

'Let me get back to you on that.'

STARTER

Look at these voicemail greetings from four different companies. Which is the best, in your opinion? Why?

1 Hello. You've reached Yo-Yo Design. Leave a message.

2 You've reached Hudson Engineering. Unfortunately no one is available to take your call at the moment. You can call us back during normal office hours. Leave a message after the tone or send us a fax on 0177 813 814 11. Thank you.

3 Hello. Fusion Financial Services, Joel Parker speaking. There's no one here at the moment, but you can leave a message after the beep and we'll call you back as soon as we can.

4 Hi, this is Cecilia's voicemail. I'm out of the office until the 5th. If it's urgent, please contact Jeff Yuong on extension 439. Thanks.



Does your company or do you have a voicemail greeting in English? If so, what is it? If not, work with a partner to write one.

NOTE

Some people still say *answerphone* or *answering machine* for voicemail.



1 Listen and write down the messages.

MESSAGE

For *Valeria Giuliani*

From _____

MESSAGE

For _____

From _____

What is wrong with the second message? What would your reaction be if you received it?

2 Listen to the voicemail greeting and the first caller's message again and complete the sentences.

You've _____¹ Lessa Logistica. _____² no
one is _____³ to take your call at the moment.
Please _____⁴ a message after the _____⁵.



_____⁶ is Walter Jackson
_____⁷ for Valeria Giuliani.
Maybe you can _____⁸
back to me as soon as you've
_____⁹ the date and time
with everyone.
I think you have my number already, but
here it is _____¹⁰, just in
_____¹¹.
Hope to speak to you _____¹².

HOW TO STRUCTURE A MESSAGE

It's important to structure your message clearly when you speak on an answering machine. Here is one way to do it.

- Say who you are and (if necessary) who you are leaving the message for. *Hello, this is ... calling for ...*
- Explain the message step by step. *I'm calling about ... / I just wanted to confirm ...*
- Say what action you would like the other person to take (if any). *Maybe you could get back to me ... / Could you call me back ...?*
- Make sure the other person knows how to contact you. *Here's my number ... / You can reach me on ...*

Don't forget to keep your message as short as possible and to talk slowly and clearly.

3 First call Walter Jackson back (message 1) and leave a message on his voicemail to confirm the date and time of the meeting. Then use your notes from exercise 1 to rewrite Seth Prescott's message (message 2).

4 Work with a partner. Use your information in the Partner Files to practise leaving messages.

PARTNER FILES

Partner A File 4, p. 48
Partner B File 4, p. 50



LIVEWORKSHEETS

5 Anke Schmidt works at JKL Consulting in Stuttgart. Listen to these two phone calls she receives and say in which call:



- a the caller gets through. ☐
- b the caller leaves a message. ☐
- c the caller gives his or her phone number. ☐
- d Anke says she will ring back. ☐
- e Anke says she will ask a colleague to ring back. ☐

Now listen again and write down the two messages.

CALL 1

Handwritten notes for CALL 1:

CALL 2

Handwritten notes for CALL 2:

6 Put the words in the right order to make sentences from the first call. Then listen again to check.

- 1 afraid here I'm the isn't at moment Jonathan .
- 2 message like him leave would to a for you ?
- 3 me pen get let a .
- 4 call Jonathan shall ask you back I to ?
- 5 number he does your have ?
- 6 gets I'll your make Jonathan message sure .

Now match the two parts of sentences from the second call. Then listen again to check.

- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a I'm calling about | c You told me | e Can you give it to me again |
| b You said that | d Can I call you back later today | f I'll talk to Henry and |

☐ Henry was too busy to join the team.

☐ just in case?

☐ as soon as I've had the chance to speak to him?

☐ that we could take Maria instead.

☐ the email you sent me yesterday.

☐ call you straight back.

REFERRING TO PREVIOUS COMMUNICATION

Normally when we are calling someone back, we need to refer to previous communication like a phone call or an email to explain why we are calling. This can involve reporting or summarizing what another person has said. When we do this, we normally put tenses one step back 'into the past', as in the examples below.

'Sorry, I'm too busy.'
'I **was** ill on Monday.'

You said that you **were** too busy.
She said that you **had been** ill on Monday.

If the situation we are talking about is still true or relevant, however, we don't always change the tense.

'I **can't** come to the meeting.'
'I'll email you asap.'

He said that he **can't** come to the meeting. OR
He said that he **couldn't** come to the meeting.
She said that she'll email me asap. OR
She said that she **would** email me asap.

We often use 'reporting verbs' like *ask*, *tell*, and *mention* when we are reporting what someone said. Look at the examples below and notice how the verbs are used.

'Will the 10th be OK for you?'
'I **sent** the email on Monday.'
'I'm **thinking** about going.'

You **asked me if** the 10th would be OK for me.
She **told me that** she had sent the email on Monday.
Jonathan **mentioned that** he was thinking about going.

7 Complete the reported sentences, as in the example.

- 1 'The quality is too low.'
They said that the quality was too low.
- 2 'Maybe we can find another supplier.'
She told me _____
- 3 'It will be difficult to schedule a new meeting.'
He said _____
- 4 'Can you deliver earlier?'
They asked _____
- 5 'We hired two new employees.'
You mentioned _____
- 6 'I'm going to the UK in June.'
He told me _____

8 Complete the sentences with prepositions from the box.

about • after • at • for • in • on • to • until

- 1 Unfortunately no one is available to take your call _____ the moment.
- 2 Please leave a message _____ the beep or send us a fax _____ 042 823 4421.

- 3 This is Adam Gray calling _____ Stefanie Renner.
- 4 I'm calling _____ the email you sent me yesterday.
- 5 Maybe you can get back _____ me.
- 6 I'll be _____ the office _____ 5 p.m. today if you want to call me.

9 Make eight sentences for dealing with messages. Use one word or phrase from each column, as in the example.

Can I	afraid	she	again just in case?
Can you	call	the email	back later today?
Could	calling about	you	for her?
Would you like	you get back	to me	gets your message.
I'm	please give me	your number	have my number already.
I'm	to leave	you	isn't here at the moment.
I'll	make sure	a message	on this asap, please?
I	think	she	you sent me yesterday.

- a Can I call you back later today?
- b Can you _____
- c Could _____
- d Would you like _____
- e I'm _____
- f I'm _____
- g I'll _____
- h I _____

Now use the sentences above to complete the dialogue extracts below.

- A Sorry, I'm really busy at the moment. Can I call you back later today? ¹
- B Sure, no problem. I'll be in the office all afternoon.

- A _____ ²
- Is that right?
- B Erm ... let me check. Hold on a second ... Yes, I have it here. 879 234 89.
- Is that right?
- A Yes, that's right.

A I'm sorry, Martina isn't here at the moment. _____
 _____³
 B Yes please. I'd like to know the date of the next project meeting.
 A OK. _____⁴

A It might be easier if she calls me. I'll be in the office until 3 p.m. today.
 B OK. I think we've got your contact details, but _____
 _____⁵
 A Of course. It's 011 324 893 25.

A Can I speak to Brenda Stacey, please?
 B Oh, _____⁶ Can I
 take a message?

Hi Patrice. This is Roland. _____⁷
 There seems to be a problem with the schedule. _____
 _____⁸

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

PARTNER FILES

Partner A File 5, p. 49
 Partner B File 5, p. 51

USEFUL PHRASES

Taking a message

I'm afraid [name] isn't here at the moment.
 Would you like to leave a message for her/him?
 Let me just check (that) I've got that right.
 Shall I tell [name] to call you back?
 Does [name] have your number?
 I'll make sure [name] gets your message.
 I'll tell him/let him know that you called.

Leaving a message

This is [name]. I'm calling about ...
 [name] asked me to call her/him (back).
 I just wanted to check/confirm/ask if ...
 Could you ask her/him to call me back?
 I'll be in the office today until ...

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

- 1 544 332 64 reach you me can on .
- 2 for message her leave would to like you a ?
- 3 call Eileen her asked to back me .
- 4 Mary Lamb is this. meeting calling about the I'm .
- 5 already sent he the told letter me had that he

Do you love voicemail or hate it? Complete this survey to find out if you are message mad, or if messages drive you mad!



1 What's your opinion of voicemail?

- a I hate it. I only like talking to real people. ☐
 b I don't like it much but I realize it can be useful. ☐
 c I think voicemail is great. I couldn't live without it. ☐

2 What do you do when you call someone and get a message?

- a Hang up and try again later. ☐
 b Hang up, think about what to say, and phone back to leave the message. ☐
 c Say what I need to say. ☐

3 How do you feel about leaving messages in English?

- a I feel self-conscious in my own language, so I would never leave a message in English. ☐
 b Self-conscious and nervous, I always prepare first. ☐
 c I like it. I know I won't get an unexpected question and I will have time to say what I have to say. ☐

4 When do you have your voicemail on?

- a Never. ☐
 b Only when I know someone I don't want to speak to is going to call. ☐
 c Quite often, when I am busy, or out of the office. ☐

Results

If you answered:

Mostly a's – You are definitely a voicemail hater. You should try to see the advantages of voicemail, it can be very useful.

Mostly b's – You are comfortable with voicemail but you would really rather speak to the person you called.

Mostly c's – You are a voicemail lover. Maybe you love it too much. Do you prefer talking to machines than to people?

OVER TO YOU

What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of using voicemail at work?

Do you ever play 'telephone tag' with business contacts? (You call them and leave a message, they call you back and leave a message, etc.)

What tips can you think of for using voicemail effectively?