

56 Business English Phrases for Speaking Professionally and Advancing Your Career

1. Beginning a Conference Call

You will either hear these phrases or need to use them yourself while talking to people on a conference call.

- “Are we all on?”
- “Can I ask that we all state our names, please?”
- “I’m here. It’s [your name] in [your city].”

These are useful phrases to check if everyone is present and has joined the conversation. When asked, just respond, “yes” and give your name and position, or job at the company.

- “Can everybody hear me?”

The chairperson or person in charge of the meeting usually says this. It’s useful to make sure everyone is present for the start.

2. Clarifying Things on a Phone Call

When talking on a conference call, there is a chance that your Internet connection will be poor, or that the quality of the call will be poor. In these cases, you might miss out on something that someone said.

- “Could you speak more slowly, please?”
- “Could you repeat that, please?”

- “Would you mind spelling that for me, please?”
- “Could you explain that in another way, please?”
- “I’m afraid I didn’t get that.”

3. Taking a Break from the Conversation

Conference calls can be stressful. It is perfectly fine to excuse yourself, but make sure you are polite and clear when you do it. Try these phrases if you need a break.

- “[Your name] speaking. I need to leave for ten minutes. Is that okay with everyone?”

When you return, let everybody know you are back by saying:

- “[Your name] here. I’m back on the line again.”
- “[Your name] just coming back in here, thanks everyone.”

4. Starting a Great Presentation

At some point you may be called on to give a presentation. Even native English speakers should keep these simple and not get too complicated. Business presentations can and do have a reputation for being dull. Not a lot of people enjoy sitting through tons of PowerPoint slides...do you?

Keep it moving quickly and people will still be interested. Try these helpful phrases for a presentation:

Introduce yourself and keep it loose and breezy (informal and light)—it will put everyone at ease.

- “Welcome everybody, my name is [your name] and I am the designer for GPLZ Video.”
- “Hi, I’m [your name] and I’m the designer for GPLZ Video.”
- “Good morning/afternoon/evening ladies and gentlemen, I’m [your name].”
- “Hi everyone, I’m [your name]. I’m going to keep this brief, as I know you’re all busy people. I’m going to make this quick for you...”

Note: remember to use the contraction “I’m” instead of “I am” to sound friendlier and less formal.

5. Introducing the Topic of Your Presentation

After you've introduced yourself, it is time to introduce your topic of presentation.

- “Today I'm here to talk to you about...”
- “I'm delighted to be here today to tell you about...”
- “Today I would like to outline our plans for...”

This gives your audience a map, or an idea of what you will be talking about. Here are some phrases that will provide **structure** for your presentation, making your message neater and more organized.

- “Firstly, I'll talk about...” or “I'll start with some general information on...”
- “Then I will look at...” or “then we'll go over...”
- “And finally, we'll look at...” or “To conclude we'll touch on...”
- “I will be glad to answer any questions that you may have at the end of this presentation.”

Try to look up from your notes as often as possible so you can engage and interest your audience and relax. Try to have fun. People are generally forgiving if you make a few mistakes.

6. Ending Your Presentation

This is a very simple part. Once you have given your presentation and are ready to finish, use these phrases.

- “Well, that brings me to the end of my presentation, thanks so much for listening.”
- “It was a real pleasure being here today. Goodbye and thank you.”
- “Well that's it from me. Thanks a lot.”

7. Being an Active Participant in Meetings

You will, at some point, be asked to take part in a meeting at your workplace. It is a good idea in business meetings to speak as clearly as possible and to be firm (strong). Remember though, “firm” does not mean “rude” or “pushy.”

It can be easy to seem pushy if you don't add the all-important “please” and “thank you” to your phrases. These polite terms go a long way in business English. Meetings are all about listening and letting people know you understand what is being talked about. Try these phrases when you are in a business meeting or participating in a conference call.

First, you can use these phrases if you accidentally speak over somebody or stop them from saying something.

- “Sorry, I interrupted you. You were saying...?”
- “Please go on...”
- “After you...”

If you are not sure what somebody said, **use these phrases to clarify:**

- “I'm sorry, but could you speak up a little?”
- “I didn't quite hear that, sorry, can you say that again?”
- “I didn't catch that last bit. Can you say it again please?”

Signal phrases for when you have a question.

- “Am I to understand that...”
- “Sorry, but just to clarify...”
- “So, what we're saying is...”

Agreeing with people.

- “That's an excellent point [person's name], I totally agree with you on that.”
- “Okay, I think we are all on the same page here...”
- “Yes, I get what you're saying...”

Disagreeing with people.

Hopefully you won't need these too often! Remember to be polite but firm.

- “I’m sorry but I think you may have that slightly wrong...”
- “From our perspective, it’s a little different. Let me explain.”
- “Well, yes and no—can I tell you how we see it?”

8. Negotiating Successfully

When you are [taking part in a negotiation](#), you might get what you want, but sometimes you may not. Here are some phrases that will work for each situation. Remember, be polite, but be firm.

Professional businesspeople never lose control of their emotions. Sometimes in a negotiation you know you are not going to win. [When you go into a negotiation](#), you should know your “deal breaker” is. A deal breaker is absolutely not negotiable, or a condition that you will not accept no matter what. For example, the lowest price you are willing to accept for a product is \$100 per piece. You will walk away if somebody demands a lower price.

Perhaps you are protecting your “bottom line.” The bottom line is the financial situation beyond which you cannot operate. Try these phrases to get the negotiation “back on track” if it seems you are “not on the same page.” Meaning: Get the negotiation going in your favor if you are not in agreement.

- “I understand that we can’t do that, but can we discuss some other alternatives?”
- “I hear what you’re saying, but our bottom line is very clear on this one.”
- “This is the deal breaker for us, we can’t budge.” (Budge means move, change or give up.)

9. Planning for Future Meetings

1. Everybody has a phone now, and in business it is really important to know how to greet people and leave them with a positive impression of yourself and the company you work for. Many customers' and clients' first interactions with you (and the company you work for) will be on the phone. Make sure you leave them with a great first impression with these phrases when you want to meet with them again:
 - “I'd like to set up a meeting with you at your earliest convenience. When are you free?”
 - “Are you free to talk again next week?”
 - “When can we talk about this again?”
 - “How does 2:30 p.m. Thursday sound?”
 - “Does Thursday at 2:30 p.m. suit you?”

After the person has agreed to the time, it is customary to confirm one last time just to make sure the other person has really heard. If you are working in a place like an airport where there could be confusion as to the time, add the “a.m.” or “p.m.” just to be sure you have been understood:

- “Thursday at 2:30 p.m. then, that would be fine.”
- “Okay, I look forward to seeing you then.”
- “Thursday at 2.30 p.m. Looking forward to it, see you then.”
- “Thursday at 2.30 p.m., bye for now.”