

ILC Learning Guides

Telephoning Skills

Many students find it hard to understand English on the phone. There are three main reasons: they don't see the caller on the other end and they need to *hear what the caller say*; they are *not familiar with the expressions* commonly used in telephone conversations; and they are too anxious to *project their ideas to interpret* the message, thus failing to capture the main points.

Test yourself.

Do you know these expressions?

1. I'll put you through. (_____)
2. Hold on, please. (_____)
3. The line is engaged. (_____)
4. May I know who's calling? (_____)
5. Mr. Smith, please. (_____)
6. Mr. Smith: This is he. (_____)
7. I'm afraid he is not available now. (_____)
8. I'll give you a ring later. (_____)
9. So long. (_____)
10. May I see him tomorrow? (_____)

From the following list, choose the expressions which have similar meanings to the above, to fill in the gaps.

- Bye now.
- I'd like to have an appointment with him tomorrow.
- What's your name, please?
- I'll connect you.
- May I speak to Mr. Smith, please?
- Please wait for a moment.
- I'll call you back later.
- I'm sorry Mr. Chan isn't around right now.
- Smith speaking.
- The line is busy/ occupied.

If you want to brush up your telephone English, spend some time on the following cassette tapes and CD-ROM. *They are available in the ILC.*

1. Bruce, K. (1992). **Telephoning**. Hong Kong: Longman. (with a cassette tape) (Call No: PE1115 B78 1987)
2. Palstra, R. (1987). **Telephone English**. Prentice-Hall International English Language Teaching. (with two cassette tapes) (Call No. PE1128 P347 1987)
3. **Telephone Talk**. CD-ROM, disc 1 & disc 2. (Call No. PE1128.3 T44 1993)

If you want to listen to your own voice, use the CD-ROM “**Telephone Talk**” to record your voice and compare your speech with the responses given in the model dialogues.

This English CD teaches you how to:

- A. Get through on the phone
- B. Understand names and numbers
- C. Describe people and places
- D. Check understanding
- E. Deal with offers and invitations
- F. Take messages
- G. Make enquiries
- H. Give directions

Use the test in the CD-ROM to check on your mastery of the skills. You will definitely become a **more confident speaker** once you have internalized the basic expressions.

Some useful web sites for practicing telephone English:

<http://www.englishclub.com/speaking/telephone.htm>

<http://esl.about.com/library/weekly/aa092000a.htm>

<http://www.focusenglish.com/dialogues/communication/commindex.html>

<http://www.englishonline.net>

<http://ec.hku.hk/epc/telephoning/>