

Idioms: Telephoning

Answering the phone

- Good morning/ afternoon/ evening, Jackson Enterprises, Sally Jones speaking.
- This is ... speaking
- How can I help you?
- Could you speak up, please?
- Who's speaking, please?
- Am I speaking to ...?
- Could you spell that please?
- Who would you like to talk to sir/ madam?
- One moment please, I'll see if Mr Jones is available.

Asking for someone

- I'd like to speak to ...
- Could I speak to someone who ...
- Could you put me through to Mr Jones, please?

Problems

- I'm sorry, I don't understand.
- I cannot hear you very well.
- You must have dialled the wrong number.
- I've tried to get through several times, but it's always engaged.

Putting someone through

- I'll put you through to ...
- I'll connect you to...
- I'll put ... on the line
- I'm sorry, there's no reply from Mr Jones

Putting someone on hold

- Just a moment, please.
- Hold on, please.
- Hold the line, please.

Asking someone to call back

- Thank you for waiting. I'm afraid Mr Jones is not in at the moment
- I'm sorry, Mr Jones is in a meeting
- Can/ Could you call back later in the day?

Taking a message

- Can I take a message?
- Would you like to leave a message?
- Can I give him/her a message?
- I'll tell Mr Jones that you called
- I'll make sure Mr Jones rings you as soon as possible.
- At what number can you be reached?

Telephoning

Telephoning in a language which is not your own is not easy. You should be aware that the person you are speaking to may have difficulties too. Therefore keep the following points in mind:

- **Speak clearly.** Use clear articulation and try to avoid difficult words and long sentences if it is not necessary to use them.
- **Do not speak too fast.** Keep in mind that many people tend to speak too fast when they are nervous. Hardly anyone ever speaks too slowly.
- **Confirm** what you have understood. This is especially important if the other person gives addresses or dates.
- **Be polite.** Start and end the conversation politely. Try to avoid being too direct. In English this is often done by using *would*. Compare: *I want some more information* - *I would like to have some more information*.
- **Be efficient.** Make sure that you have prepared the call and know **what** you want to say and **how** you want to say it in advance.
- **Know the telephone alphabet.** This is particularly important if you have to spell names and addresses. You should also know the names of symbols which are used in names and addresses, such as the hyphen and the tilde.
- **Know frequently used expressions.**
- **Listen carefully,** so that you do not need to ask the other person to repeat information.

The Telephone Alphabet

Letter	Pronunciation	Telephone alphabet
A	/ei/	Alfred
B	/bi:/	Benjamin
C	/si:/	Charles
D	/di:/	David
E	/i:/	Edward
F	/ef/	Frederick
G	/djei:/	George
H	/eitsj/	Harry
I	/ai/	Isaac
J	/djei/	Jack
K	/kei/	King
L	/el/	London
M	/em/	Mary
N	/en/	Nellie
O	/eu/	Oliver
P	/pi:/	Peter
Q	/kju:/	Queen
R	/ar/	Robert
S	/es/	Samuel
T	/ti:/	Tommy
U	/ju:/	Uncle
V	/vi:/	Victor
W	dubble /ju:/	William
X	/eks/	X-ray
Y	/wai/	Yellow
Z	/zed/	Zebra

Symbols

Symbol:	Name:	Example:
-	hyphen	Clermond-Ferrand, France
–	dash	33–39 London Road
~	tilde	Señora Isabella Fernandez
^	caret	
°	degree sign	Calle Preciados 5°
é	e acute	René Floquet
è	e grave	Rue de Ramonières
ü	u-umlaut	Zülpicher Strasse
'	apostrophe	Ms O'Connor
@	at-sign	jones@instep.com (e-mail address)
ABCD	capitals	U.S.A.
abcd	lower case characters	p.l.c.