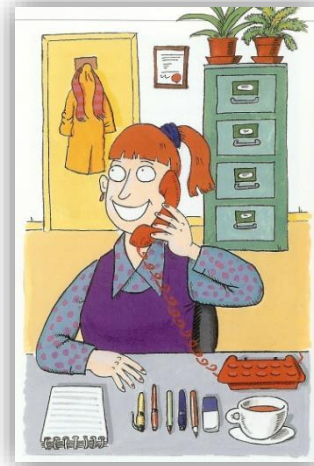
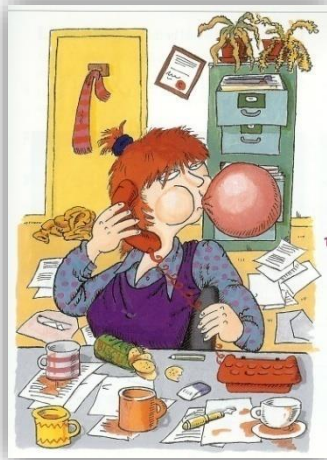


Introduction

An effective secretary should learn to handle telephone calls and know good telephone manners. This shows that the secretary can professionally use the telephone and give a good first impression including using correct and appropriate phrases. This unit will present good telephone manners, common errors in telephoning and expressions used to receive a call in an office.

Good Telephone Manners

In business, it is important that a professional secretary should give a good impression on the telephone.



Practice 1

Discuss with your classmates. Look at the pictures above, which shows a good telephone manner? Please give some evidence.

Practice 2

Complete these suggestions with Do or Don't.

1. _____ sound positive!
2. _____ keep a caller waiting!
3. _____ give your name or the name of the company in friendly voice!
4. _____ speak clearly!
5. _____ sound bored!
6. _____ give the impression you know very little about your company!
7. _____ apologize immediately if an apology is needed!
8. _____ get irritated!
9. _____ give the caller the name of person you are going to put him through to!
10. _____ sound helpful!

11. _____ take responsibility: either solve the caller's problem or promise to take some appropriate action!
12. _____ break promise!

Practice 3

Say the followings. Smile as you do so.

I'll get him to call you back.

I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

Thank you for calling Prefect Partners.

Hold the line, please. I'm putting you through.

How can I help you?

Have a nice day.

Common Errors in Telephoning

There are a number of common mistakes that people make when speaking on the phone. A secretary will sound professional if she or he avoids them.

Practice 4

A. Try correcting the following statements.

a. Hello. I am John Satterwhite speaking.

b. I call from Spain.

c. I would to speak to John.

d. You send a brochure to me, please?

e. I send you a brochure immediately.

f. I look forward to see you next week.

g. Can I leave a message, please?

h. Could I speak to Mrs. Susan?

B. Match the mistakes with the following explanations.

1. The present simple is not used for actions which are happening now. The present continuous is needed here.
2. Would is not followed by to if the meaning is similar to want.
3. Look forward to should be followed by -ing.
4. This is a promise so I'll should be used, not the present simple.
5. Only surnames are used after title like Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr, not first names.
6. This form isn't used. On the telephone, say This is... speaking.
7. This is a request, so you should use Can you...? or the more polite Could you...?
8. The article a is missing.

Receiving a Call

① When a company secretary picks up the phone, there are three basic steps he or she should follow:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. Identify company: | Great Trading Company. |
| 2. Greet: | Good morning. / Good afternoon. / Hello. |
| 3. Offer help: | May I help you? / How can I help you? |

Alternatively, a secretary is able to start a telephone conversation with greeting, followed by identifying the company and offering help.

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. Greet: | Good morning. / Good afternoon. / Hello. |
| 2. Identify company: | Great Trading Company. |
| 3. Offer help: | May I help you? / How can I help you? |

Then a secretary asks for caller's name. Next he or she asks the caller to hold the line and finally puts him/her through.

In this business situation, Nida is the secretary to Sales Manager Mr. Peter Woon. She picks up a phone. Underlined expressions used for answering a call are presented in given conversations.

Conversation 1

Nida: Sales Department, good morning. May I help you?
Mr. Smith: Could I speak to Mr. Woon, please?
Nida: Who's calling, please?
Mr. Smith: Jamie Smith.
Nida: Just a moment, please. I'll put you through.
Mr. Smith: Thank you.

Conversation 2

Nida: Hello, KK Electrics. How may I help you?
Ms. Utada: I'm calling from Tokyo. I'd like to speak to Mr. Woon, please.
Nida: May I have your name, please?
Ms. Utada: Yes. This is Yuko Utada.
Nida: Hold the line, please.
Ms. Utada: Certainly. I'll wait.
Nida: Mr. Woon, Ms. Utada from Tokyo is on the line.
Mr. Woon: OK, thank you.
Nida: Thank you for holding, Ms. Utada. I'll connect you now.
Ms. Utada: Thank you.

Conversation 3

Nida: Good morning, Nida speaking. Can I help you?

Mr. Brown: Hello. This is Paul Brown speaking. I'm trying to contact Mr. Woon and talk about details of multimedia marketing.

Nida: I'll get him.

Mr. Brown: Thanks.

Practice 5

1. In pairs, practice the conversations 1-3.
2. Make a telephone conversation. Use the given set of information where necessary. Student A uses your name and acts as a secretary who answers a call. Student B uses your name and acts as a caller. Then take turns.
 - A. LG Electronics (Thailand) Co., Ltd. - Marketing
 - B. Mr. Mike Johnson - FedEx Thailand - talk about business plan

② As a receiver, a secretary will sometimes have to transfer a caller to another person in a different department. Before you do this, you need to say:

- ❖ Just a moment, please, I'll put you through to the section.
- ❖ Just a moment, please, I'll transfer your call to Mr. / Ms.
- ❖ Just a moment, please, I'll put you through to someone who can help you.

Conversation 4

Nida: Sales Department, good morning.

Mr. Comas: Can I speak to Mrs. Teng, please?

Nida: Just a moment, please. I'll transfer your call to Mrs. Teng in Purchasing.

Mr. Comas: Thank you.

Practice 6

1. In pairs, practice the conversation 4.
2. Make a telephone conversation. Use the given set of information where necessary. Student A uses your name and acts as a secretary who answers a call. Student B uses your name and acts as a caller. Then take turns.

A. Accounts Research and Development

B. Ms. Lin Ling

③ If the person the caller asks for will return to the office soon, it is useful to ask for the caller's name and number:

- ❖ I'm sorry, but he's not here right now. If you give me your name and number, I'll ask him to call you back.
- ❖ I'm sorry but she's in a meeting now. If you give me your name and number, I'll ask her to call you back.

Conversation 5

Nida: Good morning, Sales Department.

Tom: Oh, hello. I'd like to speak to Peter Woon, please.

Nida: I'm afraid he's not here today. If you give me your name and number, I'll ask him to call you back tomorrow.

Tom: Yes, fine.

Nida: Can I have your name and number, please?

Tom: My name's Tom Powel. And my number is 022445650.

Nida: Could you repeat that, please?

Tom: My number is 022445650.

Nida: Yes, I've got that. I'll make sure he gets your message as soon as he comes in.

Practice 7

1. In pairs, practice the conversation 5.
2. Make a telephone conversation. Use the given set of information where necessary. Student A uses your name and acts as a secretary who answers a call. Student B uses your name and acts as a caller. Then take turns.

A. Accounts - He's tied up at the moment.

B. Mr. Jimmy Moore - 024638876

- ④ Sometimes there is a misdialled call, a secretary should say:

- ❖ I'm sorry. I think you have the wrong number.
- ❖ You seem to have dialled the wrong number.

Conversation 6

- Nida: Sales Department, good morning.
- Ms. Martin: Could I speak to Mr. Adams, please?
- Nida: Nobody by that name works here.
- Ms. Martin: Could I check the number? Isn't it 027632468?
- Nida: You must have the wrong number.
- Ms. Martin: Oh, I must have dialled the wrong number. Sorry to have troubled you.

Practice 8

1. In pairs, practice the conversation 6.
2. Make a telephone conversation. Use the given set of information where necessary. Student A uses your name and acts as a secretary who answers a call. Student B uses your name and acts as a caller. Then take turns.

A. CEO Xiaoping's Office

B. Ms. Feng Ting - 024625679

⑤ If there is a lot of background noise or static on the phone, the following phrases will be useful to handle a noise problem:

- ❖ There's a lot of background noise. I can't hear you very well.
- ❖ This is a bad connection. Please hang up and I'll call you back.

Conversation 7

Nida: Sales Department, good afternoon.

Nick: Hello, Nida. It's me, Nick. I'd like some information about our new price list.

Nida: (Crackkk...) Oh hello, Nick. This is a bad connection. Please hang up and I'll call you back.

Nick: Okay.

Practice 9

1. In pairs, practice the conversation 7.
2. Make a telephone conversation. Use the given set of information where necessary. Student A uses your name and acts as a secretary who answers a call. Student B uses your name and acts as a caller. Then take turns.
 - A. Finance
 - B. I'd like to change some information of our business plan.

⑥ When ending a call, a secretary should end a conversation by using suggested phrases below.

- ❖ I'll give the message to Mr. / Ms. as soon as he/she returns. Thank you for calling. Good bye.
- ❖ Thank you for calling. Goodbye.
- ❖ Thank you for your help.
- ❖ Have a nice day.

Conversation 8

Nida: Nida speaking.

Gary: Nida, it's Gary Lays.

Nida: Gary! Hello. What can I do for you?

Gary: Could we meet sometime next week to revise the annual report?

Nida: Of course. When do you have in mind?

Gary: How about Tuesday morning, say nine o'clock? Come see me at my office.

Nida: Yes, that would be fine.

Gary: I'll prepare the first draft. You just bring the minutes.

Nida: Perfect!

Gary: See you then. Goodbye.

Nida: Thank you for your help. Goodbye.

Practice 10

1. In pairs, practice the conversation 8.
2. Make a telephone conversation. Use the given set of information where necessary. Student A uses your name and acts as a secretary who answers a call. Student B uses your name and acts as a caller. Then take turns.
 - A. write a survey report - next Thursday - 3 p.m. - summarize data from the questionnaires - bring a copy of interview script
 - B. Thursday suits me. - Thank you for calling.

Making a call

To make a telephone call in the business context, it is necessary to be well prepared. According to Murthy & Nagasubramanian (2007), a telephone call should be planned exactly the same way as a business letter. The caller should prepare a list of points to be discussed. There are particular issues to be considered when calling someone at work.

For example:

- You should have the correct number.
- You should know the name of the person whom you wish to talk to or the name of the department.
- You should have the subject or specific topics that you want to ask.
- If you are calling on behalf of your boss, you should find out exactly what he or she wants from the call.
- You should identify yourself and your company.
- You should be ready to leave a message in case the person is not available.
- You should have the relevant documents with you in case you need to refer to something while calling.

Source: Murthy & Nagasubramanian (2007, p. 129)

When making a telephone call it is professional to start a conversation by greeting and identifying yourself. It is essential to say it as clearly as possible so that the person knows who you are and whom you want to talk to. When you finish talking, you can end your call by thanking the person you are talking to. Following are useful expressions for making telephone calls in the workplace.

1. Identify yourself

- Hello, this is Somluck calling from Infotel.
- My name is I'm calling from
- This is from
- Hi Bob, it's Linda here.

2. Asking for connection

- I'd like to speak to.....
- Can/Could/May I speak to ?
- Could you put me through to?
- Dr. Howard Wilson please.
- Miss Lily Extension 244, please.
- Mr. Winai room number 1509 please.
- Is Debra there please?
- Is Jackie in?

3. Reasons for calling

- I'm calling about order No. 05521. We have not received the goods yet.
- I'm calling about a hotel reservation for Mr. Chris.
- The reason I called is to make an appointment with your sales team.
When would be a good time?
- I'm calling to check that you received my fax. I sent it this morning.
- I'm calling to confirm that Mr. Freeman will attend the seminar next week.
- I was wondering if you could tell me about the details of the forthcoming management meeting in London.
- Mr. George Springfield asked me to call you to confirm the trip to Japan next month.

4. Leaving a message

- Can you ask him to call me as soon as possible?
- Please tell her that I need the sales report by Monday.
- Please tell Jenny that the meeting will start at 10am tomorrow and please tell her to bring the monthly report with her.
- Please tell Miss Kim that Dr. Cris will meet her for lunch tomorrow at Boathouse Restaurant.
- Please tell Mr. Vejay that I'll pick him up at the airport on Friday at 4pm.
- Please let her know that Mr. Mark Taylor from SCB will visit the factory on Monday at 11am.

5. Speaking to someone else

- Can I speak to his assistant/ his colleague?
- Can I talk to one of the sales staff?
- Can I talk to someone who is in charge of language training please?
- I'm interested in the Small Business Workshop. Who can I talk to please?
- Can I talk to someone about the car insurance please?
- Can I talk to someone in the Finance Department please?

6. Ending the call

- Thank you very much for your help.
- Thank you so much for your time.
- I really appreciate your help in this matter.
- I look forward to seeing in Bangkok.
- Thank you for your help. Bye.
- I look forward to our meeting/ your call/ your visit/your email.
- Thank you. Goodbye.
- It was nice talking to you. Goodbye.
- Very nice to talk to you. Bye.

Telephone etiquette

Good and courteous manners are considered important when making a telephone call in any business organizations. You have to show respect and pay attention to the person whom you are talking to and you have to make sure that you do not waste the caller's time. There are some basic telephone rules as follows:

Do's

- Plan the call thoroughly. Have clear objectives before calling.
- Send an e-mail before you call when necessary.
- Have all necessary information in hand.
- Be concise, polite and efficient. Time is money.
- Smile when you use the telephone. People can hear you smile.
- Use questions to identify key issues.
- Listen actively. Confirm regularly that you understand.
- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Speak with a positive manner.
- Allow people to finish what they are saying.
- Avoid complex language.
- Check that the other person understands.
- Take notes during the call.
- Send a follow-up e-mail to confirm.
- Finish with a positive phrase.

Don'ts

- Call if you are unprepared.
- Pretend to understand, especially when dealing with foreign accents.
- Assume that the person you are talking to has understood everything.
- Interrupt.
- Shout.
- Rely on your memory for important details.
- Forget to write down important details.
- Waste time.
- Put the receiver down too quickly. It can be rude.

Source: adapted from Dignen (2000, p. 34)

Exercise

Instructions: Choose the correct preposition from the list below to complete the following sentences.

about to by in for on at of

1. Can I speak Mr. Wu please?
2. I need the confirmation letter tomorrow.
3. Let me transfer the line you.
4. Would you like leave a message?
5. Could you put me through Mr. Wallace please?
6. Please tell Margaret that I would like to meet her lunch.
7. I want check the price of the new scanner.
8. I look forward your email.
9. Thank you very much your help.
10. I would like to talk the person who is in charge the computer training course please.
11. Can you tell Mr. Fisher call me back?
12. I want to talk the new advertising campaign.

Review Questions

A. Who says the phrases below: a caller or a receiver? Put C for a caller and R for a receiver on the lines given.

- _____ 1. Who's calling please?
- _____ 2. Yes, I'll hold.
- _____ 3. I'd like to speak to CEO Miki, please.
- _____ 4. Good morning. Health Care Center. How can I help you?
- _____ 5. I'm afraid she is in a meeting at the moment.
- _____ 6. Will you hold?
- _____ 7. My name is Peter Clapton.
- _____ 8. Okay, I'll call back at about four o'clock.
- _____ 9. The line's free now. I'm putting you through.
- _____ 10. Can you call back this afternoon?
- _____ 11. Goodbye. I'll tell him you called.
- _____ 12. I'm afraid the line's engaged.

B. Rewrite the following sentences with one of the words in the box given.

find	coming	contact	ask	ring
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1. I'll get back to you as soon as I can.
2. Just a moment, he's out of the office. I'll get him for you.
3. What time is Mr. Jin getting back? He'll be back at three.
4. I'll get him to call you back.
5. I can't get through to the supplier- their line's always engaged.

References

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