

Unit 4: Teleconferences/Telephoning

This document provides common vocabulary found in various stages of a telephone call. As this is spoken English, it is usually considered to be less formal than forms of written communication, even those which are somewhat informal, such as e-mails. As always, the level of formality will depend upon the target audience of the communication. Formal phrases are found in the left column and the equivalent informal phrase in the right.

<i>Formal</i>	<i>Informal</i>
<i>Greeting</i>	<i>Greeting</i>
Good morning (time of day - person unknown) Hello (if known)	Hi (person known) Hi Christine (first name known)
<i>Reason for call</i>	<i>Reason for call</i>
I have been asked to (passive is formal) I am calling regarding the matter of ... (longer sentences tend to be more formal) I would like (modals are used for more formal communication) Could I please speak with Ms Smith (this is polite question form)	I would like to know (active is less formal) It's regarding (short is usually less formal) I want ... (no modals can be impolite/ less formal) Is Ms Smith there? (questions without question form are less formal)
<i>Transferring someone</i>	<i>Transferring someone</i>
I will see if Ms Smith is in (full words are more formal) Would you please hold the line, I will see if I can transfer you to ... (modal is more formal) Sorry for keeping you waiting, I can now transfer you (when another party waits, you should apologise) Thank you for calling, Ms Smith will get back to you soon	I'll see if Ms Smith is in (contractions (2 words into 1) make it less formal) Please hold the line and I'll try to find him (imperative is less formal) I will transfer you now (lack of modals and no apology is less formal) Bye (it is always polite to thank the other party, (especially when the call is from an external source)

Formal	Informal
<p>Person called is not available</p> <p>He has just stepped out</p> <p>I am sorry, he is not in the office this week, could someone else help you (if the party is on holiday, typically private information is not given unless caller known) He should be back in an hour, shall I take a message (avoid to repeat same vocabulary in sentence)</p>	<p>Person called is not available</p> <p>He isn't here (more information should be provided) He isn't here this week, do you want to speak with someone else? (it is less formal to make them respond)</p> <p>He'll be back in an hour, will you call again or ... (contractions (I'll) are less formal and one should always offer to take a message)</p>
<p>Taking a message</p> <p>Can I take a message? (always offer to take a message) Would you like to leave a message? (this is the equivalent of offering to take a message) Can I repeat your number to you? (this is more professional) Would you spell that please?</p> <p>I will ensure that she contacts you as soon as possible (it is more polite to confirm the next step)</p>	<p>Taking a message</p> <p>Call again in an hour (this is always rude and informal) Do you want to leave a message? (short and no modal is less formal) Okay, I got it (the caller is not so sure)</p> <p>Can you spell it please (would is more formal than can) She will phone you when she is free (this is not as convincing)</p>
<p>Message leaver</p> <p>Could you get her to phone me at 089/4532271 please?</p> <p>This is Ms Smith calling from Siemens, in Munich at at 089/4532271 (the caller should identify name, company and number) I am sorry, but I think I have given you the wrong number, it is... (never tell the other party</p>	<p>Message leaver</p> <p>Can she call me at we 089/4532271 (no please is informal, read numbers out with individual digits) Get her to call me back (it should not be assumed they have the number)</p> <p>No, you got the wrong number, it is ... (it is considered impolite to tell them they made the</p>

Formal	Informal
<p>they made you mistake) Could he possibly call me back today by 17:00, it is quite urgent (it is best to give deadlines and explain why to ensure response) Thank you for your assistance (people always appreciate a thank you)</p> <p>look forward to seeing you on ... As requested, I have attached</p>	<p>error) Get him to call me back by 17:00 (this might not happen and sounds demanding, so it is informal) Bye</p>
<p>Phoning another company</p> <p>Good afternoon, this is Mr Jones from Siemens calling, could I please have Alan Krauss ... (it is always polite to identify yourself) I would like to speak with Mr Krauss at extension 215 please (this indicates Mr Krauss knows you)</p> <p>The entire team would like to thank you for your great efforts (making messages inclusive brings more formality) The team's outstanding efforts and enthusiastic commitment are the reason for our success (use of strong adjectives makes it sincere and formal)</p>	<p>Phoning another company</p> <p>I would like to speak with Alan Krauss please (some cultures do not like it if the caller does not identify themselves) Can I have extension 215 please (the recipient does not know whether Mr Krauss knows you)</p> <p>I want to thank you for your great efforts (the use of "I" can be less formal though it is personal) Our success is because of the team (providing less detail or specifics about the effort is more informal and less sincere)</p>
<p>Making and Changing arrangements</p> <p>Is it possible to reserve a room for the 24th ... (an enquiry is more formal) I look forward to seeing you on ... (present simple is more formal than present continuous) I am happy to confirm our meeting of the 24th .. I would like to arrange a meeting between Ms Smith and Mr Krauss ... (modals are formal)</p>	<p>Making and Changing arrangements</p> <p>I need a room for the 24th (this sounds demanding and impolite) I am looking forward to seeing you on (present continuous is less formal) I confirm our meeting of ... I need to arrange a meeting between Ms Smith and Mr Krauss ... (no modal is less formal)</p>

Formal	Informal
<p>Is Mr Krauss available in the morning ... (if you request availability, it is politest not to give a precise time)</p> <p>I am very sorry, but we need to postpone the meeting of 12th June, is later in the week possible? (it is more polite with a cancellation to provide or ask a range of time for a reschedule)</p> <p>I am sorry, but Mr Krauss can't make the meeting afterall, he has to be in Berlin for a Board meeting (explaining the cause of something is more formal)</p>	<p>Is Mr Krauss available at 10 am (it may be too precise)</p> <p>I am very sorry, but we need to postpone the meeting of 12th June, is Thursday possible?</p> <p>I am sorry, but Mr Krauss can't make the meeting afterall. (no reason given could be impolite)</p>