

STARTER

How good are you at giving information over the phone? Do this quiz on numbers and symbols. Compare your answers with a partner's, then check your answers in the key.

1 How do you say these numbers in English?

- a) 647
- b) 9,235
- c) 1,574,389
- d) 1.955
- e) €15.40
- f) 0049 30 2970 6634



2 What does a comma (,) show in an English number? And a point (.)?

3 What are these symbols called in English?

a b c d
bob_jones@abc-company.com

- e) / _____
- f) \ _____
- g) # _____
- h) * _____
- i) (_____
- j)) _____



Refer to the *Numbers, dates, times, symbols* page of the MultiROM for more information about saying numbers and symbols in English.



- 1** Arno Maier works in a small import/export company in Hamburg. Listen to the two calls Arno makes and receives, and correct the mistakes in the notes.



2 Listen to the dialogues again and complete the sentences and questions below.

Call 1

I have a question _____¹ your relay switches. Are you the _____² person to ask?

What _____³ your question?

Could you _____⁴ me what the unit price would be for orders over a thousand units?

That was the RS 877, _____⁵?

Sorry, I didn't _____⁶ the second price.

Call 2

I'm _____¹ about the order you faxed us yesterday.

I just wanted to _____² it.

Do you have a _____³?

Would you like me to _____⁴ that for you?

Let me just _____⁵ that back to you.

Sorry, what was the post code _____⁶?

HOW TO BE LESS DIRECT

Generally in English, the less direct a sentence is, the more polite it is. For example, we often use the past tense (*was, wanted*) instead of the present tense (*is, want*). The past tense is more polite, because it's less direct.

*What **was** your question?*

*I just **wanted** to check ...*

*I **wanted** to ask about ...*

Similarly, we often use *could* and *would* to make questions or statements less direct.

***Could** you tell me what the price **would be**? (instead of **Can** you tell me what the price **is**?)*

*What **would be** your preferred means of payment? (instead of **What is** your ...?)*

3 Rewrite the sentences below to make them less direct, as in the example.

- 1 What is your question? *What **was** your question?* _____
- 2 Can you tell me your name? _____
- 3 I just want to check the address. _____
- 4 What is your name again? _____
- 5 What do you want to know? _____
- 6 What is your charge for delivery? _____
- 7 How long does it take to send it? _____
- 8 I want to ask if you have time to meet tomorrow. _____

ACTIVE LISTENING STRATEGIES

Active listening strategies can help you to communicate more effectively on the telephone.

When listening, say words like *right, uh huh, got you, yeah* every few seconds to show that you are paying attention. The other person feels more relaxed because it's clear that you are there and actively listening to them.

Check each piece of information that the other person gives you – even if you think you have understood everything perfectly, you might have actually misunderstood something the other person said.

You can do this by:

- Echoing, in other words by repeating what the other person said, to make sure you understood correctly:
A *We can deliver on Tuesday.*
B *Tuesday. Right.*
- Asking for clarification:
A *Our address is 40 George Street.*
B *Sorry, did you say 40 or 14?*
- Reading numbers and other important pieces of information back to the other person:
A *My number is 2389 5354.*
B *Let me just read that back to you. So that's 2389 5354.*

You can also ask the other person to read a number back if they don't do it themselves:
Can you just read that back to me?

Complete these extracts from a telephone conversation with words from the box.

4

And your name was • Did you say • Let me just read that back to you •
So that's • Sorry, was that • To Poland



- 1 Iwona Well, first of all, how long would it take to ship a consignment to Poland?
- George _____? I would say between a week and ten days by sea. We could also send a shipment via air freight, but that would naturally be more expensive.
- Iwona _____? a week to ten days?
- George Yes, that's right.
-

- 2 Iwona So that's 58 for Gdansk, then 61 3453.
- George _____? 3453 or 2453?
- Iwona It's 34 53.
- George Right. _____? 4. It's 00 48 5861 3453.
- Iwona Yes, that's right.
-

- 3 George Great. _____? 5 Iwona ...?
- Iwona Jakubik. That's spelt J-A-K-U-B-I-K.
- George _____? 6 Iwona Jakubik.
- J-A-K-U-B-I-K. Got you.



5 Check that you have understood correctly. Ask about the highlighted information, as in the example. More than one answer is possible each time.

- 1 I would like to order **50** units. *Sorry, did you say 50 or 15 units? / OK, so that's 50 units.*
- 2 Our address is **98** King Street, Hull.
- 3 My phone number is **091 210 3885**.
- 4 The meeting is on **Thursday**.
- 5 My name is Oliver **Prentice**.
- 6 The new price is **€72.90**.

6 Do you know how to say the alphabet in English?

Complete this table by putting the letters of the alphabet into the correct columns according to how you say them. For example, C /si:/ goes into the same column as B /bi:/, because they have the same vowel sound. If a letter doesn't fit into an existing column, put it into a new column.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	B C					

SPELLING

Although there is an official English spelling alphabet (developed by NATO and used by the military and by radio operators), most English speakers do not know it. Instead, they use common words or personal names to spell words. For example, to spell NATO, an English speaker might say:

That's N for Neil, A for apple, T for Thomas, O for orange.

Notice that in English we say **N for Neil** or **N as in Neil** (AE), not ~~N like Neil~~.

7 Work with a partner to practise spelling. Look at the list of place names in the Partner Files. Spell the names in your list for your partner and write down the names your partner spells for you.

PARTNER FILES

Partner A File 2, p. 48
Partner B File 2, p. 50

LIVEWORKSHEETS

8 Write the email and website addresses in words, as in the examples.

- 1 alan.thompson@hotmail.com Alan dot Thompson at hotmail dot com
- 2 *www.gopher-systems.com w w w dot gopher hyphen systems dot com
- 3 kevin.stevens@afg-consulting.ca _____
- 4 margaret.peterson@zebra.it _____
- 5 www.rent-a-car.com _____
- 6 (your email address) _____
- 7 (your company website address) _____

- * Remember that the letter *w* is pronounced *double you* in English.
 * Some people say *dash* instead of *hyphen*. However we don't normally say *minus* in email addresses.



Now practise reading the addresses out loud.

9 Find ten sentences from this unit. Start at the numbered word, then move one square at a time (left, right, up, or down). Use each word once only.

1 Do	2 Let	me	just	check	that.	person	to	ask?	3 I'm
you	have	that	read	just	4 Are	right	the	about	calling
5 What	a	back	6 Let	me	you	the	order	you	7 Would
would	pen?	to	back	to	you?	8 What	you	like	me
you	like	you.	get	give	me	was	faxed	us	to
know?	to	that	and	just	your	your	question?	yesterday.	spell
9 Can	I	check	10 Can	you	phone	number?	you?	for	that

Use the sentences you found above to complete the two dialogues. Sometimes more than one answer is possible.

- 1 Kevin Mahoney Engineering. Kevin speaking.
- Fiona Hello Kevin. This is Fiona from ALP Supplies. _____ A.
- I have a question about one of the items. _____ B.
- Kevin I'm not sure, but I'll do my best! _____ C.
- Fiona Well, the item number HG 892375 is out of stock at the moment, and I wanted to ask if the HG 892376 would be okay instead? It's almost the same model.
- Kevin Oh Fiona, I'm not totally sure. _____ D.
- Fiona Sure, no problem.
- Kevin Great. _____ E.

Fiona Of course. It's 0248 294 413.
 Kevin Right. _____ F. Your number is 0248 294 413.
 Fiona That's right.
 Kevin OK Fiona, I'll talk to my boss and I'll call you back later today.
 Fiona Great. Bye now.
 Kevin Bye.

- 2 Kathy Voland Information Services. Kathy speaking.
 Paul Hi Kathy. It's Paul here. I just have a quick question about the software you installed for us.
 Kathy Oh, hi Paul. Nice to hear from you. _____ G.
 Paul Well, I'm afraid we've lost the user name for the test set-up. Can you give it to us again?
 Kathy Sure. No problem. _____ H.
 Paul Yes, I do. Fire away.
 Kathy OK. The user name is 'Joe.Bloggs'. _____ I.
 Paul Yes please.
 Kathy OK. It's J-O-E dot B-L-O-G-G-S.
 Paul _____ J. The user name is 'Joe.Bloggs', spelt J-O-E dot B-L-O-G-G-S.
 Kathy That's right.
 Paul Well, thanks very much Kathy.
 Kathy You're welcome. Bye now.

10 Work with a partner to make two phone calls. Look at the Useful Phrases below before you read your information in the Partner Files.

PARTNER FILES

Partner A File 3, p. 48
 Partner B File 3, p. 50

USEFUL PHRASES

Opening the call

I'm calling about ...
 I have a question about ...
 I wanted to ask about ...
 Are you the right person to ask?

Exchanging information

What was your question?
 What would you like to know?
 Could you tell me ...?

Checking information

Would you like me to spell that for you?
 Did you say ...?
 Sorry, I didn't catch that.
 Let me just read that back to you.
 Let me just check that.

11 Put the words in the right order to make sentences with expressions from this unit.

- 1 have you pen do a ?
- 2 six order A is elephant for Venice two zero E V the for number for apple .
(AEV 026)
- 3 D for Bob that B was or David for ?
- 4 address D Tom at his hyphen dot Baker E email is Martins .
(tom-baker@martins.de)
- 5 didn't that sorry I catch . thirteen did thirty say or you ?

Get active with your listening

Imagine you are calling an important business contact. The person says he is in a hurry and only has five minutes for the call. While you are talking, you hear him typing on his computer keyboard, and he continually interrupts you while you are trying to talk. How would you feel?

The above description is an example of a bad listener. Everyone learns at school how to read and write, but normally we are never taught how to listen. However, effective listening is one of the most important communication skills.



Here are some things you can do to improve your active listening skills.

- 1 Remove distractions. Make sure the place where you are telephoning isn't too hot, too cold, too noisy or too uncomfortable.
- 2 When you're on the phone, don't type, tidy your desk or organize your papers. The noises you make will tell your partner that you're not listening.

- 3 Forget about your own problems and tasks while talking to your partner. You can't concentrate on what someone else is saying if you are thinking about your 'to do' list.
- 4 Regularly summarize what your conversation partner has told you, to show that you are listening ('So what you mean is ...', 'If I understood you correctly, you want to ...'). This can also help your partner to move forward in the conversation.
- 5 Be honest with your partner. If you weren't paying attention to what they said, or if their English is too difficult, tell them and ask them to repeat what they said ('Sorry, could you say that again?', 'I'm sorry, but I'm finding you difficult to understand. Could you maybe try to talk in simpler English, please?').
- 6 Wait until the other person has stopped talking before you decide what to say next. If you are constantly thinking about your response, you won't be able to concentrate on what they are saying. Use phrases like 'let me see', 'I see what you mean', or 'I just need to think for a moment' to give yourself time to think about what to say next.
- 7 Learn listening skills from other people. Pay attention to how other people (especially native speakers) show you that they are listening.

OVER TO YOU

Are you a good listener? Why / Why not?

How could you improve your own listening skills?

Can you think of people you know who are good/bad listeners? How do you feel when you speak to them?