

# Telephoning

Calling someone on the telephone can sometimes be intimidating, especially when you have to do it in your second language. Have no fear though! We've got your back and have collected lots of phrases that will be useful to you when talking on the phone.

Discover the differences between formal and informal English used on the phone. Build your confidence with help from these phrases so that you can master this important skill!

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## Formal English on the Phone

In this table you'll be introduced to phrases that you can use when speaking formally on the phone. Use them when calling businesses, making appointments with doctor's, or speaking with anyone that you want to be extra polite to.

Could I speak with Mr. Park?

May I speak to Mrs. Wood?

I would like to speak to Mr. Perez.

May I ask who's calling?

Can I get your name?

This is David Park.

Hayes speaking.

Would you mind holding for a minute?

I'm sorry, Mr. Hayes is not available right now.

Would you like to leave a message?

May I take a message?

Could you call back later?

Could you repeat that, please?

Could you speak a bit slower, please?

Thank you for your call.

### **Hayes speaking**

One way to answer the phone in a formal way is the sentence pattern LAST NAME + speaking. This is most common in business settings where last names are used. In response, the person calling would probably just give their name and where they are calling from. For example, like this Hi Mrs. Green, this is Sarah from PR.

### **Would you mind holding for a minute?**

Sometimes when you make a phone call the person you are trying to call cannot talk immediately. When this happens, they will probably say a phrase like Would you mind holding for a minute? or Please stay on the line. Both of these phrases are simply asking you to wait. It is implied that the person will talk to you as soon as possible. You will hear the phrase Please stay on the line more commonly when calling businesses. In response to these phrases, you could say something like Sure, I can hold.

### **Informal English on the Phone**

Oftentimes we just want to talk with friends or family on the phone. In those cases we can use informal English. Here we've gathered informal phrases that you can use when talking on the phone to those closest to you.

This is David.

Is Hanna there?

Is David free?

Who is this?

It's Owen.

Hang on a second.

Just a moment.

Sorry, she's not here right now.

When will Tyler be in again?

Could I leave a message?

Sorry, I think I dialed the wrong number.

Sorry, I didn't catch that.

Can you say that again?

I'll call back a little later.

I can't hear you very well.

Bye!

### **Sorry, I think I dialed the wrong number**

This is a very useful phrase to know in case you call the wrong person. You can use it whenever this happens to politely apologize to the person you called. In this phrase, dialed the wrong number simply means called the wrong number. A very common response to this phrase is No problem!.

### **Sorry, I didn't catch that**

When making a phone call, it can sometimes be hard to understand the person you are talking to. Maybe the phone reception is bad, they are talking too quickly, or you just misunderstood them. If this happens, then use the phrase Sorry, I didn't catch that to tell the person that you didn't understand them. They would then most likely just repeat what they said. For example like this I said, do you want to hang out later today?.

### **Can you say that again?**

This is a very useful phrase to know when making phone calls. Use it whenever you don't understand something that somebody said and want them to repeat themselves. In response, the person would simply repeat their last sentence. For example like this Yeah, do you know what time the team is meeting up tonight?.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What are the most essential English phrases I need to know when talking on the phone?

Could I speak with Mr. Park?

Would you mind holding for a minute?

Could you call back later?

Could you repeat that, please?

Is Hanna there?

It's Owen.

Hang on a second.

Could I leave a message?

### What is formal English like when talking on the phone?

When speaking English formally on the telephone you will often use words like could, would, and please. These words make you sound much more polite not only while speaking on the telephone, but also just in general when speaking English. You should also refer to and call others by their last names. Formal English is used when calling businesses, doctors, your boss, or really anyone you would want to be extra polite to. When calling these people or places you should try to get to the point of your call and avoid being too personal as well as small-talk.

### What is informal English like when talking on the phone?

Informal English is used on the phone when talking with friends, family, or people that you know well. First names and nicknames will be used in these cases. Informal conversations on the telephone are much more casual and similar to normal conversations that you would have with someone face to face.

**What do I say at the beginning of a telephone conversation?**

Starting a telephone conversation is similar to starting a normal face-to-face conversation. Speakers will start by greeting each other, usually with a simple Hello.. Then they would say who they are. To do this you can use the following pattern in any situation:

This is + NAME.

This is David.

This is John from yoga class.

This is Tyler from work.

In informal situations you could also use:

It's + NAME.

It's Owen.

It's Jacob from yoga class.

It's Tyler from work.

**How do I ask to speak with someone on the phone?**

There are a couple of different ways to ask to speak with someone on the phone.

The most common way to do this is:

Could I speak with + NAME?

Could I speak with Mr. Park?

Could I speak with Mr. Foster?

Could I speak with Mr. Kim?

You can use this pattern in either a formal or informal setting.

To formally ask to speak with someone, use:

May I speak to + NAME?

May I speak to Mrs. Wood?

May I speak to Mrs. Miller?

May I speak to Mrs. Long?

I would like to speak to + NAME.

I would like to speak to Mr. Perez.

I would like to speak to Ms. Foster.

I would like to speak to Mr. Kim.

To informally ask to speak with someone you can use:

Is + NAME + there?

Is Hanna there?

Is Sarah there?

Is Jessica there?

Is + NAME + free?

Is David free?

Is Jacob free?

Is Tyler free?

**How do I end a conversation on the telephone?**

Ending a telephone conversation is quite simple, as you will end it like any other conversation by saying goodbye. To end informal calls you could say for example:

Bye.

Talk to you later.

Talk to you soon.

Formal calls can be ended by saying something like:

Goodbye.

Thank you, have a nice day.

Thank you for your call. (use only if someone called you).



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