

Block

2**TELE COMMUNICATION**

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BLOCK 2 INTRODUCTION

Technology is an important aid in business and in fact in many instances today it is the main mode by which business is transacted.

Telephone and mobile phones have replaced paper, while voicemail, video conferencing and conference calls are commonly used in many modern offices. However, to use these means of communication effectively, we need to learn about the rules and etiquette of each technology as well as the physical organization required when more than one person is involved.

In this block we have the following units:

Unit 1 - Features of Telephone Communication

Unit 2 - Making Arrangement and Appointments

Unit 3 - Leaving and Taking Messages

Unit 4 – Tele & Video Conferencing

All these contexts have been cleverly woven in the different activities/tasks that you are expected to complete. It is through the skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking that these topics are covered. There is a CD, which will help you listen to correct English in terms of pronunciation, stress and intonation.

We hope you enjoy reading the units and find them useful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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UNIT 1 FEATURES OF TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Reading Comprehension: Basic Telephone Skills
- 1.3 Effective listening Skills
- 1.4 Effective Speaking Skills
- 1.5 Telephone Etiquette
- 1.6 Grammar Focus
- 1.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.8 Answers

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- State the role of a telephone in communication;
- Use basic telephone skills for communication;
- Employ effective listening skills to understand well;
- Mention the ‘do’s and ‘don’ts’ while speaking over the telephone;
- List the things that good telephone etiquette requires;
- Describe the benefits of good telephone skills at work; and
- Explain how good telephone skills can benefit a company.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The telephone has become an indispensable part of our lives. We remain in touch with our friends and near ones using the telephone. We have access to so many services, be it plumbing, servicing and repair of machines, electrical work, pest control, food to order, home delivery of groceries or our cable and Internet services, through this small machine called the telephone.

We also use the telephone for cold calling, contacting referrals, answering advertisements, making enquiries, following up on interviews, and sometimes even conducting or facing the interview itself. And the whole world of business runs on the telephone. In short, we cannot exist without the telephone in today’s world.

This telephone sits quietly on our desk but is a source of flow of immense information and allows communication with the outside world. Knowing how to use it is important because this little machine ‘can dominate you unless you tame it’! To use your telephone effectively, you need to **manage** its use.

Knowing how to use a tool effectively keeps you from making mistakes. This is true for those whose job is intrinsically linked with the telephone –like the front office assistants, telephone operators, secretaries, customer service agents and BPO employees, in these jobs mistakes on the job can be fatal!

It is true that effective telephone communication skills are something that not every employee brings with them when they join an organization. Then there is the problem of people having different standards of what constitutes effective telephone communication. So it is important to learn some standard procedures.

‘In a customer service orientated business, these telephone skills are essential to your customer’s perception of your organization and their loyalty to it. A failure to emphasize the importance of effective phone communication among your telephone customer service representatives can bring into question your organization’s professionalism and credibility, possibly sending customers to your competition.’ (From the Internet)

The above quotation clearly says that things can be made or marred depending upon what kind of telephonic communication it was: effective or faulty.

We also need to understand what communication is. The objective of communication is to send your message across to the listener just as you want it. We do not want the listener to understand it otherwise. That is why we choose appropriate words to clothe our ideas in and choose only those words which cannot be interpreted in different ways. Our message should be related to the context and the situation. We all know that the meaning of an utterance lies less in the words and more in the non-verbal communication. We shall read about these later in the unit. Then there are barriers to communication which can vary from outside noise, faulty machine to feelings, emotions and pre-determined notions and biases. And since we do not have body language to help the listener get our real meaning we have to be careful with our words and non-verbal communication.

So, what constitutes effective telephone communication and how do we use it effectively? Let us begin with the basic telephone skills i.e. managing the use of the telephone.

1.2 READING COMPREHENSION: BASIC TELEPHONE SKILLS

Once you are using the telephone you need to develop some procedures that ensure you get the most out of each call and that you do not waste time.

Your job may be largely receiving and making telephone calls but there are other things that you do as well. You need to manage your time in such a way that your schedule does not get disrupted and you can accomplish your jobs for the day. So the first thing you would need to do is to schedule your calls.

Scheduling and managing calls

Schedule your outward calls to suit your work schedule and that of the receiver/respondent. So there would be some time allocated for outward calls that you need to make. Similarly if you have a lot of office work to do, you can filter the calls so that only the most important ones get through to you. This way you would not be interrupted in your work. You can check on the other calls and call them back at a time when you are free.

Planning outgoing calls

At the beginning of each day do the following:

- make a list of all the calls you have to make
- arrange them in order of priority (essential, desirable, those that can be rescheduled, if necessary)
- allocate time for each call trying, if possible, bunch the outward calls according to the time it would be suitable for your respondent.

In this way you might make some calls early in the day, some after lunch and perhaps a few in the evening depending upon the convenience of your respondent and yours too.

Receiving Incoming calls

For incoming calls, decide when you are able to take calls without having the flow of your other work interrupted. You may put a suitable message on your answering phone or any other answering service you use. By scheduling your calls in this way, you will be able to give your full attention to them.

Being prepared for the telephone call

Being prepared to take a phone call is necessary as it ensures that you start out on the right track. Jot down your notes which might contain some or all of the information given below:

- the name of the person you are calling/or expecting a call from
- your relationship to them (perhaps a referral)
- the purpose of your call
- the main points you need to discuss
- anticipate a few things he/she might ask

Your notes will keep you on track and minimize the chance of forgetting some important information.

Identifying yourself

Identify yourself immediately when you make the call. Never assume the person will remember who you are so remind them how you know them. Refer to your previous conversation or any written communication between the respondent and your company. This way your call will be specific and no time will be wasted.

Below are a few examples of identifying:

- a) A: Hello, ABN Company. How may I help you?
B: This is Arvind Sharma, applicant for the post of deputy manager. I wished to enquire about....
- b) A: Hello.
B: This is Mrs. Kumar speaking. I had called yesterday to enquire about the motor insurance....
A: Yes, Ma'am, I remember you had called. Is there anything you wished to ask/know?
- c) A: Good morning. Sarah Training Institute.
B: Mr. Rao, from National Fashion Centre here....

Rescheduling an untimely call

It is important to find out if this is a good time to call. If not, schedule a better time and try to get a direct line or extension to avoid the telephone operator. The respondent will be in a better position to take your call and you will notice that the call will be more fruitful and positive.

Eliminating distractions

Turn off the radio, television or anything else that can distract you. Request your colleagues to lower their voices as they talk. Or if possible, call from a quiet location and avoid using a cellular telephone. You may get a lot of extraneous noise and you might be cut off in the middle of a conversation. Try not to do two things at the same time as you may have to ask the respondent to repeat himself/herself.

Using appropriate greetings and endings

Whether you are making a call or receiving one, use a suitable greeting. Appropriate greetings and endings to calls help build a good rapport and avoid misunderstandings and wasting time. The four elements of an appropriate greeting are:

- thanking the respondent for calling your company
- identifying your company
- giving your name and job title/department
- asking how you can help the caller

When you close the call you should:

- make sure that the caller has no more queries
- thank the caller
- let the caller put the receiver down first, so they don't feel you have cut them off.

A word of caution! Do not appear too familiar in your approach.

Greetings

- a) Thank you for calling Ambika Mills. How may I help you?
- b) Good morning. This is Suniti Pillai, Public Relations officer, Ambika Mills. How can I assist you?
- c) Good afternoon. Hotel Park Inn. (wait for response)

Endings

- a) A: Is there anything else you wished to ask?
B: No. Thank you.
A: Thank you for calling Grant High. Have a good day, Sir. (wait for caller to put receiver down)
- b) A: Is there any other way I can be of assistance, Ma'am?
B: Umm, yes. Could you tell me in whose name shall make the draft?
A: In the name of Rattan Incorporates, Ma'am.
B: Thanks a lot. Good day to you.
A: It's a pleasure. Good day.

Gathering Information

As we have said earlier telephone communication is vital to business because it allows both customers and employees to gather information or solve problems quickly. That makes a telephone call a purposeful activity. This means the caller has some definite objective or reason to call. You will need to elicit this objective as quickly and as clearly as possible. If you are making the call you would need to state your reason for the call as soon as you have identified yourself.

In a simple information-seeking call, all you need to do is ask for the caller's name, address, telephone and fax numbers.

However, in more complex situations, you need to develop your questioning techniques so that you can elicit the main facts. In such situations you would need to be friendly and helpful. Your caller may have a complaint about a product or service.

In such case you would need to:

- ascertain the nature of the problem
- verify (asking model number, name etc.) that the product in question is a product of your company
- next check on the date of purchase to find out if the warranty cover still applies
- through questions try to find out how the caller has been using the product
- and what steps they have taken to rectify the problem

Read the examples below.

- a) A: Good morning. Abha Electronics.
- B: Good morning. There is a problem with the new refrigerator I bought from you last Sunday.
- A: What exactly is the problem, Sir?
- B: There is no chill tray to keep milk or other perishables.
- A: Could you tell me the model number, Sir?
- B: It is Coolpool, 450, Energy saver.
- A: (Repeats to show that she has got the correct information) Coolpool, 450, Energy Saver?
- B: That's right.
- A: Please be on the line. I shall check and let you know.
- A: (after a minute) Thank you for being on the line. Sir, this particular model does not come with an inbuilt chill tray. But if you wish to have one, you could purchase it from us. Please call number and our representative will come home and deliver it to you.
- B: How much would it cost?
- A: Rs.500/-, only for the chill tray. We have no service charges for this.
- B: Thank you
- b) A: Good afternoon. Apex computers.
- B: Good afternoon. I needed some help with my computer.
- A: Which company are you calling from, Ma'am?
- B: Abha Photos and Graphics. We're your regular customers.
- A: Thank you for the information. What exactly is the problem?
- B: You see I loaded the latest version of some software. It took some time to install but after that my computer does not seem to work well.
- A: Did you restart the computer after installing the new software?
- B: No, in fact I continued working. Should I try to restart?
- A: Yes, please do. And if the problem persists you can give us a call.
- B: Thank you. You have been very helpful.
- A: It's a pleasure, Ma'am.

In other cases you would need to ascertain:

- who is calling
- from where (company or individual)

- reason for calling
- the nature of the problem or query

Suggesting and verifying a course of action

Once you have an accurate picture of the situation, you are in a position to propose a course of action to your caller. In many instances if it is a minor problem it can be rectified by giving a few instructions to the caller as in computers or other machines. In other cases you might like to suggest the plan of action.

You should:

- outline the proposal and make sure that it is acceptable to the caller
- confirm that they understand what is to be done

Here is an example of a call where active listening skills are used and a course of action is agreed:

A: Good morning. Thank you for calling Worldvision. How may I help you?

B: Good morning, I'm Sheila Sahni speaking from flat number 425. My Internet is not working.

A: Not working, Ma'am? Can you open the home page?

B: No, I cannot.

A: What does it say?

B: It says 'website not found'.

A: Ma'am, would you restart your computer once?

B: All right. Please be on the line.

(After a couple of minutes)

B: I have done that. Now what do I do?

A: Please go to start button and press 'Run'. A black window will open and some message will come on it. Let me know the message that comes.

B: Well, it says 'No reply from host' or something like that.

A: Oh, then there is a problem with the network or the cable. A technician will come and check it out. Would you be home today?

B: Please send one now. I need to use the Internet urgently.

A: Sure, Ma'am, a technician will be at your place within ten minutes.

B: Thank you very much.

Taking notes

Take notes of the information gained and repeat it back to the caller to make sure that you have understood correctly. You might like to record the name of the caller, time of call, for what reason, the action you agreed upon or action

taken at your end, details of address, telephone number and the complaint number if you have allotted one.

Dealing with difficult callers

There may an occasion when the caller is angry and difficult because he or she has a complaint. You would need to handle the call tactfully for the image of your company depends upon how you deal with the problem. It is important to treat the caller with respect for he or she may be a potential client. Your tactful handling may help in getting business for your company whether it is sales, getting a new subscriber, a new student if yours is an educational institution, or even a new collaborator in business.

Whatever the nature of the problem, attend to it without disclaiming personal responsibility and promise to take positive action. You might refer the caller to the concerned department or your boss or you could assure that the job would be done within a reasonable time.

Here is an example.

A: Saviour General Insurance. How may I help you?

B: Can I talk to someone senior in the company? You have sent me the Motor Insurance policy with the same mistakes in it.(Sounds angry)

A: I'm sorry for the inconvenience you've faced Ma'am. Please be on the line. I shall connect you to the concerned person.

B: No, I don't want to talk to any executive. I want to talk to someone senior. How many times do I have tell you that my car is not hypothecated to any bank? Yet your revised policy says 'Hypothecated to ABC Bank'.

A: I'm extremely sorry for the inconvenience you have faced. I shall put you through to our deputy manager here.

B: Thank you

In brief you would be doing all or most of the things mentioned below.

- listen without interrupting
- gather the facts and make a note of them
- take their details so you can get back to them
- sympathize with them and offer to act as fast as you can
- apologize if you have made the mistake
- stay calm even though the caller is angry and uses abusive language

At the end remember to give the details of the department you have forwarded the call to and assure that the concerned person will get back within a stipulated time.

Other Strategies for Effective Phone Communication

- Return calls in a timely fashion; failure to do so reflects poor customer service. As a caller, be sure to leave voicemails that are clear and informative. Leave your name, business, reason for your call and contact information.
- Put the customer on hold only if it is absolutely necessary. No one likes to be left on hold indefinitely. If you must put a customer on hold, estimate the time of the wait and ask whether he or she would mind holding. If you do have a caller on hold, check in with the caller every 45 to 60 seconds. 'A minute is a lifetime when you are on hold.'
- Never let a phone ring more than three times. Attend to it promptly. Doing so tells callers that their call is important to you.

These are some of the brass-tacks of telephone communication at office. You will learn more about these in the sections that follow.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 How can one be prepared for the telephone call?
- 2 What is the relevant information one needs to gather from a telephone conversation? Illustrate your answer with examples.
- 3 What strategy should be employed while dealing with difficult callers?
- 4 How can one give the impression of an efficient helpful office staff?
- 5 Read the statements given below and say whether they are true or false.
 - i We need to be very careful with our choice of words and utterances so that the specific meaning is conveyed.
 - ii Jotting down notes and keeping them ready at one's table helps in keeping record for future communication.
 - iii We should use appropriate language for greeting and signing off.
 - iv It is nice to do some social talk before coming to business as it helps to build rapport with the customer.
 - v It is important to get an accurate picture through questions because many a time the problem is minor which can be fixed through telephonic instructions alone.
 - vi Instead to returning calls we must wait for the customer to call again. This way we will know that the customer is serious.

1.3 EFFECTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

A fruitful and positive interaction over the telephone depends much on our listening skills. And we need to remember that we do not have the advantages of a face-to-face interaction where we can use clues like facial expression, object on hand, the location or the gestures of the interlocutor. We have to depend totally upon our listening skills.

According to Mia Schiffman Melanson of the Help Desk Institute, words alone do not convey the meaning of what a person is saying. In a face-to-face communication the aspects that help to get the message across are largely non-verbal. If the meaning of a message comes through the non-verbal communication, we are at a disadvantage in a telephonic conversation. As is evident from this table, we would have to glean the meaning mostly from the tone of voice of the respondent in a telephone talk.

The avenues of verbal communication	Percentage of emphasis in face-to face communication	Percentage of emphasis on telephone
Body language, gestures, facial expression	55%	0%
Tone of voice	38%	85%
Word content	7%	15%

What is good listening?

Good listening skills mean allowing the respondent to talk and to convey that we are interested in what he/she is saying and indicate our attention with a few encouraging sounds or a few relevant questions or by interrupting in an encouraging manner. These interruptions could be 'yes', 'I see', 'Okay', 'right,' 'I know what you mean', or they could be prompts to encourage the caller to say more: 'Is that true?', 'Are you sure, etc. In this way we get the right information, notice the drift of the conversation, anticipate what the caller may say or ask next, stay on track and best of all win the trust of the caller. This kind of listening is called **active listening**.

Three important components of verbal communication are:

- rate of speech
- tone or attitude
- word choice

The real message often comes through subtle clues which we might miss if we are not paying attention.

One way to remember how to listen actively is to remember these points.

<p>L Let others speak.</p> <p>I Intend to "hear" what they are saying.</p> <p>S Speak when it is your turn.</p> <p>T Talk with them, not at them.</p> <p>E Enthusiastically respond when appropriate.</p> <p>N Never speak when else is talking.</p>
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Barriers to oral communication

Listening carefully in an office humming with activity can be a challenge. We must be aware of these and avoid them. If we get distracted we might miss on some important information and would have to ask the respondent to repeat himself/herself which is not a good practice. A few of the things that may distract our attention while we are attending to a call are discussed below.

Environmental distractions

In a busy office, physical activity and movement around can distract you. There may be a colleague who puts something on your table or wants you to see something at that very moment, there may be other telephones ringing or lights flashing which may distract your attention. We need to focus and not allow these to distract our attention from what our respondent is saying over the telephone.

Jumping Ahead

Many times we are so preoccupied with what we are going to say next that we miss what the respondent is saying. This is called jumping ahead. This happens when we are under pressure to solve a problem quickly. It is also true that we listen at a faster speed than when we speak.

Emotional filters

Often we begin our work with pre-conceived notions which are primarily based on our previous experiences. If we have had an unpleasant encounter with a particular person we tend to be defensive or even aggressive. We respond to the situation emotionally and this affects the conversation. When we develop a negative attitude towards a person, even a suggestion appears to be an accusation or fault-finding. We must be wary of such emotional filters because they do not allow us to perceive the correct message. Our emotional response often distorts the meaning of what the person is saying. This can unfairly influence the transaction.

Mental side-trips

Taking repeated calls of a similar nature can be boring. You know what you would ask or say and how the conversation will proceed and soon boredom and indifference creeps in. You mentally start switching off the call on hand and begin to take mental trips about what you would do in the evening, or a visit you need to make or simply what you are going to order for lunch from the canteen. When you re-engage yourself in the conversation you find that you have not lost much as the answers were anticipated. You drift away again and this time you lose your respondent. You have to ask the respondent to repeat what he or she said.

Effective Listening: Some Tips

In order to listen effectively we would need to do the following:

- First and foremost- pay attention
- Let the respondent know that the call is important to you as well

- Pay attention to the ideas (what the person is really saying)
- Take down relevant information/queries
- Assess the emotional state of the respondent
- Read between the lines (the actual purpose of calling)
- Assess how much the respondent knows

Paying Attention and taking down notes

We have discussed distracters and the need to pay attention. If we pay attention, we can get not only the spoken messages but the unspoken messages as well. That will help us to provide the required information or make the respondent feel comfortable and reassured. As we listen, we should take notes so that we do not have to ask him/her to repeat what he/she said a while ago.

Paying attention to the ideas

We all have speech idiosyncrasies. Some speak fast, some speak a bit too slow, some have speech mannerisms like using expressions like ‘You see’ ‘...and the kind’ etc. which they use frequently. Some have a heavy accent. Some use too many words to say a thing. Some have voices that may distract—either too shrill or too melodious. All of these may distract our attention from the content of what the person is saying. We need to be focused and in order to do so try to keep notes. This will keep our mind on the ideas and the theme of the conversation and not speech mannerisms.

Assess the emotional state of the speaker

When a person calls up, he or she may be calm, aggressive, angry, frustrated, disappointed, happy, sarcastic or plain offensive. The tone of the voice, the pauses, the additional sounds like sighs, giggles or laughter tell us about the mood of the speaker at the time of speaking. In addition, the choice of words too indicate, what the person wants to convey. At times people speak very fast when they are agitated. We need to understand the state of mind and act accordingly. In case a person is too agitated, it is a good idea to suggest that we talk at a later time when he or she is in a better mood. We also need to reassure that their job would be done, and even if something is impossible, we can use a soothing voice and an empathetic manner to provide comfort. This will make the person trust and come back to you.

Assess what the speaker knows

We need to assess how much the person knows about the subject on hand by listening to his/her choice of words and her enquiries. If we discover that a person does not know much about the subject then it would be advisable to avoid jargon and taking facts for granted. We would need to explain a few things and use the lay person’s language to convey the information to him/her. In such a case we ought not to use abbreviations and short forms with which the speaker is not acquainted.

Read between the lines

Often many things are meant but left unsaid. We need to look for hints in the shape of questions like ‘There is no way I can get it before Monday?’ or tone of voice that indicate what the person really wants. If we can provide any sort of help, say to person who needs something immediately, we can try to do so. If there are some unspoken requests like, “You see I live very far and have a very young child,” means that the person will not be able to come and collect something personally. Offer possible options permitted in your office that could make it easy for him/her.

You may be able to glean the actual purpose of calling from the clues in the voice or the words. If a person made enquiries like, “Has the meeting of Executive Committee been held?” and you knew that he/she had put in a proposal, you would know that she/he wishes to know the status of his/her proposal. In that case you might give her the relevant information within the scope of your post.

Thus we have seen that when we actively pay attention not only to words but other non-verbal cues like tone of voice, pauses, hesitation etc. to understand what the respondent actually means.

A few things to avoid

Do not interrupt

We must allow the respondent to speak. It is not polite to cut someone off mid-sentence. Moreover, if we listen to the respondent we would understand the need, the problem or what the person is trying to say. We must be careful while talking to an angry respondent. Interruption would make him/her more irritated. It is best to let him/her say what he/she wants. Perhaps after he/she has let off steam, she would be more amiable to what you say.

Do not finish the respondents’ sentences for them

We might be in a hurry to get to the root of the problem and with our years of experience we might anticipate what the person will say next. It is not wise to do so since if you are proved wrong then it would be embarrassing for you. Even if you right you might appear to be patronizing and the respondent will feel belittled. Either way it will affect you and your company’s image.

Read the conversation below.

A: Good morning, is it the ABC Institute?

B: Yes, Ma’am, this is the ABC Institute. What can I do for you?

A: You see, I applied for the post of Secretary at this institute last week.

B: Oh, I see Ma’am. **They have not yet decided the date for the interview.** (*assumption*)

A: No, I did not call to find out the date of the interview. By mistake I had submitted my original certificate with the application.

B: So what do you want me to do, ma’am?

A: You see I have another offer. I need to submit the certificate there. And I would like to withdraw my application from here. (*fact*)When can I come to collect it?

B: The applications are still under screening. Would you give me a call at 4 in the evening to find out?

A: Sure, thanks.

We can thus conclude that much of telephone communication is more to listen and less to speak. The listening too has to be active and sharp. For that we need to pay attention and often take down notes to be aware of the thread of the conversation.

Check Your Progress 2

1 What are the barriers to communication?

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.....
.....
.....
.....

2. How can one listen effectively?

.....
.....
.....
.....

3 What do you understand by listening between the lines?

.....
.....
.....
.....

4 Listening like reading is a predictive exercise where we constantly predict what the speaker might say next or what will come next in the text. However, during official communication we must not try to complete the sentences for the customer. Can you explain why?

.....
.....
.....
.....

5 Why is telephone communication more of listening and less of speaking?
Explain.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Listen to the telephonic conversation and answer the questions that follow.

(Listening Text)

A: Hello, ABCD Banking services. How may I help you?
B: Hello, my name is Goonj Gandhi. I have an ABCD credit card. I have lost my credit card and want you to block my card. Please do it immediately.
A: Sure, Mr. Gandhi. May I know the number of your card?
B: 0000000011112222
A: Thank you. I shall transfer the call to the Credit Cards department. Please remain on the line.
B: Thanks.
A: Good morning, Sir. This is Aarti from ABCD. May I know the problem, Sir?
B: I have lost my credit card and wished to block it. Sure. But I would need some details before that.
May I have your full name?
B: Goonj, G-O-O-N-J Gandhi, G-A-N-D-H-I.
A: The sixteen digit number of your card, please.
B: 0000000011112222
A: And may I have your date of birth?
B: It is 17 April, 1980.
A: Thank you. Could you please give me your complete address?
B: 14, BC, I Block, Pratham Puri.
A: Thank you very much, Mr. Gandhi. Don't worry, your card has been blocked with immediate effect. Our customer care department will get in touch with you regarding your new card.
B: Thank you very much.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Where did Goonj Gandhi call?
- 2 What did he want to do?
- 3 Why was it necessary for the customer care executive to know his card number?

- 4 Which department was his call transferred to?
- 5 Why did the executive in the Credit Card department take so many details from Goonj Gandhi?
- 6 Were the executives precise and to the point in their communication?
- 7 Were they courteous?
- 8 Which sentence shows that Goonj Gandhi was anxious?
- 9 Which sentence must have put his mind at rest?
- 10 Would you rate this conversation as a piece of effective communication? Why/Why not?

1.4 EFFECTIVE SPEAKING SKILLS

The image of the company, institute or office is created by the way we handle the calls. It is important to project the best possible image of our organization with the help of our voice, tone, choice of words, willingness to listen and willingness to help.

The Three Components of Verbal Communication

Let us look at the three components of verbal communication: rate of speech, tone and choice of words.

Rate of speech

People's speed of delivery of speech differs. The normal speed of delivery amongst the English speaking people is between 125 to 150 words per minute. There may be fast speakers who create a barrage of words and sentences. It does not matter so much as it is possible to understand even when a person speaks at 300 words per minute. Faster than this is the speed at which we think-almost 500 words per minute. This means that a person with a fairly slow speed of delivery can make us restless and we end up finishing the sentences for him/her in an attempt to bring the conversation to a close. This also means that we indirectly influence what the respondent would say.

Another interesting fact is that the speed of delivery is related to the emotional state of a person. An impatient, excited or angry person would speak at a faster pace. On the other hand slow speed of delivery might mean confusion or fatigue. Though the speed of delivery can give us some insight into the mental state of the speaker the indicators may not always be correct.

Tone

Tone is the intonation pattern and voice modulation of the speaker. The tone can be simply neutral. It can be contemptuous, sarcastic, aggressive, condescending, helpful, friendly or simply indifferent. With good listening skills we can make out what the person actually means. The tone tells us about their attitude towards us.

Say for example if a person says 'What a great company this is!' or 'How fortunate I am to get a call from you!' these could mean that the person is

indeed happy or it could have been said in sarcasm or even jest. We need to listen closely to understand the emotion behind an utterance. A sigh might mean frustration, laughter might mean that the respondent is intimidated or simply embarrassed. In either case we need our respondent to feel comfortable and begin to trust us.

Similarly we must be careful about our tone. Nowhere should the respondent feel that we do not care or our attitude is not right. On the one hand the respondent needs a problem solved or a certain information provided. He/she has emotional needs on the other. We need to address both kinds of needs for a lasting relationship with a customer or user of our services.

Choice of Words

The choice of words of a respondent can also give an insight into his or her state of knowledge, attitude, general behaviour and purpose of calling. A person who uses a lot of technical words is either trying to browbeat by showing that he/she knows a lot about the topic or simply trying to impress you into compliance. A person who is hesitant and uses few technical words means the person does not have much knowledge of the field. The choice of words like 'you' or 'me' might be an indication that the respondent looks upon us as an adversary.

Our attitude comes through our tone and choice of words and if it is a positive one we have won a customer or a client. But if the attitude is not right we might lose the customer or the contact. Our behaviour dictates to a large extent the attitude that comes through.

Let us consider the different kinds of attitudes that may come through our behaviour and the one that is most desirable.

Passive attitude

Passive communication style is characterized by expressing constant agreement of what the other is saying. Passive people allow others to dominate them. They do not protest even when it is required and as a result suffer from over work, domination and suppression. It is important to stand up for one's rights and over the telephone, we might need to do that-stand up for our rights and for those of the organization. It is good to be assertive and call a spade a spade if it is necessary. If we remain passive in the office, we are sure to be trodden upon by others or get saddled with too much work. This will have an undesirable outcome often leading to sudden explosion of anger and aggressive behaviour.

Aggressive attitude

Aggressive people are always on the defensive looking for a way to blame others. Aggressive language undermines and humiliates others. Certainly we do not want our clients, customers or our contacts to feel that. The choice of words as shown above, the tone of our voice, the volume of our voice indicates our aggressive attitude. This causes situations to get more complicated. So, we must not consider the caller as an adversary who has to be defeated. We must not overuse our personal power.

Assertive attitude

We need to find a mean between the two kinds of attitude. One the one hand, we do not want to be cowed down by simply what the respondent is saying and we do not want to trample over the rights of others. The mid-path would be to be confident, convincing and assertive. Assertive people are direct, positive and participatory. They do not talk to the client, they talk with the client appreciating both points of view. They respect the rights of others. But they are ready to stand up for their rights and call a spade a spade if the need arises.

Assertive behavior is goal-oriented or result-oriented and not blame-oriented. They are pleasant to talk to as they can appreciate the good points in others as much as they are aware of their own good points.

Hence, if we are assertive we would respect and care for our clients and rapport building would be quick. It is important for the person on the other end to feel valued and reassured that the problem would be solved or their requests would be addressed.

In such a situation both the respondents participate trying to find a solution together and the result is a good solution.

Let us consider the situation we discussed above.

A: Good morning, is it the ABC Institute?

B: Yes, Ma'am, this is the ABC Institute. What can I do for you?

A: My name is Shaheeda Parveen. You see, I applied for the post of Lecturer at this institute last week. By mistake I have submitted my original post graduate certificate with the application.

B: So what do you want me to do, Ms. Parveen?

A: I would like to replace it with a photocopy.

B: I guess that would be possible as the applications are still under screening. You can give us the photocopy and we shall return you the original. Would you be able to come at 12.30 p.m. on Friday?

A: Friday? (hesitates) You see I live very far and our baby sitter is on leave.

B: Umm. Ma'am, could you courier the photocopy to us. Please give your full address so that we can courier your original certificate back to you, if that is fine with you.

A: I think that is a good idea. Could you send it by courier tomorrow?

B: I'm sorry that would not be possible before Friday. The earliest you can get it is on Saturday afternoon.

A: Al..right... I hope the certificate would be safe.

B: Don't worry. They are the best courier service.

A: What is your name, please?

B: I am Anil. Anil Sobti.

A: Thank you so much, Mr. Sobti.

B: It's a pleasure, Ma'am.

We noticed that Anil Sobti was positive and could read the unsaid request when Shaheeda Parveen said that she lived far and her baby sitter was on leave. He offered a solution. Later Shaheeda Parveen made a request which the organization could not fulfill and Anil Sobti was assertive about that. In the end both signed off with a positive feeling. She is happy that the person at the office turned out to be helpful and Anil Sobti is happy that a person cared to know his name and thanked him warmly.

We see that assertive and helpful behaviour not only helps one to arrive at a better solution but also heightens the credibility of the organization. It is helpful for the person handling the telephone calls as well, for a warm and positive feeling reduces stress and thus has health benefits too.

Essentials of speaking over telephone

There are certain basic things that we need to keep in mind when we are talking to clients, contacts or customers over the telephone. They can be listed as:

- Smile
- Use the caller's name
- Be courteous in your language
- Echo important points
- Acknowledge the person on the other end
- Mirror the respondent
- Record your conversation for feedback

Smile

Imagine that you are talking to the person face-to-face. Put a smile on your face just as you would in a face-to-face conversation. It will enhance your vocal quality and you will sound pleasant and relaxed. This will convey a pleasant attitude and an enthusiasm on your part. It might appear strange but if you smile while speaking your smile will be carried through the tone of your voice. On the other hand if we are tired or seem bored, our voice carries lack of enthusiasm over the telephone. This will affect your relations with the respondent.

Use the caller's name

It is always a pleasant thing to hear one's name. This makes the person on the other end feel valued-that the person on the other end has taken care to remember his/her voice. This is the first step in building rapport. It is important to keep in mind whether to you use the first or the surname. In

India using the first name for everyone is not a part of our culture. While first names show greater warmth, surnames can be used to convey respect. Much would depend on the culture of one's organization and that of the person on the other end.

A: Good morning, Spectrum Internet Services.

B: Good morning. I think my Internet is down.

A:: Which flat are you speaking from Madam?

B: Oh, this is Mrs. Neha Verma from flat no 161.

A: Mrs. Verma, could you tell me what the page shows when you try to connect to the Internet?

B: It shows 'This page cannot be displayed.'

A: Mrs. Verma, perhaps you need to restart your computer. Please do so and let me know if you still have problem connecting.

B: All right. (after a pause). Ah, it's connected. Thank you.

A: It's a pleasure, Mrs. Verma.

Be courteous in your language

It is extremely necessary to use courteous expressions like 'please', 'thank you', 'it's a pleasure', 'I'd be glad to help you' which will help to make the conversation smooth and pleasant for both. We also need to remember that the image of the organization is conveyed through our interaction with others and courtesy will help to convey a positive image.

Echo important points

Echoing is an integral part of active listening. When we echo the important points, the benefits are dual. One, it helps us to stay on track and second we can always cross-check if we have heard right. We could use expressions like, "So you are saying you sent a list of books on computing," or "May I repeat, Sir? Your UPS is not giving power back-up, right?" If you make a practice of doing this there would be less misunderstanding and the right service can be rendered.

Acknowledge the person on the other end

If the person is calling for the second or third time we ought to acknowledge him or her with 'Hello, Mrs. Singh. How can I help you?' or if we are aware of the problem then it is nice to show that we remember the problem. At the same time if the respondent is appearing harassed, then we need to be empathetic and do our best to help. It is also important to note that for the respondent the issue is important or he/she would not have called. Thus we should acknowledge the problem and address it suitably.

Here is an example:

A: Hello, Global Computers.

B: Hello, I'm calling from, Gandhinagar. I'm calling with regard to the printer I talked to you about last week.

- A: Oh, hello, Mr. Bhuvan. I remember you had called regarding the 3400 series printer. Is it still giving trouble?
- B: Yes. I am exasperated. It prints so erratically. Sometime it stops printing and shows the message 'ink levels are not available'. You see, after talking to you I had put in original cartridges. I have a presentation tomorrow and I still cannot get any printing done.
- A: I am sorry that you are going through this trouble Mr. Bhuvan. I can understand how frustrating it can be. Let me check with the technical department if they can send someone to check the machine. Would you be home today?
- B: Yes, do send someone after 4 in the afternoon.
- A: Don't worry, Sir. He'll first give you a call before he comes. He shall also bring a substitute printer so that your important work can be finished.
- B: Oh, that would be great. Thank you so much for your help.
- A: It's a pleasure. You are one of our valued customers. Bye.

Mirror the respondent

Mirroring the respondent means matching the vocabulary, the rate of speech or the point of view of the respondent. This means that if the respondent is a technical person we need not try to explain and simplify it for him/her assuming that he/she has the information. On the other hand, if the person is a novice, we would need to avoid jargon and might have to explain things in a simple way to help him/her understand. And suppose, the speaker is speaking very slowly, then we would alter our speed of delivery accordingly. We should not try to contradict what the person is saying just to win an argument. It is a good idea to empathize and then slowly win the person over to our point of view. The respondent becomes agreeable and begins to understand.

Record Conversation for feedback

If we are new to the profession then it helps to record our calls. We can hear how we come through. We can listen to the CD and note if we are too slow, fast or if we appear aggressive, indifferent or helpful. We can also get rid of our speech mannerisms if we listen to our recorded conversation once in a while. Some organizations have a system of monitoring calls. We can listen to these recordings so that we can review and improve ourselves.

Thus we see that if we are handling the telephone calls for our organization we need to be good listeners, good speakers, sensitive to the needs and feelings of others and ready to help because all these contribute to image building.

Check Your Progress 4

Answer the questions below.

1. What are the three major attitudes that are conveyed through our voice and tone?

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.....
2. Which is the recommended attitude for effective office management?
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.....
.....
3. What are the essentials of speaking over the telephone?
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.....
.....
4. What is the advantage of recording our calls?
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.....
.....

1.5 TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE

Telephone etiquette has been addressed in the previous sections under basic telephone skills, listening and speaking skills. A few more things that we need to pay attention to are the following:

1. *Pull your self from what ever you are doing.*

We need to put away reading material, stop checking our emails or preparing a draft of something or even our snack and coffee when the telephone rings. This way we would not appear distracted to the caller and would not miss out any important point. If we are still paying attention to whatever we were doing earlier then our pauses will become longer and we would be asking our respondents to repeat themselves which will tell them clearly that we are distracted. This can make them unhappy and irritated. Our centre of interest should be the caller or the respondent and nothing else.

2. *Prepare your phone voice*

The tone of voice and speed of delivery has been discussed at length in the earlier sections. And it is true that a person's phone voice is not the normal uninhibited voice. At times our voice is not very pleasant, for example we were having an argument with someone when the telephone rings. Now, if we just pick up the phone and respond then our tone will sound aggressive. So we need to consciously switch to our pleasant friendly phone voice before we pick up the receiver. We need to take a breath, smile, assume our telephone voice and then respond to the call.

3. *Make a good impression with a pleasant greeting*

It is important to make the first impression with an effective and efficient greeting. Your organization may have a standard greeting. Use that rather than long winded greetings that take a long time.

4. *Treat the caller with respect*

Phrases like ‘I don’t know’, ‘It can’t be done’, ‘Just a second’, ‘You must have....’ Or ‘No’ are negative and might make us appear unwilling to help. They are best avoided. This does not mean that we should not be honest. In case something is not possible we need to send the message across with ‘We would be happy to help but I’m afraid this may not be possible for our organization’ or ‘I’m sorry, we may not be able to help you here’.

5. *Take care while placing the caller on hold*

Before placing a caller on hold, we need to ask their permission first and thank them when we resume the conversation. It is also not a good practice to keep the caller on hold for a long time. In such case we should promise to call back and disconnect. And then according to our promise, we should never forget to call back.

6. *Answer promptly*

We should not allow the phone to ring more than three times. Allowing the phone to ring long before answering it gives the impression of tardiness in the office. It irritates the caller.

7. *Learn to handle two or three calls at time*

There may be occasions when another telephone rings while we attending to a call. As per our habit we pick up the second phone and excusing yourself from the first one respond to the second caller promising to call back.

8. *Signing off*

When hanging up the phone, we need to make sure the caller or the person who called hangs up first. Otherwise, always hang up the phone, gently. A remote, handless headset is convenient as it does not need to be slammed down and can be gently disconnected.

This will solve hanging up as you push release on the headset to hang up the phone. A handset also does not tie us to our desk. The phone can also be answered if away from your desk.

Check Your Progress 5

Mention some of the aspects of telephone etiquette.

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1.6 GRAMMAR

We use different types of sentences during telephonic conversation. We use assertive sentences to inform, interrogative sentences to make enquiries, requests or offers and imperative sentences to make requests, give instructions or orders. And client may express his or her feelings using an exclamatory sentence.

Activity 1

1. Modals can be used in multiple ways in different kinds of sentences to express different things. Look at the sentences below and complete them using appropriate modals given below. One modal can be used in more than one place. You may use the shortened forms wherever required.

will would should shall won't

- i.you give me your mobile number, please?
 - ii. You allow the machine to cool down before you start it again.
 - iii. I need help. The car start.you send someone to look at it?
 - iv.you listen to me, please?
 - v. I assure you the engineercome to your house within ten hours.
 - vi. I have been sending mails to have the error in the policy rectified. I wish someone in your officedo the needful.
 - vii. I'm sorry to hear about your inconvenience. I send the mechanic to look at it?
 - viii. Irather go for double door refrigerator.
 - ix. I think youcheck your product well before delivery.
 - x. You have been most unhelpful! I.....write a complaint to your manager.
 - xi. I promise youget the delivery before 5 p.m. tomorrow.
 - xii. Looking at the volume of your work I think yougo for a laser printer.
2. Select appropriate adjectives for the sentences below.
- i. The Lara XV has a more(efficient/effective) engine. Its petrol consumption is less. Moreover, it is less (loud/noisy).
 - ii. We offer you the package at a (discounted/depreciated) price.

- iii. I feel that Clause 14, a in your agreement is
(needless/redundant) as the point has been covered at Clause 11.
- iv. You may rest assured. We use only (washed/sterilized) cotton in our clinic.
- v. The company will provide you (maintenance/maintaining) support for 12 months after the purchase of the machine.
- vi. The(estimated/ guessed) expenditure for providing media support during the function would be Rs.35,000/-
- vii. The mistake committed is indeed (regrettable/deplorable).
- viii. We only make(massive/bulk) deliveries to institutes.

1.7 LET US SUM UP

The telephone is an important tool in our lives, be it home or office. At office when we have the job of handling telephones we need to be careful about certain things for the smooth functioning of the office and for a projecting a positive image of our organization. Like all procedures, telephone communication has its nuances and its rules which we must adhere to. We need to be courteous in our greetings and while signing off. We need to obtain specific information through polite questions. Often the problem may be minor and can be solved through telephonic instructions alone. At times the customer is angry or anxious. We must try to read between the lines and move forward accordingly. We must never interrupt a customer, nor should we complete his/her sentences for her. While obtaining necessary information we must jot the points down and keep them ready for future communication. It is also essential to call back instead of waiting for the customer to try and get through again. It is important that at the end of the telephone call both we and our caller have a feeling of satisfaction. This would mean increased business or a heightened image of our organization.

1.8 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. One can be prepared for the telephone call by preparing notes on who we are calling or expecting a call from, the relationship of the organization with the person, the purpose, the main points we need to discuss and questions if any. In this way no time will be wasted.
2. We need to make sure who is calling and from where, the reason for calling, nature of problem, if it is a product in question, date of purchase, how the caller is using the product and whether anything had been done to solve the problem.

Example:

Name of the caller: Mr. X

(Individual or representing a company) If from a company, name of the **company:** Clothing Options

Reason for calling: Enquiry regarding an e-printer (Model no.) purchased on Feb, 15.

Nature of problem: The printer does not print even after the mechanic has had a look

How the caller is using the product: For e-printing designs and patterns from designers seated at various places in the office to save time in getting up and coming to the printer situated in a particular room.

What has been done: An earlier complaint had been made and a mechanic from the company had gone to set it right

3. Difficult callers need to be handled with tact. We need to listen without interrupting, gather the facts and note them down, sympathize with them and offer to solve the problem, offer apology if required and last but not the least remain calm and not get excited by what he or she is saying.

Your strategy would include the following:

First listen without interrupting or contradicting the person (the customer is always right)

Then through questions gather the facts and make a note of them and promise to get back to them

Express regret at the inconvenience caused, and promise to look into it and keep your promise

If you have made a mistake, apologize without any reservations

Stay calm even though the caller is angry and uses abusive language

4. We can give the impression of an efficient helpful office staff by responding to the call promptly, returning calls, not keeping the caller on hold for long and using a confident and pleasant voice.
5. Do it yourself.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Environmental factors, trying to follow what is going on around us, focusing on our answer instead of listening, a negative attitude and switching off mentally by taking a mental trip while on the phone act as distracters and do not allow us to get the message of the caller.
2. We can listen effectively if we consciously pay attention, encourage the respondent or caller to speak, focus on the ideas and not the style or mannerisms of the speaker, take down relevant details, act according to the emotional needs of the caller, match our language and information to that of the caller and try to get to the real meaning behind the words.
3. Do it yourself.

4. Do it yourself.

5. Do it yourself.

Check Your Progress 3

Do it yourself.

Check Your Progress 4

1. The three major attitudes that are displayed through our voice are aggression, indifference and assertiveness.
2. The assertive attitude is one in which we act confidently, convincingly and do not get cowed down by what the speaker is saying. We show empathy to the speaker but at the same time do not hesitate to tell the truth in a polite fashion.
3. The essentials of speaking over the telephone are smiling while talking, using the caller's name, being courteous, echoing the important points to clarify and to tell the speaker that we are paying attention. We need to acknowledge the person on the other end and try to mirror him or her by adjusting to her speed of delivery or simplicity of language. We also record our calls for feedback and improvement.
4. The advantage of recording our calls is that we can objectively listen and find out if our tone and speed of delivery are appropriate or not. We can also discover if we have any speech mannerisms and rectify them.

Check Your Progress 5

We need to maintain telephone etiquette. These would include the following steps.

- First disengage yourself from whatever you are doing so that you can give your full attention to the caller and register the necessary information or respond adequately and suitably without appearing to be distracted. Be attentive to ensure that you do not have to ask the caller to repeat herself or himself.
- Prepare your phone voice which is would be pleasant, have measured speed of delivery, pleasant and helpful. If we try to smile as we talk then automatically our voice will assume a pleasant tone.
- Make a good impression with a pleasant greeting. Use phrases that are polite and socially acceptable to persons who are important to you.
- Treat the caller with respect and try to offer help. Ask the relevant questions and offer to initiate action as quickly as you can. In case something may take time, be honest and say that to the caller but do not refuse to help or assist.
- Do not slam the phone down. Instead ask the caller if there is any other help he or she wishes to get from you. Wait for the caller to disconnect. In case you need time to look into the matter promise to call back and disconnect. Call back as soon as you can.
- Other aspects of telephone etiquette are to answer the phone promptly and try to manage two calls simultaneously as efficiently as you can

without making any one of the callers wait for a long time. You may tell the caller who called later that you will call him/her back. And while signing off make sure the caller hangs up before you do. Do not slam the phone down. You may use a handset to make the disconnection gentle.

Activity 1

1.
 - i. Would you give me your mobile number, please?
 - ii. You should allow the machine to cool down before you start it again.
 - iii. I need help. The car won't start. Will you send someone to look at it?
 - iv. Will you listen to me, please?
 - v. I assure you the engineer shall come to your house within ten hours.
 - vi. I have been sending mails to have the error in the policy rectified. I wish someone in your office would do the needful.
 - vii. I'm sorry to hear about your inconvenience. Shall I send the mechanic to look at it?
 - viii. I would rather go for double door refrigerator.
 - ix. I think you should check your product well before delivery.
 - x. You have been most unhelpful! I will write a complaint to your manager.
 - xi. I promise you shall get the delivery before 5 p.m. tomorrow.
 - xii. Looking at the volume of your work I think you should go for a laser printer.
2.
 - i. The Lara XV has a more efficient engine. Its petrol consumption is less. Moreover, it is less noisy.
 - ii. We offer you the package at a discounted price.
 - iii. I feel that Clause 14, a in your agreement is redundant as the point has been covered at Clause 11.
 - iv. You may rest assured. We use only sterilized cotton in our clinic.
 - v. The company will provide you maintenance support for 12 months after the purchase of the machine.
 - vi. The estimated expenditure for providing media support during the function would be Rs.35,000/-
 - vii. The mistake committed is indeed regrettable.
 - viii. We only make bulk deliveries to institutes.

UNIT 2 MAKING ARRANGEMENTS AND APPOINTMENTS

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Warm up
- 2.2 Reading
- 2.3 Vocabulary
- 2.4 Listening
- 2.5 Grammar: Modals of Polite Request (may, would you, could you)
- 2.6 Writing and Speaking
- 2.7 Let us sum up
- 2.8 Answers

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit will familiarize you with the language used through the telephone while making official arrangements and appointments. You will learn how to:

- fix appointments and meetings
- cancel appointments
- reschedule appointments and meetings
- make arrangements for business events
- make arrangements for a welcome
- make arrangements for a farewell

2.1 WARM UP

List some of the duties that you think an office secretary performs.

.....
.....

2.2 READING

Read these three telephone conversations in which an appointment or meeting is being scheduled, rescheduled or cancelled.

Conversation 1

Kapil Verma: Good Morning, Mr. Ghai's office. How may I help you?

Pankaj Rai: Hello, this is Pankaj Rai. I'd like to make an appointment with Mr. Ghai. May I know who's on the line?

Kapil Verma: Hello, Mr. Rai. This is Kapil Verma, Mr. Ghai's secretary. Mr. Ghai had asked me to expect your call. When would you like to come, Sir?

Pankaj Rai: I'd like to meet him sometime on Tuesday morning.

Kapil Verma: Would 11 a.m. on Tuesday suit you?

Pankaj Rai: Tuesday at 11 a.m. is fine with me. Could you give me the address of your office, please?

Kapil Verma: It's 31A, Pacific Tower, Legend Place.

Pankaj Rai: Thank you. Please inform Mr. Ghai I'll be there on Tuesday.

Conversation 2

Pankaj Rai: Hello.

Kapil Verma: Good morning, Mr. Rai. This is Kapil Verma, Mr. Ghai's secretary.

Pankaj Rai: Hello, Kapil.

Kapil Verma: I'm afraid we'll have to reschedule your Tuesday meeting with Mr. Ghai. He's had to go on an urgent business trip and will only return on Wednesday morning.

Pankaj Rai: That's alright. Could you reschedule the meeting for Thursday?

Kapil Verma: Certainly, Sir. I'm sorry for the inconvenience. Would 10 a.m. on Thursday, the 17th suit you?

Pankaj Rai: That's fine by me. I'll be there at 10 a.m.

Kapil Verma: Thank you, Mr. Rai.

Conversation 3:

Pankaj Rai: Hello.

Kapil Verma: Good morning, Mr. Rai. This is Kapil Verma from Mr. Ghai's office.

Pankaj Rai: Hello, Kapil. Have you called to confirm my meeting tomorrow?

Kapil Verma: Unfortunately Mr. Ghai has taken ill and will not be coming to office this week. I'm sorry to inform you that your meeting will have to be cancelled for the present. I'll call and let you know as soon as he returns to work. Please accept my apologies for the delay.

Pankaj Rai: That's alright, Kapil. I hope he gets well soon. Please let me know when he resumes work. This meeting is, in fact, quite urgent.

Kapil Verma: I'll do that, Mr. Rai.

Pankaj Rai: Thank you, Kapil.

Kapil Verma: Good day, Mr. Rai.

Check Your Progress 1

Answer these questions based on the reading passage:

Conversation 1:

1. What is the purpose of the first conversation?

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.....
.....

2. How did Kapil Verma know that Mr. Rai would call?

.....
.....
.....

Conversation 2:

1. What is the purpose of the conversation?

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.....
.....

2. Why does Kapil Verma reschedule the appointment?

.....
.....
.....

Conversation 3:

1. What is the purpose of the conversation?

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.....
.....

2. When is Mr. Ghai expected to return to office?

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.....
.....
.....

2.3 VOCABULARY

You will have noticed that the conversations in the reading section were formal. Formal telephone conversation use typical phrases, many of which you read in the text of the three conversations above.

Check Your Progress 2

Look again at the text of the 3 conversations and pick out the phrases of typical formal telephonic conversation in them.

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Activity 1

Change these informal sentences into formal and hence more polite sentences:

1. Who's calling?
.....
2. Mr. Chang can't meet you today.
.....
3. I want to meet him immediately.
.....
4. Can you tell him to meet me at 5 p.m. today?
.....
5. Will you come tomorrow at 9:30?
.....
6. Do you want a cup of tea while you wait?
.....
7. You can't talk to him now. He's on the other line.
.....
8. What's your name?
.....
9. What time do you want to meet Ms. Dillon?
.....
10. Switch off your cell phone during the meeting.
.....

2.4 LISTENING

The DPT Cell is organizing a series of training workshops. Listen to this conversation about its planning and arrangements and answer the questions below.

Check Your Progress 3

1. For whom are these workshops being organized?

.....
.....

2. Where are the participant teachers going to stay?

.....

3. Who is going to make travel arrangements for resource persons coming from outside the city?

.....

4. Where are these resource persons going to stay?

.....

5. What equipment has Malti already arranged for?

.....
.....

6. What additional equipment has Ms Naidu requested her for?

.....

2.5 GRAMMAR: MODALS OF POLITE REQUEST (MAY, WOULD YOU, COULD YOU)

Modal verbs are helping/auxiliary verbs that express ideas like **ability**, **permission**, and **asking for assistance**. Many modal verbs have more than one meaning. They are always followed by the simple form of a verb.

For example:

Could you give me the address of your office, please?

This shows that the speaker is asking for the address politely.

To ask questions in a **very** polite way, we use: **Would you/ Could you** (please) + simple verb + ...?

For example:

A: **Would you** please send the document to me again?

B: I'm afraid I can't find it.

To ask questions in a **polite but less formal way**, we say: **Will you/ Can you** (please) + simple verb + ...?

For example:

A: Will you please send the document again?

B: I can't find it.

We **do not use the word "may"** in a polite question when "you" is the subject.

For example:

May you please close the door? → Wrong!

Could you please close the door? → Right!

The word "please" makes the request more polite and less direct.

Check Your Progress 4

1. Fill in the blanks with the correct modals.

- i. Sunita:send me the document by email? (very polite)
- ii. Teacher: Pankaj.....erase the blackboard for me? (less formal)
- iii.you show me how to use this computer software? (less polite and informal)
- iv. Salil.....photocopy these letters right away? (less polite)
- v. Rahat:help me with this project, please? (very polite)
- vi. Ma'am: explain this point to me again, please? (very polite)

2. Make these sentences from the text less polite and formal.

- i How may I help you?
- ii May I know who's on the line?
- iii When would you like to come, Sir?
- iv Could you give me the address of your office, please?
- v. Would 10 a.m. on Thursday, the 17th, suit you?

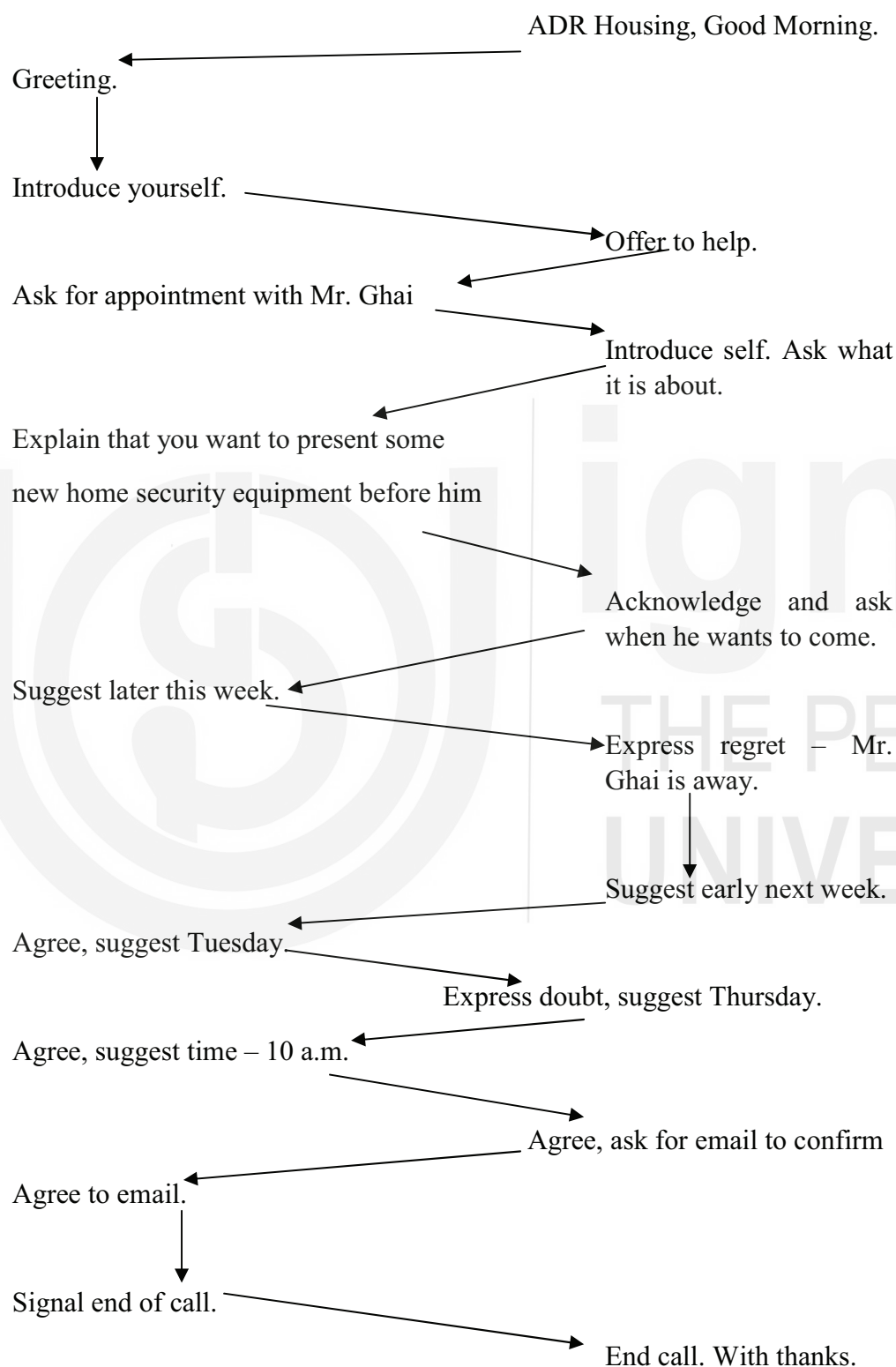
2.6 WRITING AND SPEAKING

Check Your Progress 5

1. Given below are the steps in a telephone conversation between two people in a business context. The arrows indicate the flow of conversation. Create the dialogue taking the help of language introduced in the reading section.

Caller – Pankaj Rai
(Newage Systems, Pune)

Called – Kapil Verma
(ADR Housing, Gurgaon)



- Write an essay on **How to arrange a Farewell Party**. Use the following points: Set a Budget, Delegate Roles and Responsibilities, Keep the atmosphere light with some games and entertainment, Make the farewell address interesting but short, Present a thoughtful farewell gift.

2.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we learnt how to make, reschedule and cancel appointments and meetings. We also learnt and practiced polite language, especially polite phrases that are commonly used in telephonic conversations. We also practiced long telephonic conversations regarding making arrangements for events to be held. In the writing and speaking section, we practiced the structure of a detailed conversation on arranging a meeting and what the flow of such a conversation should be.

2.8 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

Conversation 1:

- 1 The purpose of the conversation is to arrange a meeting between Mr Ghai and Mr. Rai.
- 2 Mr. Ghai had told Kapil Verma to expect Mr. Rai's call.

Conversation 2:

- 1 The purpose of the conversation is to reschedule the meeting between Mr. Ghai and Mr. Rai.
- 2 Kapil Verma reschedules the meeting because Mr. Ghai has had to go on an urgent business trip.

Conversation 3:

- 1 The purpose of the conversation is to cancel the meeting between Mr. Ghai and Mr. Rai because Mr. Ghai has taken ill.
- 2 Kapil Verma does not know when Mr. Ghai will return to office because he is ill.

Check Your Progress 2

- i How may I help you?
- ii I'd like to make an appointment with Mr. Ghai.
- iii May I know who's on the line?
- iv When would you like to come, Sir?
- v Would 11 a.m. on Tuesday suit you?
- vi I'm afraid we'll have to reschedule your Tuesday meeting with Mr. Ghai.
- vii I'm sorry for the inconvenience.
- viii Would 10 a.m. on Thursday, the 17th, suit you?
- ix Please accept my apologies for the delay.

Activity 1

1. May I know who is calling?
2. I'm afraid Mr. Chang won't be able to meet you today.
3. I would like to meet him as early as possible.
4. Could you ask him to meet me at 5 p.m. today?
5. Would it be possible for you to come tomorrow at 9:30?
6. Would you like a cup of tea while you wait?
7. I'm afraid it won't be possible to talk to him now. He's on the other line.
8. May I have your name?
9. What time would you like to meet Ms. Dillon?
10. Please switch off your cell phone during the meeting.

2.9 LISTENING (TAPE SCRIPT)

Ms. Naidu: Hello.

Malti Rao: Good morning Ms. Naidu. This is Malti Rao from the DTP Cell.

Ms. Naidu: Good morning, Malti. What can I do for you?

Malti: Ma'am, as you already know from our Director, Ms. Vaidya's email, we are organizing a series of workshops for middle school teachers next month. She has asked me to co-ordinate with you on this project.

Ms. Naidu: Yes, Malti. I have the schedule right here in front of me. The workshops are from the 15th to 19th of April, right?

Malti: Yes, Ma'am. We have also sent you the list of workshops.

Ms. Naidu: Yes. I've already got in touch with the resource persons. But some of them will be coming from outside Delhi, so you will have to make arrangements for their stay. I will ask them to mail their confirmation to me and copy them to you.

Malti: That would be very helpful. I have already made arrangements for the teachers in one of the hostels, and we have reserved a few rooms in our guest house for some resource persons too. Once I know how many are coming from outside Delhi I'll arrange their tickets as well as book rooms for them.

Ms. Naidu: That's fine. I'll ask them to confirm their participation within this week. You will also need to make arrangements for some equipment that they may need.

Malti: Right, Ma'am. We've already made arrangements for an OHP and 8-10 laptops. If they need any material to be photocopied

for their workshops, please ask them to mail it to us and we'll make the necessary copies and keep them ready. In case any other arrangement needs to be made, please let me know and I'll get it done.

Ms. Naidu: I'm sure some of them may like to use some audio clips along with their PowerPoint presentations, so please arrange for that too.

Malti: That's fine. We'll have an audio system ready.

Ms. Naidu: I think that covers it all, Malti. If I think of something else, I'll let you know.

Malti: Thank you, Ma'am.

Check Your Progress 3

1. The workshops are being organized for middle school teachers.
2. The participants are going to stay in a hostel.
3. Malti is going to make travel arrangements for the resource persons.
4. They will be put up at a guest house.
5. Malti has already arranged for 8-10 computers and an OHP. She has also said that she will make photocopies that the trainers require.
6. Ms Naidu would like her to arrange for an audio system too.

Check Your Progress 4

1. i. would you please
ii. will you
iii. can
iv. can you
v. Could you
vi. would you
2. i. Can I help you?
ii. Can you tell me who's speaking?
iii. What time are you coming?
iv. Give me the address of your office. Or Can you give me the address of your office.
v. Can you come at 10 am on Thursday, the 17th.

Check Your Progress 5

1. ADR Housing: ADR Housing, good morning.

Newage Systems: Hello, I'm Pankaj Rai from Newage Systems, Pune.

- ADR Housing:** How may I help you, Mr. Rai?
- Newage Systems:** I'd like an appointment with Mr. Ghai.
- ADR Housing:** I'm Kapil Verma, Mr. Rai's secretary. Can you tell me what it's about?
- Newage Systems:** Certainly. We've imported some latest security equipment from France, and I'd like to give Mr. Rai a demonstration for his new housing project.
- ADR Housing:** I see. When would you like to meet with Mr. Rai?
- Newage Systems:** Perhaps later this week?
- ADR Housing:** I'm afraid that won't be possible, Sir. Mr. Rai is away all of this week. How about early next week?
- Newage Systems:** That should be fine. Could we meet on Tuesday the 18th then?
- ADR Housing:** Unfortunately he's busy all day Tuesday. Would Thursday be alright with you?
- Newage Systems:** That's fine. Shall we say 10 a.m.?
- ADR Housing:** That would be perfect, Sir. Could you send us a mail to confirm?
- Newage Systems:** Yes, I will. I think that is everything for now.
- ADR Housing:** Thank you, Sir, and we look forward to your email to confirm the meeting. Goodbye, Mr. Rai.

2. How to arrange a Farewell Party

Healthy professional relationships within the office allow the entire office to work like a happy team and this in turn helps to achieve group goals. An employee who is leaving the organization should be treated like a family member who is leaving the family. A well-planned office farewell party can achieve great goodwill and foster a spirit of bonding between employees.

Office farewell parties need to be planned with efficiency and economy. Careful planning allows you to arrange a very successful farewell party within your budget. Here are a few tips for arranging a successful farewell party for a colleague who is leaving the fold or retiring.

Set a Budget

Offices usually have a clear policy regarding the budget for farewell parties at different levels of the organization. However, if there is no such policy, then it is important to decide the budget of the party as a first step of the planning process.

Delegate Roles and Responsibilities

The farewell party can be organized by office staff members, unless it is a large-scale party that requires professional arrangements. A few volunteers

within the office can be entrusted with different responsibilities to prepare for the party. This ensures that no single employee is over-burdened with the planning tasks and the entire party gets conducted with a team spirit because of the participation and involvement of more people.

Keep the atmosphere light with some games and entertainment

Just because it is an office party, it need not be solemn and boring. Bring in some fun with group games and other entertainment. But make sure that the group games and entertainment programs conform to the ethics and principles of the company. Ensure that there is no loud music or noisy games. Fun and enjoyment is important, but try to keep things simple. Use creativity and imagination to make the party lively and seek volunteers who can add live entertainment to the party with their performing talents.

Make the farewell address interesting but short

Make sure the theme of the party centers around the employee in whose honor the farewell is being given. Make the farewell address interesting, motivating and moving at the same time. Designate the job of preparing the address to one of the best writers in the office. Invite the employee for whom the party is to be given to also speak a few words to his or her colleagues.

Present a thoughtful farewell gift

The farewell gift should be something that your departing colleague would like to keep. Take the opinion of someone who is close to the recipient and may be able to suggest the appropriate gift. Make sure that the budget for the gift has been approved by the office, or if the employees are making a contribution for it, the amount of contribution should be decided by consensus.

UNIT 3 LEAVING AND TAKING MESSAGES

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Taking messages in person
- 3.3 Taking messages over the telephone
- 3.4 Writing email messages
- 3.5 Writing business messages
- 3.6 Responding to received messages
- 3.7 Grammar
- 3.8 Let us sum up
- 3.9 Answers

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- state the importance of messages in office management;
- use basic telephone skills for communication and taking messages;
- write clear messages which are easy to understand;
- write effective messages for diverse audience;
- respond to messages appropriately; and
- maintain a log of messages received and sent.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The features of telephone talk and the skills of making arrangements and appointments were discussed in the previous units. The unit 'Leaving and Taking Messages' focuses on receiving and leaving messages, which is of intrinsic importance in office administration. Office personnel have to communicate with persons within the office, with other departments as well as maintain communication with individuals or persons from other agencies and organizations. Information is received from different quarters in the office- it could be one departmental head wishing to talk to the head of the concerned department, it could be an employee who wishes to report on the progress of a project or sales or simply to explain absence from work or to seek leave. There may be persons wishing to talk to employees at different levels in order to make enquiries, initiate sales communication, make complaints or seek appointments. This communication may be done in person when the interlocutor walks into the office in search of the concerned person or it may happen over the telephone.

Often this communication cannot be completed as the concerned officer might be away on official work or on leave.

In such circumstances it becomes imperative to receive the information and put it on a 'message' meant for the concerned person. This message can be written on a piece of paper or on a formatted message pad, or by email. The office secretary also needs to maintain a log book of messages, so that relevant messages can be accessed at a later date.

3.2 TAKING MESSAGES IN PERSON

Preparedness for taking messages

You need to be prepared to take a message or you would be scrambling for paper or pens at the last moment. That way you will end up writing the message on scraps of paper which might get lost in the clutter of paper on your desk. On the receiver's part there is nothing more frustrating than reading a message which has been scribbled at the back of an envelope or a bill.

So you would need to be prepared with the following:

- Pens or pencils.
- Professional or preprinted telephone message pads or books. These will save you the trouble of writing the major heads of the information you would need to record. This will also ensure that you do not record anything other than the essential information or details. It might have heads like Date, Time, Caller, Organization, Contact no., Please call back/ Will call again, space for message etc.
- Alternately an ordinary writing pad of a manageable size can also be used.

Place these in a prominent place so that these do not get lost amongst the files and papers. After use, remember to place it back at its defined place for future use.

This situation will arise when your office or department has a visitor who wishes to meet a member of the department who is out or not available. This visitor can be from another department or may have come from another office, a client or a person desiring to make initial contact.

Offer the visitor a chair and politely enquire about the purpose of the visit. Explain to the visitor why he/she cannot meet the concerned person at that point of time. Offer to take a message and promise to call back.

As you take the message ask the visitor for the following information:

- name of the person (or designation/officer) he/she wished to meet
- full name and designation of the visitor
- address or contact number
- the purpose of the visit
- the exact message they would like to leave

- the nature of the message (the urgency and how it needs to be delivered)
- date and time when the message was recorded

Remember to

- repeat the message to the visitor to ensure that you have got it right.
- write legibly so that receiver can read it easily. You might also have to read your own handwriting at a later stage and then you should not have to struggle over it.
- if you are using a printed message pad, locate the appropriate boxes and tick them. (visitor's actions and requests i.e. visited, please call, urgent, etc.)
- remember to sign the message so that the receiver can revert to you.

Be direct, clear and concise in your message.

Needless to say, once recorded, you must give the message to the relevant person as soon as possible. If the message is confidential or sensitive then take care not to leave it around on your table for others to see.

3.3 TAKING MESSAGES OVER THE TELEPHONE

Taking messages over the telephone

The material you would require would be the same with the addition of the telephone. Your organization may have some professional telephone message pad.

Be polite on the phone and explain why the caller cannot talk to the concerned person. Ask whether the caller would like to leave a message. If, yes, then get the necessary details mentioned in the previous section.

You would need to be thorough!

Note the

- the name of the person for whom the message is intended
- time of call
- date
- nature of call
- the caller's name
- business or affiliation
- contact number (including extension or cell phone number if applicable).

If you are using a printed message pad then locate and check the relevant box as to what action is required. If you are the person taking the message, sign the message with your name or initials so if there are any questions, the

receiver of the message doesn't have any difficulty finding the person who took the message in case he/she needs more information.

Do not disconnect immediately. Take an extra second and read back the information to the caller to make sure it is correct. Also keep in mind to cross check the spelling of names of persons and companies.

Make a note if the message is urgent. If the call is something that needs to be addressed ASAP or is time sensitive, reach the message to its owner as soon as possible. Don't leave it on their desk! There is a likelihood that you might forget about it while attending to other duties. First ensure that the message reaches the receiver or his/her office before attending to other duties.

If the message is for a group of people, then make copies of it and put a few on the tables and one on the notice board where everyone can see it. Ensure that the paper and the letters on it are large enough to catch the eye.

Check Your Progress 1

1. Complete the information that your message pad should contain:
 - the name of the person for
 - the name of the personas well as the company
 - his/her (for future reference, or if he/she is required to be rung back)
 - the the message (how urgent and how it is to be delivered)
 - whether the caller will need to be back
 - the actual giving special attention to figures
 - date on which the message
 -the message was received
 - of the person taking the message

TELEPHONE MESSAGE

To: Room No:
Department:
Date: Time:
Caller:
Organization:
Phone/Mobile No: Ext:
Message:
.....
Message Taken By:

Taken from the Internet site:
<http://intranet.bpc.ac.uk/widecoll/hotel/TelMess.html>

3.4 WRITING EMAIL MESSAGES

Writing to Individuals

You may receive messages on email (electronic mail) or you might leave an email message for the receiver. If the person for whom the message is intended opens his or her email account once or twice everyday you would be sure that the message has been delivered. Emails are more efficient not only because they can be delivered instantly, but also because they have a shorter text and are easy to read.

While receiving an email message, you need to be very careful to get the real meaning of the message. An unhappy client or contact may use expressions that are sarcastic and we need to decipher the actual meaning beneath the message. During a face to face interaction with the visitor or client we pick meanings from facial expressions, body language and tone of voice. Similarly even telephone conversations convey meaning by tone of voice, the speed of delivery and the loudness of the voice. We take note of these and send messages which may be marked 'URGENT' 'Need your intervention' etc.

On the other hand, you need to take care while writing email messages. They should be carefully worded and not impromptu. Include in your email message details like why you are writing and who you are writing to and the subject of the message. Email messages need to be brief and to the point, as the main message may get lost in a longish piece running into three paragraphs. At the same time the message should not be so short that the receiver finds it cryptic and does not understand you. There should be enough information so that the receiver understands both the context and the details of the message.

Your message might include the following:

1. Nature of Message: Requires immediate action/Urgent/Important/Routine
2. Name of receiver: Kind Attention Ms/Mr.
3. Subject: The main message is summed up here
4. Important details like: Occasion/context
 - name of person/s or organization where s/he works
 - date and time of the visit or telephone call
 - purpose of calling
 - any explicit wishes (to be called back, the meeting to be rescheduled, order to be cancelled etc.
5. Signing off
6. Signature/name of the person who has taken the message

Here is a sample.

Message requires immediate attention

Kind Attention: Ms. Reena Paul, Head, Publications

Subject: The consignment of Modern Office Practices not delivered at St. Helena School

Dear Ms. Paul,

Mr. Daman, Programme Officer at St. Helena school called at 11.15 this morning to complain about the non-delivery of the consignment of books of our Modern Office Practices course. He said that they need the books immediately for disbursement.

He wishes you to call at no. 9711333333 informing him the exact date of delivery.

Thank you/Regards

Poonam Singh

Writing messages for a group of people

Sometimes you have to write an email message to a small group which is related to the work of the group. The purposes of such messages can be many:

- Arranging meetings/ get together
- Changing time/date or venue of meeting
- Disseminating minutes or notes of discussions
- Asking for agenda items
- Communicating a project's progress

The email message you send would be addressed to all in the group with their email ids in the 'To' column of the email. Alternately it can be sent to the main person with 'CC' marked to the others. But it is more democratic to send the message to the group and address them as 'Dear All'.

Keep in mind why you are writing the email message. Place the most important information on the top or in the beginning as the subject. The subject should be brief but informative enough to carry the major details of the message. A very busy person can get the message by reading the subject or heading alone.

The message should also indicate what the recipients are expected to do or bring with them for the meeting or discussion. The specific goal of the meeting can be mentioned too.

A word of caution! Be careful with the grammar. Avoid grammatical mistakes in your message. Whether it is a handwritten message or an

electronic message, it is essential to note who we are addressing in the message and use appropriate language and style.

Dear All,

Meeting of North Zone to decide strategies for the current year

Mr. Amal Nath, Area Manager of North Zone, would like to meet all the representatives of the North Zone to discuss the strategies for the current year. The meeting will be held in Conference Room no 3 at 3.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 17 November. He has requested all to come with concrete proposals and ideas.

Please email in case of a query.

Thank you/Regards

.....
Secretary
Marketing and Sales Department
ABC Electronics

In today's world computers have made work simpler and more efficient. It is suggested that if the persons in the department have computers, sending email messages is a more efficient option. This has two advantages. One message can be sent to multiple recipients. There is always a copy remaining in the 'SENT' folder with the time and date. It also ensures that the recipient will see the message because people do open their email accounts at least once in a day.

Check Your Progress 2

1. You are Preeti/ Pritpal Singh working as secretary to Mr. Yahya Khan, Director - School of Primary Education. You receive a call from the Ms. A. Sehgal, Director, School of Languages regarding a meeting to discuss training programmes for English teachers of the North-Eastern States of India. The meeting would be held in the Conference room of the School of Languages at 2.30 p.m. on Friday 26 November. Mr. Yahya Khan is attending another meeting and is unable to come to the telephone.

Prepare an email message for Mr. Yahya Khan.

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3.5 WRITING BUSINESS MESSAGES

If you are working in a Sales department of an office, you might have to send sales messages introducing the product or respond to queries of the prospective buyers.

Frame your message in such a way that the person is compelled to read it. Give it an attractive headline to arouse the curiosity and interest of the prospective buyer to ensure that the person is compelled to read your message.

The message should be direct, and like all the other messages and it should be personalized with the person's name and details. This will ensure that they see the message and read it too.

The first sales message would be an introductory one. Provide information about you, your organization and your product. If your company is a long-standing or leading one, in the particular product, do not hesitate to say so. Do not push for the sales. The first sales message would be an introduction and expression of thanks for showing interest in your product in case the person initiated the enquiry. Just give an idea of what is to come in the next message.

Your subsequent message would carry information about your products and the services offered by your company. If there are any benefits or schemes for the buyers then provide the necessary details. This might attract them. Through your message you should be able to create a need for your product. The prospective buyer should almost begin to feel that your product is the only answer to his/her problem or need.

It is important to make comparisons between your products and those of your competitors-like price, features and after sales service. Provide a postscript (PS) to the mail in which you may announce what the next message would contain. This will keep the interest alive. This makes the sales message different from the other office messages as in order to attract the prospective buyer you would need to be a little creative. The other messages are rather matter-of-fact.

As in other messages- be brief, concise and ensure that your message has no spelling or grammatical error.

Here are some examples:

- WE HAVE SOME IMPORTANT NEWS TO BOOST YOUR WINTER SALES!
- The shipment you've been waiting for has finally arrived!
- Our new generation of winter wear is here! You can begin ordering today.
- The sleek designs of the modern brands have been widely publicized and we have been bombarded with inquiries about their availability.
- The wait for your customers is over. They will be delighted to see the new trends in winter wear displayed in your store.

- The enclosed literature describes all the patterns and the specifications.
- Your discount schedule is also included. Take a careful look. You'll see that by just ordering a few more winter outfits, your profit margin increases dramatically. In addition, you can also qualify for a special discount of 5% on orders placed before October 31.
- Hurry and place your order today. We guarantee a 48-hour turnaround. You don't want to leave your customers out in the cold (literally).

(Edited from the Internet)

3.6 RESPONDING TO RECEIVED MESSAGES

An important part of office management is responding to messages as well. You might receive various messages on email to which you might need to respond.

The first and foremost thing is not to delay responding to the message for delay reflects poorly on the professional ethics of the company. It is important to discuss the message and the response it merits with your immediate senior or colleague in office. This will ensure that no impromptu response messages are sent which you would want to recall. Moreover, your senior would be in a better position to provide the requisite information or offer solutions to a problem. Having decided the appropriate response press the 'Reply' key and frame your response addressing the person by name.

If the original message is a neutral or a positive one, thank the interlocutor at the beginning of your message. If it is a negative one, for instance a complaint, begin with an expression of regret that the person was inconvenienced in any way and then offer a solution.

Here too you would need to be brief giving the essential information in a concise and clear manner. Highlight the major points by separating the paragraphs. You might want your immediate senior to get a copy too so he or she is aware of the progress in the matter.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Mention ways of writing effective sales messages. What are the ways you can ensure the sale of your product?

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2. Why is it important to discuss the response of a message with a senior in office?

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3.7 GRAMMAR

Look at the paragraph below. It describes the market trends in women’s wear.

Trends in women’s clothing are changing. Jeans, trousers, Capri’s and tights are replacing the good old sari and salwar suits. Since many women are going out to work and seem to be working late, trousers and tops seem to be the easiest things to manage. Although women have begun to look more professional and modern nowadays, this trend has terrible fallout. Weavers and traditional fabric makers are suffering huge losses due to a fall in demand and sales. It has been reported in the news that in many places the traditional loom workers are committing suicides faced with bleak prospects and starvation.

The progressive form

I You will notice that the underlined verbs describe the action or processes that are happening at the time of speaking (nowadays) or in real time. The forms that the verb takes are:

- a) is+verb+ing (third person singular, ‘he’ or ‘she’)
- b) are+verb+ing (third person plural, second person ‘you’ and first person plural ‘we’)
- c) am_verb+ ing (first person singular ‘I’)

You will also notice that in the verb ‘are committing’ the last consonant ‘t’ has been doubled in the progressive form. This happens when the vowel sound before the last consonant is a short one as in run (running), ship (shipping), stop (stopping) or bat (batting).

We also drop the final ‘e’ in verbs before adding ‘ing’ as in verbs given below:

weave (weaving), stare (staring), store (storing), trade (trading)

Check Your Progress 4

Complete the sentences using the present progressive forms of the verbs given in the brackets.

1. Prices of all essential commodities(rise) day by day. the government(do) anything about it?
2. Our table tennis team(practise) in the stadium. You cannot have your match there.
3. With the advent of the malls many small shopkeepers (shut) their shops down and(turn) to other trades.
4. We(wait) for the new consignment of televisions to arrive. They are said to have some new features.
5. You may leave the meeting if you do not like it. No one(stop) you.
6. I think you(waste) my time with the history of your unhappy purchase. Please tell me what you expect me to do.
7. I(study) medicine so that I can understand how the human body functions.
8. These students(do) a course in hotel management.

II We also use the Present Progressive Tense to indicate future action, future plans or schedules as in the example below.

We are discontinuing the discount on DVD players from next year.

Check Your Progress 5

Rewrite the sentences using the Present Progressive Tense.

1. According to the plan the Managing Director will be inaugurate the new machine on Monday.
2. As per schedule the new session will begin on the 15 of July this year.
3. We plan to leave for Mumbai in a day or two.
4. Kebabs and Curries plan to open a branch in Uttam Nagar in January next year.
5. As per schedule the President will visit Somalia in the end of September.
6. Tonight my friend Urvashi will read the news over television. This is because Mohini, the regular newsreader has fallen sick.

III. It is important to note that we do not use the progressive forms with certain verbs which represent the senses, emotions, a sense of possession or states of being. So we say: 'I smell something burning' and not 'I am smelling something burning.'

Similarly we say: I love cheese and burger.

We do not use the verbs see, fear, hear, smell, like, love, hate, have etc.in the progressive tense.

Check Your Progress 6

Use the verbs in the brackets in their correct forms.

1. I.....(hear) someone knocking. See if it is the postman.
2. Indians(not like) the impersonal behavior of certain cultures. They like to socialize and even involve themselves in the affairs of others.
3. Just a minute. I.....(have) just the thing you need at this moment.
4. The bus(run) late. I(fear) I'll be late for my appointment.
5. Every child(wish) to be treated with respect.
6. Let's rush. My uncle(hate) to be kept waiting.

3.8 LET US SUM UP

Messages are an important part of any office management. Messages can be noted in person or over telephone, using a pen and message pad or a formatted and printed message pad. Messages can be sent to the owner/recipient through email. Emails can be useful in sending messages to a number of persons at the same time. A copy can be sent to the mailbox of all the persons. Group messages can also be manually delivered by pasting them on conspicuous bulletin boards. Messages are brief, clear and to the point containing the relevant information. They need to be delivered on time to avoid delays in action. Business messages play an important role in promoting or executing sales.

3.9 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

The information that the message pad should contain is:

- the name of the person for **whom the message is meant**
- the name of the person **giving the message** as well as the company to which s/he belongs
- his/her **contact number** (for future reference, or if he/she is required to be rung back)
- the **nature of** the message (how urgent and how it is to be delivered)
- whether the caller will need to be **called back**
- the actual **message** giving special attention to figures
- date on which the message **was left/received**
- **time when** the message was received
- **name** of the person taking the message

Check Your Progress 2

Message: URGENT

Subject: Call from Director, School of Languages regarding meeting

Kind attention: Mr. Yahya Khan, Director, School of Primary Education

Dear Mr. Khan,

Ms. A Sehgal, Director, School of Languages, telephoned regarding a meeting. The details of the meeting are as follows:

- Topic: Training programmes for teachers of North East
- Date and time: 2.30 p.m. on Friday, 26 November
- Venue: Conference Room, School of Languages, Block 7

She needs confirmation of your participation.

Thank you

Preeti/Pritpal Singh

Check Your Progress 3

1 Effective sales messages are personalized with the receiver's name and details. The initial message contains an attractive headline to arouse interest, an introduction to company and person sending the message with brief reference to product. There is no attempt to push sales.

Later messages contain more details about the product with comparisons with competitors' product, information about benefits and any schemes offered and so worded that the prospective buyer begins to feel that your product is the answer to his/her need.

2 It is important to discuss the response to a message with one's senior so that a proper response can be prepared. The senior would have more information and would be able to think of a solution. Taking some time over the message will ensure that no mistake is made in responding to the message.

Check Your Progress 4

1. Prices of all essential commodities **are rising** day by day. **Is** the government **doing** anything about it?
2. Our table tennis team **is practising** in the stadium. You cannot have your match there.
3. With the advent of the malls many small shopkeeper **are shutting** their shops down and **turning** to other trades.
4. We **are waiting** for the new consignment of televisions to arrive. They are said to have some new features.
5. You may leave the meeting if you do not like it. No one **is stopping** you.

6. I think you **are wasting** my time with the history of your unhappy purchase. Please tell me what you expect me to do.
7. I **am studying** medicine so that I can understand how the human body functions.
8. These students **are doing** a course in hotel management.

Check Your Progress 5

1. The Managing Director is inaugurating the new machine on Monday.
2. The new session is beginning on July 15 this year.
3. We are leaving for Mumbai in a day or two.
4. Kebabs and Curries are opening a branch in Uttam Nagar in January next year.
5. The President is visiting Somalia in the end of September.
6. Tonight my friend Urvashi is reading the news over television. This is because Mohini, the regular newsreader has fallen sick.

Check Your Progress 6

1. I **can hear** someone knocking. See if it is the postman.
2. Indians **do not like** the impersonal behavior of certain cultures. They like to socialize and even involve themselves in the affairs of others.
3. Just a minute. I **have** just the thing you need at this moment.
4. The bus **is running** late. I **fear** I'll be late for my appointment.
5. Every child **wishes** to be treated with respect.
6. Let's rush. My uncle **hates** to be kept waiting.

UNIT 4 TELECONFERENCING AND VIDEO CONFERENCING

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Warm up
- 4.2 Reading
- 4.3 Vocabulary
- 4.4 Listening
- 4.5 Writing and Speaking
- 4.6 Grammar: Gerunds
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Answers

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit will focus on teleconferencing and video conferencing. You will learn:

- how to prepare for a teleconference
- how to conduct the conference
- conference call etiquette
- how to prepare for a video conference
- what precautions need to be taken during a video conference
- advantages of long distance conferencing

4.1 WARM UP

Activity 1

Think of all the situations in which people have to arrange audio or video conferences. Write down at least five such situations.

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4.2 READING

4.2.1 Teleconferencing

A teleconference, as the name suggests, is a conference conducted over the telephone. It may involve two or more people. It could be conducted between two departments of the same organization, among several locations in the same city or different cities in the same country or it may be an international conference involving two or several different locations.



Whatever be the nature of the call, a teleconference needs thorough planning.

The first step in planning a teleconference is setting the agenda.

Planning

The first step while planning your teleconference is setting the agenda. This includes the number of items you need to put on the agenda, its goals and the duration of the conference. Setting the time limit will depend on the number of active participants, and deciding time allocation for each item on the agenda, and to each of the active participants. Some time has to be allocated for comments by non active participants.

Another aspect of planning is the technical support. See that you send all participants the dial-in number and pass code, if any. Make sure to include the international country code if you have international participants.

Before scheduling the call, confirm availability of participants. Remember to pick a time suitable to all participants, especially when participants are in different time zones across the world. Communicate their local time to international participants in your schedule. Distribute all required material such as files, links to websites etc., well in advance. If you need participants to have certain files ready for reference on their computers, ask them to be prepared for it. Keep a list of all participants ready.

Starting the call

As the facilitator of the telecom, see that you are first to be connected.

Greet and tick off each participant as they log on. Establish the protocol of each person announcing her/his name before speaking as it is not always easy to identify someone with their voice only. This is especially important when there are multiple participants. Besides, there may be new participants in the call.

Things to remember

See that you choose a quiet location and close windows and doors if there's a chance of disturbance. Speak clearly and avoid speaking too fast. Keep all cell phones off or on silent mode. If you need to consult documents on paper,

try to reduce paper rustling. If someone has to leave the room for some reason, announce leaving and returning.

While talking

The facilitator needs to track who is talking and ensure that all active participants get the opportunity to get their voice across. Use a person's name to get his/her attention. Assign different people the role of taking notes, keeping time and ticking off the items on the agenda as they get covered. If the teleconference group is large, ensure that only a few people don't dominate the call. Elicit responses and opinions from the quieter participants.

Closing the teleconference

Take minutes of the teleconference and use them for follow up. Distribute these as soon as possible after the meeting and highlight follow up steps and responsibilities. See that you allow time for closing comments. Remember to take feedback so that any problems in execution can be eliminated in further teleconferences.

Check Your Progress 1

Answer the following questions based on the passage you have just read.

1. What goes into planning the agenda of a teleconference?

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2. What determines the duration of the teleconference?

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3. What are the two things to remember when scheduling a teleconference with international participants?

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4. What precautions do you need to take to avoid noise disturbance?

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5. What are the things the facilitator needs to take care of during the conference?

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6. What needs to be done after closing the conference?

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4.3 VOCABULARY

There are some words in the English that are so similar in spelling and pronunciation that we sometimes confuse them, resulting in saying something totally different from what we intended, or not making any sense at all. There are other words that have such slight or subtle differences in usage that we confuse those too. Here is a list of some words from the Reading section along with the words they could be confused with:

- **Among** - between
- **Elicit** - illicit
- **Ensure** – assure

From the Reading text:

1. It could be conducted **between** two departments of the same organization, **among** several locations in the same city or different cities in the same country
2. **Elicit** responses and opinions from the quieter participants.

3. If the teleconference group is large, **ensure** that only a few people don't dominate the call.

Here is a list of other such words that are easily confused:

<p>Confusing words</p>
<p>Among/between Among – used when talking about more than two people Between – used when talking about two people</p>
<p>Accept/except Accept – to agree to receive or do Except – not including</p>
<p>Affect/effect Affect – to change or make a difference to Effect – a result</p>
<p>Appraise/apprise Appraise – to assess Apprise – to inform someone</p>
<p>Farther/further Farther – more distant in space Further – extending beyond a point of time or degree; to promote</p>
<p>Fewer/less Fewer – used with nouns that can be counted Less – used with quantities that cannot be uncounted</p>
<p>Stationary/stationery Stationary – unmoving things Stationery – writing materials</p>
<p>Imply/Infer Imply – to suggest indirectly Infer – to draw a conclusion</p>

<p>Council/counsel</p> <p>Council – a group of people who advise</p> <p>Counsel – to advice; advise</p>
<p>Elicit/illicit</p> <p>Elicit – to draw out a reply or reaction</p> <p>Illicit – not allowed by law or rule</p>
<p>Eminent/imminent</p> <p>Eminent – high in rank, noteworthy</p> <p>Imminent – impending, about to happen</p>
<p>Assure/ensure/insure</p> <p>Assure – convince</p> <p>Ensure – make certain</p> <p>Insure – guarantee against loss</p>

Activity 2

Fill up the gaps with a suitable word from the choices in the brackets:

- i. The management did not the explanation given by the employee. (except/accept)
- ii. She was the youngestthe seven new recruits. (between/among)
- iii. The lawyer tried toher that she had a strong case. (ensure/assure/insure)
- iv. She was nervous as manyacademicians were coming to her paper reading.(eminent/imminent)
- v. He found everythingthe file he was looking for. (accept/except)
- vi. The secretary had completely forgotten that they had run out of (stationery/stationary)
- vii. The meeting was scheduled to begin at 11:30. (council/counsel)
- viii. As soon as the director arrived, Seema him of the situation. (appraised/apprised)
- ix. After the presentation, there was much lessabout the project among the team members. (less/fewer)

- x. The manager's commentsthat he was surprised by the success of our project. (implied/inferred)
- xi. She had not considered the sideof such strong medication. (affects/effects)
- xii. There was visible tensionAnant and his manager. (between/among)
- xiii. After the showdown with his manager, Anant spent the weekend in tension, dreading his dismissal. (eminent/imminent)
- xiv. Thankfully, there was nodiscussion of the showdown on Friday. (farther/further)
- xv. She from the Professor's expression, that he was pleased with her paper. (inferred/implied)

4.4 LISTENING

Video conferencing has become an important communication tool among businesses across the world. Listen to this talk on video conferencing and answer the questions given.



Check You Progress 2

Mark the following statements *True* or *False* based on the talk you have just heard.

- i. Video conferencing is a great way for companies to save money by cutting travel costs and also to increase productivity by saving travel time.
- ii. Video conferencing can only be done with people in the same city.
- iii. Arranging for a video conference is much more complicated and takes much longer than arranging for a face-to-face meeting.
- iv. The best chair placement for a video conference is a circular arrangement with participants sitting around a round table.
- v. The party that is not speaking should mute the microphone in order to save electricity. During a video conference it is best to keep windows open so that the room is well lit as the video is clearer in a brightly lit room.
- vi. It is better to be dressed in sober, pastel colors, as bold and bright colors can cause distracting visual effects.
- vii. One can take the help of visual aids like images and data on the computer, the white board etc. during such a talk.
- viii. There is always a delay in a video conference, however sophisticated the technology. It is therefore important to leave a longer pause between two speakers.
- ix. It is important to make verbal responses as nodding or shaking the head may go unnoticed.

4.5 WRITING AND SPEAKING

Check Your Progress 3

You just read and heard about teleconferencing and video conferencing. Write down what you think are the advantages of both. In what way is video conferencing more beneficial than teleconferencing?



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Speak out your response after you have written it down.

4.6 GRAMMAR: GERUNDS

Read the sentences given below:

Another aspect of planning is technical support.

Speak clearly and avoid speaking too fast.

The underlined words are called gerunds.

Gerunds are the -ing form of a noun. They can be the subject or object in a sentence.

In sentence 1 the gerund planning is used as the subject as it comes before the verb is.

In sentence 2 speaking is a gerund used as an object of the verb avoid.

Gerunds are always used after certain verbs. The most common of these verbs are given in the table.

avoid	can't stand	dislike/like	suggest
can't bear	don't mind	Rise	keep on
can't help	avoid	Enjoy	prefer
postpone	practice	Finish	love/hate

Some verbs can be used with either a gerund or an infinitive without any change of meaning.

begin continue start love
hate like intend need

Tarun continued **working** late into the night.

Tarun continued **to work** late into the night.

I intend **going** on a long vacation

I intend **to go** on a long vacation.

Gerunds are also used after prepositions.

difficulty in worry about insist on believe in
keen on capable of succeed in amount of
bored with apologize for look forward to serious about

I had a lot of difficulty **in finding** my way here.

She insisted **on paying** for the book.

We look forward **to meeting** you again.

Wasim is capable **of making** the presentation.

Check Your Progress 4

Complete these sentences using the gerund form of the verbs given in the box.

wonder	work	fly	read
resign	steal	service	walk
warn	deal		

- i. There is nothing wrong with the car. It just needs
- ii. Do you rememberan article in the newspaper on corporate responsibility?
- iii. You're spending so much! I can't help where you get all that money.
- iv. I will never forgetinto my office on my first day at work.
- v. Mr. Santosh couldn't get the next job easily and soon regrettedfrom the job.
- vi. A packet of cigarette carries a Government Health
- vii. We have stopped.....with those stationers as they don't provide the books on time.

- viii. I likewith my new team leader as he gives me a lot of space.
 - ix. He was afraid of, so he always took the train.
 - x. He strongly deniedthe data, although the evidence pointed otherwise.
- 2 Write about six things you love or hate doing. Make use of the -ing form of the verb. One is done for you.
- i I love reading my email first thing in the morning.
 - ii
 - iii
 - iv
 - v
 - vi
 - vii

4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have learnt about how modern technology has changed the way we conduct business. The advantages of teleconferencing and video conferencing are many. As a result of the availability of these technologies, the world has shrunk and distances have become almost irrelevant. These technological advances are of great benefit, but we need to remember that to use any new method, one must learn to prepare for it. Because the technology is fast, preparation is paramount. The key to becoming comfortable with these aids is to learn to master them and not to get intimidated by them.

4.8 ANSWERS

Activity 1

Do it yourself.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Planning the agenda includes the number of items you need to put on the agenda, its goals and the duration of the conference.
- 2 The duration of the teleconference depends on the number of active participants, the time allocation for each item on the agenda and to each of the active participants. Some time has to be allocated for comments by non active participants.
- 3 While scheduling a teleconference with international participants one must remember to pick a time suitable to all participants in different time zones across the world and to communicate the local time to international participants in the schedule.

- 4 To avoid disturbance due to noise see that you choose a quiet location and close windows and doors. Keep all cell phones off or on silent mode. If you need to consult documents on paper, try to reduce paper rustling.
- 5 The facilitator needs to track who is talking and ensure that all active participants get the opportunity to speak. Assign different people the role of taking notes, keeping time and ticking off the items on the agenda as they get covered. Make sure that only a few people don't dominate the call. Elicit responses and opinions from the quieter participants.
- 6 Feedback needs to be taken after closing the call so that any problems in execution can be eliminated in further teleconferences.

Activity 2

- i The management did not **accept** the explanation given by the employee. (except/accept)
- ii She was the youngest **among** the seven new recruits. (between/among)
- iii The lawyer tried to **assure** her that she had a strong case. (ensure/assure/insure)
- iv She was nervous as many **eminent** academicians were coming to her paper reading. (eminent/imminent)
- v He found everything **except** the file he was looking for. (accept/except)
- vi The secretary had completely forgotten that they had run out of **stationery**. (stationery/stationary)
- vii The **council** meeting was scheduled to begin at 11:30. (council/counsel)
- viii As soon as the director arrived, Seema **apprised** him of the situation. (appraised/apprised)
- ix After the presentation, there was much **less** confusion about the project among the team members. (less/fewer)
- x The manager's comments **implied** that he was surprised by the success of our project. (implied/inferred)
- xi She had not considered the side **effects** of such strong medication. (affects/effects)
- xii There was visible tension **between** Anant and his manager. (between/among)
- xiii After the showdown with his manager, Anant spent the weekend in tension, dreading his **imminent** dismissal. (eminent/imminent)
- xiv Thankfully, there was no **further** discussion of the showdown on Friday. (farther/further)
- xv She **inferred** from the Professor's expression, that he was pleased with her paper. (inferred/implied)

Listening text

As we are aware, businesses use conference calls daily, both internally and outside of their company. Client meetings or sales presentations, project meetings and updates, regular team meetings, training classes and communication with employees who work in different locations are increasingly being done through conference calls. Conference calling is a primary means of cutting travel costs and allowing workers to be more productive by not having to go out-of-office for meetings. We have already seen what goes into planning and executing a teleconference. Now let us look at what additional preparations are required for a video conference.

What do we understand by the words Video Conferencing? A video conference is much like a teleconference, except that the interaction is audio visual. It is a form of telecommunication that simultaneously allows two or more locations to interact via two-way audiovisual transmissions. It also, like a teleconference, helps people sitting at different sites to come together for a meeting. This meeting may be between two people, each in his/her private office, or it may involve several sites with people sitting in large rooms at different locations. These locations may be anywhere in the world. A video conference helps share not just ideas in a discussion, but also documents, and information displayed on the computer or on a whiteboard. Additionally, as you can see the person who is speaking, aids such as graphs, charts and other such visuals are more effectively used in a video conference as opposed to a teleconference. It is as close as you can get to a face-to-face interaction.

Planning a video conference

Though it sounds more complicated than it is, it is fairly easy to plan a video conference. Much of the planning is a lot like planning a teleconference or a face-to-face one, something that you are already familiar with. Some key things specific to a video conference are as follows.

- Take care that all the planning, setting the agenda and circulating it among participants, along with the documents you would like them to have at hand during the conference, etc. are done well in advance, as one would do in a face-to-face or teleconference.
- Ensure that chair placements are such that all participants are visible in the camera's field of view. A U or V shaped arrangement, facing the camera, is usually the most suitable.
- See that lighting is appropriate. Diffused lighting is preferred so that light is evenly distributed and shadows are minimized.
- Draw drapes or blinds to cover windows. Bright sunlight filtering through windows is distracting, as it throws shadows and hampers vision.
- It is advisable for participants to wear neutral colors as bright colors and complex patterns can also be distracting.
- Call each location 15-20 minutes prior to the scheduled start time to make sure you are all connected.

- Do a test call before the meeting to ensure that lighting, chair placements and microphone placements are all optimal.
- See that all participants are seated before the session begins to avoid going in and out during the call.

During the Call

For the video conference to go off smoothly, there are a few precautions to be kept in mind during the talk.

- If more than two sites are participating, it is advisable that sites that are not talking mute their microphones so as to minimize disruption due to noise.
- While in a video conference, as in any meeting, avoid side talking, walking in and out of the room, typing, shuffling papers or doing any other work that distracts or causes sound disturbance.
- Remember that there is a short time delay in video conferencing. This is why it is important to leave a longer pause between two speakers than in a face-to-face or telephonic conversation. Wait till the other person has clearly finished before you continue the conversation.
- Always make a verbal response, as visual ones, like nodding or shaking the head may go unnoticed.

Plan well, keep these precautions in mind and your video conference will go without a hitch.

Check Your Progress 2

- i Video conferencing is a great way for companies to save money by cutting travel costs and also to increase productivity by saving travel time. **True**
- ii Video conferencing can only be done with people in the same city. **False**
- iii Arranging for a video conference is much more complicated and takes much longer than arranging for a face-to-face meeting. **False**
- iv The best chair placement for a video conference is a circular arrangement with participants sitting around a round table. **False**
- v The party that is not speaking should mute the microphone in order to save electricity. **True**
- vi During a video conference it is best to keep windows open so that the room is well lit as the video is clearer in a brightly lit room. **False**
- vii It is better to be dressed in sober, pastel colors, as bold and bright colors can cause distracting visual effects. **True**
- viii One can take the help of visual aids like images and data on the computer, the white board etc. during such a talk. **True**

- ix There is always a delay in a video conference, however sophisticated the technology. It is therefore important to leave a longer pause between two speakers. **True**
- x It is important to make verbal responses as nodding or shaking the head may go unnoticed. **True**

Check Your Progress 3

Tele and video conferencing have become an integral part of business the world over. As business organizations expand their operations to multiple cities, and then to different countries, these methods of communication have become an essential part of their interaction with their various offices. Tele and video conferencing help bring people from across the world together with literally the flick of a button. This saves both time and resources and increases the efficiency of work. Interaction becomes faster and people are more accessible to each other.

Video conferencing has a few advantages over teleconferencing. Here you can see the people you are speaking with and this makes communication a little more effective for you can use body language like gestures, expressions etc. to communicate. Though you can upload and send graphs charts etc before a teleconference, some visual aids like three dimensional articles can be viewed by participants only in a video conference. A video conference is closer to a face-to-face interaction than a teleconference.

Check Your Progress 4

- i servicing
- ii reading
- iii wondering
- iv walking
- v resigning
- vi warning
- vii dealing
- viii working
- ix flying
- x stealing