

2 MAKING A CALL

2.1 Give your name and the name of the person you want to talk to

Announce to the switchboard operator who you are slowly and clearly.

Example:

This is Riccardo Rizzi, that's R-I-Z-Z-I, calling from Ferrari, in Modena, Italy; can I speak to Andrea Caroli please.

It's always a good idea to give both the first name and surname of the person you want to speak to. First, your listener will have a greater chance of understanding who it is you want and secondly if you had asked for Ms Caroli or Mrs Caroli, you would have totally confused the operator because Andrea (in Italy at least) is a man's name, not a woman's name.

For spelling out names see 3.4.

2.2 When you have been connected, explain who you are and the reason for your call

When you have been connected to the right person, if this is the first time you have spoken, the normal practise is to:

1. announce who you are
2. who you work for
3. say how you got your interlocutor's name
4. explain why you are calling

The third point is not strictly necessary, but may motivate your interlocutor to listen to what you have to say.

You can easily prepare what you are going to say in advance. Here is a possible model:

This is Yohannes Gedamu calling from ABC. Your name was given to me by Anh Nguyet Tran [who thought you might be interested in...]. The reason I am calling is ...

Before you announce who you are, you might also want to check that you are speaking to the right person:

Am I speaking to Dubravka Cukrov?

Is that the manager of the business development team?

Below is a longer dialogue that shows the possible evolution of a phone call between two people who work for the same team in a company but have never met or spoken to each other before. The caller is in *italics*.

Suzanne Graves.

Good morning Ms Graves / Suzanne. This is Manfred Rasapovic from the Munich Office.

Oh, good morning Mr Rasapovic.

Oh please call me Manfred. I don't think we've actually spoken before.

No, I don't think we have. I met Wolfgang when he was over here last year, but I think you and I have just emailed. Good to talk to you at last.

So the reason I'm calling you is because Wolfgang and I have been working on a project that we wanted to discuss with you... [details of project etc]... Well, look, I'd better be going, I don't want to keep you too long.

Don't worry, that's fine.

Please could you send my regards to the team.

Certainly, and it was nice to talk to you.

And you. Goodbye.

Bye.

2.3 Take notes, summarize and follow up with an email

If you take notes during the call, you can occasionally repeat back what the other person has said so that you can check your understanding. Obviously notes will also help you to remember what was said. This will be useful if / when you send your interlocutor an email summarizing the call.

At the end of the call, in order to check that you have not missed anything, make a mini summary of what has been said. This gives your interlocutor an opportunity to clarify any points. You can say:

Can I just check that I have got everything? So we have decided to delay the second stage of the project. We are going to call the client to inform them why there will be this delay. We have set ourselves a deadline for the first stage for the end of this month. Does that all sound right?

You and your interlocutor may remember little more than 10% of what was said during your call. Even if you think the phone call has gone well and that you have understood everything, it is always good practice to send your interlocutor an email summarizing the main points. You can use the same words as in your summary at the end of your call. This allows the interlocutor to check his / her understanding of the call as well. In addition, you can ask any questions or clarify points that you forgot to make during the call itself.

2.4 What to do if your English is high level but your interlocutor's is low level

Give your interlocutor (i.e. the person you are speaking to) time to tune into your voice before you start asking for or giving important information. Remember they not only have to switch their brains onto what you're saying but they also have to change language.

Put the person at ease at the start of the call:

Tell me to stop if I'm speaking too quickly or if you don't understand something.

Please ring me back if you realize afterwards that you haven't understood something.

Speak slowly. This doesn't mean just putting pauses between each word, it also means clearly articulating each individual word too as naturally as possible. Be careful not to cut out words in your sentences in an attempt to make it simpler.

Don't assume that just because they speak well they understand what you are saying.

Never try to rush the phone call—give the other person time to digest information.

Offer to email a short summary of the main points after the phone call.

Making a call: Summary

- At the beginning of the call, say: who you are, who you work for, why you are calling, and who you want to speak to.
- Check you are speaking to the right person.
- Take notes. Use these notes to make summaries during and at the end of the call, and in the follow-up email.
- Email the interlocutor with a summary.

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