



# TELEPHONE INTERRUPTIONS



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Expemo code:  
13GU-B6CA-IMI1

1

## Warm-up

In what situations can a phone call interruption have a negative effect on your work or business? How can you handle such interruptions?

2

## Handling interruptions

Read the following dialogues in pairs:

A: Hello Robert, **I'm afraid I can't talk right now.** I'm in a meeting.

B: Sandra, I **just wanted to ask you** a quick question. **I'll only be a second.**

A: **OK, if it's very quick.** Go ahead.

A: Hi it's John. **Have you got a minute?** **do you have a minute?**

B: Actually, I'm **in the middle of something.** **Is it something quick?**

A: Yes, I **just wanted to know ...**

Which of the expressions in bold are used to:

**cannot speak**

1. **avoid speaking to the caller?**

2. **encourage the caller to keep it brief?**

3. **encourage the receiver to listen?**

**avoid: not want to do something**



Now put the following expressions in the above categories:

I'm a bit busy at the moment.

Can I call you back later?

This won't take long.

Can it wait?

You've got about 30 seconds.

I'll be really quick.

Is it something urgent?

OK, try to make it short.

Do you have a moment?



### 3 Practice

Now complete the following dialogue with appropriate words and expressions from the above exercise. More than one expression may be possible for some gaps.

#### Dialogue 1

A: Hello, Adam Lewis speaking.

B: Hi Adam, it's Juan Carlos. Have \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup>?

A: Hello Juan. I'm afraid, I'm \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup> of a meeting right now. Can \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup>?

B: Adam, \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup>. I have to catch a train in a few minutes and I just wanted to ask you a quick question.

A: OK, if \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup>. Go \_\_\_\_\_<sup>6</sup>.

B: Do you know if the conference room is booked for 3 pm? We are starting our English course at that time.

A: I'm pretty sure it's free, but I'll call you back in 15 minutes to confirm.

B: OK, thanks Adam. I'll speak to you later. Bye.

#### Dialogue 2

A: Hello.

B: Hi Abdul, it's Dieter Hahn. Do \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup>? *you have a minute?*

A: Is \_\_\_\_\_<sup>8</sup>? I've got a very important conference call in about a minute. *it urgent/ quick*

B: Abdul, \_\_\_\_\_<sup>9</sup>. I just wanted to give you an update on the situation with our server. *I'll only be a second*

A: OK, you've \_\_\_\_\_<sup>10</sup>! *got about 30 seconds. You have only one minute!*

B: Well, we've managed to find the source of the problem, and it looks like it will be fixed by the end of the day. *it's going to be quick*

A: OK, thanks Dieter. That's good news. Keep me posted on the latest developments. I really have to go now. Goodbye.

### 4 Role play

Work with a partner. Role-play the situation below. Repeat the activity several times, changing roles for each call.

**Student A:** Think of a question that you need to ask your partner. Call him/her and try to get the answer.

**Student B:** You receive a phone call. You are busy doing something. Try to avoid speaking on the phone for too long.



# Key

## 1. Warm-up

Encourage a short discussion. Possible situations include during a meeting with a new client (the client is made to feel less important), presentations (looks very unprofessional), etc. Possible solutions: turn the phone off or on silent mode, quickly get rid of the caller, apologize to your client/business partner etc.

## 2. Handling interruptions

1. I'm afraid I can't talk right now; I'm in the middle of something.
2. OK, if it's very quick. Go ahead; Is it something quick?
3. I just wanted to ask you; I'll only be a second.; Have you got a minute?; I just wanted to know ...

I'm a bit busy at the moment. - 1

Can I call you back later? - 1

This won't take long. - 3

Can it wait? - 1

You've got about 30 seconds. - 2

I'll be really quick. - 3

Is it something urgent? - 1

OK, try to make it short. - 2

Do you have a moment? - 3

## 3. Practice

1. you got a minute
2. in the middle
3. it wait/I call you back later
4. this won't take long/ I'll be really quick/ I'll only be a second
5. it's very quick
6. ahead
7. you have a moment
8. it something urgent/ it something quick
9. this won't take long/ I'll be really quick/ I'll only be a second
10. got about 30 seconds

## 4. Role play

The students think of a different question/activity for each call. The activity continues until they are comfortable using the expressions from the lesson without looking at their notes.