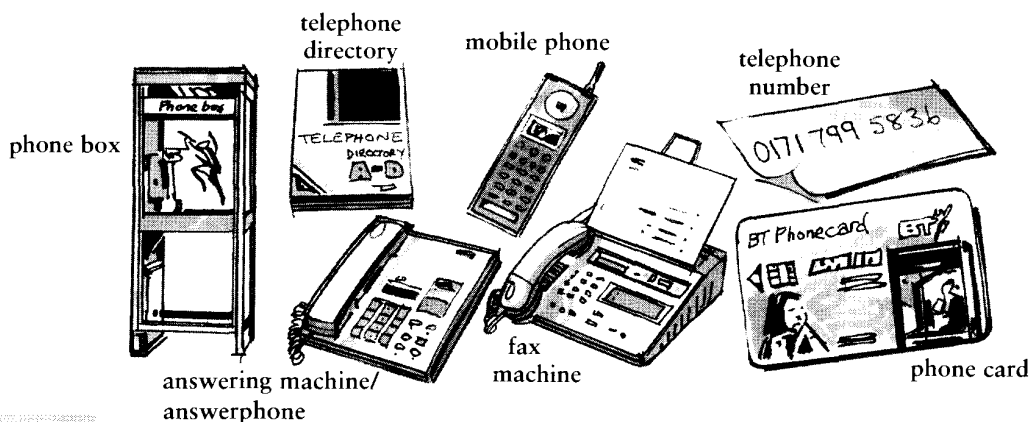


76 On the phone



A Starting a phone conversation

The first example is an informal situation; the second example is a more formal call.

A: Hello.

B: **Is that Mary?** [~~NOT Are you Mary?~~ or ~~Is it Mary?~~]

A: Yeah.

B: **Hi. It's Ruth.** [~~NOT I am Ruth,~~ or ~~Here is Ruth~~]

Note: When British people answer the phone at home they usually just say 'hello' and sometimes they also give their number. They do not give their name.

C: Good morning. Chalfont Electronics.

D: Oh good morning. **Could I speak to Mrs Gordon,** please?

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

D: **My name is Paul Scott.** (This is usually how you introduce yourself in a formal situation.)

C: Right, Mr Scott. I'll **put you through.** (= I will connect you with Mrs Gordon)

B Telephone problems

4.20 p.m. You try to phone your sister Susan but the **line is engaged** (= the line is busy). In other words, someone is already **on the phone** (= using the phone).

4.30 p.m. You phone your sister again but it's the **wrong number** (= you have **dialled** another number, e.g. 637 424 and not 627 424, and a stranger answers).

4.35 p.m. You **get through to** your sister's number (= make contact) but she's **out** (= not at home). Her husband answers and says that Susan **won't be back** (= will not return) for a couple of hours, so you **leave a message**, e.g. Could you ask Susan to ring me when she gets back? The husband agrees to give Susan the message.

7.30 p.m. Susan **phones you back** but you are out. She leaves a message on your answerphone. Her message is: Jean, this is Susan. I'm just returning your call (= phone call). I'll **give you a ring** (= phone you) tomorrow.

C Useful vocabulary

A **reverse charge call** (AmEng = **collect call**). This is when the person you ring agrees to pay for the phone call. If you **make a reverse charge call**, you must go through the **operator**. If you have someone's name and address, you can call **Directory Enquiries** to get their phone number. If you phone another town or city, you need to know the **code**, e.g. the code for Cambridge is 01223. This type of call is a **long distance call** (≠ a local call).

Exercises

76.1 Write down five words or expressions including the word 'phone' or 'telephone'.

76.2 Fill 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 answerphone yesterday afternoon.
A: I see. Well, I'm afraid Mr Patterson's (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: Catherine. 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: Yeah, 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 ...

76.3 Can you answer these questions?

- 1 In your country, what is the emergency number for the police, fire brigade or ambulance?
- 2 Is there a Directory Enquiries? What number is it?
- 3 From your country, what's the dialling code for the United Kingdom?
- 4 How much does it cost to make a local call?
- 5 How often do you have to pay your phone bill?
- 6 Is it cheaper to phone during the night?
- 7 What's the phone number of your English school?
- 8 Have you ever made a reverse charge call? If so, who was it to?

If possible, compare and discuss your answers with someone from the same country.