英 **English Coach Academy**

Self-Study · Opening a Business Call Diplomatically · Worksheet (B1–B2)

Name: _____

Work through each section on your own, then check your answers in the key at the end. Every explanation says *why* an answer works, so you can correct yourself without a teacher. Use British business English throughout.

1. Register Adjustment: Informal to Diplomatic

Each sentence is grammatically correct but too direct for a British business call. Rewrite it as a polished, indirect phrase. Your own wording may differ from the key, as long as it keeps the same softening ideas.

Example. "Can you talk now?" → "I hope I'm not catching you at a bad time? Would now be convenient to speak briefly?"

1. "I want to talk about the schedule."

2. "Wait a moment."

3. "He is not here. Call again later."

4. "I can't hear you. Your line is bad."

5. "Sorry for waiting."

6. "Is it okay if I send you the file?"

2. Situational Nuance: Multiple Choice

In every question, all three options are grammatically correct. Choose the one that gets the level of diplomacy right for the situation.

1. **You're ringing a client's senior manager for the first time, with no prior warning.**
   A. "Hello, I'd like to discuss our proposal. Is now okay?"
   B. "Good morning. I hope I'm not catching you at a bad time? I'm calling about our proposal, and I'd be glad to arrange a better moment if that suits you."
   C. "Good morning. I'm calling about our proposal, so could you give me five minutes?"

2. **You're ringing a colleague you speak to every day, with a quick question.**
   A. "Good morning. I appreciate you may have a full diary, so would you be able to spare a few minutes?"
   B. "Hi Dan, got a minute? Quick question about Friday's report."
   C. "I hope I'm not disturbing you. Would it be possible to ask a question, if now is convenient?"

3. **A customer is waiting while you find their order details.**
   A. "Hold on."
   B. "Bear with me for just a second while I pull up your order."
   C. "Please wait. I will find the order."

4. **You ring a partner and she replies, "I'm just heading into a meeting."**
   A. "It's quite important, so I'd prefer to continue now."
   B. "Of course. Would it be better if I called you back, perhaps around three?"
   C. "Okay. I will call again."

3. Dialogue Analysis and Repair

Read this call. The caller is a supplier ringing a partner company, and several things go wrong. (a) Underline or note **four** professional or cultural problems. (b) Rewrite the caller's lines 1, 3 and 5 so that they work.

1. Caller: "Hello. I want Mr Okada. Put me through."

2. Receptionist: "I'm afraid he's stepped away from his desk. Shall I ask him to call you back, or would you like his email?"

3. Caller: "That's not good. I need to speak to him now. Why isn't he there?"

4. Receptionist: "I'm afraid I can't say. Would you like to leave a message?"

5. Caller: "Yes. Tell him I called about the contract." *(The caller's phone rings. They say "Hold on", press mute for a minute, then return.)* "Okay. Go on."

(a) Problems I noticed:

(b) My rewrites (lines 1, 3 and 5):

4. Self-Guided Roleplay: Voice Recording Task

Context card. You work for Larkspur Consulting. A client, Mr Hasegawa, was due to approve the revised timeline a week ago and hasn't replied. You want a decision, but you also want to keep the relationship warm. He isn't expecting your call.

1. **Shadow.** Watch the lesson video (The Follow-Up Call) again. Play one line at a time and repeat it aloud, copying James's rhythm and intonation. Do this three times for his opening availability check.
2. **Prepare.** Plan your opening in note form only (not word for word): name and company, a diplomatic availability check with an easy exit, and your purpose in one sentence.
3. **Record (round 1).** Use your phone to record your opening. Aim for 30 seconds.
4. **Record (round 2).** Record again, this time adding your reply if he says, "I'm sorry, I'm about to go into a meeting."
5. **Self-assess.** Play both recordings back and tick the checklist below.

Self-assessment checklist

☐ I gave my name and company before asking for anything.

☐ I acknowledged the interruption (for example, "I hope I'm not catching you at a bad time?").

☐ I offered an easy exit: a choice between speaking now or later.

☐ I stated my purpose in one clear sentence.

☐ My voice stayed warm, with a slight rise on the availability question, not a flat demand.

☐ I paused after the question and left room for him to answer.

☐ In round 2, I accepted the delay graciously and suggested a specific time to call back.

5. Complete the Call (from the video)

Fill each gap with the missing words from *The Follow-Up Call*. Try it from memory first, then watch the video to check.

1. "It's James Bennett from Larkspur Consulting. I hope I'm not _____ you at a bad time? Would now be convenient to speak _____, or shall I call back later?"
2. "Certainly. _____ with me for just a second while I _____ your file."
3. "Thank you for _____. I've got that information _____ for you. The first draft is _____ for Tuesday the fourteenth."
4. "Excellent. I'll let you get _____ with your morning then. Thanks for your _____, Sarah."

Answer Key with Rationale

Use these explanations to understand *why* an answer works, not just what it is.

Section 1. Register Adjustment (model answers)

1. "I'm calling about the schedule. Would you have a few minutes to go through it?"
   Why: "I want" states a need without considering the listener. A question about their time turns your request into an invitation.
2. "Bear with me for just a second while I check that for you."
   Why: "Wait a moment" is an order. "Bear with me" asks for patience, and "while I check" explains the wait.
3. "I'm afraid he's stepped away from his desk. Shall I ask him to call you back, or would you prefer to leave a message?"
   Why: "I'm afraid" softens bad news, and offering two options gives the caller control instead of an instruction.
4. "I'm sorry, you're cutting out slightly. Let me dial back in."
   Why: "Your line is bad" sounds like blame. Putting the problem on the connection, and offering to fix it, protects the relationship.
5. "Thank you for holding. I've got that information ready for you."
   Why: thanking is warmer than apologising for a short wait, and giving the information at once makes the wait feel useful.
6. "Would you mind if I sent the file over? I can email it straight away."
   Why: "Would you mind if" is a recognised indirect request. Adding a concrete next step ("straight away") keeps it efficient.

Your answers should include at least one softener (such as *I'm afraid, would you mind, I hope, perhaps*) and a question rather than a command.

Section 2. Situational Nuance

1. **B.** A is too casual and "okay" is vague for a senior stranger. C is polite but pressing: "could you give me five minutes?" sounds like asking for a fixed slice of their time, and it leaves no exit. B names the interruption and offers to reschedule.
2. **B.** With someone you speak to daily, A and C sound stiff. Over-formal language creates distance between people who know each other well. B matches the relationship: short, friendly and clear about the topic.
3. **B.** A is too abrupt. C is grammatically fine but sounds flat and a little cold, and doesn't tell the customer what you're doing. B is polite and explains the wait.
4. **B.** A ignores their situation and puts your needs first. C accepts the delay but is vague and leaves the next step open. B respects their time, agrees to call back and proposes a specific time.

Section 3. Dialogue Analysis and Repair

Four problems:

- **No self-introduction (line 1).** The caller never gives a name or company. In British business culture, you identify yourself before you ask for anything.
- **Blunt demands (line 1).** "I want... Put me through" is an order, not a request. Use "Could I speak to...?" or "Would it be possible to speak to...?"
- **Pressure and blame (line 3).** "That's not good... Why isn't he there?" implies fault. The receptionist can't control Mr Okada's diary, and the caller's tone makes the

exchange tense.

- **Poor hold management (line 5).** The caller says "Hold on", mutes for a minute and returns without thanks. They should have asked permission, explained, kept it short and thanked the receptionist.

Model rewrites:

- (Line 1) "Good morning. This is James Bennett from Larkspur Consulting. Could I speak to Mr Okada, please?"
- (Line 3) "I see. Thank you for letting me know. Would you mind taking a message?"
- (Line 5) "Yes, please. Could you tell him I called about the contract? ... I'm so sorry, would you mind holding for just a moment while I take another call? ... Thank you for waiting. Please go ahead."

Note that the receptionist's lines are already good models: "I'm afraid", "Shall I... or would you...?" and an offer of two options.

Section 4. Roleplay: what a strong recording sounds like

- Model round 1: "Good morning, Mr Hasegawa. This is James Bennett from Larkspur Consulting. I hope I'm not catching you at a bad time? I'm calling about the revised timeline. Would now be convenient to speak briefly, or would you prefer that I called back later?"
- Model round 2 reply: "Of course, I quite understand. I'll let you get on. Would it be convenient if I called you back at three o'clock?"
- **Why it works:** you identify yourself, acknowledge the interruption, give a single-sentence purpose and offer an exit. The reply to "I'm about to go into a meeting" accepts the delay without argument and proposes a specific time, which keeps the relationship warm and the deadline alive.
- **Tone tip:** let your voice rise slightly on "at a bad time?" and pause for a full second after the choice. Silence reads as courtesy, not hesitation.

Section 5. Complete the Call

1. **catching**; **briefly**. "Catching you at a bad time" admits the interruption, and "briefly" promises that it will be short.
2. **Bear**; **pull up**. The reason for the wait ("while I pull up your file") is what makes it polite.
3. **holding**; **ready**; **scheduled**. Thank her for waiting, then give the answer straight away.
4. **on**; **time**. "Get on with your morning" shows you respect her day, and thanking her for her time closes the call warmly.