# 1 'Shall I put you through?'

**STARTER** **Work with a partner. Ask him or her the questions below and make a note of the answers. Then tell the class what you found out.**

1 How often do you make phone calls in English?

2 When was the last time you made or received a phone call in English? How was it?

3 Who do you normally speak English to on the phone? Are they native speakers or non-native speakers of English?

4 What do you find most difficult about telephoning in English?

5 Describe your worst experience with an English phone call.

AUDIO 2–4

**1 Three people are calling the company Micah Information Systems. Listen to the three dialogues and complete the table.**

| | CALL 1 | CALL 2 | CALL 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Who is calling? | | | |
| Who does he/she want to speak to? | | | |
| Does he/she get through? If not, why not? | | | |
| What will happen next? | | | |

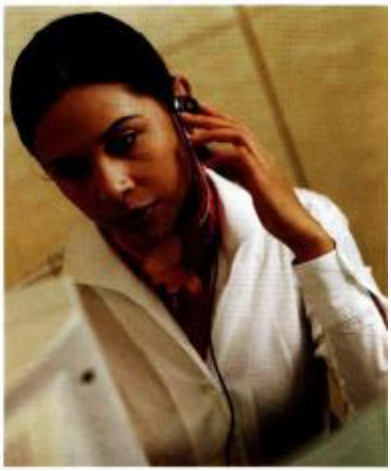
| British English | American English |
|---|---|
| The line is engaged. | The line is bu |
| mobile (phone) | cell (phone) |

LIVEWORKSHEETS

AUDIO 2–4

## 2 Listen again and complete the sentences from the dialogues.

1 Micah Information Systems. Sylvia _____ .
2 I'll _____ Mr Seide you _____ .
3 It's Karen Miller _____ .
4 I actually _____ to speak to Maria.
5 Just _____ on a moment while I make the _____ .
6 I'm _____ Maria's line is _____ .
7 I'll try _____ later.
8 Let me just _____ a pen.
9 Nice to _____ from you.
10 I'm actually talking to someone on the other _____ .



**Which sentences (1–10) can be used:**

a to say who you are? 1, 3
b to open a conversation politely? _____
c to say who you want to speak to? _____
d to put a caller through to another person? _____
e to say that somebody (or you) can't talk now? _____
f to say you will call again later? _____
g to take or leave a message? _____

## 3 Match the two parts to make questions from the dialogues.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Could I speak | a | my mobile number? | _____ |
| 2 | Can I take | b | through to her? | _____ |
| 3 | Could you ask | c | have your number? | _____ |
| 4 | Could you tell me | d | back in ten minutes? | _____ |
| 5 | Does Mr Seide | e | your name again? | _____ |
| 6 | Is she there | f | a message? | _____ |
| 7 | Shall I put you | g | ask what it's about? | _____ |
| 8 | Can I just | h | at the moment? | _____ |
| 9 | Can I call you | i | to Jörg Seide, please? | a, h |
| 10 | Have you got | j | him to call me back? | _____ |

**Now match these answers with the questions. Sometimes more than one answer is possible.**

A Certainly.
B Yes, he does.
C Sure, no problem.
D My name is John Ellis.
E Yes, I have.
F That would be great.
G Yes, she is.
H I'm afraid he's in a meeting.
I I need to ask her about the project meeting next week.
J Yes, I have.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

**4** **There are usually two ways of saying the same thing: a formal way, or a less formal way. Find pairs of expressions with the same meaning and complete the table.**

~~Can I speak to Bob, please?~~ Certainly. ~~Could I speak to Bob, please?~~

Thanks. What's it about? Could you please hold? Hang on a moment.

Can I just ask what it's about? Shall I put you through to her? Sure.

Do you want to speak to her? Thank you.

| MORE FORMAL | LESS FORMAL |
|---|---|
| *Could I speak to Bob, please?* | *Can I speak to Bob, please?* |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

**5** **There are different ways to give our names on the telephone. Match the sentences with the explanations. (Careful: one sentence below is not used on the telephone!)**

1 This is Gordon Wallis.
2 It's Gordon (Wallis) here.
3 Here is Gordon Wallis.
4 Gordon (Wallis) speaking.

a You say this when you answer the phone.
b You say this when you call a company and you don't know the person who answers the phone.
c You say this when you call someone you know.

**USING FIRST NAMES**

Whether we use first names or surnames (family names) with people in English normally depends on the relationship we have with them. Here are some tips.

- As a general rule, do what the other person does. So if the other person uses your first name, use their first name when you speak to them. One important exception: if the other person has a much higher status than you (for example if you are a secretary and they are a manager) then sometimes it is better to use their surname, even if they use your first name. It depends on the company culture.
- If it is the very first time you speak to a person, you should probably use their surname.
- If you have had contact with the person before (even if it was only on the phone), you can normally use first names.
- If the person is an important business contact, you should definitely try to use first names, if appropriate. It is a sign of a close working relationship.

AUDIO 2-4

**6** **Look at – or listen to – the three phone calls in exercise 1 again. Who uses first names, and who uses surnames? Why?**

LIVEWORKSHEETS

**GIVING 'BAD' NEWS**

It is very common for native speakers to use *I'm afraid* or *I'm sorry* when giving 'bad' news, for example when saying someone is not available.

***I'm afraid*** *Mr Seide is in a meeting.*
***I'm sorry, but*** *Mr Seide is in a meeting.*

If you do not use *I'm afraid* or *I'm sorry*, the sentence sounds very direct and impolite to a native speaker.

The word *actually* is also often used to make a statement more polite. For example, it can be used:

- instead of saying the word ***no***. A: *Does he have your phone number?* B: ***Actually***, *I don't think he does.*
- when we change the subject (e.g. when we change from small talk to talking business). *Your holiday sounds fantastic. Listen, Sandra, I* ***actually*** *wanted to speak to Maria.*
- to say something which is inconvenient or annoying for the other person, in a polite way. *Can I call you back? I'm* ***actually*** *talking to someone else on the other line.*

Careful: *actually* is not the same as *current(ly)*!

## 7 Rewrite the highlighted sentences below with *I'm afraid* or *actually*.

1 I'm trying to get through to Jake Woodward. He asked me to call him this morning.
*I'm actually trying to get through ...*
2 Marie Dupont. You're from France, aren't you? – No, I'm from Belgium.
3 Can I talk to Kevin Shields? – He's not here.
4 Would you like to leave a message? – No, I'll call back later.
5 Can I call you tomorrow? – I won't be in the office tomorrow.
6 Heather's line is engaged. Shall I tell her to call you back?

## 8 Look at the situations below and make excuses for why your boss doesn't want to come to the phone. Try to use *I'm afraid*, *I'm sorry*, or *actually* in each sentence. Remember that you don't always need to tell the truth when making an excuse!

**EXAMPLE**

*I'm afraid she's unavailable. She's actually out of the office today.*

**EXCUSES**

*having lunch*
*out of the office today/this afternoon*
*on a business trip*
*in a meeting*
*on another line*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

**9** **Work with a partner to practise the dialogue below.**

| A | B |
|---|---|
| Answer phone. | Say hello and make some small talk. |
| Respond. | Change subject and ask to speak to somebody. |
| Person is unavailable. Say why and offer to take message. | Leave message. |
| Take message. | Say thank you and goodbye. |

AUDIO 5–12

**10** **Often when we telephone we have to deal with communication problems. Listen to the dialogues and match them with the problems. Sometimes more than one answer is possible.**

CALL

a The caller is speaking too quietly. . . . . ☐
b The person called didn't understand what the caller said. . . . . 1 ☐
c The person called wants the caller to say something again. . . . . ☐
d The caller is speaking too fast. . . . . ☐
e The caller has called someone by mistake. . . . . ☐
f The person called doesn't know how to write a word. . . . . ☐
g The phone itself is making a lot of noise. . . . . ☐
h The previous call was cut off and the caller has to call the other person back. . . . . ☐

AUDIO 5–12

**Now complete the extracts from the dialogues with words from the box. Then listen again to check your answers.**

slowly • up • cut • line • catch • spell • could • wrong

1 Sorry, I didn't _____ that.

2 Sorry, _____ you repeat that, please?

3 Sorry, can you speak _____ a bit, please?

4 Sorry, I think you have the _____ number.

5 Sorry, this is a really bad _____ .

6 Sorry, we got _____ off.

7 Sorry, could you _____ that for me, please?

8 Sorry, could you say that a bit more _____ , please?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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

PARTNER FILES
Partner A File 1, p. 48
Partner B File 1, p. 50

**USEFUL PHRASES**

**Giving your name**
Gail Jones speaking.
This is Robert Smith from ABC Enterprises.
Hello, Jane. It's Elena Gonzalez here.

**Getting through to the right person**
Could/Can I speak to Mark, please?
I'd like to speak to Ellen Baker, please.
I actually wanted to speak to Pat.
Is Pascal there at the moment?

**Making the connection**
Shall I put you through to him/her?
Can I just ask what it's about?
Could you please hold?
Just hang on a moment while I make the connection.

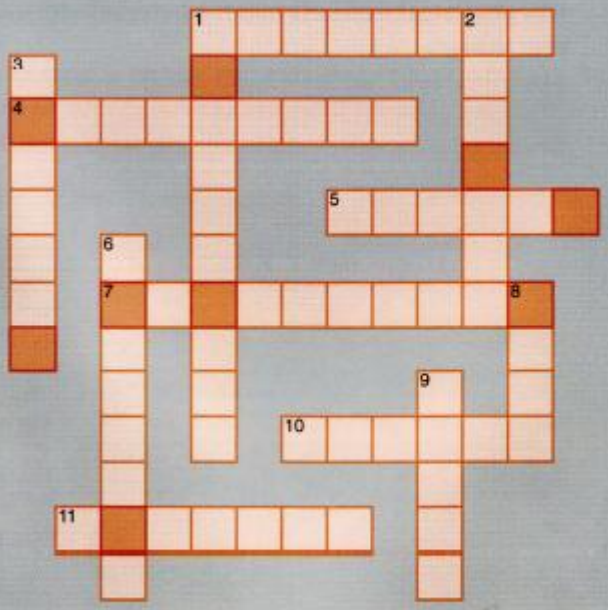
**When the person isn't available**
I'm afraid his/her line is engaged.
I'm afraid Pat isn't available at the moment.
I'm afraid she is in a meeting.
Can I take a message?
Would you like to call back later?

**12** **Complete the crossword, then rearrange the letters in the darker squares to find the mystery word.**

The mystery word is

**across**
1 *I'll ... later.* (2 words – 4, 4).
4 *Can you give me her ... number, please?*
5 In America this is called a *cell.*
7 Another way to say *connect* (2 words – 3, 7).
10 *I'm ... she's unavailable at the moment.*
11 *I'm sorry, his line is ... .*

**down**
1 Rearrange the letters ONCNINETCO.
2 *Can I ask who's ...?*
3 *Would you like to leave a ...?*
6 *Good morning. Acme Ltd. George Fraser ... .*
8 *I'll see if she's in. Could you please ... .*
9 *I'm sorry, I didn't ... that. Could you repeat it, please?*



LIVEWORKSHEETS

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

1 speaking Kyoko Ito .

2 Juan Suarez is this . to speak I can please Ms Sanders ?

3 call back I'll later .

4 office in Brenda today isn't the .

5 number do have my you mobile ?

6 today I'm Mr Chang in isn't office afraid the .

7 called him I'll that you tell .

**OUTPUT**

**What advice would you give to someone to help them telephone successfully? Work with a partner to make a list of tips. Then read the article and discuss the questions.**

# Successful telephoning

**Phone calls can often be challenging in your own language, but when you're speaking a foreign language they are even more difficult. There's no body language to help you, the audio quality is not always perfect, and there is more time pressure than in a face-to-face conversation. Below are some tips to make telephoning in English less stressful.**

**1** If you have to make a difficult phone call, spend a few minutes preparing first. Think about what you want from the phone call. What might the other person say? Make notes of English phrases you can use during the call.

**2** Try to relax. Make sure you have enough time for the call, and don't hurry. It's better to have a successful ten-minute call than an unsuccessful five-minute call.

**3** Sometimes receiving an unexpected call can be very stressful. To give yourself some time to prepare for the call, you might want to tell a 'white lie' (*I'm sorry, I'm actually in a meeting right now. Can I call you back in ten minutes?*) and call back when you feel more confident.

**4** It's important to make a little small talk with the other person before you talk business, but don't spend too long chatting. Get to the point of the call quickly. If you're talking to a native English speaker, listen for words like *well*, *so*, and *anyway* – these are signals that it's time to talk business.

**5** Speak more slowly and at a lower pitch than you would during a face-to-face conversation. It makes you sound confident, helps the other person to understand you, and calms you down if you are nervous.

**6** Don't be afraid to ask a caller to repeat something (*I'm sorry, I still didn't catch that. Could you say it again more slowly?*). It's better for the caller to repeat a piece of information five times than for you to write down the wrong information.

**7** Smile! Although it sounds strange, the other person can hear if you are smiling – it makes your voice sound friendlier.

**OVER TO YOU**

What is the thing you find most difficult on the telephone? How could you make it easier? Can you think of five things you could do to improve your telephoning skills in English? For example, record English calls and listen to them with your English teacher, or telephone an English-speaking friend for practice.

LIVEWORKSHEETS