Introduction to Telephone Calls

Discuss these questions in a small group. Ask one group member to summarize your discussion to the class.

1. What kinds of phone calls make you nervous? What can you do to prepare for a telephone call that you’re nervous about making?
2. Do you feel comfortable asking for repetition or clarification on the telephone?
3. Why is it important to use standard or “fixed” phrases in telephone communication?
4. What can you do to improve your telephone communication skills?

"He wants permission to send you hundreds of e-mails selling you things you never knew you needed."

Source: www.businesscartoons.co.uk/shop

Culture Note

Telemarketers seem to call at the most inconvenient times. Few of us appreciate their intrusion into our lives. If you have call display, you can often see that a telemarketer is calling when the display shows “Unknown name/unknown number” or a 1-800 number. Then you can avoid the telemarketer by not answering the phone. But what if you don’t have call display? Or what if you are afraid of missing an important call? You should be polite to telemarketers as they are only doing their job, and often are not getting highly paid for it. However, you don’t have to listen to their pitch. You can simply say No, thank you, and hang up.
Telephone Etiquette

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The following quiz tests your knowledge of telephone etiquette. Discuss with your classmates whether or not you agree with each statement.

1. Generally, you shouldn’t answer your cell phone when you are in a social situation (e.g., on a date, at a friend’s for dinner). T F

2. It’s okay to explain that a colleague at work is not available to answer the phone by saying the person is at lunch. T F

3. You should always identify yourself when you make a telephone call, e.g., This is Michelle Brown. May I speak to ...? T F

4. If your call is unexpected, you should ask the person if it is a convenient time to talk. T F

5. A caller who has been put on hold is likely to get impatient after holding for one minute. T F

6. You should leave information on your voice mail greeting about the reason why you are not answering your phone. T F

7. It’s important to use active listening words on the phone such as Yes, I see, and Okay. T F

8. When you return to a caller after putting them on hold, you should say Thank you for holding. T F

9. Hello is an appropriate greeting when you answer the telephone at work. T F

10. Before you put a caller on hold, you should inform the caller that you will do this. T F

11. It’s okay to answer the phone at home saying Yes? T F

12. When you dial a wrong number, you should say, What number is this? T F

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Search the Internet for tips on telephone etiquette. Compare your answers to the quiz questions with researched information. Share new and interesting information with the class.

Possible search terms: telephone etiquette; telephone manners