

BUSINESS ENGLISH

These units are intended for German-speaking students who wish to improve their command of Business English. They are the result of my teaching at various universities, consultancies or companies. All units are freely available for study but copyright.

Abbreviations used are: **e.g.** = *exempli gratia* (Latin), for example, for instance, and **i.e.** = *id est* (Latin), that is, that means. German translations are usually in brackets.

Unit 8: The Language of Telephoning

We all use our phones nearly every day and when doing business calls it can be helpful to know some expressions so that you do not get stuck in the middle of an important conversation. Let us first look at the different types of phones. You may use a **fixed line** (Festnetz), sometimes called **land line**, and you may have a **cordless phone** (schnurloses Telefon), or your **receiver** (Hörer) is connected to the base station via a **cord** (Leitung). Most often you will use a **mobile** or **cell phone** (Handy), or a **smart phone** with an Internet connection. These things are also called electronic **devices** (Gegenstände). You can then type in or **dial** (wählen) a number, using the **dial** (Tasten), or **keys**. The so-called *Rautetaste* is called **pound** or **hash key** in English.

A phone number consists of a **country** or **national code** (Ländervorwahl) such as **0044** for the **UK** (United Kingdom) or **0049** for Germany, a **local** or **area code** (Ortsvorwahl), the **actual number** and in big companies or authorities the **extension** (Durchwahl). Should you have to search for the phone number first, you can consult a **phone book** (Telefonbuch), the **Yellow Pages** (Gelbe Seiten), or **directory enquiries** (Auskunft). Today most often you will find contact details on the Internet.

You may then speak to a **switchboard operator** (Vermittlung) or an **automatic answerphone** (Anrufbeantworter) who/which may ask you to **hold the line** or **bear with him/her** (in der Leitung bleiben), they are **putting you/the caller on hold** (in der Warteschleife lassen). You can ask the **operator** (Vermittler) to **put you through to** (zu jemandem durchstellen) a specific person. If you have **dialled the wrong number** (sich verwählen), you will apologize, then put the receiver back on the **hook** (Gabel), or try again. If the person you want to talk to is not available or **out of office** (nicht am Platz, ausser Haus) you may want to

leave a message (eine Nachricht hinterlassen) or ask for him/her to **call you back at a later time** (um einen Rückruf bitten). If you are picking up somebody else's phone you may want to **take a message** (eine Nachricht aufnehmen), or **pass on some information** (eine Information weiterleiten) to that person once you see him/her. When several people get together at the same time you have a **telephone conference** (Telefonkonferenz), often abbreviated as **telco**. Once you have finished the conversation you **hang up** (auflegen).

A typical **introduction** to a phone conversation could run like this:

A Hello, this is company XYZ, Mary speaking, how can I help you?

B Good morning/afternoon/ Hello, this is Peter Schneider from company XYZ in Hamburg, Germany, speaking. Can you put me through to Jennifer in the Sales Department, please? I don't have her extension.

A Of course, her extension is 3655, just hold the line please, and I will try to connect you.

B 3655, I got that, thank you.

A I am sorry, she is not in at the moment, can I take a message or would you like her to phone you back later in the day?

B That would be great, but how about David? I talked to him as well sometime ago, is he available?

A Let me just try again, I see if I can get him on the phone for you.

C Hi Peter, this is David speaking, how are you?....
