

Telephone Skills Review

The telephone is one of the most commonly used technologies in our lives today. It is important that everyone know how to use it properly and effectively, and look on it as the important business tool that it is.

Whenever you use the telephone, you are Western Oregon University to the person on the other end of the line. Your office is judged by the voice that speaks for it over the telephone. How you handle each call affects future goodwill which often takes years to create but only seconds to destroy!

Your telephone personality.

- Develop a good telephone voice
When your voice is warm and friendly, when you are courteous and tactful...people will enjoy dealing with you and your office.
- Use businesslike phrases instead of slang
Say "yes," "certainly" and "of course" instead of "O.K.," "yeah" and "uh-huh".
- Put a smile in your voice by using phrases of courtesy such as "please", "thank you" and "you're welcome".
- Jot down the callers name and then use it in your conversation.
- Speak clearly and distinctly. Talk into the transmitters. Use a normal range of tone for your voice but avoid extremes of loudness or softness, highs or lows. Talk at a moderate rate, not too fast or too slow.
- Be tactful. When it is necessary to refuse a request because of policy give a full and sympathetic explanation. Avoid expressions such as "you have to" or "you must".
- Treat every call as an important calls. It is important to the person calling you. When the caller feels that you are giving him or her individual rather than routine consideration, he or she will have more confidence in you and your department.

When you receive a call.

- Answer promptly with a smile.
- Answer by the second ring.
This gives an efficient impression to your caller, and your co-workers can continue working undisturbed.
- Identify yourself and your department.
You can answer using a phrase such as "Business Office, this is Mary." Add your name, last name if needed to identify yourself. Identifying yourself will encourage the caller to identify themselves.
- Explain when you leave the line, and return promptly
Tell the caller why you need to leave, and ask if they would mind waiting, as in "Would you care to hold while I get that information?". If the caller does not wish to wait, offer to call back.

- Use the HOLD feature of your telephone
Remember, the telephone receiver will transmit sound even though the mouthpiece is covered. Ask the caller if they will hold and wait for a reply before putting them on hold.
- Return to the caller with a progress report promptly. Get the caller's attention when you return to the line using a phrase such as "thank you for holding..."
- Terminate calls courteously
Say "good-bye" pleasantly. Allow the caller to hang up first. This will avoid having the receiver bang in the ear.

Answering calls for others.

- Avoid screening calls
When a caller asks for someone, advise them of that person's current status before asking for the identity of the caller. To ask who's calling first gives the impression that the person called is "in" to some and "out" to others. Whenever possible, process calls without screening them at all.
- Explain your co-workers absence from the office
It's up to you to create a good image of the person for whom you are taking calls. Statements like "He's out to coffee" or "She hasn't come in yet" give the wrong impression. Be tactful; give a report such as "She's away from her office right now". Don't say "He's on another call" unless you are prepared to have the caller ask to hold.
- Offer assistance
When appropriate to the call, ask "May I help you?" instead of just routinely taking a message.
- Transfer calls correctly
If a call needs to be transferred to another location on campus, explain to the caller why they are being transferred, to whom, and to what number before you transfer them.

The new etiquette for voice mail

- When you are answering calls for others, encourage callers to leave voice mail messages rather than taking written messages. This allows for more detailed private messages to be left.
- When you place a call and reach a voice mailbox, do not hang up! Leave a message! Voice mail systems are powerful tools which can enhance user productivity and expedite call processing, but they only work if you use them.
- The recommended format for leaving a voice mail message is your name, your department and a complete message including what you are calling about, what you want done, when you will call back or want to be called, and at what number.
- The AUDIX voice mail system at WOU records the time and the date of your message, and the actual number you are calling from, so that information does not need to be included in your message.
- Try to keep each message to a single subject. It helps to have your thoughts organized before you call. Try to not ever leave a message that just says "call-me-back". If you say what you want, the other party can prepare an answer before they return your call. This saves everyone time.

- Try to always change your greeting accordingly. If you are out for the day or for several days it is always recommended that you change your greeting. This allows callers who need immediate help, to know that you are not available.
- Return calls as soon as possible. Voice mail is not for screening calls.
- Delete your messages often. These automatically delete after 10 days but if there are many messages or a few long messages this can fill up a mailbox and allow callers to not be able to leave a message because the mailbox is full.
- Remember when recording your message that this messages represents both you and the University. Use a friendly, but a businesslike voice.
- If you have continuous communication with customers or clients and you have an e-mail number you may want to leave your e-mail address on your voice mail message.
- The AUDIX mailboxes will allow you to leave a message up to two and a half minutes long.