# How to make a business phone call.

### 1. Ask their name

To better assist the caller, ask for their name. We do this for two reasons:

- First, you can write down the caller's name and refer to them by name for the rest of the conversation.
- Second, if your company has a database of clients or partners, you can quickly pull up the caller's file. This allows you to better understand their previous experience with your company.

How do you think we should ask for their name?

- A. What is your name?
- B. May I ask who is calling?
- C. Who is this?

If you answered B, you are correct! When answering the company phone, you want to be very polite.

A. "What is your name?" can be casual or polite. But at the beginning of a phone conversation, it is more appropriate to use "May I ask your name?" or "May I ask who's calling?"

B. *"May I ask who's calling?"* is the most polite and best choice for this conversation.

C. "Who is this?" is very casual and considered rude in a professional setting.

### 2. Making requests

Sometimes, you have to give seemingly negative information. For instance, perhaps you can't hear the caller or the connection is fuzzy. How do you tell the listener this?

*The connection is very bad. Can you speak a little louder please?*

The connection refers to your phone connection. This is when your phone connection is quiet, cutting in and out (service comes and goes in brief moments), or if there is a background noise.

*I'm afraid I can't hear you. Can you repeat that please?*

Of course, you are not actually afraid. However, this is a common way for English speakers to give bad news. "**I'm afraid** I can't hear you" is more polite than simply saying "I can't hear you."

*Can you speak more slowly please?*

*Can you hold please?*

"Hold" is when we step away from the phone for a moment. This could be because you need to look something up or refer to another colleague. Either way, always ask the listener if it is okay to put them on hold.
Do you see a pattern? As a rule, every time you make a request, add a "**please**" at the end.

# 3. Ending the Phone Call

If you resolved a problem, thank the caller for calling.
***Thank you for calling [company name]. Have a great day!***
If you need to contact the caller back, there are a few additional steps.
## 1. Get the caller's contact information
First you'll need to ask for their contact information using one of these phrases:

- ***What is the best way to contact you, by phone or email?***
- ***May I have your phone number?***
- ***May I have your email address?***

If they choose phone, ask when the best time to contact them is. Many people prefer to have phone calls *after* a certain time in the morning and *before* a certain time in the evening (usually before 6:00 p.m.). If they choose to give you their email address, make sure you spell the letters out to make sure you have the correct address. Vowels (A, E, I, O, U) are usually heard correctly but consonants sometimes need to be specified. An easy way to do this is to use names of cities, movies, celebrities, etc.
For instance, "Your email address is …
 **Note:** The symbol "@" is read as "**at**" and a period "." is called "**dot**" when saying an email address aloud.
## 2. Always repeat their information
Always repeat the caller's name and contact information back to them! This is a great opportunity to make sure you have the correct information.
***To confirm, your name is [caller's full name] and your phone number is [caller's phone number].***
Make sure to get a 10-digit phone number, including the area code. A typical phone number format in the United States is XXX-XXX-XXXX, where the first three digits are the area code. You'll also see (XXX) XXX-XXXX, with the area code in parenthesis before the 7-digit number.
***To confirm, your name is [caller's full name] and your email address is [caller's email address].***
## 3. State what you will do
Then, tell the caller what you will do.
For instance, *"I will ask my colleague and call you back tomorrow."*

Or, *"I will submit a report and call you when I hear back from them. It should be no later than next week."*

I always like to give a time (like "tomorrow" or "no later than next week" from the examples) to contact the caller by. This is very professional but also risky. If you promise to call them tomorrow, make sure you call them tomorrow!

Even if you don't have the answer yet, you can still call and say *"I apologize; I need a bit more time to resolve this. May I call you back on Thursday?"* **Give yourself enough time** because if you push the date back once or twice, the caller will likely become angry.

**To summarize:**

*Thank you for calling [company name]. Have a great day!*

OR

**Step 1:** What is the best way to contact you, by phone or by email?

**Step 1.5:** May I have your phone number/email address?

**Step 2:** Just to confirm, your name is [caller's full name] and your phone number (or email address) is [caller's phone number or email address].

**Step 3:** "I will [do XX] and contact you [provide a specific day or time of the week]."

Simple, right?

So, where does Comcast go wrong?

It wasn't the words, or vocabulary, it was the customer service representative's tone of voice. He was condescending (talks down to the customer) and overall, did not solve the problem.

Do not make the same mistake! Many things can go wrong on a phone call. The connection can be terrible, you could be late for dinner or the customer can be very upset. But no matter what happens, **always be polite and professional on the phone.**

Also, **smile!** Research shows that people can "hear" the smile in your voice.

These types of everyday interactions are what build relationships between businesses and their customers and partners.


N.B. Remember, when you are practicing your Listening skills, it is good to remember these guidelines because you will have already a schemata of what to expect to hear in such authentic in nature conversations.