

# 02

## Making calls

Our telephone answering system has broken down. This is a human being. How can I help you?

Anonymous customer service representative

How often do you use the telephone at work?

### Learning objectives: Unit 2

**Business communication skills** Receiving calls; Leaving voicemails; Roleplay: Exchanging information on the telephone  
**Listening** Planning a telephone call; Voicemail messages; Telephone conversations  
**Vocabulary** Telephone expressions  
**Grammar** Past Simple; time adverbs ago, before, during, for, in, over  
**Phrase bank** Telephoning

1 How comfortable are you speaking English on the phone? Work with a partner. Complete the questionnaire with the verbs in the box in the correct form. Then discuss.

have keep lose misunderstand shout sound try want wish

## BE HONEST!

Can you remember a time when you ...

- A totally \_\_\_\_\_ what someone said on the phone?  
Oh, yes  No
- B really \_\_\_\_\_ rude and unhelpful because you were busy?  
Oh, yes  No
- C constantly \_\_\_\_\_ to ask the other person to repeat what they said?  
Oh, yes  No
- D just \_\_\_\_\_ putting off a call because you didn't want to speak English?  
Oh, yes  No
- E actually \_\_\_\_\_ at someone on the phone?  
Oh, yes  No
- F completely \_\_\_\_\_ track of the conversation?  
Oh, yes  No
- G just \_\_\_\_\_ you could talk to the other person face to face?  
Oh, yes  No
- H even \_\_\_\_\_ pretending you were out to avoid taking a call?  
Oh, yes  No
- I really \_\_\_\_\_ to kill the person on the other end of the phone?  
Oh, yes  No



Making phone calls in a foreign language requires planning. It's especially important to know what to say right at the beginning of the call.

2 1.11 Listen to the phone call. Why does the caller get angry?

3 1.12 Listen to a better version of the same phone call and complete the following opening phrases:

\_\_\_\_\_, accounts \_\_\_\_\_. Marius Pot \_\_\_\_\_.

4 1.13 Now listen to another phone call. Why does the caller sound so unprofessional?

5 1.14 Again, listen to a better version of the same phone call and complete the following phrases:

\_\_\_\_\_ Ramon Berenguer \_\_\_\_\_ Genex Ace Pharmaceuticals.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Catherine Mellor, \_\_\_\_\_?  
\_\_\_\_\_ an invoice.

**6** A lot of the English you need on the phone is just a small number of keywords used in different combinations. Work with a partner. How many telephone expressions can you make in two minutes using one word or phrase from two or more sections below (e.g. *Can I have your name, please?*)? Write them down.

Can	I you	ask check speak to take see if help have give speak up hold on get tell leave say spell read get back to	who's me you he/she him/her your name a message someone something a moment it that	please about it again with me with you back to me I called within the hour to call me back a few details on that is there for me later today calling when he'll/she'll be back a message
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**7** You overhear a colleague say the following things on the phone. What questions do you think she was asked? Use some of the telephone expressions you made in 6.

- a** Yes, I'd like to speak to Ifakat Karsli, please.
- b** Yes, it's Ivana Medvedeva.
- c** M-E-D-V-E-D-E-V-A, Medvedeva.
- d** Yes. Can you just tell her Ivana called?
- e** Yes, I'll tell him as soon as he gets in.
- f** Of course. Your reference number is 45-81099-KM. Okay?
- g** Sorry, is that better?
- h** Around three, I should think.
- i** Can we make that two hours?
- j** Certainly. Can you give me your number?
- k** Sure. When can I expect to hear from you?
- l** Sure. Just a minute. Where's my pen? Okay, go ahead.


**8**  **1.15** Listen and check your answers.

## Voicemail

**1**  **1.16** Listen to six voicemail messages. Take notes. Which message is about:

- a** an order?
- b** some figures?
- c** a meeting?
- d** a deadline?
- e** a report?
- f** a reminder?



**2**  **1.16** Listen again and answer the questions.

- Message 1** How many times did Cheryl phone yesterday?
- Message 2** What's the good news about phase one?
- Message 3** What did Zoltán include in his report?
- Message 4** When was the delivery?
- Message 5** When was the estimate due?
- Message 6** What do you think is happening at three tomorrow?

**3**  **1.16** The messages in 2 contain the following verbs.

- a** phoned, corrected, faxed
- b** wanted, finished, explained
- c** started, emailed, included
- d** talked, despatched, delivered
- e** called, discussed, expected
- f** tried, waited, booked

The *-ed* endings of regular verbs in the Past Simple can be pronounced in three different ways: /d/, /t/ or /ɪd/. Listen to the messages again. Which verbs take the /ɪd/ ending? Why? Put them in the third column of the chart.

/d/	/t/	/ɪd/

Now put the other verbs in the correct column.

**4** The following messages were taken by your secretary. Work with a partner. Can you recreate the original voicemails? The first one has been done for you as an example.

Svetlana (Paris)  
 Flight delay – late for meeting.  
 Start with item 2 on agenda.  
 Will join asap.

*Hi, it's Svetlana. Listen, my flight's been delayed and it looks like I'm going to be late for the meeting. Can you start with item two on the agenda and I'll join you as soon as I can? Thanks! See you later.*

**A**  
 Seiji (Nagoya)  
 Negotiations going well – deadlocked on price. Authorize 14% discount on 50,000 units?

**B**  
 URGENT!  
 Jim (Expo in Dublin) Last memory stick for presentation! Pls email PowerPoint slides asap!

**C**  
 Tony  
 Stuck in meeting at HQ. Conference arrangements progress? Pls contact speakers to confirm.

**D**  
 Kate (Seattle)  
 InfoTag querying our invoice for Q3. Ask accounts to check figures + reinvoice if necessary.

**E**  
 URGENT!  
 Alicia  
 Needs Turin report – tomorrow pm latest! Call back if problems.

**F**  
 Mike  
 Has appointment here Fri. Meet? Coffee?  
 Ian sends his rgds.

pls = please  
 asap = as soon as possible  
 rgds = regards  
 HQ = headquarters  
 Q3 = third quarter

**5**  **1.17** Listen to the original voicemails and compare them with your answers.





## Returning a call

**1**  **1.18-1.19** Listen to two telephone calls and answer the questions.

### Call 1

- a** Whose answerphone are we listening to?  
**b** What does the caller want?  
**c** Put the lines of the recorded message in the correct order.
- 7 Hello. This is Patterson Meats,  
 but if you'd like to leave  
 for calling, I'm afraid  
 please do so  
 your call right now,  
 after the tone and I'll get back  
 Sylvia Wright's office. Thank you  
 I'm not able to take  
 a message,  
 10 to you as soon as I can.

### Call 2

- a** Who didn't come to the meeting?
- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Bill Andrews     | 3 Jonathan Powell |
| 2 Stephanie Hughes | 4 Melanie Burns   |
- b** Who does Tim already know?
- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Bill Andrews     | 3 Jonathan Powell |
| 2 Stephanie Hughes | 4 Melanie Burns   |
- c** What didn't the visitors from the UK see?
- |                          |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 the processing plant   | 4 the freezer units |
| 2 the factory            | 5 a presentation    |
| 3 the packing department |                     |
- d** Tim was interrupted during the phone call. Complete what he said to Sylvia.  
Sorry \_\_\_\_\_.  
I just \_\_\_\_\_.  
Where \_\_\_\_\_?
- e** What were the British visitors worried about?  
**f** Would the product they came to see be popular in your country? Would you try it?

**2** Put these irregular verbs from Call 2 into the Past Simple. You have 45 seconds!

be   come   do   get   give  
go   have   meet   say   send  
speak   take   tell   think

**3** One of the following extracts is from the phone call. The other is incorrect. Which is incorrect and why?

- a** So who else did come? Came Stephanie Hughes?  
**b** So who else came? Did Stephanie Hughes come?



Remember to show interest in what your partner tells you.  
*Really? I see. Right.*  
*Uh huh. Good. Great.*  
*Oh, that's interesting.*  
 Finish your call like this:  
*Anyway, look, I must let you go.*  
*Thanks a lot for your help.*  
*Speak to you soon.*  
*Bye now.*

## Finding out

Work with a partner. Phone each other in order to find out some information to help you:

- do business in a foreign city
- give a presentation
- attend a job interview.

Talk to your partner before you begin and decide on the subject of your phone calls. Think of the language you will need to use.

Begin your phone call in this way:

Hi, \_\_\_\_\_ (your partner's name). It's \_\_\_\_\_ (your name) here. How are things? ... And how's business?

Then use the notes below to help you ask your questions. Ask other questions if you like.



## 1 A business trip

*Listen, I'm going to \_\_\_\_\_ (city?) on business in a couple of weeks. I know you did some business there a while ago and I just wanted to ask you how it went.*

- |                             |                             |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a Which airline / fly with? | g meetings go okay?         |
| b business class?           | h language problems?        |
| c Where / stay?             | i chance / see much / city? |
| d What / food like?         | j What / do / evenings?     |
| e What / people like?       | k invite / their home?      |
| f easy to work with?        | l take a present?           |



## 2 A presentation

*Listen, I'm giving a presentation at \_\_\_\_\_ (a meeting? a conference?) in a couple of weeks. I know you had to give a presentation a while ago and I just wanted to ask you how it went.*

- |                              |                             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a talk / your own?           | g How many / visuals?       |
| b How long / take / prepare? | h tell jokes?               |
| c How big / audience?        | i give / handouts?          |
| d How long / speak for?      | j take questions / the end? |
| e nervous?                   | k any difficult ones?       |
| f use PowerPoint?            | l How / deal with them?     |



## 3 A job interview

*Listen, I'm going for an interview at \_\_\_\_\_ (company?) in a couple of weeks. I know you had an interview with them a while ago and I just wanted to ask you how it went.*

- |                                    |                             |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a How long / interview / last?     | g trickiest question?       |
| b How many interviewers?           | h ask / personal questions? |
| c How friendly?                    | i have / do / a test?       |
| d say what / looking for?          | j ask them / questions?     |
| e refer / your CV?                 | k What / salary / like?     |
| f How interested / qualifications? | l offer you / job?          |



# 02 Making calls

## Vocabulary

### Telephone expressions

In business, phone calls are often interrupted. Match the difficulties and distractions (a-i) to the appropriate responses (1-9).

- a A colleague wants you to sign something.
- b Your colleague leaves a few seconds later.
- c There's a lot of noise right outside your office.
- d Your boss wants a word with you - now!
- e Someone else is trying to call you.
- f The caller gives you their name - it's unpronounceable!
- g You think you misunderstood the information the other person just gave you.
- h You gave the caller a lot of information very quickly.
- i The other person just won't stop talking!

1 Sorry, could you speak up a little?

2 Look, I've got someone on the other line. Can I call you back?

3 Okay? Did you get all that?

4 I'll have to go, I'm afraid. Something's come up.

5 Sorry about that. Where were we?

6 Anyway, I won't keep you any longer. Speak to you soon.

7 Excuse me a moment.

8 Sorry, could you spell that for me, please?

9 Can I just check that with you?

- a  b  c  d  e  f   
g  h  i

## Grammar

### Past Simple

You use the Past Simple to talk about completed past events. Most verbs are regular, but there are about 100 important irregular verbs that are useful to learn.

Affirmative		Negative	
I	worked.	I	didn't work.
You		You	
He		He	
She		She	
It		It	
We		We	
They		They	

Interrogative		Spelling changes	
Did Didn't	I	verb	past simple
	you	study	studied
	he	prefer	preferred
	she	stop	stopped
	it	admit	admitted
	we		
	they		

### to be

Affirmative		Negative		Interrogative	
I	was.	I	wasn't.	Was	I?
He		He		Wasn't	he?
She		She			she?
It		It			it?
You	were.	You	weren't.	Were	you?
We		We		Weren't	we?
They		They			they?

1 Correct the conversation with the information above.

- A Phoned Enrique about those figures?
- B No. I wait all morning, but he phoned not.
- A Typical! And I suppose he didn't the report either.
- B No. Did he went to the meeting yesterday?
- A No, but I not expected him to.

2 Write the Past Simple of the verbs below. Why don't the verbs on the right follow the same spelling changes as the verbs on the left?

hurry	_____	play	_____
occupy	_____	enjoy	_____
refer	_____	offer	_____
confer	_____	suffer	_____
drop	_____	develop	_____
flop	_____	visit	_____
commit	_____		
transmit	_____		

### Time adverbs

**3** Time adverbs help us to be more specific about the past. Complete this short presentation about the development of a new product with the time adverbs in the box.

ago before during for in over

As you know, we first got the idea for the new product a year (a) \_\_\_\_\_, but (b) \_\_\_\_\_ we could go to market with it, there was a lot of work to do. (c) \_\_\_\_\_ six months, the product was in development at our research centre in Cambridge. We then ran tests (d) \_\_\_\_\_ a three-month period. (e) \_\_\_\_\_ that time, we also conducted interviews with some of our best customers to find out what they wanted from the product. (f) \_\_\_\_\_ March we were finally ready for the launch.

**4** Complete the joke with the Past Simple of the verbs in brackets.

A businessman (a) \_\_\_\_\_ (want) to interview applicants for the position of divisional manager. There (b) \_\_\_\_\_ (be) several strong candidates, so he (c) \_\_\_\_\_ (decide) to devise a simple test to select the most suitable person for the job. He (d) \_\_\_\_\_ (ask) each applicant the simple question, 'What is two and two?'

The first applicant (e) \_\_\_\_\_ (be) a journalist. He (f) \_\_\_\_\_ (light) a cigarette, (g) \_\_\_\_\_ (think) for a moment and then (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (say) '22'.

The second applicant (i) \_\_\_\_\_ (have) a degree in engineering. He (j) \_\_\_\_\_ (take) out his calculator, (k) \_\_\_\_\_ (press) a few buttons and (l) \_\_\_\_\_ (show) the answer to be between 3.999 and 4.001.

The next applicant (m) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) as a corporate lawyer. He (n) \_\_\_\_\_ (state) that two and two (o) \_\_\_\_\_ (can) only be four, and (p) \_\_\_\_\_ (prove) it by referring to the well-known case of Gates v Monopolies Commission.

The last applicant (q) \_\_\_\_\_ (turn) out to be an accountant. The businessman again (r) \_\_\_\_\_ (put) his question, 'What is two and two?'

The accountant (s) \_\_\_\_\_ (get) up from his chair, (t) \_\_\_\_\_ (go) over to the door, (u) \_\_\_\_\_ (close) it, then (v) \_\_\_\_\_ (come) back and (w) \_\_\_\_\_ (sit) down. Finally, he (x) \_\_\_\_\_ (lean) across the desk and (y) \_\_\_\_\_ (whisper) in a low voice, 'How much do you want it to be?'

**5** Read the conversation and answer the questions.

- Anne** Who did you tell?  
**Bengt** Just Claire.  
**Anne** And who told you?  
**Bengt** Stefan.  
**Anne** And nobody else knows?  
**Bengt** Only you.  
**Anne** Well, of course, I do. I told Stefan.

- a** Who knew first?  
**1** Anne **2** Bengt **3** Claire **4** Stefan  
**b** How did Bengt find out?  
**c** Who was the last to know?  
**1** Anne **2** Bengt **3** Claire **4** Stefan  
**d** Read these two questions and underline the subject in each.  
*Who did you tell? Who told you?*

**6** Correct the six errors in these conversations.

- a** **A** They're moving us to a new office.  
**B** Who did say so?  
**A** The boss. I spoke to him this morning.  
**B** Oh. So where said he we're moving to?  
**b** **A** Well, I went to the interview.  
**B** And? What did happen?  
**A** I got the job!  
**B** What said I? I knew you'd get it. Congratulations!  
**c** **A** I spoke to Amy at the meeting about our idea.  
**B** And what thought she?  
**A** She liked it.  
**B** Good. So who else did come to the meeting?

### Phrase bank: Telephoning

**1** Look at the phrases below and decide who probably said them: the caller or the person who received the call. Mark them C or R. If you think it could equally be both, write B. The first one has been done for you.

**a** This is [John White] from [Novartis].  C

- |                     |   |   |
|---------------------|---|---|
| It's<br>I'm calling | → | <b>b</b> about an invoice. <input type="checkbox"/>                           |
|                     |   | <b>c</b> speak to Jane Green, please? <input type="checkbox"/>                |
|                     |   | <b>d</b> ask who's calling, please? <input type="checkbox"/>                  |
| Can I               | → | <b>e</b> take a message? <input type="checkbox"/>                             |
|                     |   | <b>f</b> get back to you on that? <input type="checkbox"/>                    |
|                     |   | <b>g</b> leave it with you? <input type="checkbox"/>                          |
|                     |   | <b>h</b> call you back (in a few minutes / an hour)? <input type="checkbox"/> |
|                     |   | <b>i</b> speak up, please? <input type="checkbox"/>                           |
|                     |   | <b>j</b> say that again? <input type="checkbox"/>                             |
| Could you           | → | <b>k</b> spell that (for me), please? <input type="checkbox"/>                |
|                     |   | <b>l</b> hold on a moment, please? <input type="checkbox"/>                   |
|                     |   | <b>m</b> read that back to me? <input type="checkbox"/>                       |
|                     |   | <b>n</b> tell me when she'll/he'll be back? <input type="checkbox"/>          |
|                     |   | <b>o</b> ask her to call me back? <input type="checkbox"/>                    |

**2** *Can I ...?* is perfectly polite. Why do you think *Could you ...?* is better than *Can you ...?*