

Answering Phones At Work

How should I answer the phone at work?

Answer promptly — after no more than three rings. Use an introductory phrase (group of words) to identify your company, then yourself such as, “Good morning, ABC Company. This is Jason Jones.” The greeting should have no more than 12 words although some companies will direct you to use lengthy phrases when answering the telephone. For example, “ABC Company. We focus on quality and service. This is Jason Jones. May I help you?”

Answer with a clear, pleasant, friendly voice. Do not rush through the phrase when you answer the phone. Rushed voices sound rude, uninterested, unprofessional. Clear, pleasant voices sound friendly, helpful, relaxed, and professional. Say each word clearly. Do not use any slang words.

Stop your conversations with coworkers when answering the phone. Give the caller your complete attention. If you must complete the conversation with your coworker, answer the phone, introduce your company and yourself, then say to the caller, “One moment please. I’ll be right with you,” and place the caller on hold for no more than one minute. After one minute, check back with the caller and say, “I apologize for the delay. Do you wish to continue holding, or would you prefer that I call you back in a few minutes?” If the caller prefers to be called back, write down the caller’s name and phone number. Do not forget to return the call promptly.



What should I do if I have to answer the phone for a supervisor?

In the work world, it is common for employees to answer supervisors’ phones, take messages, and screen calls (find out who is calling before putting the call through to the person). When answering the phone, use the phrase that the supervisor requests. For example, “Good morning. ABC Company, Shipping Department. Stacy Wright speaking.” Find out from your supervisor if you are to screen his or her calls. If the answer is yes, you must find out who is calling so that you can tell the supervisor before transferring the call to him or her.



To screen a call say, “Who is calling please?,” or “May I tell Mr. Smith who is calling?,” or “May I have your name please?” After you get the caller’s name, say “I’ll see if Mr. Smith is in his office.” IMPORTANT: Put the caller on hold, then tell Mr. Smith who is calling. If he wants to take the call, return to the caller and say, “I’ll transfer you to Mr. Smith now. Thank you for waiting.” If he cannot (or does not want to) take the call, return to the caller and say, “Mr. Smith is not in his office. May I take a message?” or “Mr. Smith is in a meeting. May I take a message?” or “Mr. Smith’s line is busy. May I take a message?”

Does that mean that I have to lie at times?

While no one can require you to lie, workers that answer phones need to **answer in ways that protect the company, supervisor, and coworkers**. Mr. Smith may be next door at a birthday party for a coworker and wants to spend a few minutes there before returning phone calls. You would not be lying by telling a caller that he is not in his office. The caller does not need to know that an office birthday party is more important

than the phone call. Or, Mr. Smith may be preparing a report for his supervisor. By telling a caller Mr. Smith is not available and taking a message, you are protecting Mr. Smith's time to help him complete the report. Or, if a coworker gets a phone call when taking extra time off for lunch, you should not tell the caller, "He should have been back from lunch 45 minutes ago," or "He never tells me anything so I don't know where he is." Show tact (saying difficult things in a nice way) by saying, "He's out of the office at the present time. May I take a message?"

What important information should I remember when taking messages?

Remember to not make promises since you cannot make other workers return phone calls. After taking the message, say "I'll give Mr. Smith the message," or "I'll put this message on Mr. Smith's desk," or "I'll give this message to Mr. Smith as soon as he returns." When taking messages —

- Get caller's name! You may say "Will you spell your last name please?"
- Get caller's phone number with area code! Read back the area code and phone number to check that you got it correct.
- Write down the date and time the caller called.
- Write down any other information you were able to get from the phone call such as "Mr. Jackson is returning your call," or "Sarah wants to order a different color dress," or "Tim says that it is important that you reach him as soon as possible. He's at the city hospital," or "Call Robert back by 3 p.m. today," or "James will return tomorrow morning."
- Write or print the message clearly — and sign your name (or initials) so the person who receives the message may ask you any questions.



QUICK CHECK:

1. Within how many rings should you answer a telephone at work?
2. a) What 2 things should the introductory phrase identify? b) How many words should the phrase have? c) When might it have more words?
3. a) How do rushed voices sound? b) How do clear, pleasant voices sound?
4. a) What should you do if a phone rings while you are talking with a coworker? b) How long may you place the caller on hold? c) What should you do once the caller has been on hold for this long?
5. What is meant by "screening" calls?
6. a) To screen a call, what should you say? b) After getting the information, what should you do? c) If the call is accepted, what should you do and say? d) If the person cannot or does not want to take the call, what should you do and say?
7. List 3 things that workers who answer phones at work need to protect.
8. a) What should you not say when answering the phone for a coworker who is late returning from lunch break? b) Do you think this is best for the company? c) Give a reason for your answer.
9. What is tact?
10. a) When taking messages, what should you remember? b) What should you say?
11. List 4 pieces of important information that are needed on phone messages.
12. a) What should you say to get the name down correctly? b) What should you do after writing down the caller's number?
13. Why should you sign every message?
14. a) Do you think you would enjoy answering the phone at work? b) Why or why not?