



Managing a phone call

Lesson code: 1162-P6CC-EIAA

UPPER INTERMEDIATE +

 American English

1 Warm-up

How often do you receive telephone calls at work? Are the subjects of the calls always relevant?

2 Vocabulary

Read the following telephone conversation and use the adjectives below to describe the speakers.

A: Hello John, how are things with you? Did you have a nice vacation with the family?

B: Yes, we went to Tunisia again. Look, tell me what you want. I'm very busy.

A: I just needed your cash flow forecast for next month.

B: OK, I'll email it to you after lunch.

A: How was the weather in Tunisia?

B: It was wonderful. I must go.

A: OK. Could you tell me how your new office is?

B: I have no time to talk to you. Can you get off the phone?

A: OK, bye.

rude blunt chatty direct tactless abrupt friendly
nosy cold unprofessional straight unfriendly bored

How could you improve the underlined expressions in the dialogue?

3 Listening

Listen to the beginning and end of another telephone conversation and put T (True) or F (False) next to the following statements:

1. Carl would rather talk about business than make small talk.
2. Alison wants to end the conversation quickly.



4 Useful expressions

Listen again and complete the expressions below:

1. _____, what can I do for you?
2. _____ the _____, how's Mario getting along?
3. _____, are you happy with the figures?
4. _____, it's been good _____ to you.
5. There's an important call _____ coming _____ on the other line.
6. I _____ have to _____.

Put the above expressions into the following categories:

- a. Moving the conversation to the main subject of the call: _____
- b. Bringing the conversation back to the main subject of the call: _____
- c. Changing the topic: _____
- d. Bringing the conversation to an end: _____

Add the following expressions to the categories above:

Anyway, the reason I called is because ...

Before I forget, ...

So, as I was saying, ...

Anyway, getting back to what we were talking about, ...

Was there something you wanted to discuss?

I'll let you go now.

5 Role play

Role play the following short phone calls with your partner, using expressions from this lesson.

Student A: Student B has an important name and address that you need. You are very busy and don't have much time for small talk. Call him/her.

Student B: You receive a phone call from Student A. You are bored and want to chat.

Student A: Call Student B to discuss a work project. You are not very busy and you want to chat for a while.

Student B: You receive a phone call from Student A. You have an important meeting to attend in 5 minutes so you don't have much time to chat.



3 Listening

Carl: Hello, Carl Bauer speaking.

Alison: Hi Carl, this is Alison. How are you doing?

Carl: Oh, you know. Busy with the usual projects.

Alison: I hope the new boss isn't working you too hard.

Carl: Actually, she's been great. So, what can I do for you?

Alison: Well, I just wanted to discuss your projected sales figures for next month. By the way, how's Mario getting along in his new position?

Carl: He's doing fine.

Alison: Is he getting on well with the rest of the team? I know he can be a bit of an office clown sometimes.

Carl: Actually, he's fitting in just fine. Anyway, are you happy with the figures?

Alison: Yes, I think that on the whole they're reasonable for this time of year. But I think the figure for projected sales is a little optimistic in the current economic climate.

Carl: OK, I'll have another look and revise it. Well, it's been good talking to you, and ...

Alison: Yes, we must go out for a drink sometime and catch up.

Carl: Sounds good.

Alison: And I hear there's this great new bar that's just opened on Church Street. You'll really like it.

Carl: Alison, there's an important call just coming in on the other line. I really have to go.

Alison: Oh, OK then. Speak to you soon. Bye.



2 Vocabulary

Go through the adjectives with the students or have them look up the words in a dictionary.

Speaker A could be described as chatty, friendly, nosy, bored. Speaker B could be described as rude, blunt, direct, abrupt, cold, straight, unfriendly. Both speakers could be described as unprofessional or tactless.

Suggested alternative expressions: How can I help you? I'm afraid I have to go. I'm afraid I'm really busy at the moment. Can you get back to me later? etc.

3 Listening

Play the audio file or scan the QR code with your mobile device (make sure you have access to the internet and a QR code reader app installed on your device).

1. T
2. F

4 Useful expressions

1. So
2. By; way
3. Anyway
4. Well; talking
5. just; in
6. really; go

- a. 1
- b. 3
- c. 2
- d. 4, 5, 6

Anyway, the reason I called is because ... - a

So, as I was saying, ... - b

Before I forget, ... - c

Anyway, getting back to what we were talking about, ... - b

Was there something you wanted to discuss? - a

I'll let you go now. - d

