

Telephone Etiquette Guide

Answering Calls for Your Department/Office

1. Answer promptly (before the third ring if possible).
2. Before picking up the receiver, discontinue any other conversation or activity such as eating, radio, etc that can be heard by the calling party.
3. Identify yourself and your department on answering
4. Speak clearly and distinctly in a pleasant tone of voice.
5. Learn to listen actively and listen to others without interrupting.
6. Use the hold button so that the caller does not accidentally hear you querying/clarifying a response for them.
7. When transferring a call, be sure to explain to the caller that you are doing so and where you are transferring them.
8. Remember that you may be the first and only contact a person may have with your department, and that first impression will stay with the caller long after the call is completed.
9. If the caller has reached the wrong department, be patient and polite, sometimes they have been transferred all over the place. If possible, attempt to find out where they should call/to whom they should speak. If this is not possible take their name and number and pass it on to the most appropriate person who can help them/
10. When you are out of the office or away from your desk for more than a few minutes, forward your phone to voicemail.
11. When the they are looking for is not in, the following responses should be used both to protect the privacy of the office staff and to give a more tactful response:

What You Mean:	Tell the Caller:
"He is out."	"He is not in the office at the moment. Would you like to leave a message on his voicemail?"
"I don't know where she is."	"She has stepped out of the office. Would you like to leave a message on her voicemail?"
"He is in the canteen."	"He has stepped out of the office. Would you like to leave a message on his voicemail?"
"She isn't here."	"I expect her shortly. Would you like to leave a message on her voicemail?"
"He is on leave."	"He is out of the office for the day. Can someone else help you or would you like his voicemail?"
"She can't be disturbed."	"She is unavailable at the moment. Would you like to leave a message on her voicemail?"
"He is busy at other meetings"	"He is unavailable at the moment. Would you like to leave a message on his voicemail?"

Taking Messages

1. Be prepared with pen and message slip when you answer the phone.
2. When taking messages be sure to ask for the caller's name (asking the caller for correct spelling) and the phone number and/or extension (including area code)
3. Repeat the message to the caller.
4. Be sure to fill in the date, time, and your initials.
5. Place the message slip on your colleagues desk or in a conspicuous place in their office, such as their chair.
6. Don't forget that you can transfer them to voicemail instead of taking a paper message, but don't forget to ask, "Would you like me to transfer you to _____'s voicemail?" Do not assume that the caller would rather go to voicemail. Always ask first.

Handling Rude or Impatient Callers

1. Stay calm, try to remain diplomatic and polite, speak slowly and calmly. Getting angry will only make them angrier.
2. Always show willingness to resolve the problem or conflict.
3. Try to think like the caller. Remember, their problems and concerns are important.
4. Offer to have your manager talk to the caller or call him/her back if the caller persists.

Handling Nuisance Callers

If you have tried to deal with the caller as above and the caller persists in making nuisance calls do not engage him/her in conversation. If he or she is abusive then you should end the call and report it to your Line Manager. Do not hang up the phone, first tell the caller that you will not listen to abuse and that you will be terminating the call. If the caller remains abusive you should use the following wording:

Excuse me, you are being abusive and that is unacceptable.. I am sorry but I have to end this phone call now. Good bye.

Hang up the phone

If you are concerned about security as a result of the call convey your concerns to your Line Manager.

Making Calls on behalf of the HSE

1. When you call someone and they answer the phone, first identify yourself: "This is _____. To whom am I speaking?"
2. Always know and state the purpose of the communication.
3. When you reach a wrong number, don't hang up or ignore the person who answered the call. Say: "I'm sorry, I must have the wrong number. Please excuse me." And then hang up.
4. If you told a person you would call at a certain time, call them as you promised. If you need to delay the conversation, call to postpone it, but do not make the other person wait around for your call.
5. If you don't leave a number/message for someone to call you back, don't be surprised if they are not available when you call again.

Voicemail Etiquette

VoiceMail has many benefits and advantages when used properly. However, you should not hide behind voicemail. If callers constantly reach your voicemail instead of you, they will suspect that you are avoiding calls. Here are a few tips on such things as greetings and responding to voicemail.

Voicemail Greeting

1. Be sure to record your own personal greeting. People tend to feel that they have already lost the personal communication touch because of voicemail. If a female voice says that "Joe Smith is not available", the caller will not be convinced that you listen to your voicemail.
2. Write down what you want to say in your greeting and practice saying it a few times before recording.
3. Include in your greeting your name and department so that people know they have reached the correct person.
4. Your regular greeting should include your normal work hours. If you know that you will be on leave or out of the office for a few days or have different hours temporarily, you should record an alternate greeting to let callers know this. Callers will know that they cannot expect a callback for a few hours or a few days.
5. When you leave for the day or will be away from your desk for an extended period of time, forward your line to your voicemail using the call forward feature as a courtesy to your callers. Call forwarding means that your callers don't have to wait through an entire ring cycle (12 seconds/3 rings) before leaving a voicemail message for you.

Checking Messages and Returning Calls

1. Check your messages daily and return messages within 24 hours (or Monday if messages come in at the weekend). If it will take longer than 24 hours to get a response, call the person and advise him/her.
2. Reply, forward, or delete messages immediately. Keep your mailbox clean. Saved messages take up needless space in your mailbox.
3. If you forward a message, be sure to explain to the person to whom you are forwarding the message why you are sending it to them.

Leaving a Voicemail Message for Another Person

1. Speak clearly and slowly.
2. Be sure to leave your name and extension number. It's best to say it at the beginning and end of your message.
3. Keep messages short and to the point.
4. Remember that you want to leave the person you are calling with a good impression of you.
5. Leave the date and time you called in the message. Let the person know the best time to call you back.
6. Cover one topic in one message; specify what you want the recipient to do.