

# BACKWARDS DIALOGUE

## Aim

To practise making telephone calls

## Language

Language of telephoning; multi-word verbs, e.g. *hold on*, *put through*

## Skills

Speaking, listening

## Lesson link

Use after Classbook Lesson 13

## Materials

One copy of the worksheet cut up

## Pre-activity (5 minutes)

- Divide the students into teams. Tell them they are going to do a short quiz about multi-word verbs connected with telephoning.
- Ask the teams the difference between *get through* and *be cut off* (*get through*: manage to speak to the person you're calling, *cut off*: line disconnected); between *pick up* and *hang up* (*pick up*: answer the phone, *hang up*: put the receiver down at the end of a call); between *call* and *call back* (*call*: phone someone, *call back*: phone a second time to speak to someone); between *look up* and *speak up* (*look up*: look for a telephone number in the phone book, *speak up*: speak louder); between *hold on* and *put through* (*hold on*: wait a minute, *put through*: connect to another department / person).
- The first team to answer a question correctly gets a point.

## Procedure (30 minutes)

- 1 Divide the class into pairs and give each pair one of the situation cards from *Backwards Dialogue*.
- 2 Give the students five to ten minutes to invent a dialogue based on the situation. Circulate and check accuracy and the appropriacy of the dialogues. Encourage the students to incorporate as much telephone language into their dialogues as they can.
- 3 Each pair then reads their dialogues out, but backwards (line by line, not word by word). The students listen and guess the situation and the relationship between the speakers. When a student thinks they know the situation and relationship they interrupt the pairs, shouting, 'Stop!'
- 4 If the guess is correct, the pair then read the dialogue forwards. Ask them to focus on the stress and intonation of the dialogues.

## Extension activities

- The students think of their own situations for a second round.
- Tape the forward versions and analyse them for correct stress and intonation.

# BACKWARDS DIALOGUE

1

A guest calling a hotel  
to enquire about  
booking a room

2

A customer calling an airline  
to book a plane ticket

3

A man calling a woman to  
ask her out on a date

4

A woman calling a man to ask  
him out on a date

5

A person calling a friend to  
ask him / her to dinner

6

A secretary calling another  
secretary to check a meeting time

7

A person calling the theatre  
to buy tickets

8

A person calling the doctor's  
receptionist to make an  
appointment

9

A person calling a sports centre  
to find out how much it is to hire a  
tennis court

10

A person calling a restaurant  
to book a table

11

Someone calling a company  
to order a product from the  
sales department

12

Someone calling in response to  
an advert in the paper about a  
car for sale

## 2 Can you make a phone call?

Language practised: *Phrases2know* page 20 of the Students' Book

Speaking: interaction

Time: about 15 minutes

You will need one photocopy for each pair.

- Make pairs and hand out Resource 2 to each pair of students. Read through the instructions with the class and check they understood what to do.
- Remind students not to look at each other's role cards. Check that they understand that there are two separate conversations, conversation 1 and conversation 2 and that they will roleplay each conversation separately.
- Give students three or four minutes to read their cards and to think about what they're going to say. Remind them to use the *Phrases2know* on page 20 of the Students' Book and to remember to use formal or informal language as appropriate.
- Students do the roleplays. Monitor and support as necessary.
- Make new A and B pairs for further practice if appropriate or ask some pairs to perform their roleplays for the class.

# Can you make a phone call?

## Student A

In this activity you are going to make formal and informal phone calls. There are two roleplays so do each one in turn.

**1** You're looking for a place to rent with your friend Sam. You've seen an advert in the newspaper for a flat in Holland Avenue and it looks perfect. You phone your friend but his or her brother or sister answers the phone.

Ask to speak to Sam.

If he isn't there, tell Sam's brother or sister all about the flat.

Leave a message and ask Sam to call you back as soon as possible.

You're at your cousin's house at the moment – the number is 01571 688 423.

**2** You work at Belview Property Services. Your company rents houses and flats. Your boss is Mrs Matthews.

Answer the phone.

Put the caller through to Mrs Matthews.

Tell the caller that she's out at the moment.

Ask what the call is about. If it's about a flat on Holland Avenue, you think it's already rented.

If necessary, take a message. Write the message and the phone number down.



## Student B

In this activity you are going to make formal and informal phone calls. There are two roleplays so do each one in turn.

**1** You're Sam's brother or sister. You're at home when the phone rings.

Answer the phone.

Ask the caller to wait and check if Sam is at home.

Tell the caller that Sam isn't in at the moment.

Ask what the call is about.

Ask if you can take a message.

Write down the message and the phone number that Sam should call.

**2** You're looking for a flat to rent with your friend. You've seen an advert for a flat in Holland Avenue and it looks perfect.

The advert says to call Mrs Matthews at 'Belview Property Services'.

Phone and ask to speak to Mrs Matthews.

Say why you're calling.

Ask for details of the flat and arrange a time to see it. Ask Mrs Matthews to call to confirm.

Leave your name and phone number for her to call you. Your number is 903 669 758.

## HOW CAN I HELP YOU?

### Materials: two role cards per student

Ss work in pairs. Give all Student As and Student Bs their two role cards. Start by discussing Ss' experiences of telephone customer service and call centres. Focus on whether they are generally positive or negative and why. Explain that in the activity Ss will have a chance both to make and to respond to enquiries. Check the vocabulary to *clone a card*, *overdraft* and *overdrawn* and give the Ss time to read their role-cards and prepare what they are going to say. The role play begins with Student A phoning Student B about a power cut. Before you start, remind Ss to use the functional language from I.3 and to always be polite. Ss continue with the second role play. At the end, discuss whether the class felt their enquiries were dealt with politely and effectively.





### Student A – Making enquiries

**There is a power cut on your street and you have had no electricity for twelve hours. You phoned the power company just after it happened and were told to phone back later in the day after they had investigated the problem. You are now phoning for a second time.**

- Find out when the power will be switched on again.
- Find out what the problem was and if it will happen again.
- Find out why there are not any engineers working on the problem now (there were some this morning).
- Find out what compensation you can expect to receive.
- Explain how inconvenient it has been and how unhappy you are with the situation.

**Phone Customer Service now!**

### Student A – Managing enquiries

**You work in the customer service department of a national bank, CTB. You deal with customer complaints and problems. A customer is going to phone you regarding a cloned cash card. Their money was stolen but the bank has not refunded it yet.**

- Ask for personal and bank account details as well as security passwords.
- Apologise that the computer system is really slow today.
- Explain that the customer has not received a refund because the bank has not received a police crime reference number yet.
- Explain refunds take a minimum of ten working days.
- Explain customers should not normally have to pay overdraft charges in these circumstances. You can ask your supervisor to refund the charges immediately.

**Start the conversation with: Hello this is CTB. This is (name) speaking. How can I help you?**

### Student B – Managing enquiries

**You work in the customer service department of a national power company, EGON Power. A customer experiencing a power cut is going to phone you for the second time about the problem.**

- Ask for their personal details and account number.
- Apologise for the fact that the computer system is really slow today.
- Explain that the problem is complex and will take up to three days to repair as special equipment is needed.
- Explain that engineers only work for eight hours and then another team arrive.
- Compensation is paid after thirty-six hours with no power.

**Start the conversation with: Hello this EGON Power, I'm (name). How can I help you?**

### Student B – Making enquiries

**Your cash card was cloned and over \$1500 was taken from your account. The bank accepted it was not your fault and promised to refund the money. Three weeks later they have not done this and you are now paying overdraft charges.**

- Explain the situation to the customer service representative.
- Find out why the money has not been refunded and when you will receive it.
- Explain that you have already given the bank the police crime reference number.
- Explain that you need money desperately as you have to pay your rent this week.
- Find out why you are paying overdraft charges. It is not your fault that your account is overdrawn.

**Phone Customer Service now!**