

Quick Guide: Leave a message after the tone

How many times have you grabbed the phone, phoned somebody, got an unexpected voicemail message and are not prepared with the message you want to leave? It's irritating and your choices are to either babble on; leave a very short, perhaps abrupt sounding message and then realise you've missed out an important point; or to hang up, which of course is a complete waste of time. So be prepared next time you ring somebody and are faced with a voicemail message. Here are the **top ten tips** to help you handle this situation more professionally.

- 1. Prepare, prepare, prepare.** Plan your message before you pick up the phone. Think about how much detail you want to leave.
- 2. State the following** as a minimum: your name, company, brief reason for calling and telephone number to call back on.
- 3. Avoid telephone ping pong.** If you are about to go out or into meetings, leave an idea of when it is best to call you back.
- 4. KISS your message.** Keep it short and sweet, or short and simple! Get to the point quickly and aim to be brief and clear. Avoid repeating everything. If the receiver needs to hear it again they can easily listen to it once more.
- 5. Avoid long complicated or extremely detailed messages.** Some things are far too complex to leave long messages about. It would be better to introduce the topic and say you would like to arrange to speak to them.
- 6. Hang up** if you do not want to let the person know you are ringing them. This may sound strange but may happen, for example, when you are chasing them for something and know that if you leave a message to return your call they will avoid you next time you ring. If this is the case, don't leave a message but ring again in half an hour.
- 7. Are you still there?** Try not to leave long pauses while you think about what you are saying. You may get cut off. Think about and plan what you want to say.
- 8. Speak naturally** sounding relaxed, positive and upbeat. Speak clearly and at a good pace, particularly if leaving your telephone number. They may be trying to write it down.
- 9. Review your message.** Many voicemail systems allow you to review what you've said. Make good use of this feature if you are worried your message may not be correct.
- 10. Avoid a long goodbye.** Don't add extra information as an afterthought once you have said 'goodbye' as they may have hung up and miss this important information.

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