

Useful phrases and vocabulary

Opening a call

Identifying yourself

This is Leo Pearson from Griffin Plc.
It's Steve Ronson (from) AFS here.

Explaining the reason for the call

I'm calling about ...
I have a question about ...
I wanted to ask about ...
Are you the right person to ask?

Getting through to the right person

Asking for the person

Could I speak to Bob Little, please?
Is Katja there, please?
Could you put me through to your accounts department, please?
Listen, Steve, I'm actually trying to get through to Paula. Is she there at the moment?

When the person isn't available

Oh, that's a pity. I'll try calling later.
Can I leave a message for him/her?
Can you ask him/her to call me back, please?

Taking a call

Identifying yourself

Micah Information Systems. Sylvia speaking.
HCE Ltd. Arno Maier speaking. How can I help you?
So, what can I do for you?

Transferring a call

Can I just ask what it's about?
Can you hold on a moment, please?
Can you hold the line, please?
I'll put you through.
I'm connecting you now.
The line's (still) busy.
Would you like to wait, or shall I ask him/her to call you back?
I'm afraid his/her line is engaged (Am Eng: busy).
Shall I give you his/her extension number?

When the other person isn't available

I'm afraid Ms Thomson is unavailable at the moment.
She's on another line/in a meeting/on a business trip.
I'm sorry, but Derek isn't in the office today.
Can I take a message?
Would you like to leave a message for her/him?
Would you like to call back later?
Can I help at all?

Calling someone back

Sorry, I'm really busy at the moment. Can I call you back later today/in ten minutes?
I'm actually talking to someone on the other line. I think I've got your number, but can you give it to me again just in case?

Returning a call

I'm just returning your call from yesterday. You left a message on my answering machine.

Ending the call

Thank you very much.
→ You're welcome.
Just let me know if there's anything else I can do for you.
→ I'll do that.
Speak to you later.
Bye now./Goodbye.

Communication problems

I didn't catch that (last part).
Could you repeat that, please?
Can you speak up a bit, please?
Could you speak a little bit more slowly, please?
Could you spell that for me, please?
This is a really bad line.
Sorry, we got cut off. ... Anyway, as I was saying, ...

Messages (in person)

Taking a message

Can I take a message?
Does (s)he have your number?
I'll tell him/her you called.
Shall I ask him/her to call you back?
I'll make sure he/she gets your message.

Checking the message

Let me just read that back to you.
Let me just make sure that I got that right.
You'd like to know if ...
Was that M for Michael or N for Nancy?
Sorry, did you say 42 04 or 42 14?
Sorry, what was the post code again?

Leaving a message

Could you ask him/her to call me back?
My name is John Ellis. I'm calling from Retex Plc and my number is ...

Messages (answering machines)

Greetings

You've reached Lessa Logistica.

Unfortunately no one is available to take your call at the moment.

Our normal office hours are 9 to 5, Mondays to Fridays.

Please leave a message after the beep or send us a fax on (Am Eng: at) ...

Hello. This is Cecilia's voicemail. I'm out of the office until 3 p.m./the 5th. If it's urgent, please contact Jeff on (Am Eng: at) extension 439. Thanks.

Leaving a message

This is Walter Jackson calling for Toshiki Kitano.

I'm calling about ...

Maybe you can get back to me.

I think you have my number already, but here it is again just in case. It's ...

I'll be in the office until 6 p.m. today if you want to call me.

Hope to speak to you soon.

Mobile phones

Where are you?

→ I'm on the train.

→ I'm actually in the office. You can call me on my landline.

→ I'm afraid I'm in a meeting at the moment. Can I call you later?

Have you got a couple of minutes?

My battery's low – we might get cut off, I'm afraid.

Sorry, you're breaking up (a little).

Listen, I think I'm losing the connection. I'd better go.

Small talk

Asking how someone is

How are you?

How are you doing?

How's business?

How are things in Prague?

Answers

Fine, thanks. And you?

Not (so) bad.

A bit busy, as always.

Oh, can't complain. How are things with you?

Small talk questions

What have you been up to?

→ Nothing much, apart from work, to be honest.

→ I've just got back from holiday.

How's the weather over there?

→ Wet, as usual!

→ Really nice, for a change.

How was your holiday?

→ Very nice. We had a great time.

→ Don't ask! It was a complete disaster.

Making arrangements

Suggesting a meeting

Do you have time to meet next week?

I was wondering if you might have time to meet next week.

It would give us the chance to talk about ...

Suggesting times and places

When would suit you?

Where would you like to meet?

Would Monday be OK for you?

How about Wednesday morning?

Shall we say 10 o'clock in my office?

Maybe you can pencil me in on Tuesday morning.

Reacting to suggestions

I just need to check my diary.

I think that should be possible.

Tuesday's bad for me, I'm afraid.

I'm tied up all day.

Yes, that would be good for me.

Confirming an arrangement

OK, so I'll see you Wednesday, then.

So that's Monday at 10 a.m. at your office.

Changing arrangements

I'm calling about our meeting tomorrow.

I'm afraid something has come up.

One of my clients has cancelled/brought forward our appointment.

The meeting lasted longer than I expected.

I wanted to ask you if we could meet a bit earlier/postpone our meeting.

I was wondering if we could reschedule our appointment.

Would it be possible to meet a bit later?

When you are late for an appointment

I'm afraid my meeting has taken longer than I expected.

I might be a few minutes late.

I should be there by 3 at the latest.

Complaints

Making a complaint

Are you the right person to talk to?

There appears to be a small problem with your latest consignment.

There appears to be a mistake on the invoice you sent us.

You seem to have forgotten the attachment.

Some of the components don't seem to work.

Clarifying the problem

What's the problem exactly?

Could you explain the problem in more detail?

Apologizing

I'm very/extremely sorry about that.
Please accept my apologies.
That's entirely our fault.
There must have been a mix-up.

Taking action

It's good that you've brought this problem to my attention.
This is what I'll do.
I'll make sure it gets sorted out straight away.
Let me put you through to our accounts department. They'll sort it out for you.
You actually need to speak to our technical support hotline. Unfortunately I can't put you through directly, but let me give you the number.

Ending on a positive note

Again, I'm really sorry about the mix-up.
Well, thanks for sorting that out.
→ It's the least I can do.
I'll personally make sure it doesn't happen again.
If you have any questions just give me a call.

Reaching agreements

Making proposals

I wanted to make a suggestion.
I have an idea.
What do you think?
How does that sound?

Interrupting

Sorry, can I interrupt you there?
Yes, yes, but can I just say something?
Well yes, that may be true, but...
Can I just come in here?
Can I just stop you there?

Reacting to proposals

That sounds feasible/very reasonable.
We could probably work with that.
That depends./That's difficult to say.
I don't think that would be possible.
I think we have a certain amount of room to manoeuvre, but I would have to check with my boss first.

Useful verbs (in context)

to call sb back	Can I call you back later today?
to catch	Sorry, I didn't catch your name.
to connect	I'm connecting you now.
to get cut off	Sorry, we got cut off. Where were we?
to get back to sb on sth	I'm not entirely sure. Can I get back to you on that?
to get in touch	I'm trying to get in touch with Mr Ellis.
to get through	I'm trying to get through to the sales department.
to hold	Could you please hold? I'll try to connect you.
to leave a message	Would you like to leave a message for him?
to put sb through	Shall I put you through to Mr Seide?
to reach sb on	You can reach him on his mobile.
to read sth back to sb	Let me just read that back to you.
to receive a phone call	I received a phone call from your colleague yesterday.
to return sb's call	I'm just returning your call from earlier.
to spell	Could you spell that for me please?
to speak up	Sorry, I can't hear you. Can you speak up a bit, please?
to take a message	I'm afraid he's in a meeting. Can I take a message?

British English

American English

(also) answerphone	answering machine
diary	planner
half (past) two	half past two
mobile (phone)	cell (phone)
on extension 439	at extension 439
send us a fax on 897 543	send us a fax at 543 2111
the line is engaged	the line is busy