

How to make conference calls

In this lesson you will learn how to organize and take part in conference calls on the telephone.

Starter

- Match the beginnings (1–5) and endings (a–e) of these guidelines for hosting a conference call. Which ones do you think are most helpful?
 - Set a clear agenda beforehand and ...
 - If there are more than five people in the call, ask them to announce who they are every time they join in ...
 - Give one person the job of 'monitor' to keep a record of what people say and ...
 - As host, make sure everyone has an equal chance to take part and ...
 - Consider running a conference call during which people are also online ...
- a try not to let one or two people dominate.
b ask people to familiarize themselves with it.
c to remind people of topics that have been raised but not dealt with.
d so that key documents can be viewed and discussed.
e so that others know who is speaking.

Expressions

- David Grade is a senior executive with Courierwise, a large mail delivery company. He is about to host an international conference call. Listen to the start of the call and write down where all the speakers are.
David _____ Marisa _____
Manu _____ Brad _____
- Complete the sentences (1–6) with the words below. You will need to find the correct position of each word. Listen again to check your answers.
call speaking fully item
briefly technical
 - Before we move on to the main agenda, could I ask everyone to introduce themselves, please?
 - The usual reminder; please remember to say your name whenever you start.
 - Can I just check if there are any problems?
 - And whatever happens, please don't put this on hold.
 - During the call, I'd like you to keep a note of any topics that have been raised but not discussed or answered.
 - Let's start with one on the agenda.

Speaking

- Role-play a conference call for three people. You are the host. Your teacher will play the other two roles. Before you start, decide together:
 - which company is having the conference
 - what the main topic of the call will be
 - who the participants will be
 - what the viewpoints of the participants are.

When you are ready, start the conference call. Try to use language from Expressions and the Language box.

Language box

Whoever and *whatever* are used to talk about people or situations when we do not know exactly who or what is being talked about. They are also used when it does not matter what specifically is being talked about:

Whoever takes over Larry's job has got a lot of work to do.

Whatever the boss thinks, I think we did well.

Whenever can mean *every time*:

I get nervous whenever he checks my work.

Whenever also means *at a time of your choosing*:

Whenever you're ready, please come for a chat in my office.

Hint

When answering the phone to an unknown caller, it is normal to say who is doing the answering:

Pedro speaking.

Hello, Pedro here.

Pedro.

The speaker in this last example may come across as confident and busy, but also a little impatient.

Writing

- 1 A friend in another country has written you an email saying that he has been told to host an international conference call tomorrow. He is worried because he's never even taken part in a call of this kind before. Write a reply giving him advice and suggesting some things he can say and do.



Look

Look at listening scripts 29.1 and 29.2 on page 134. Find more examples of *however*, *whatever*, *whenever*, and *whoever*.

- 29.2 3 Now listen to the rest of the call. Mark the sentences true (T) or false (F).

- 1 The conversation is a discussion about a recently won contract. _____
- 2 Some participants are less knowledgeable than others about issues being discussed. _____
- 3 One of the conference participants has a technical problem during the call. _____
- 4 All participants are broadly in agreement over the main issues. _____
- 5 The ground rules aren't followed once the call progresses. _____

- 29.2 4 Replace the words in **bold** with words from the call. Then listen again to check.

1 OK, who would like to start the discussion?

2 Marisa **Sorry ...** We're speaking at the same time.

David **Continue**, Marisa.

3 David **Sorry**, Marisa. I couldn't catch all of that. You **might** have a very bad line there ...

Marisa **OK**. I'll return soon.

4 **Sorry**, I heard the end of that conversation but I couldn't understand who was speaking.

5 Let's **repeat** it again.

However can indicate that the quantity of something makes no difference to a situation:

However many folders we buy, it's never enough.

However can also mean *in any way*:

However she does it, I'm sure it'll look great.

You can use *-ever* words to make a question sound more emphatic, more surprised, or more curious. For example, *Whatever ...?* and *However ...?* are similar in meaning to *What on earth ...?* and *How on earth ...?*:

However did they win that contract?

Whatever was he doing in the office at that hour?

Lesson record

3 new words from this lesson

1

2

3

3 useful phrases from this lesson

1

2

3

Things to remember

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