

Useful phrases

1 | Exchanging contact details

Asking for details

Let me take your name and number.
Can I have (your) name / number / email address?
What's the best way to contact you?
I have an email address for you but I'm not sure if it's current.
Can you text me your business card?

Giving details

Let me give you / Here's my card.
Thanks, and here's mine.
I'll send you (my) contact details by text.
You can call / reach me on ...
Here's my email address.
The one above is my business email. I check it regularly so please use that one.
It's easiest if you just give me your email address.

2 | Exiting a conversation

Maybe see you later?
Nice talking to you.
I'm afraid I must be off.
I promised to meet someone else. But I'll come back when I've seen him / her.
I'm going to get some food. I missed lunch because of (the conference call).
Is that James over there? Excuse me, I really must go and speak to him.
Catch you later.
Well, I'm going to circulate. It was good to meet you.
Is that the time? My parking ticket runs out in five minutes!
Look, I really don't have time to chat at the moment. I'll call you tomorrow though

3 | Catching up with colleagues

Questions

What are you doing at the moment?
What about you?
How about you?
Are you still (playing golf)?
So how's (the new job) going?
Do you still work for the same company?
Anyway, how are things with you?
Have you been away recently?

Comments

It's a lot of fun too.
I don't play as much as I used to.
It's going well, thanks. I'm really enjoying it.
I've just come back from ...
I haven't been on holiday for ages.
It's difficult to find the time. I'm always so busy.
We're really busy – as usual.
It's always different. And it keeps me on my toes.

4 | Thanking and responding

Thanking

Thank you for having me.
Thanks. / Thanks a lot.
Thank you very much.
Thanks for your time / help.
I'd like to thank you for ...

Responding

It's a pleasure.
No problem.
You're welcome.
That's OK.
Thank you for coming.

5 | Reassuring and sympathizing

Asking about a situation

How did (the call / it) go?
(What's / Is something) the matter?
You seem a bit (unhappy / quiet / upset / frustrated).
How's (the new job) going?
Is there (anything / something) wrong?
Is everything OK?

Reassuring / sympathizing

How awful!
Oh no!
It sounds as if you ...
You couldn't have done any more.
I know it's hard ... but ...
Don't worry about it.
Try to forget it.
You did the right thing.
I'm sure you did the best you could.

6 | Responding to spontaneous situations

Inviting / Offering

How about ...-ing?
What about ...-ing?
Do you feel like ...-ing?
Would you like to go ...?
Do you want to ...?

Accepting

I'd love to.
Good idea.
Why not?

Partly accepting

Maybe ... Can I let you know later?
Let me just check with (my wife / boss).
OK ... but I can't stay long.
Yes ... but can we make it tomorrow?

Declining

Sorry – I'm heading straight home tonight, it's (my partner's birthday).
Not tonight, I've had a bad day.
(I'm afraid) I don't really feel like it today.
(I'm afraid) I need to stay behind and finish this (report / email / presentation / offer).

7 | Talking about social plans

Questions

What have you got on this weekend / this evening / tonight?
What are you up to tonight / at the weekend?
What are you doing (this weekend)?
Anything nice planned for (the weekend)?
Are you taking any time off (in the summer)?

Responses

We're off to ... (Italy).
We'll probably see a film / catch a movie.
I'm supposed to be (helping a friend).
Nothing special.
It depends on (my colleagues / the weather).

Reactions

Very nice.
Great!
Poor you!
Lucky you!
I see.
Sounds good.
How relaxing!

8 | Apologizing and responding

Apologizing

Sorry (I'm late) ...
I'm sorry (that) ...
I'm really / very sorry (about) ...
I do apologize (for) ...
Sorry about that.
I'm afraid (that) ...

Responding to an apology

Never mind.
That's OK.
That's all right.
It doesn't matter.
Don't worry about it.
No problem.

9 | Making and responding to quick requests

Making a quick request

Do you have a minute?
Excuse me, am I disturbing you?
Could you just have a quick look at ...?
Could you spare a few minutes?
Do you have a few minutes?
Would you mind checking ...?
Can / Could you give me a hand with ...?

Responding to requests

Yeah, sure.
No problem.
Certainly. Take a seat.
Yes, come in.
I'm a bit busy right now.
Sorry, no time!
I'm sorry, not just now.
Sorry, I'm just on my way to ...
Give me two minutes and I'll be right with you.

Replying to a negative response

Ok, I'll try you (tomorrow).
Never mind.
It's not that urgent.
I'll send it to you in an email then.

10 | Avoiding saying 'no'

Sorry, I'll be away on business / holiday then / when you need me.
Er ... have you tried John?
Hmm, I don't have a lot of time at the moment.
I'd love to help, but ...
It may be a bit problematic ...
Try me again when (I've finished the project / I'm back from holiday / the kids are back at school).
I'm afraid I've got too much on at the moment.
I suppose I could look into it.
I'll give it some thought.

11 | Dealing with situations on the phone

Problems in communication

You're breaking up ... I haven't got a very good signal.
Sorry, it's a really bad line.
I'm afraid I didn't catch that / that last bit.
You're very faint. Can you speak up a bit?
Hold on while I go somewhere quieter.
I'll hang up and (call you on the landline / try again later / go outside to call).

Not a good time to call

I'm sorry, but I have someone on the other line. Can I call you back?
Sorry, but this'll have to be quick, I'm about to (board a plane / go into a meeting / enter a tunnel).
So now's not a good time to call?
I'm afraid I really don't have a lot of time today. Can you call again tomorrow?
I'm just on my way out. Can you call again later?

12 | Being negative diplomatically

I have some reservations about it.
I can see both sides of the argument.
It sounds interesting but ...
I'm not sure about it.
I need to think about it.

13 | Talking about news at work

Introducing news

You'll never guess what I heard, ...
Have you heard the news?
Did you hear the latest about ...?

Repeating news you have heard

According to (Sam), ...
Rumour has it ...
Apparently, ...
(Anna) says that ...
I spoke to (Robert) and he said / told me ...

Responding to news

Really?
Surely not!
No!
You're joking!
That's really (childish).
That's nonsense!
Wow!
I don't believe it!
That's incredible!
Are you sure?

14 | Talking about films, TV and books

Books

It's a real page-turner.
I couldn't put it down.
It's very well written.
It's been on the best-seller list for weeks.
Have you read any good books recently?
I don't get much time to read.
I've just finished ...

Films

I was on the edge of my seat.
It's a blockbuster of a movie.
It's full of brilliant special effects.
The computer animation is extremely clever.
It's an absolute classic with a star-studded cast.
It became a box office hit overnight.

TV

I'm completely hooked on it.
I tend to channel-hop.
I can't miss an episode.
I record (the live sports programmes).
What I really can't stand is reality TV / soap operas / sport.
I just like to unwind in front of the TV.
I don't have much time to watch TV.

Describing the story from a book, film, TV drama

It has a gripping storyline / a really fast-moving plot.
The main character(s) is / are ...
It's a story about ...
(There's) a twist to the plot / story / at the end.
It's set in (Venice / the 18th century).

General comments

It's very atmospheric / exciting / entertaining / enjoyable / well done.
I'd definitely recommend it.
I really enjoyed it.

15 | Making people feel relaxed

Offering a seat / drink

Please have / take a seat.
Let me get you a tea or coffee.
Can I get you something to drink / a tea of a coffee?
A (coffee / cup of tea) would be nice.
Could I have a (tea)?
Coffee, white no sugar, please.

Dealing with bags / coats

I'll put your coat / bag / umbrella over there, but don't forget it!
Let me take your coat.
You can leave your bag over there.
Let's put your bag / suitcase out of the way.
Would you like to leave it (behind reception).

Talking about the journey

How was your journey?
Very straightforward thanks. / The traffic was terrible.
You've (driven over / flown in) from ... today?
Did you have any trouble finding us?
It was quite easy. / No problems. / No, not at all.
I hope you managed to avoid the roadworks / find a parking space / follow my directions.

Talking about the weather

What was the weather like when you left?
Much worse / better / warmer / colder than this.
It's absolutely freezing out there!
It's quite warm / cold for this time of year, isn't it?

16 | Talking about taking time off

Talking about a weekend or short holiday

I took the day off.
We managed to get away (for a weekend / without the kids / for the day).
We just had a long weekend away.
We booked a last-minute holiday.
We visited my partner's family.
I caught up on some DIY.
We were on a three-day spa break.
I did some (household chores / shopping).

Commenting on what the experience was like

It poured with rain the whole time!
We had lovely weather.
We had a great time.
It made a real change.
I'd highly recommend it.
It was just what we needed.
It was great for relaxing / switching off.
I didn't really enjoy it, but it (had to be done / needed doing).