



Reception Skills

Western Cultural communication over the phone and face to face in a business setting

Vocabulary

- Appointment
- Message
- Call back
- Book (v.)
- Busy
- Hold
- Urgent
- Postpone
- Schedule/reschedule
- Apology/apologize
- Slot (time slot)
- Cancel
- Address (v. / n.)
- Department
- Transfer
- Assist
- Confirm
- Sorry (various uses)
- Meeting
- Follow up
- Double check

Dates

- Days of the week and months are proper nouns and need to be capitalized when written.
- Weekdays/Business days: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
- Weekend: Saturday, Sunday, phrase "on the weekend" (North American)
 - Can use "this" to mean the upcoming day/week/month, ex. **This** Saturday, I'm going to eat Pineapple cake. (tomorrow)
 - "Next" usually means the one after, ex. "**Next** month, I'm going to Taipei. (June)
- Abbreviations (short forms) for days are usually the first two/three letters. Ex. Mo./ Mon.
- Months: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December. Abbr.=first three letters + a period, ex. Jan.
- For a year, we typically phrase the year as two separate numbers. Ex. 2019 becomes 20 + 19, said as "twenty-nineteen".

Dates Continued

- Date numbers are "ordinal" (show the order they occur); 1=first, 2=second, 3=third, 4-19 add "-th" to the end of the number, numbers ending with /v/ are made into /f/ (Five=Fifth, Twelve=Twelfth). 20 and 30, add "ith" to the end, Twenty=Twentieth, Thirty=Thirtieth (sounds like twenty-ith, thirty-ith). After 20, for numbers ending with 1, 2, and 3, follow the earlier rules for those numbers, ex. Twenty-one=Twenty-first. (if writing as number, add last two numbers of ordinal term, ex. 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th)
- Say day first, then month, then number; "June twelfth."
 - Can just say month and number as well.
 - Can also use opposite order if "the" is before number and "of" is before month, ex. "the first of July"
- Prepositions:
 - "On" for a specific date, ex. "on Monday," "on July first (1st)"
 - "In" for referring to months, "my birthday is in June," "We will be closed for two weeks in April," etc.

Times

- In western cultures, the 12 hour clock is more commonly used than the 24 hour clock
 - We distinguish with am/pm; am=morning, pm=afternoon
- There are also different phrases used to express time rather than simply saying the time itself. We see an hour as a whole "1" and refer to the 15 minute sections as quarters ($\frac{1}{4}$). We also use numbers to represent the number of minutes. We use prepositions "to", "after", and "past" to refer to the position within the hour.
 - "To" = until the next hour, "After"/"Past"=into the current hour
 - First half of the hour, we use "After" and "Past" and the current hour number
 - Second half of the hour, we use "To" and the upcoming hour number, since we are saying this is how long until this time.
 - "Half past six" = 6:30, "quarter to nine" = 8:45, "ten after" = current hour: 10, "ten to" =current hour:50.

Locations: Review

- When giving room numbers, we don't say the full number, and "zero" becomes "oh".
 - Ex. Room 305 = "room three oh five"
- Prepositions:
 - "at" for address, Ex. "The university is **at** 1018, Section 6, Taiwan Blvd..." (remember that your email **address** has an @ "**at**" symbol)
 - "in" for buildings and rooms, ex. "The English office is **in** L Building, **in** room 504." Also used in phrase, "**in** the area"
 - "on" for some specified areas, ex. "**on** campus", "**on** that street", also used in phrase "**on** the/my way" which refers to the action of going somewhere, or the route you are taking.



When Taking a Call...

Transferring

- When putting a caller on hold, never put them on hold without saying anything. Always ask if it's okay. "Is it okay if I put you on hold for a moment?" "Do you mind holding?" "Can you hold, please?"
- Always warm transfer if you can. A warm transfer is when you put the caller on hold, call the person they need to speak with, then merge the two calls to introduce the two. A cold transfer is when you send the call straight to the other person. Sometimes we can't warm transfer, if there are other calls holding, or the other person isn't available and you are putting the caller through to a voicemail. Let them know if there will be a voicemail.
- If it is taking longer than 5-10 minutes, go back on the line to let the caller know you are still working on a solution for them. Ex. "Sorry for the wait, I'm still working on finding that phone number for you, please bear with me."

Participating in a Call

- Active listening: let the caller know you are listening and understand. Use short interjection to show this. Ex. Yes, okay, uh huh, of course, etc.
- If the situation is appropriate, show empathy, "I understand how you feel," "I'm sorry to hear that,"
- Face to face: Maintain eye contact and nod periodically.
- If necessary, know how to make requests and asking follow up questions. Ex. "Sorry, but could you please speak slower?" "I'm sorry, I don't understand. Do you need...?" "Are you look for/to...?"
- Confirm what they want. "So you are looking to speak to _____?" "You want to make an appointment?"
- Sometimes if someone is spelling a name for you, they might use a "phonetic alphabet". They could say, "A like alpha," or "B like Bravo". You can find copies online for yourself if you want to have it for reference or to use yourself.

Ending a Call

- Reconfirm that you've addressed all their concerns. "So we... (insert what you did)..." ex. Rescheduled your appointment, updated your file, confirmed your information, etc.
- Acknowledge their thanks, if they give it. Ex. "You're welcome," "No problem," "My pleasure," etc.
- Remind them of any future activities. "So and so will call you back by tomorrow," "Make sure you remember to bring your resume," etc.
- Ask if there are any other questions or concerns. "Is that everything you need for today?" "Will that be everything for now?" "Have I answered all of your questions?"
- Thank the caller. "Thank you for calling," "Thanks for giving us a call," "Thanks for letting us know," (good to use if caller is rescheduling an appointment).
- Wish them a good day or evening. "Have a good day," "I hope you have a great rest of your day," "Enjoy the rest of your day."



When Making a Call...

Before Calling

- Know your purpose. Why are you calling? Who are you calling? What are you hoping to achieve with this phone call.
- Have the information you might need. Ex. References numbers, account numbers, names of contacts, follow up phones numbers, agenda if scheduling something, etc.
- Know what you want to say. Practice saying it a couple times so you feel comfortable saying it. Making a list can help you make sure you mention everything you want to, or avoid your mind going blank.

Making the Call

- Don't be afraid to ask them to repeat themselves, or speak slower. If you don't understand, don't say silent. On a phone there is no facial or body language to show you don't understand.
- Make sure you speak clearly and at an appropriate volume, speaking too loud can be considered rude or aggressive, and too quietly can be frustrating for the person you are speaking.
- Try to make the call when you are in a quiet place, if there is a lot of background noise, it can make the call more difficult for you and the person you are speaking to.

Messages

Leaving a Message

- Who is calling: Your name, where you are calling from or who on behalf of.
- You can include the date and time of your call, but it is not necessary as many voicemail machines will include this. If someone is taking the message, they should note the time.
- Why you are calling: What you want to know or have done.
- How can they reach you: leave at least a phone number, can leave other contact options if available. Repeat this twice.
- To maintain professionalism, wish them a good day/evening when ending the call.

Taking a Message

- Offer to take a message: ex. "I'm sorry, he's unavailable right now, would you like to leave a message?"
- Get their name, where they are calling from, who they are calling on behalf of.
- Make sure you take down the date and time they called for when you pass on the message.
- Why they are calling, and any associated information.
- Let them know if there is a good time to call back, or offer to have their call returned. "He will be available after 3 pm if you'd like to call back, or I can ask him to return your call later." Let them know if there is a time you can guarantee they will be called back by.
- Thank them for calling and wish them a good day/evening.

Face to Face Interaction

- In face to face interactions, your facial expressions and body language are important.
- Try to keep an open expression; not frowning, and smiling if it is appropriate. Show empathy when the situation calls for it.
- Maintain eye contact while they are speaking, unless you have a specific reason to look away (ex. Checking a schedule or notes). Nod and add vocal interjections to show understanding, similar to when you are on the phone. "Yes, okay, uh huh," etc.
- In Western culture, if you are meeting someone in a formal professional setting, you usually shake hands, especially in business. Grasp their hand firmly, not too loose but not too tight. This isn't necessary in all interactions, though.