

IC2 Class: Conference Calls / Video Conference Calls - 2016

Technology today is wonderful. That doesn't mean, however, that conferencing calling in a foreign language is easy. In fact, the experience can be difficult for non-native English speakers. Even if your written and conversational English is excellent you may struggle over the phone or during video conferencing.

A. Some of the problems you may encounter during conference calls are:

1. Poor sound quality.
2. Background noise.
3. Difficult topic.
4. Large number of participants all wanting to say something
5. Ineffective leadership during the call (your boss or chairperson doesn't ensure that everyone feels they can participate).
6. Cultural difficulties (use of complicated idioms and accents).

Many of these problems are beyond your control. Here are some tips on what you CAN do to make conference calls a less stressful experience.

B. BEFORE THE CALL

1. Learn the software or device you'll be using, and practice using it.
2. Make sure you're somewhere quiet to take the call.
3. **Prepare thoroughly. Look up some of the vocabulary that you need.** Make sure that you're absolutely confident with whatever it is you're going to have to talk about, or present during the call. Maybe you can even do some background research so that you feel well qualified to give your opinion.
4. **Practice some key words.** Particularly if you're going to be asked to speak, run through some words and phrases with a colleague. You need to make sure your pronunciation is really clear, particularly for conference calls when the sound quality might not be perfect.
5. **If it's available get a copy of the agenda** so that you can follow the structure of the call. This will help you anticipate some of the language you're going to hear.
6. Before you begin ask your boss, or the person leading the call to **make pauses between points.**

C. DURING THE CALL

1. If there's a problem, say something. Politely ask the leader to speak more slowly and clearly. If there is background noise, ask for the source to be removed.
2. Ask for clarification: Check that you have understood by asking questions.

3. Help your colleagues by speaking slowly, loudly and clearly. Remember that the Internet connection or call quality may not be great
4. Anticipate features of spoken conversation: “Uh”, “Right”, “Uh-huh”, “Um”, “Like”, and “You know” (any fillers that will disrupt the flow of the conversation).
5. Use the modal verbs “could, may, would.” This makes your speech sound more formal. For example: “Could we discuss the situation with our buyer in India?”
6. Don’t forget about eye contact and facial expressions if you’re in a video conference.

***Activity #1: The phrases below are helpful phrases that you may use. Read the phrases and add some of your own ideas.**

Common Teleconference Call Phrases

Let’s look at common phrases used in Teleconferences. Feel free to add some of your own to each category.

1. At the beginning of the meeting:

1. Are we all on?
2. Can everybody hear me?
3. Did everybody get the agenda?
4. We’ll just wait a few minutes.
5. Sorry I’m late.
6. Is everyone here?
7. Are we all ready to start?
8. If everyone is here, let’s start our meeting.
9. _____

2. The video has some problems:

1. You’re rather jerky
2. I can’t see the people at the edge of the room.
3. Your image froze.
4. The image has disappeared.
5. The image and sound are not in synch.
6. There is no image on the screen.
7. The picture is not so clear.
8. _____

3. You have problems hearing:

1. You're very quiet. Could you speak up?
2. Just a second. I'm going to turn the volume up.
3. Can you try moving the microphone closer?
4. Unfortunately, we can't hear you so well on our side. Could you speak a little louder, please?
5. _____

4. You can't identify who is speaking:

1. Was that John?
2. Sorry. Who was that just now?
3. Sorry. May I ask who is speaking at the moment?
4. Is that John speaking?
5. _____

5. You don't catch something said:

1. I didn't catch that. Could you repeat it?
2. Could you speak more slowly please?
3. I'm afraid I didn't get that.
4. I don't follow you.
5. Could you explain that in another way?
6. Could you repeat that please?
7. I'm sorry. I don't understand the word _____. What does it mean?
8. Can you explain what _____ means?
9. _____

6. Someone needs to step outside:

1. I have to take this if you don't mind. (When you receive a phone call during the meeting.)
2. I'll just go and get the documents. I'll be back in a second.
3. I need to leave for five minutes. I'll be right back.
4. I need to step outside for a moment. I'll be right back. Please continue the meeting.
5. _____

7. Talk about a particular part of a document you have copies of:

1. In the... first section/ second paragraph.../ third sentence.../ fourth bullet point...
2. On the fifth page...
3. If you take a look at the 2nd page, you'll find...
4. If you kindly take a look at the bottom of the page, you can see....
5. I would like to refer to the top of page 3.
6. _____

8. You need something repeated more than twice before you understand it:

1. Sorry, I still don't get it.
2. Could you just say that one last time?
3. Could you rephrase that for me?
4. Sorry. I still don't follow you.
5. Sorry. I still don't understand what you are trying to say.
6. _____

9. You need to temporarily hang up:

1. Maybe if we hang up and try again, it will sort out the problem.
2. Sorry, I need to speak to this person for just two minutes. I'll call you back when I'm finished.
3. I need to hang up for a moment. I will call you right back.
4. _____

10. You want to talk about something among just your side:

1. Could you give us a moment?
2. We need to discuss this if you don't mind. I'll turn off our microphone for a second.
3. We need to discuss this for a moment. Could you give us a moment?
4. _____

11. There is an interruption on your side:

1. Sorry, someone just came in.
2. Sorry, there's a lot of noise outside.
3. _____

12. Get a contribution from someone who hasn't spoken (for a while or at all):

1. John, did you want to comment on this?
2. We haven't heard what Jill has to say yet.
3. I'd like to hear John's opinion on this if you don't mind.
4. _____

13. You need to email a document:

1. I'll send it to you now.
2. Just a second. I'll find the document on my laptop and email it to you now.
3. _____

14. Someone takes a long time coming back from their break:

1. I'm afraid John hasn't come back yet.
2. I'm sure he'll be back soon but shall we start.
3. John will be here shortly. So, why don't we start.

4. _____

15. Strongly but politely disagree:

1. I'm afraid I can't agree with you there.
2. With all due respect, I'm not so sure I agree.
3. With all due respect, I have another opinion.

4. _____

16. You have a technical problem that takes you more than twice to resolve:

1. Let me try this one more time.
2. There is one more thing I can try.

3. _____

17. Someone leaves from your side:

1. John has to go to another meeting.
2. John had to rush off.

3. _____

18. You need to adjust your equipment:

1. Just a second. I'll move it.
2. Let me adjust the settings.
3. Let me adjust the volume quickly.

4. _____

19. Tell the other side they need to adjust their equipment:

1. The camera seems to be pointing in the wrong direction.
2. Can you try moving/adjusting...

3. _____

20. Insist that people use their own names every time they speak:

1. Sorry. Could people identify themselves before they speak?
2. It might be easier if people say their names each time they speak.

3. _____

21. Interrupt someone:

1. Can I come in here?
2. Sorry to butt in but...
3. I'd just like to add that...
4. Can I add something quickly?

*NOTE: "Just" and "quickly" tell everyone you will be brief. If someone interrupts, you should say "Just let me finish" or "Can I quickly finish?"

5. Sorry to interrupt, but....
6. If I may just interject here,
7. _____

22. Go off topic:

1. By the way...
2. That reminds me...
3. Digressing for moment, I'd like to discuss...
4. _____

23. Take the conversation back to a previous topic:

1. Can we speak a little more about...?
2. That brings us back to...
3. Can we get back to the topic of.....?
4. I think we should get back to the main point, which is.....
5. I think we are getting off track. Let's get back to the main topic.
6. _____

24. Ending the Call

1. That should do it for today.
2. That's about all for today.
3. Thank you everyone for joining.
4. Let's continue this discussion at our next call.
5. That's all for today. Nice talking to all of you today.
6. I think we should conclude our conference call here.
7. That concludes our meeting for today. Thank you all again for joining.
8. _____