

13B You called?

Activity type: Speaking – Role play – Groups

Aim: To practise the language of telephoning

Language: Language for managing telephone calls / Making arrangements – Use any time after 13.1.

Preparation: Make enough copies of the worksheet so that you can distribute an equal number of caller cards and answerer cards to the learners. (The 'Extra role' is in case you have an uneven number of learners or wish to take on this role yourself.)

Time: 15–20 minutes

- 1 Elicit examples of language which learners associate with telephone calls, including: *I'm sorry, I think you've got the wrong number.; I'm afraid he/she isn't here at the moment.; Can I take a message?; Hello, <name of company>, how can I help?* (for a business call).
- 2 Tell learners that some of them will be making telephone calls, others will be answering. Those answering are either at home (in a house they share with friends) or at work. Explain that any answerer should be able to respond to any call in some way, even if it is only to say that the caller has the wrong number. If the answerer is not the actual person the caller wants to speak to but lives/works in the same place, the answerer can offer to take a message. Encourage learners to add any small talk they feel is appropriate.
- 3 Hand out the role cards and let learners study them for a minute or so to decide if they are callers or answerers and to understand their roles. (If necessary, explain that Pat, Jamie and Sam share a house – they are housemates.) Answerers sit down (preferably in a circle) and callers stand. Callers move from answerer to answerer until they have successfully completed their call. (Note: A successful completion of a call is when the caller has found someone who will at least take / pass on a message.)
- 4 Learners who have successfully completed their calls exchange caller cards and start again.

Larger classes

- Divide the learners into two groups with callers and answerers already paired so that they play fixed roles (i.e. the element of callers moving round to find the right answerer is eliminated). When they have finished their phone call, they exchange cards with another pair and have a different phone conversation.
- Make more copies of caller cards than answerer cards so that more callers have to search for the right answerer.

Extension

If callers have not found the actual person they want to talk to but someone is going to take / pass on a message, have learners role play a situation whereby the person who has received the message calls back.

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Caller cards

1 Call your friend Pat to arrange to go to the cinema – Monday, Thursday or Friday are possible – Monday or Thursday would be best, though, as you usually go out on Fridays. If Pat isn't there, leave a message.

2 You need a lift to the airport on Sunday morning – call your friends Pat, Jamie and Sam and to try to find someone who can help. Offer to pay for the petrol. If no one is there, leave a message.

3 You planned to meet your best friend, Sam, to go shopping and have lunch on Saturday, but now you are going to be busy. Call to rearrange the plan. If Sam isn't there, leave a message or try to get a mobile number.

4 There is a problem with your internet connection. You've tried restarting everything, but there is still no connection. Call the company to find out what's wrong.

5 You need a new printer for your computer. Call the company you bought your computer from. You've seen the printer you want on the website and tried to buy it, but there seems to be a problem with the website. Your credit card number is 1234-567-8910-000.

6 You work for Webcraft Ltd., a company that builds websites for other companies. You specialise in sites which companies can use to sell their products online. Call Bamco Computing Services to sell your service.

Extra role:

Answerer cards

1 You are Pat. You are at home alone (your housemates Jamie and Sam are out). You have an exam on Friday morning so you need to do a lot of work, but it would be nice to go out. Your car is in the garage. If anyone calls to speak to your housemates, take a message.

2 You are Jamie. You are at home alone – your housemates Pat and Sam are out, but Sam's mobile number is 00051-926-543. You're free on Sunday, but you're a bit short of money at the moment.

3 You are Sam. You are at home alone – your housemates Pat and Jamie are out. You have arranged to go shopping with your best friend on Saturday morning. You're free most of next week, except Wednesday. If anyone calls to speak to your housemates, take a message.

4 You work for Bamco Computing Services in the Customer Service Department. If someone needs the Sales Department, you can give them the number (03483-234-21), or you can pass on a message. You know that there is currently a problem with the internet service Bamco provides. Engineers are working on the problem and it should be fixed by this evening.

5 You work for Bamco Computing Services in the Sales Department. If someone needs Customer Service, you can give them the number (03483-634-77), or you can pass on a message. You can take orders for products over the phone with a credit card. Deliveries usually take seven days.

6 You are the manager of Bamco Computing Services. You have been having some problems with your website – customers find they can't buy online. You'd be interested in meeting someone to improve the site.

ER You are an answering machine in a business setting. Apologise that no one is available and ask callers to leave a message after the beep.