



APEX ENGLISH

Your voice. Global.

B1 · BUSINESS ENGLISH

UNIT 3 · B1·3B

On the phone and on video

Theme · Emails & communication



Unit 3 · B1·3B

On the phone and on video

Theme: Emails & communication

B1 · Business English



Learning objectives

- Open, hold and close a business phone or video call with confidence.
- Handle a bad connection, an interruption or a request to repeat.
- Use polite indirect questions and confirmation language to sound professional.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Class Book

Warm-up · Your call habits

Rank these 5 call situations from the one you handle *BEST* (1) to the one you handle *WORST* (5) in English. Be ready to explain #1 and #5.

answering an unexpected call from a client

leading a video meeting with 6+ people

leaving a voicemail

asking someone to repeat because you didn't understand

closing a call politely when the other person keeps talking

Lead-in · Match the phrase to its function

Match each call phrase to what it's really doing.

1. "Sorry, could you repeat that?"

2. "You're breaking up a little."

3. "Just to confirm..."

4. "Could I stop you for one second?"

5. "I need to jump — I have another call."

followUp: Which of these do you use *MOST* at work? Which one do you *AVOID*?

Reading · Why English phone calls feel harder

Many B1 learners can write perfect emails but freeze on a phone call. It's not their level of English — it's the missing signals. On a call there are no facial expressions, no body language, and sometimes no video. Your only tool is your voice and the words you choose.

Three small habits fix most of the problem. First, name yourself and the reason in the first ten seconds: 'Hi, this is João from Beira Roasters — quick question about tomorrow's delivery.' Second, use short 'active listening' words to prove you're there: 'sure', 'OK', 'got it', 'right'. Silence on a call sounds like you disappeared.

Third, always *CLOSE* with a summary. Even one line — 'so, you'll send the numbers by Friday and I'll call you Monday at 10, right?' — saves a whole email chain later. Professionals don't sound impressive because their grammar is perfect. They sound impressive because they name themselves, they listen out loud, and they close clearly.

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1. According to the text, why are phone calls harder than emails?
 - (A) The English is more advanced
 - (B) There are no facial expressions or body language
 - (C) Grammar rules are different
2. What should you do in the first 10 seconds?
 - (A) Ask about the weather
 - (B) Name yourself and the reason for the call
 - (C) Apologise for calling
3. What is the purpose of the final summary?
 - (A) To sound polite
 - (B) To avoid a long email chain later
 - (C) To end the call quickly

Vocabulary in context

Find these words in the text and match them to the meaning.

freeze — become suddenly unable to speak

signals — small hints that people use to communicate

active listening — showing you're paying attention while listening

close (a call) — end it clearly, with a summary

True / False / Not Given

Based only on the text, choose the correct option.

1. The text says the main problem is grammar level.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
2. Silence on a call sounds like you disappeared.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given
3. You should always send a follow-up email after every call.
 - (A) True
 - (B) False
 - (C) Not Given

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4. 'Sure', 'OK' and 'got it' are examples of active listening.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

5. Video calls are always easier than phone calls.

- (A) True
- (B) False
- (C) Not Given

React to the text

Discuss briefly. There is no single correct answer.

1. Which of the 3 habits (name + reason / active listening / close with summary) is HARDEST for you? Why?

2. Do you agree that phone calls in English are harder than emails? What is your personal experience?

Scan for meaning

Find the phrase in the text that matches each definition.

1. become suddenly unable to speak or think

2. short words that prove you're paying attention

3. end a call clearly with a summary

4. small hints people use to communicate

Vocabulary · Phone and video call phrases

hold on / hang on — wait a moment (informal)

put someone on hold — stop the conversation while they wait

transfer a call — pass the call to another person

get cut off — the call ended by accident

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- mute / unmute** — turn your microphone off / on
- drop off (a call)** — leave the call before it ends
- you're breaking up** — your voice is choppy — bad connection
- you're on mute** — we can't hear you, please unmute
- can you hear me?** — check if your sound is working
- let me share my screen** — start screen-sharing
- shall I turn my camera on?** — offer video
- let me revert to you** — I need to check and reply later

practice

Complete each sentence with *ONE* phrase from the lists.

1. Sorry, I ____ you off — please repeat the last sentence.

2. Sorry, you're ____ — I only catch every third word.

3. Marta, you're ____ — please unmute.

4. I'll ____ my screen so we can look at the numbers together.

5. I don't have the answer right now — let me ____ by tomorrow.

6. Sorry, I got ____ — I'm calling you back now.

Collocations · call verbs

Match each verb with the noun it usually goes with.

- make** — a call
- return** — a missed call
- join** — a meeting / a call
- leave** — a voicemail
- schedule** — a follow-up call
- reconnect** — after a bad connection

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**Odd one out**

Choose the word that does *NOT* belong.

1. mute · unmute · hang up · attach
 - (A) mute
 - (B) unmute
 - (C) hang up
 - (D) attach
2. hold on · hang on · one moment · goodbye
 - (A) hold on
 - (B) hang on
 - (C) one moment
 - (D) goodbye
3. voicemail · missed call · sign-off · ring back
 - (A) voicemail
 - (B) missed call
 - (C) sign-off
 - (D) ring back

Word building · verb ↔ noun

Complete the pair.

1. to call → a ____

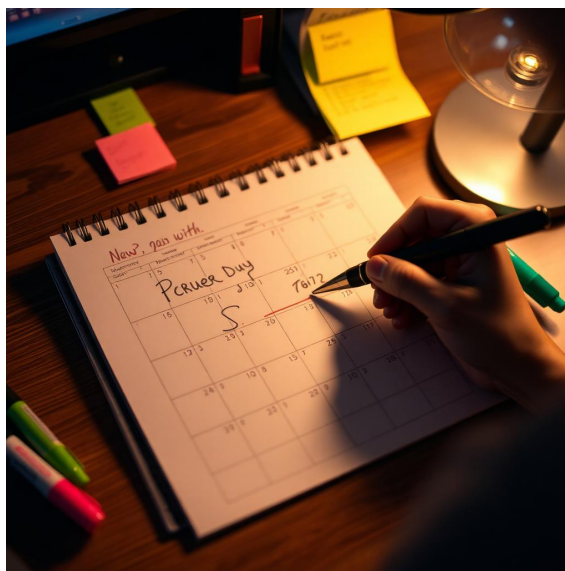
2. to connect → a ____

3. to interrupt → an ____

4. to invite → an ____

5. to introduce → an ____

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Grammar · Polite indirect questions

1. Why indirect? — Direct questions can sound blunt on a call. • Direct: What is your name? • Indirect: Could you tell me your name, please? Indirect = softer, more professional.

2. Structure — Start with: Could you tell me... / Do you know... / May I ask... Then use STATEMENT word order (no auxiliary do/does/did). ✗ Could you tell me what is your name? ✓ Could you tell me what your name is?

3. Yes/no questions → use 'if' or 'whether' — • Direct: Are you available Friday? • Indirect: Could you tell me if you are available Friday? • Do you know whether the meeting is confirmed?

4. Confirming — 'just to confirm...' — • Just to confirm, you'll send the numbers by Friday, right? • Sorry, did you say Tuesday or Thursday? These are gold for phone/video.

Exercise A — Make it indirect

Rewrite each direct question as an indirect one.

1. What is your email address?

2. When does the meeting start?

3. Where is the report?

4. Is the boss in the office today?

5. How much does it cost?

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6. Has the client replied yet?

Exercise B — Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has ONE mistake with indirect question form.

1. Could you tell me what is the deadline?

2. Do you know when does the meeting start?

3. Could you tell me where I can to find the report?

4. Do you know is the boss available?

Exercise C — Confirm on a call

Write ONE 'just to confirm' sentence for each situation.

1. You agreed to send the invoice by Friday 5 pm. →

2. The client will meet you at their office on Tuesday at 10. →

3. You will call back Monday morning with the answer. →

4. The price you agreed is €4,500 excluding VAT. →

Exercise D — Ask for a repeat / a clarification

Write ONE polite phrase for each situation.

1. You didn't catch the price. →

2. You didn't understand a technical word. →

3. You want to check you heard 'Tuesday' correctly. →

4. The line is bad — you want them to say it again. →

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**Exercise E — Rewrite for the phone**

Rewrite each direct email sentence as a polite phone sentence.

1. Send me the file.

2. I need the answer today.

3. Repeat, please.

4. Wait a second.

Exercise F — Complete the phone dialogue

Complete each answer.

1. — Hi, I'd like to speak with Marta, please. — Sure. May I ____ ____ ____ (ask / who / calling)?

2. — Could you tell me ____ ____ ____ ____ (when / meeting / start)? — The meeting starts at 10 sharp.

3. — Just ____ ____ ____ ____ (confirm), you'll send the numbers by Friday, right? — Correct — by Friday 5 pm.

Listening · A video call gets interrupted

Two colleagues on a video call. There is a bad connection, a mute mistake, and a summary at the end.

pre

What is your usual first sentence when you join a video call late?

What do you do when you can't hear the other person?

gist

1. What problem happens FIRST in the call?

2. What problem happens SECOND?

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3. How do they close the call?

detail

1. What deadline do they finally agree on?

2. Which topic did they NOT get to?

3. How does Voice B react to the interruption?

Third listen — read between the lines

Answer from what is IMPLIED.

1. How well do these two people know each other?

2. Would you say Voice B is a good communicator on video? Why?

Useful language from the audio

Match each phrase to what it does.

"Marta, you're on mute." — helpful correction, no drama

"Sorry, you're breaking up." — signals bad connection politely

"Got it." / "Right." — active listening, low-cost

"Just to confirm..." — closing summary opener

"I'll send you a written summary too." — backup — protects both sides

Voice A: Hi Marta — can you hear me?

Voice B: ...

Voice A: Marta, you're on mute.

Voice B: Sorry! Can you hear me now?

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Voice A: Loud and clear. OK — Q3 report. Where are we?

Voice B: Draft is 70% done. I need the numbers from the North region.

Voice A: Right, I'll send... sorry — [pause] can you still hear me?

Voice B: Sorry, you're breaking up. Say that again?

Voice A: Better? I said — I'll send you the CRM export tonight. Deadline for the draft?

Voice B: Thursday. Then we do a quick call Friday at 10 to review?

Voice A: Perfect. Just to confirm — you'll send the report by Thursday and I'll call you Friday at 10. What about the Q4 marketing plan?

Voice B: Let's save that for Friday. I'll send you a written summary of this call too, just in case.

Voice A: Appreciate it. Talk Friday.

Fourth listen — fill the gaps

Complete the exact phrases from the call.

1. Marta, you're ____ ____.

2. Sorry, you're ____ ____.

3. Just to ____, you'll send the report by Thursday...

4. I'll send you a written ____ of this call too.

Speaking · The 3-minute mock call

In pairs, run a 3-minute mock call. Cover: (a) intro line 'this is X, calling about Y', (b) 1 indirect question, (c) 1 'sorry, could you repeat', (d) close with a 'just to confirm' summary.

Scene: You call a supplier to confirm tomorrow's delivery

A: You: expecting a delivery of 200 boxes at 9 am.

B: You: the supplier — the truck will arrive between 8:30 and 10.

Scene: You call a client to move a meeting

A: You: need to move a meeting from Wed 3 pm to Thu 11 am.

B: You: the client — you can do Thu, but only after 2 pm.

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Scene: You return a missed call from a stranger

A: You: you missed 2 calls from an unknown number.

B: You: a recruiter with a job you might like — 90 seconds to pitch.

Discussion · your worst call

Choose 2 questions and speak for 30–45 seconds each.

What was the WORST work call you ever had in English? What made it bad?

Do you prefer voice-only or video? Why? Does it depend on who you're calling?

Is it OK to keep your camera OFF? When yes, when no?

What do you do when you don't understand someone's accent on a call?

Role-play · Bad-connection call

Read your role, prep 30s, run the 3-minute call. Simulate ONE bad-connection moment.

Scene: Client call from a coworking space (noisy background)

A: You: client. You are in a coffee shop and the wifi is poor. You want to reschedule a meeting AND confirm two prices.

B: You: the account manager. Handle the bad line calmly, ask ONE indirect question, close with a 'just to confirm' summary.

Scene: Voicemail follow-up

A: You: you left a voicemail yesterday. Now you're calling back. Say why in the first 10 seconds.

B: You: the person who got the voicemail — you were busy but you remember. Answer politely and give ONE concrete next step.

Mini-presentation · 60-second 'how I handle calls'

Deliver a 60-second talk to a partner. Follow the 4-beat structure.

Beat 1 (10s) — Your first sentence when you PICK UP a business call in English.

Beat 2 (15s) — Your favourite polite indirect question and when you use it.

Beat 3 (20s) — What you do when you didn't understand something.

Beat 4 (15s) — How you close a call cleanly.

sample: When I pick up a business call, my first sentence is always the same: 'Hi, this is Ana speaking — how can I help?' It gives me one second to switch to English mode. My favourite polite indirect question is 'Could you tell me what the best time to call back is?' — much softer than 'When can I call you again?' When I don't understand something, I don't fake it — I say 'Sorry, could you say that in a different way?' To close, I always use 'just to confirm' and repeat the next step in one sentence. That

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saves me from a follow-up email 90% of the time.

Writing · Follow-up email after a call

Write the 5-line follow-up email you would send after the video call in today's listening. Subject → greeting → 1-line context → 2-line summary of what was decided → clear next step with deadline → close. Max 80 words.

bonus: Bonus task — 'Would you rather' polls. Write TWO indirect questions your team could vote on this week (e.g., 'Could you tell me whether you prefer Monday or Thursday for the weekly?'). Max 15 words each.

Wrap-up · What did we cover?

3 habits: name yourself + reason / active listening ('got it', 'right') / close with a summary.

Indirect questions = softer + more professional. Statement word order after the opener.

Fix problems with fixed phrases: 'you're on mute', 'you're breaking up', 'could you repeat'.

'Just to confirm...' saves a whole email chain later.

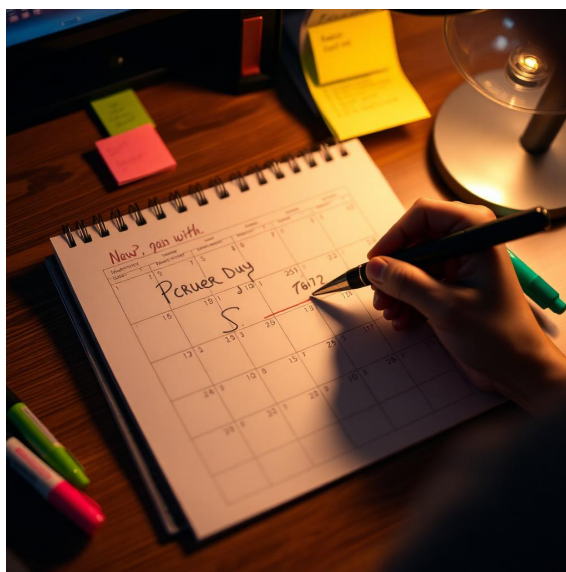
Quiz

1. The most polite version is:
 - (A) What is your name?
 - (B) Could you tell me what your name is?
 - (C) Could you tell me what is your name?
2. Colleague can't be heard. You say:
 - (A) Your microphone is broken.
 - (B) You're on mute.
 - (C) You should speak louder.
3. To close a call cleanly, you say:
 - (A) OK bye.
 - (B) Just to confirm, you'll send the report by Thursday, right?
 - (C) Talk soon.
4. The correct indirect form is:
 - (A) Do you know when starts the meeting?
 - (B) Do you know when the meeting starts?
 - (C) Do you know when does the meeting start?
5. 'You're breaking up' means...
 - (A) You're speaking too fast.
 - (B) The connection is bad / your voice is choppy.
 - (C) The call is over.

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Workbook — home practice



1. Vocabulary gap-fill

Complete each sentence with **ONE** phrase from the box.

Word bank: on mute · breaking up · hang on · hold on · get back to · cut off

1. Marta, you're ____ — please unmute.

2. Sorry, you're ____ — I only catch every other word.

3. ____ one second, I need to check the file.

4. ____, someone at the door.

5. I don't have the number now — I'll ____ you tomorrow.

6. Sorry, we got ____ — I'm calling you back now.

2. Make it indirect

Rewrite each direct question as an indirect one, starting with 'Could you tell me...' or 'Do you know...'.

1. What is your email address?

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2. When does the meeting start?

3. Where is the report?

4. Is the boss in the office today?

5. How much does it cost?

6. Has the client replied yet?

3. 'Just to confirm...'

Write *ONE* 'just to confirm' sentence for each situation.

1. You agreed to send the invoice by Friday 5 pm.

2. The client will meet you at their office on Tuesday at 10.

3. You will call back Monday morning with the answer.

4. The price is €4,500 excluding VAT.

4. Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has *ONE* mistake with indirect question form or call vocabulary.

1. Could you tell me what is the deadline?

2. Do you know when does the meeting start?

3. You are in mute.

4. The line is broken up.

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5. Listening — three call openings

Three people answer a business call. Notice who sounds most professional in the first 10 seconds.

1. Who sounds MOST professional?

2. Who sounds UNPROFESSIONAL?

3. Who names the company but not themselves?

Voice A: Yeah, hello?

Voice B: Beira Roasters, this is Ana speaking — how can I help?

Voice C: Beira Roasters, good morning.

6. Writing — a call summary email

Write the 5-line follow-up email you would send after a phone/video call. Subject → greeting → 1-line context → 2-line summary of what was decided → clear next step with deadline → close. Max 80 words.

Ask the teacher — notes to bring to class



Answer key — Class Book

Lead-in · Match the phrase to its function

1. polite ask for a repeat
2. signals a bad connection
3. closing move — verify next steps
4. polite interruption
5. closing signal with a real reason

Reading · Why English phone calls feel harder

1. (B) There are no facial expressions or body language
2. (B) Name yourself and the reason for the call
3. (B) To avoid a long email chain later
1. (B) False
2. (A) True
3. (C) Not Given
4. (A) True
5. (C) Not Given
1. Model: closing with a summary — I'm always in a rush and I say 'OK bye' and hang up. Then I re-open the topic by email 20 minutes later. I'm going to change that.
2. Model: for me, video is easier than voice-only. On the phone I can't see the other person's face, and I second-guess whether they understood me.
1. freeze
2. active listening
3. close (a call)
4. signals

Vocabulary · Phone and video call phrases

1. on hold
2. breaking up
3. on mute
4. let me share
5. get back to you
6. cut off
1. (D) attach
2. (D) goodbye
3. (C) sign-off
1. call
2. connection
3. interruption
4. invitation / invite
5. introduction

Grammar · Polite indirect questions

1. Could you tell me what your email address is?
2. Do you know when the meeting starts?
3. Could you tell me where the report is?
4. Do you know if the boss is in the office today?
5. Could you tell me how much it costs?
6. Do you know if the client has replied yet?
1. Could you tell me what the deadline is?
2. Do you know when the meeting starts?
3. Could you tell me where I can find the report?
4. Do you know if the boss is available?
1. Just to confirm, I'll send you the invoice by Friday at 5 pm, right?
2. Just to confirm, we're meeting at your office on Tuesday at 10, correct?

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3. Just to confirm, I'll call you back Monday morning with the answer.
4. Just to confirm, the price we agreed is €4,500 excluding VAT — is that right?
1. Sorry, could you repeat the price? / Sorry, was that four thousand or fourteen thousand?
2. Sorry, could you explain what you mean by [word]?
3. Sorry, did you say Tuesday or Thursday?
4. Sorry, you're breaking up — could you say that again, please?
1. Could you send me the file, please?
2. Would it be possible to get an answer today?
3. Sorry, could you repeat that, please?
4. Could you hold on for one second, please?
1. May I ask who is calling? (or: May I ask who's calling?)
2. Could you tell me when the meeting starts?
3. Just to confirm, you'll send the numbers by Friday, right?

Listening · A video call gets interrupted

1. Voice B is on mute — Voice A can't hear her.
2. Voice A's connection is bad ('you're breaking up').
3. Voice A summarises: 'you'll send the report by Thursday and I'll call you Friday at 10.'
1. Thursday for the report, Friday at 10 for the follow-up call.
2. The Q4 marketing plan — they'll discuss it Friday.
3. Calmly — apologises for the mute, offers to send a written summary as a backup.
1. Fairly well — first names, casual tone, no need for long introductions.
2. Yes — recovers quickly from the mute, uses active listening ('got it', 'right'), and offers a backup written summary.
1. on mute
2. breaking up
3. confirm
4. summary

Quiz

1. (B) Could you tell me what your name is?
2. (B) You're on mute.
3. (B) Just to confirm, you'll send the report by Thursday, right?
4. (B) Do you know when the meeting starts?
5. (B) The connection is bad / your voice is choppy.

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Answer key — Workbook

1. Vocabulary gap-fill

1. on mute
2. breaking up
3. Hold on
4. Hang on
5. get back to
6. cut off

2. Make it indirect

1. Could you tell me what your email address is?
2. Do you know when the meeting starts?
3. Could you tell me where the report is?
4. Do you know if the boss is in the office today?
5. Could you tell me how much it costs?
6. Do you know if the client has replied yet?

3. 'Just to confirm...'

1. Just to confirm, I'll send you the invoice by Friday at 5 pm, right?
2. Just to confirm, we're meeting at your office on Tuesday at 10, correct?
3. Just to confirm, I'll call you Monday morning with the answer.
4. Just to confirm, the price we agreed is €4,500 excluding VAT, correct?

4. Find and fix the mistake

1. Could you tell me what the deadline is?
2. Do you know when the meeting starts?
3. You're on mute.
4. You're breaking up. / The line is breaking up.

5. Listening — three call openings

1. Voice 2 — 'Beira Roasters, this is Ana speaking, how can I help?'
2. Voice 1 — 'yeah, hello?' — no name, no company.
3. Voice 3 — 'Beira Roasters, good morning' — polite but not personal.

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