



925 English – Lesson 35: Answering the Phone

Hi, Tim here with another 925 English lesson. Today we're going to learn some expressions for answering the phone in English.

Using the telephone is an important part of business. But the way we communicate is a little different from in-person conversations. We have some special expressions we use to answer the phone, ask for clarification, and get a callback.

At the start of a phone call, it's a good idea to make sure the other person knows who you are. You can identify yourself in a few different ways. Besides saying "my name is," we often use the expression "this is" before our name. But don't try to use this expression in person. I *only* say "this is Tim" when I'm talking on the phone.

Let's practice identifying ourselves at the start of a phone call. Listen to each example, then repeat it for yourself. Ready? Let's get started!

- Hi there, this is Jason Locke calling from Milton Enterprises.
- Oh hello, my name's Wendy Chambers, with BMA Bank.
- Good morning, Dirk here. How can I help?
- Hello, Francine speaking.

As you can hear, we identify ourselves not only when we call someone else, but also when we *answer* the phone. To do that, we just say something simple like "Tim here" or "Tim speaking."

Now, because we only have a person's voice on the phone, there's a higher chance we don't understand something. It might be a single word or a whole sentence that isn't clear. In this situation, you need to ask for clarification. You might ask "could you repeat that?" or "what was that?" Or you might simply say that you didn't "catch" something, which means you didn't hear correctly.

Let's try some examples of asking for clarification. Remember to repeat the examples after you hear them.

- Sorry, what was that?
- Could you repeat that last part again?
- Sorry, did you say fourteen or forty?
- I'm sorry, I didn't catch that.

One very important word you heard several times in those examples is “sorry.” That word helps make our requests more polite. You also heard an example of asking for clarification between two similar words. In this case, you just ask “did you say X or Y?”

Another common situation is when you need to talk about calling someone back. Maybe you called a business to talk to someone who’s not there. Or maybe someone called *your* business to talk to someone who’s not in. In any case, we need to arrange a callback.

Polite ways to arrange a callback often use the expressions “could you” or “would you.” For example, you might say “could you ask John to call me back?” or “would you like Tom to call you back later?” And sometimes it’s *you* who has to call someone back, because you’re busy or have a poor signal. In that case, you might ask “would you mind if I called you back?”

Let’s try some practice with asking for a call back using these expressions. Once again, repeat the examples after you hear them.

- Could you have Dave call me back at this number?
- Would you like me to ask Mary to return your call?
- Please have Charlie call me when he’s available.
- Would you mind if I called you back in 15 minutes?

One useful expression that we just heard is to “*have* someone do something.” That is, you can say “I will have Greg call you back tomorrow.” That just means you are asking Greg to call the person back.

Okay, so we’ve practiced some useful expressions. But how do these sound in a conversation? Let’s listen to a short dialog between Carly and Bob. Bob is calling Carly’s office to talk with Jennie Schwarz, but Jennie isn’t there. Let’s listen.

Carly: Hello, Ace Business Machines.

Bob: Hi, this is Bob Turner. May I speak with Jennie Schwarz?

Carly: Sorry but Jennie’s not in the office right now.

Bob: Okay, could you have her call me back please?

Does that make sense? Bob identifies himself and asks to speak with Jennie Schwarz. When Carly tells him Jennie’s out of the office, Bob asks her to have Jennie call him back.

Now it's your turn to practice. We'll repeat the dialog, but this time we're going to beep out the second speaker's words. You will have to say those parts yourself. Remember to identify yourself as Bob Turner and ask to speak with Jennie Schwarz. Then you'll politely ask Carly to have Jennie call you back. Ready? Here we go!

Carly: Hello, Ace Business Machines.

Bob: Hi, this is Bob Turner. May I speak with Jennie Schwarz?

Carly: Sorry but Jennie's not in the office right now.

Bob: Okay, could you have her call me back please?

All right, that's all for this lesson! We've learned some great ways to identify yourself on the phone, ask for clarification, and talk about calling someone back. We'll be back soon with some more useful English expressions.

Until then, so long and happy learning!

Language Review

A. Pronouns and Callbacks

Pronouns are words like *I, you, me, he, and him*. When you arrange a callback, you need to make sure you get these pronouns correct! You should be able to tell from the grammar of a sentence what the correct pronoun is. Complete the following sentences with one of the given pronouns.

you **I** **him** **me** **he**

1. If Karl's not in, then could you please have _____ call _____ back later?
2. Would _____ mind if _____ called you back right after lunch?
3. Could _____ please tell Wayne to call _____ back when he returns?
4. Please tell Tim that _____ can call _____ back tomorrow.

B. Review Quiz

1. Which of the following sentences would you only say when talking on the phone?
 - a) I am Susan.
 - b) My name is Susan.
 - c) This is Susan.
 - d) Are you Susan?
2. What is NOT a correct way to ask someone for clarification?
 - a) I'm sorry, you didn't catch that.
 - b) Could you repeat that last part?
 - c) Did you say fifty?
 - d) Sorry, what was that?
3. Complete the sentence below with the correct words.
_____ you _____ if I called you back tomorrow?
 - a) Could / have
 - b) Would / mind
 - c) Could / care
 - d) Would / try

4. If your name is Frank, which of the following are possible ways to answer someone's phone call? [choose 2]
- a) Hello, I am Frank.
 - b) Hi, Frank speaking.
 - c) Hello, Frank here.
 - d) Hi, Frank.
5. If you want to talk with James, but James isn't available, then you can tell the person answering the phone...
- a) "If you can get James calling me."
 - b) "Would you mind James calling me?"
 - c) "Could James be calling me?"
 - d) "Please have James call me."

Answers

A. Pronouns and Callbacks

1. Him / me
2. You / I
3. You / me
4. He / me

B. Review Quiz

1. c; 2. a; 3. b; 4. b, c; 5. d