

Adapted from: English Vocabulary in Use (pre-int. & int.):

MAKING PHONE CALLS

Vocabulary

phone box = phone booth

telephone directory = phone book

mobile phone

phone card

fax machine

answering machine

engaged = busy

dial a number

leave a message

phone back

Directory Enquiries

reverse charge call

local call

long distance call

A. Starting a phone conversation

An example of an informal call

A: Hello.

B: **Is that** Mary? (NOT: Are you Mary? / Is it Mary?)

A: Yes.

B: Hi. **It's** Ruth. (NOT: I am Ruth. / Here is Ruth.)

When the British answer the phone at home, they usually say »hello«, sometimes they give their number, but not their name.

An example of a formal call

A: Good morning. Lex Electronics.

B: Good morning. **Could I speak to** Mr. Jones, please?

A: Yes. **Who's calling**, please?

B: **It's** Paul Scott. (in a formal way also: **My name is** P.S.)

A: Right, Mr. Scott. I'll **put you through**. (=connect you with Mr. Jones)

In business conversations, the name of the company is given and standard phrases like the ones highlighted above are used.

B. Telephone problems

- You call your friend Susan, but the **line is engaged**. (=busy). Someone is already **on the phone** (=using the phone);
- You phone Susan again, but it's the **wrong number** (you have **dialled** another number, and a stranger answers);
- You **get through** to your friend's number (=make contact), but she's out (=not at home). Her husband tells you that Susan **won't be back** for an hour, so you **leave a message**, e.g. Could you tell her to ring me when she gets back?
- Susan **phones** you **back**, but you are out. She leaves a message on your answer phone: Hi, this is Susan. I'm just **returning** your **call**. I'll **give you a ring** tomorrow.

Exercises

1. Write down all the expressions you can remember including the word »phone«.

2. Fill in the gaps in these phone conversations with suitable words or phrases:

- A A: Good morning. Boulding Limited. Can I help you?
 B: Yes. (1)..... Paul Mathews and I'm trying to contact Mr. Patterson. He actually left a (2)..... on my answer phone yesterday afternoon.
 A: I see. Well, I'm afraid Mr. Patterson (3) at the moment. Can I ask him to (4)..... later?
 B: Yes, please. I shall be here until lunchtime. My (5) is 748 7267.
- B A: Hello.
 B: Hi. (6) Sandra?
 A: No, sorry. I'm (7) Sandra's not here at the moment.
 B: Oh. Do you know when she'll (8)?
 A: No, I've no idea.
 B: OK. Well in that case, could I (9)a for her?
 A: Yes, of course.
 B: Could you ask her to (10) this evening, please?
 A: Sure. What's your name?
 B: Cathy. I'm a colleague from work. She's got my number.
 A: Right. I'll tell her.
 B: Thanks very much. Bye bye.
 A: Bye.
- C A: Hello?
 B: (11)Carlos?
 A: Yes, speaking.
 B: Hi Carlos. (12) Serena.
 A: Oh hello. I was expecting you to ring yesterday.
 B: I did – or at least I tried. I (13) your number about six times last night, but I couldn't (14)..... It was (15) all the time.
 A: Oh yes, I'm sorry about that. I was (16) the phone to my brother for about an hour and then someone from school rang me about the table tennis tournament next week.
 B: Oh well, never mind. Anyway, I'm phoning about ...

3. Telecommunications – Vocabulary (From English for Secretaries):

| | | | | | |
|----------|-----------|------------|-------|--------------|--------|
| charge | codes | connect | dial | digit | direct |
| engaged | extension | hands-free | local | message | |
| operator | receiver | tone | units | wrong number | |

1. A call to someone in the same area is a call.

2. To make a call to another town or country, you need to know the area, country and international Make sure you don't miss out a in the number.
3. If you are using a conventional phone you should pick up the and the number you want; perhaps you have a modern phone with a facility.
4. If the person you have called is already speaking to someone else, you will hear a sound which tells the line is
5. You'll get a if you aren't careful and make a mistake.
6. When the phone rings at the other end you will hear a ringing
7. Nowadays, you can call most countries and you don't need to ask the to connect you.
8. Some companies have an answering machine where you can leave a
9. If you reach a switchboard, you will have to ask for the you require.
10. The cost of a call depends on how long, where and when you phone. The cost is known as a and it is calculated in

4. Can you answer these questions?

- a) What is the emergency number for the police, fire brigade or ambulance?
- b) Is there a Directory Enquiries? What number is it?
- c) How often do you have to pay your phone bill?
- d) Is it cheaper to phone during the night?
- e) What's the phone number of your school?
- f) Have you ever made a reverse charge call? If so, who was it to?