



Foto: Thorsten de Jong / pixelio.de

# Business English

## Folge 2: Ten Golden Telephone Rules

Mit der besten Freundin stundenlang zu telefonieren, macht Spaß. Bei Geschäftstelefonaten sieht die Sache schon anders aus. Und dann auch noch auf Englisch! Der Sprachtrainer Gary Castle nimmt Ihnen im 2. Teil unserer Business-Englisch-Serie die Angst vor englischen Anrufen.

According to some research, 93% of communication is non-verbal (7% is based on words, 38% on the sound of the voice (tone, speed, etc.) and 55% on body language (mostly facial expressions).

### 1 Prepare yourself!

- a. Write small scripts with phrases that you need and have a list of keywords on your desk. You won't panic when you can quickly find the words or expressions that you need.
- b. Practise alone, or better, with a friend.
- c. If you're calling someone, have all the information you need, the invoice numbers, the names, the dates, etc.
- d. Make a list of what you want to say in English, for example:
  1. Your introduction: "Good morning, this is Mia Meier calling from JGT Toys, can I speak to Mr. Jackson please?"
  2. "Hello Mr. Jackson, this is Mia Meier calling from JGT Toys, I'm calling about ..."
  3. "I'm sorry to tell you that ..."
  4. "Is it possible to ..."
  5. Don't forget to ask him about his holiday in Spain, and his wife's name is Gina.

The idea is that you can prepare yourself to make your calls easier and more professional.

- 2 **Foresee any problems.** What will you say when the person you want to speak to is unavailable? Do you have a message prepared for an answer machine?

- 3 **Make sure your basic English is good.** You will feel more comfortable when you know the English alphabet, the times, dates and numbers without thinking about it. There are 6 letters in English which can cause problems, a, e, i, r, v and w because they sound like different German letters or vice versa. G and j are often mixed up and h and y are often forgotten. It is quite easy to identify the problem areas and just work on those.

- 4 **Keep your language clear.** Use the KISS principle – Keep It Short and Simple! Why use words that may confuse others or, which often happens, you might use incorrectly. Try to avoid using idioms and trendy terms – it's too easy to make mistakes in meaning and style.

Although there are disagreements with these figures, one thing is clear – we use our eyes to hear! This is one of the problems when using the telephone; there is no visual contact.

### Surprise, surprise

Other problems are that the telephone can ring at any time (the surprise factor; interrupting your concentration) and often the work environment is not optimal (noisy, busy, and not private). Compare a phone call to a meeting where the time is fixed and the place is quiet, organised and private. Last but not least we also have a hardware problem – the sound quality of telephones isn't normally the same as your hi-fi!

Here's a list of our Ten Golden Telephone Rules for not starting to panic when you know an English-speaker is calling on the phone:

It's a good habit to double check even with German calls, but when you're talking another lan-

guage it is essential. So, with a little preparation and a little practice you'll be able to improve your communication skills and reduce one of the stress factors in modern office life – the English phone call.



**Gary Castle,**  
Geschäftsführer und  
Englisch-Trainer,  
City English.

[www.city-english.de](http://www.city-english.de)



If you need extra help, download our Little Telephone Guide: [www.city-english.de/download.htm](http://www.city-english.de/download.htm)

- 5 **Speak slowly.** This gives you more time to think about what you want to say and it also makes your caller speak slower too! Also, if you speak in a lower tone it makes you more relaxed and more sovereign.

- 6 **If you don't understand something – say so!** Ask your caller to repeat themselves. It's OK to say even after the third time that you still don't understand. Some native speakers speak too quickly and may use language that they think is normal but most foreigners have never heard of, and non-native speakers may have strong accents.

- 7 **If you really don't understand the caller.** Here's a tip: you can say that the line is really bad and ask them to send an email. For most people it is easier to read and write English than it is to speak it.

- 8 **Don't worry if you make mistakes.** Nobody expects you to be perfect so just relax! The biggest mistake is not saying anything at all, and that can be easily avoided.

- 9 **Do the phone mediation.** When the phone rings once – stop what you're doing. On the second ring, calm yourself by taking a deep breath, this also makes your voice sound stronger and deeper. Third ring, smile before you pick the phone up.

- 10 **Recheck the information.** To do this effectively it's important to make notes during the call. One technique to recheck information is to 'echo' words. When someone says "the plane arrives in Hamburg at 11:35" you can say "I see, 11.35 Hamburg" while writing this information down. They continue with "we'll be staying at the Atlantic for two nights ..." you add "Atlantic, two nights".