

Business telephone conversations

Telephoning is an important part of doing business in English. Telephone conversations, especially **business telephone conversations**, follow certain patterns:

- Someone answers the phone and asks if they can help.
- The caller makes a request—either to be connected to someone or for information.
- The caller is connected, given information or told that they are not in the office at the moment.
- If the person who is requested is not in the office, the caller is asked to leave a message.
- The caller leaves a message or asks other questions.
- The phone call finishes.

Of course, all business telephone conversations do not follow this rigid scheme. But this is the basic outline for most business telephone conversations, especially those made to request information or ask for clarification.

Example Business Telephone Conversation: Role-Play

Ms. Anderson (sales representative Jewels and Things): ring ring...ring ring...ring ring...

Mr. Smith (Secretary): Hello, Diamonds Galore, this is Peter speaking. How may I be of help to you today?

Ms. Anderson: Yes, this is Ms. Janice Anderson calling. May I speak to Mr. Franks, please?

Mr. Smith: I'm afraid Mr. Franks is out of the office at the moment. Would you like me to take a message?

Ms. Anderson: Uhm...actually, this call is rather urgent. We spoke yesterday about a delivery problem that Mr. Franks mentioned. Did he leave any information with you?

Mr. Smith: As a matter of fact, he did. He said that a representative from your company might be calling. He also asked me to ask you a few questions...

Ms. Anderson: Great, I'd love to see this problem resolved as quickly as possible.

Mr. Smith: Well, we still haven't received the shipment of earrings that was supposed to arrive last Tuesday.

Ms. Anderson: Yes, I'm terribly sorry about that. In the meantime, I've spoken with our delivery department and they assured me that the earrings will be delivered by tomorrow morning.

Mr. Smith: Excellent, I'm sure Mr. Franks will be pleased to hear that.

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Ms. Anderson: Yes, the shipment was delayed from France. We weren't able to send it along until this morning.

Mr. Smith: I see. Mr. Franks also wanted to schedule a meeting with you later this week.

Ms. Anderson: Certainly, what is he doing on Thursday afternoon?

Mr. Smith: I'm afraid he's meeting with some clients out of town. How about Thursday morning?

Ms. Anderson: Unfortunately, I'm seeing someone else on Thursday morning. Is he doing anything on Friday morning?

Mr. Smith: No, it looks like he's free then.

Ms. Anderson: Great, should I come by at 9?

Mr. Smith: Well, he usually holds a staff meeting at 9. It only lasts a half-hour or so. How about 10?

Ms. Anderson: Yes, 10 would be great.

Mr. Smith: OK, I'll schedule that. Ms. Anderson at 10, Friday Morning...Is there anything else I can help you with?

Ms. Anderson: No, I think that's everything. Thank you for your help...Goodbye.

Mr. Smith: Goodbye.

Task 1: Review your knowledge by filling in the gaps with the words and phrases below to complete the summary of the conversation.

Ms. Anderson telephones Diamonds Galore to _____ with Mr. Franks. Mr. Franks is not in the office, but Henry Smith, the secretary, speaks to Ms. Anderson about a _____ problem with some earrings. The earrings have not yet _____ at Diamonds Galore. Ms. Anderson tells Peter that there was a problem with the _____ from France, but that the earrings should arrive tomorrow morning.

Next, they _____ a meeting between Ms. Anderson and Mr. Franks. Mr. Franks is not able to _____ with Ms. Anderson on Thursday because he is _____. They finally decide on Friday morning at 10 o'clock after a _____ that Mr. Owen usually holds on Friday mornings.