



[Important Phrases for English Telephone Conversations](#)

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Telephoning in English includes learning a number of special phrases, as well as focusing on listening skills. Some of the most important phrases include how to answer the phone, how to ask for others, how to connect, and how to take messages.

Introducing Yourself

Here are a few ways to informally introduce yourself on the telephone:

This is Ken.

Hello, Ken speaking

If you'd like to reply more formally, use your full name.

This is Jennifer Smith speaking.

Hello, Jennifer Smith speaking.

If you are answering for a business, just state the business name. In this case, it's common to ask how you can help:

Good morning, Thomson Company. How may I help you?

Plumbers Insurance. How can I be of service today?

British / American Difference

Hello, this is Ken

Brighton 0987654

The first example response is in American English and the second is in British English. As you can see there are differences in both forms. The telephone articles include both British and American English, as well as phrases that are common to both forms.

In American English, we answer the phone stating "This is ..." In British English, it's common to answer the phone by stating the telephone number. The phrase "This is ..." is used only on the telephone to substitute the phrase "My name is ..." which is not used to answer the telephone.



Asking Who Is on the Telephone

Sometimes, you'll need to find out who is calling. Ask them politely for this information:

Excuse me, who is this?
May (Can) I ask who is calling, please?

Asking for Someone

At other times, you'll need to speak to someone else. This is especially true when you telephone a business. Here are some examples:

Can I have extension 321? (extensions are internal numbers at a company)
Could I speak to...? (Can I - more informal / May I - more formal)
Is Jack in? (informal idiom meaning: Is Jack in the office?)

Connecting Someone

If you answer the phone, you might need to connect the caller to someone at your business. Here are some useful phrases:

I'll put you through (put through - phrasal verb meaning 'connect')
Can you hold the line? Can you hold on a moment?

When Someone Is Not Available

These phrases can be used to express that someone is not available to speak on the telephone.

I'm afraid ... is not available at the moment
The line is busy... (when the extension requested is being used)
Mr. Jackson isn't in... Mr. Jackson is out at the moment...

Taking a Message

If someone isn't available, you might want to take a message to help the caller.

Could (Can, May) I take a message?
Could (Can, May) I tell him who is calling?
Would you like to leave a message?

Continue practicing your skills by using the practical exercises below which include information on leaving messages on the telephone, how to ask native speakers to slow down, role plays on the telephone and more.

Practice With a Role Play

Begin by learning important telephone English with the dialogue below. Here is a short telephone conversation with some of the key phrases:



Operator: Hello, Frank and Brothers, How can I help you?

~~Peter: This is Peter Jackson. Can I have extension 3421?~~

Operator: Certainly, hold on a minute, I'll put you through...

Frank: Bob Peterson's office, Frank speaking.

Peter: This is Peter Jackson calling, is Bob in?

Frank: I'm afraid he's out at the moment. Can I take a message?

Peter: Yes, Could you ask him to call me at ... I need to talk to him about the Nuovo line, it's urgent.

Frank: Could you repeat the number please?

Peter: Yes, that's ..., and this is Peter Jackson.

Frank: Thank you Mr. Jackson, I'll make sure Bob gets this asap.

Peter: Thanks, bye.

Frank: Bye.

As you can see, the language is rather informal and there are some important differences from face-to-face conversational English.