

# Speaking over the telephone



## 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)

## 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.

## 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** ( $\neq$  a **local call**).

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.

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.

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 ...

- A** Directory Enquiries. Which town, please?  
**B** Oxford.  
**A** What name, please?  
**B** Oxford University Press. Walton Street.  
**A** That's Oxford 56767.  
**B** Thank you. Can you tell me the code for Oxford?  
**A** 0865.  
**B** Thanks. Goodbye.

- C** MacDonald and Company. . . . Can I help you?  
**D** I'd like to speak to Mr Walker, please.  
**C** Mr Walker? Which department is he in?  
**D** Accounts.  
**C** Hold on . . . trying to connect you . . . all right . . . you're through.

- F** Number, please?  
**G** Oh, I'd like to make a transferred charge call.  
**F** Where to?  
**G** Stratford.  
**F** What number?  
**G** 17414.  
**F** What's your name, please?  
**G** Joan Fitzgerald.  
**F** Can you spell that?  
**G** F-i-t-z-g-e-r-a-l-d.  
**F** . . . and where are you calling from?  
**G** 01-992-6636.  
**F** Right. Hold the line, please.  
**H** Who are you telephoning?  
**I** Nobody.  
**H** Well, why are you holding the phone?  
**I** My watch has stopped.  
**H** I don't understand!  
**I** I'm phoning the 'speaking clock' . . . listen . . . (At the third stroke, it will be 8.52 and 30 seconds.)

# *Telephone: Connecting*

## **Useful Phrases**

**How can I help?**

**Can I speak to ..., please?**

**Who's calling, please?**

**Please hold**

**I'll just put you through**

**Could I speak to.....please?**

**Who shall I say is calling?**

**Just a second**

**I'll see if he's in**

**I've got .....on the phone for you**

**Hang on a moment**



## **Transcripts**

**Michelle:** Hello, you've reached the marketing department. How can I help?

**Male:** Yes, can I speak to Rosalind Wilson, please?

**Michelle:** Who's calling, please?

**Male:** It's Richard Davies here.

**Michelle:** Certainly. Please hold and I'll put you through.

**Male:** Thank you.

**Michelle:** Hello, marketing. How can I help?

**Male:** Could I speak to Jason Roberts, please?

**Michelle:** Certainly. Who shall I say is calling?

**Male:** My name's Mike Andrews.

**Michelle:** Just a second - I'll see if he's in. Hello, Jason, I've got Mike Andrews on the phone for you ... Okay - I'll put him through. Hang on a moment, I'm just putting you through.

# *Telephone: Messages*

## **Useful Phrases**

**Can I speak to ..., please?**

**I'm afraid he's in a meeting**

**Can I help?**

**Can you call back later?**

**Can I take a message?**

**Could you tell him that...**

**Can I take your number, please?**

**OK, I'll make sure he gets the message**

**Claire:** Hello, finance department.

**Jennifer:** Hello, can I speak to Adrian Hopwood, please?

**Claire:** I'm afraid he's in a meeting at the moment. Can I help?

**Jennifer:** No, I need to talk to Mr Hopwood, I think. What time will he be out of the meeting?

**Claire:** In about an hour. Can you call back later?

**Jennifer:** Okay, I'll do that.

**Claire:** Or can I take a message?

**Jennifer:** Actually, would you mind? Could you tell him that Jennifer McAndrews called and that I'm in the office all day if he could call me back.

**Claire:** Can I take your number, please?

**Jennifer:** Yes, it's 5556872

**Claire:** 5556872. Okay, I'll make sure he gets the message.

**Jennifer:** Thanks very much for your help, bye!

**Claire:** Goodbye!

# A phone call

Unit 14.mp3

## Questions

Who's telephoning?

Who's answering the phone?

Did they have a date?

Ask "When?"

Why couldn't she come?

Did she want to phone him?

Why didn't she phone him?

Is his number in the directory?

Why couldn't she find it?

Did she have to wash her hair?

Ask "Why?"

Is she going to the opera with Mike?

Ask "Who ... with?"

Did she want to go?

Why did she say yes?



**Mary** Hello.

**Mike** Mary? Is that you?

**Mary** Yes. Mary here . . . Who's speaking?

**Mike** It's Mike.

**Mary** Mike? . . . Mike who?

**Mike** What do you mean 'Mike who?'  
. . . Mike Connors, of course.

**Mary** Oh, Mike . . . I'm sorry.

**Mike** Yes. We had a date last night.  
Where were you?

**Mary** Oh, I'm sorry, Mike. I couldn't come.

**Mike** Couldn't come! Why couldn't you come?

**Mary** Well, I had to wash my hair.

**Mike** Wash your hair! Why didn't you phone me?

**Mary** I wanted to phone you, but I couldn't remember your number.

**Mike** But it's in the telephone directory.

**Mary** Yes, I know, but I couldn't remember your surname.

**Mike** Oh . . . But why did you have to wash your hair last night?

**Mary** Well I had to do it last night because I'm going to the opera tonight.

**Mike** The opera! Who with?

**Mary** George . . . George Johnson . . . my boss's son.

**Mike** I see.

**Mary** He asked me yesterday. I didn't want to go but I couldn't say no.