

Quick Guide: How To Mind your (Telephone) Manners

We have all used the telephone from a very early age and probably without any real guidance or professional role models to help us. Inappropriate (or even bad!) habits will have bedded in through the years, so here are the **top ten tips** to help you reassess (and change) your telephone manners:

- 1. Do you like using the telephone?** Learn to smile at it when it rings. Yes, you'll look silly, but you will feel positive and sound better.
- 2. Answer your telephone within three rings,** or ensure your voicemail kicks in within this timescale. Callers get frustrated if they have to wait much longer than this, and will frequently vent their frustration on you, leading to a difficult call.
- 3. Don't be shy: tell your caller who you are!** Unless you have a corporate protocol to use, answer with a 'good morning' or 'good afternoon' followed by your full name. This helps build a positive relationship and marks you out as a confident professional with a name.
- 4. Speak clearly** so the caller can tune in to your voice. If you have a strong accent, slow down. If your caller doesn't understand you, they will stop listening, perhaps become confused, and again this may lead to a difficult call.
- 5. Choose your questions carefully.** If you want them to talk to you, giving you lots of information, then ask an open question. These usually begin with 'what', 'how', 'when', and 'why'. Reserve closed questions for the rambling chatterboxes.
- 6. If you have to take a message,** double check names and phone numbers. With difficult names, if getting them to spell it fails, repeat what you have heard to the caller then write it down phonetically.
- 7. Offer useful information.** Things like when they might expect a return call, or who (not 'someone') will be calling them.
- 8. But beware of confidentiality.** If you are unsure what you are able to say, err on the side of caution and say you will double check and get back to them.
- 9. Keep your promises if you agree any action.** And if you can't, then forewarn them of your 'plan B': *before* the deadline expires. Otherwise you may well have another – even more difficult – call to deal with when they ring to chase you.
- 10. Remember to end your call** as you would any professional conversation – with a pleasant "Thank you" or "Goodbye" (not 'bub-bye!').

Related Course: [Telephone Skills and Behaviour](#)

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