

More and more difficult telephoning roleplays and useful language

Roleplay the situations below in the order given. If there are any which you can't cope with, ask for your teacher's advice and then try the same one again. Change which of you is answering the phone each time. If you need to put someone through, you can either do the roleplay in threes or one person can take on all the roles of people answering the phone.

- 1 Phone someone you know and have a quick conversation.
- 2 Phone someone you know and have a longer conversation.
- 3 Phone someone you know. One of you wants to end the conversation quickly but the other person keeps extending it.
- 4 Phone someone you don't know to ask for some information.
- 5 Phone reception and ask to be put through to someone you know.
- 6 Phone reception and ask to be put through to someone you don't know.
- 7 Phone reception and ask to be put through to Mr Smith. Several Mr Smiths work there.
- 8 Phone reception and ask to be put through to someone. You are not sure exactly who you need to speak to (= You don't have a name).
- 9 Phone reception and ask to be put through to someone. You have their name ("Mr Rousseau") but you're not sure how to pronounce it.
- 10 Phone reception and ask to be put through to someone. They are not available so phone again. You get through the second time.
- 11 Phone reception and ask to be put through to someone. They are not available so phone again. They are also not available the second time.
- 12 Phone reception and ask to be put through to someone. They are not available, so ask them to phone you back. They then do so.
- 13 Phone reception and ask to be put through to someone. They are not available, so leave a message including a phone number.
- 14 Phone reception and ask to be put through to someone. They are not available, so leave a message including an email address.
- 15 Phone reception and ask to be put through to someone. They are not available, so leave a message including a website address.
- 16 Phone reception and ask to be put through to someone. They are not available, so leave a message including a postal address.
- 17 Phone someone. They are not available, so leave a message on their answerphone including some complex numbers (e.g. very large numbers, decimals or fractions). They then phone you back to double check.
- 18 Phone someone. They are not available, so leave a message on their answerphone including instructions of how to get somewhere. They then phone you back to double check.
- 19 Phone someone and talk about the details of a document which you both have copies of
- 20 Phone someone and talk about the details of a website (getting them to get it up on their screen first).

Brainstorm useful language for doing these things which you probably had to do during the last activity.

Starting telephone conversations – the person answering the phone

Starting telephone conversations – the caller

Asking for someone's name

Asking people to wait

Saying someone isn't available/ Explaining why they can't speak to someone

Responding to that

Talking about written sources (documents, webpages etc)

Dictating (including postal addresses, website addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers, and spelling things out)

Taking dictation/ Checking your understanding

Things to say while listening/ while the other person is speaking

Ending telephone conversations



Suggested answers

Expressions after NOT in italics means answers which are not acceptable

Starting telephone conversations – the person answering the phone

- 01323 894389.
- Hello./ Good morning./ Good afternoon....
- ... Corp(oration)/ Limited/ PLC. (...department.) (... speaking).
- ...How can/ may I help you (today)?/ How can I be of assistance?
- ... Who do you wish to speak to?
- ...'s desk/ phone.... speaking.

NOT "Can I help you?"/ "May I help you?"/ "This is (name)"

Starting telephone conversations – the caller

- Hello/ Hi/ Good morning (name)....
- Can I/ Could I/ May I/ I need to speak to (name)/ someone (in your... department) (please) (about...)?
- Is that (name)?/ Is that the...department?
- Is this the right number for...?
- (I'm not sure if I've got the right number, but) I need to talk to someone about...
- This is (name) (from...) (calling)/ It's (name) (from...) (again)
- My name is... from.../ and I work for.../ I sent you an email last week about...
- I was given your number by...
- I had a message that I should call you./ I just got your message./ I'm returning your call.
- Someone phoned me from this number (so I'm calling back).
- Sorry to phone you at lunch time./ phone again so soon./ bother you./ phone so late.
- Just a quick call to say.../ I know you're very busy, but I just needed to...
- Is this a good time?/ Are you free to talk?/ Did I get you at a bad time?
- I'm calling/ phoning about/ to...

Asking for someone's name

- Who's calling please?/ Can I take your name, please?/ May I ask who is calling?/ Who shall I say is calling?/ Could I have your name?/ Can I just check your name?
- Could you repeat your name?/ Could you spell your name for me?

Asking people to wait

- Just a moment/ minute/ second (I'll.../ while I...)...
- If you could wait for just a second/ minute/ moment, (I'll.../ while I...) ...
- (Please) give me a second/ moment/ minute...
- Please bear with me (while.../ and I'll...)...

- I'm putting you on hold./ Please hold (the line)./ Please don't hang up.

- ...I'll (just) get a pen and paper/ find the information for you/ get your account on screen/ put you through/ connect you (now/ straightaway/ right away).
- ...I'm looking for the file/ looking for the information/ looking for a pen and paper/ writing it down/ sending you the information/ putting you through/ checking if he's available (right now).

Saying someone isn't available/ Explaining why they can't speak to someone

- I'm afraid/ Unfortunately/ I'm sorry but...
- ...He/ She isn't answering his/ her phone....
- ...He/ she is (still) out of the office (all day)/ not in the office (today)/ in a meeting (until...)/ on another line/ away from his desk/ away from her desk/ meeting a client/ abroad/ out of the country (until...)/
- ...His/ Her line is busy....
- ...He/ She will/ should be back/ available...
- ...Would you like to leave a message?/ Can I take a message?
- ...Perhaps I can help.
- ...Shall I ask him/ her to call you back?
- ...Can I take your name and number (and I'll ask him/ her to call you back)?
- ... but he/ she's contactable on his/ her mobile. Do you have the number?/ Shall I give you the number?

Responding to that

- Yes, please. Can you tell him/ her...?
- No, that's okay. I'll call again later.
- Actually, it's quite urgent...
- Can you ask him/ her to call me back?
- Can I leave a message?/ Can you take a message?
- Is there anyone else I can speak to (about...)?
- Could you give me his/ her mobile number?
- Do you know when he/ she will be back/ available?

Dictating (including postal addresses, website addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers, and spelling things out)

- Can I leave a message?/ Can you take a message?
- I think she already has my number, but here it is just in case...
- Do you have a pen and some paper?/ You might want to write this down.
- Do you want me to spell that for you?/ I'll spell that for you/ It's spelt...
- Here's my address/ email address/ home phone number/.....

- New line
- New word
- (Forward) slash
- Double slash
- Dot
- Dash/ Hyphen
- Underscore
- All one word
- At (mark)
- Apostrophe
- Open brackets - Close brackets
- Area code
- International dialling code/ Plus 44
- Double

- Treble/ Triple
- V for violin
- That's A B F, Alpha Bravo Foxtrot
- Capital...

- Do you want me to repeat that?/ That is...
- Would you like to read that back/ check that back?
- Would you like me to repeat...?
- Okay?

Taking dictation/ Checking your understanding

- Let me take that down./ Let me write that down./ I'll just make a note./ I'll note that down./ I'll just get a pen and some paper.
- Just a second. Okay, go ahead please.

- Can I (double) check...?/ Just to (double) check,...
- Can I check that back/ read that back?/ Let me read that back (to check).
- Can you repeat the first part/ middle part/ last part/ whole thing/ from.../...?
- Can you say it again/ one more time (more slowly)?
- Can you spell that/...?/ How do you spell...?
- Could you speak (a little) slower, please?
- Did you mean (to say)...?
- Did you say... or...?
- Do I need any punctuation (in that email address)?
- Do you mean... or...?
- I didn't (quite) catch...
- I guess you mean...
- I understood up to...
- I'm not familiar with...
- Is that (one word/ B for Bobby/ one five/ a figure...) (or two words/ V for Virgin/ five oh/ a word/...)?
- Is that spelt with a... (or a...)?
- Is that... as in...?
- So, that's..., right?
- What does... mean?

- I'll make sure he/ she gets your message./ I'll pass that message onto him/ her.

Talking about written sources (documents, webpages etc)

- I'm phoning about the email you sent yesterday.
- I'm looking at your new catalogue and...
- It says on your website that...
- I've got your 2014 catalogue here in front of me and...

- Do you have it in front of you now?
- Are you online now?/ Do you have access to the internet while we are speaking?
- I'm just getting it up on my screen./ I'm looking for the file right now.

- I can send you a link to that information online, if that's okay.
- I'm sending it to you now.

- If you look at the second paragraph on the third page,...

- If you turn to page (number)...
- In the top left corner,...

Things to say while listening/ while the other person is speaking

- Got it.
- I see
- Mmmm hmmm
- Of course.
- Oh, right.
- Okay.
- Really?
- Right
- Sure.
- Yeah/ Yup

Ending telephone conversations

- So/ Well/ Right/ Okay,...
- I have to get going, I'm afraid./ Well, I'd better make a move./ It's been nice talking to you but...
- My next client has just arrived/ My other phone is ringing/ I have someone on another line, so...
- That seems to have about covered it./ That's all for now, I think.
- I won't keep you any longer./ I'm sure you need to get back to work, so...

- Thank you (for your call)./ Thanks (for calling).
- Thanks (for your help).
- Thanks anyway.
- Sorry I couldn't be more help.

- Is there anything else (I can help you with today)?

- Can I call you back (in a minute/ in a second)?
- Can you call again a little later?/ Could you possibly phone back in about 10 minutes?
- Can you find out and call me back?
- As we agreed/ discussed...
- I look forward to hearing from you soon.
- I'll make sure he gets the message./ I'll pass that message on as soon as I can.
- I'll do my best to get that message to him before lunch.
- I'm sure he will get back to you soon.
- I'll get someone to ring you first thing in the morning.
- I'll make sure that gets sent as soon as possible.
- I'll call again...

- I'll... and get right back to you.
- I'll tell him you called.
- Please call again if you have any other problems/ questions.
- Speak to you later/ soon/ tomorrow/ then.

- It was great/ nice speaking to you.
- Take care./ Bon voyage./ Have fun./ Have a good weekend.
- Bye (for now)./ Goodbye./ See you.

Use the language above to do the same roleplays again, this time taking the opposite roles each time.