

Calling a business

The following lesson is aimed at helping students learn the appropriate way to communicate effectively in a business environment.

Often, we are pressed for time and the more effective you are at giving the correct information to a caller is to speak simply, concisely and politely.

The following formula is used to place a business call in Canada.

- **your name (company you represent)+ the person you are calling**
- + **the reason for the call (why you are calling).**

Example: “Good morning, my name is John Brown from YYZ Roofings and I would like to speak to accounts representative Joe Black concerning an invoice I received this morning.”

Confusion occurs when one or all of these elements is left out or isn't clearly defined. For example, if you do not give your name, the telephone operator will ask you for it; the same applies if you do not give the name of your company and the reason for your call. It is imperative that all the important information be given to assure a clear and brief exchange.

Identifying the type of message

There are two types of questions.

- a closed question.
- an open end question.

The closed question is answered by **YES** or **NO**. The auxiliary heads the question.

- *Did you wish to speak to Mrs. Jones? Yes, I did.*
- *Did you leave a message on her voice mail? No, I did not.*
- *Do you know what her extension number is? No, I don't.*



The open question demands a more elaborate and complete response.
The auxiliary follows the adverb.

- *How many did you say?*
- *What time are you scheduled to arrive?*
- *When is the meeting?*

The dialogue below gives an example.

Identify the closed and open questions.

Secretary: “ABC manufacturing, may I help you?”
Caller: “Yes, please. My name is Paul Mendhelson from XYZ supplies calling Mrs. Sally Jones.”
Secretary: “Would you spell your name please?”
Caller: “M-E-N-D-H-E-L-S-O-N”
Secretary: “Thank you. There are 2 Sally Jones; do you know which department Mrs. Jones is in?”
Caller: “She is in Marketing.”
Secretary: “One moment please I will call her office... It seems she is out. Would you like to leave a message on her voice mail?”
Caller: “Yes thank you.”
Secretary: “Hold on please, go ahead.”

Identify the closed and open questions

Closed	Opened

Questions

Auxiliaries and modals use is essential to proper questions, negative and YES and NO answers.

You could safely say that auxiliaries act pretty much as administrative assistant do. They perform most of the work, and make the verb, (*boss*) look good.

The principal auxiliaries and modals used in this document are:

(DO - DOES) - DID - HAVE - (IS - ARE - AM) - WOULD - COULD - CAN - MUST - WILL.)

The interesting is their simplicity; they have a tendency to all act the same. The structure of the negative - question making patterns are identical.

Example:

Simple Past

Affirmative: I **sent** a message to James yesterday morning.

Negative: I **did** not **send** a message to James yesterday.

Questions: What **did** you **send** yesterday? - When **did** you **send** a message to James?

Simple Present

Affirmative: I **send** a message to James every morning.

Negative: I **do** not **send** a message to James every morning.

Questions: What **do** you **send** every morning? - When **do** you **send** a message to James?

Simple future

Affirmative: I **will send** a message to James tomorrow morning.

Negative: I **will** not **send** a message to James tomorrow morning

Questions: What **will** you **send** every morning? -When **will** you **send** a message to James?

Spelling out words

When spelling your name or the name of your company, it is preferable to use a recognized spelling code to avoid confusion.

Proper names sometimes pose a problem with spelling, personal taste and cultural habit account for the difference.

Official spelling code

A = ALPHA

B = BRAVO

C = CHARLIE

D = DELTA

E = ECHO

F = FOXTROT

G = GOLF

H = HOTEL

I = INDIA

J = JULIET

K = KILO

L = LIMA

M = MIKE

N = NOVEMBER

O = OSCAR

P = PAPA

Q = QUEBEC

R = ROMEO

S = SIERRA

T = TANGO

U = UNIFORM

V = VICTOR

W = WHISKEY

X = X-RAY

Y = YANKEE

Z = ZULU

Example:

John Smith is spelled: **JULIET - OSCAR - HOTEL - NOVEMBER**

SIERRA - MIKE - INDIA - TANGO - HOTEL

Try these out

*I have an appointment with Mr. **F-E-D-E-R-E-R** at the **W-Y-N-D-H-A-M** hotel. The meeting is in the **I-N-T-E-R-C-O-N-T-I-N-E-N-T-A-L** room.*



Numbers must be pronounced one by one. - "1997" is pronounced "**ONE - NINE - NINE SEVEN**" AND NOT "~~**NINETEEN HUNDRED — AND NINETY SEVEN.**~~"

Your flight confirmation number is: SC 456 98907 HU - 90. - **S C four five six nine eight nine zero seven H U** dash **nine zero.**

Practice using your company's name and address.

Time and date

In English, the 12 hour system is preferred over the 24 hour circadian system. Therefore when properly applied, this system practically eliminates all possible errors.

- *Tomorrow morning at 8.*
- *Tonight at 7.*
- *I will call you this evening around 9.*

“We are having breakfast early tomorrow morning at 6.” In this case there is no need for the AM or PM indicators.

Your appointment is tomorrow at 4. Logic commands that the appointment must be in the afternoon. **“We are having dinner at 8”.** Here again there can be no ambiguity; dinners are always held in the evening.



Date

In British English, the date is often written as follows: 26 August or 26th August. When reading is customary to follow this example: ***the twenty-sixth of August*** or ***August the twenty-sixth***.

Try these out

24/07/99 _____.

17/10/1987 _____.

11/12/1986 _____.

Answering the phone

There are a number of possibilities to answer a call to quickly situate the caller, thus making sure that there have not been any mistakes. A simple **“Hello”** is not enough at the workplace.

Examples:

- *The Joe Gates Company, Joe Gates speaking.*
- *Extension 55, this is Caroline.*
- *Sales dept. Pierre at your service.*

Answering a wrong number

Often numbers get confused and callers dial the wrong numbers. Again, the golden rule is to be cordial and cooperative to guarantee that no time is wasted answering inefficient calls.

Here are a few examples:

- *I'm sorry you have dialed the wrong number. Please try again.*
- *I think you have called the wrong number.*

Unfortunately, sometimes callers insist and call a second time.

You will want to verify which number was dialed by the caller.

- *What number were you trying to call?*
- *Whom may I ask are you trying to reach?*

Holding the line

Sometimes, the alternative to calling back or leaving a message is "*holding*". The receptionist must ask the caller to hold the line.

These forms fit the bill:

- *ABC Publications, please hold the line...*
- *ABC Publications, just a moment please...*

Example:

Receptionist: "ABC manufacturing, please hold the line...Yes, can I help you?"

Caller: "Yes. May I speak to Mr. Simms in the sales department, Bill Moor calling."

Receptionist: "One moment please, I will call his office. Sorry the line is busy. Would you like to hold the line?"

Caller: "Thank you. I will hold for a couple of minutes."

(Two minutes pass)

Receptionist: "The line is still busy. Would you like to leave a message?"

Caller: "No. I will call a little later, thank you."

Receptionist: "Thank you."

It is important to give the caller all possible opportunities to get in touch with the person he or she is trying to reach. That way, no call ends up ambiguous or messages get lost.

Making appointments

There are effective ways to introduce a request; you are asking someone to accommodate you, so it is important to be polite concise and cordial when doing so.

Examples:

- *I was wondering if we could meet over lunch concerning...*
- *I would like to know if we could meet...*
- *Would it be possible for us to meet...?*
- *I would like to make an appointment with Mr. Smith.*

Returning a call.

Returning a call is always easier than initiating one. You indicate the time and the purpose of the message and make sure that you give your name and the name of your company.

Example:

- *“Hello Mrs. Reimer. This is Paul Black returning your call. You left me a message yesterday afternoon at 2.”*
 - *“I am sorry I was out of the office. May I ask what this is regarding?”*
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What to do when you don't understand?

Foreign language speakers are often anxious about telephone conversations because they are afraid they will not understand, or will not be understood. Speaking a foreign language is often an exercise in humility, because we are forced to be creative in expressing ourselves when our vocabulary is limited.

Fortunately, there are a variety of ways to handle the problem. The first thing to remember is to never say: *WHAT? - WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? - WHAT DO YOU WANT?*

Here are a couple of alternatives

- *I am sorry I did not understand, could you repeat that please?*
 - *Would you mind repeating please?*
 - *Could you spell that word please?*
 - *I am not sure I understand the meaning of that expression; would you mind giving me a synonym please?*
 - *May I ask the meaning of that word, expression, etc.?*
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