

Talk Time Topic: Telephone Etiquette

Let's get started...

Before we begin today's discussion, let's talk about phone manners. What is good phone etiquette? What is bad phone etiquette? Take a moment to think about one part of a phone conversation that is difficult for you. What is it? Share your thoughts with the group.

Background:

Every culture has its own special rules for communication. The telephone is a major tool of communication. It is important that we understand and follow the rules of telephone etiquette. Whether you're using a regular telephone or a cell phone, there are some basic rules that you should know. Start your conversations with a "friendly greeting". If you need to make a long call and are with people, excuse yourself and find a private area to talk. If you are interrupted while on the telephone, ask the person you are talking to if they would mind "holding" or if they could "hang on". Many people complain about the use of cell phones: when people use them and how loudly they speak.



In pairs for 5 minutes, ask and answer these questions:

Do you think people should use their cell phones:

- on a bus?
- in the grocery store?
- in a restaurant?
- in a shopping mall?
- in a movie theatre?

Now if you answered yes to any of these, tell your partner how it should be done.

Tell each other about any problem you have had with cell phones in these places.

Share your partner's answers with the group.

Discussion Questions:

Is phone etiquette the same or different in your country? Explain.

Have you ever been "hung up on"? How did you feel? Tell what happened.

What kind of rule should there be about "hanging on"? How long should you hold for someone? How many times should you hold for someone?

What are some polite ways that you can ask someone to repeat himself or herself?

Do you know someone who won't let you "get a word in edgewise" on the telephone? Tell about your experience. What did you say? Do you have a good idea of how to handle this type of situation?

What "pleasantry" do you like to use to say goodbye to someone?

Have you ever been upset by someone's lack of phone etiquette? What did they do or say? What did you say or do in response?

Think of a time that you needed to make a call and didn't know if it was going to bother people. What did you do?

If you use a cell phone, do you use the "silent mode" or "vibrate"? Why or why not?

If you use a cell phone, do you use text messaging? When is it good to use text messaging and when is it bad phone etiquette?

What is a "quick call"? When you say you're going to make a quick call, how long does it last?

If you use a cell phone, you have a choice of "ring tones". Do you think there are some ring tones that are inconsiderate of others? Why or why not?

There are some greetings that young people use that older people are not comfortable with. Can you think of some of these?

Have you heard some common goodbyes that young people use? What are they? At what age are these greetings not considered good phone etiquette?

New words and Idioms:

A call, reply, clarify, answer, voice-mail, long-distance, important call, busy signal, silent-mode, mute, vibrate, courteous, to "excuse yourself", to "call back", to "hold", "do you mind if I make a quick call?", a bad connection, cordless phone, to text, a friendly greeting, "hang on", to be "hung up on", "talk a mile a minute", "can't get a word in edgewise", etc.