



Teleconferences politeness competition game

Compete to make the following teleconferencing phrases more and more polite, giving up when you can't get any more extreme, then discuss which of those phrases is probably most suitable for your typical business situations.

- "Your microphone isn't working."
- "Speak up."
- "Wait."
- "I can't understand what you're saying."/ "I have no idea what you are talking about."
- "Speak slower."
- "Please repeat."
- "Let me finish what I am saying."
- "Let me speak."
- "It's time to start."
- "Isn't Alex supposed to be there too?"
- "Everyone has to say something."
- "Our side will start the discussion."
- "You should all have the agenda in front of you now."
- "I have no idea which part of the document you are talking about."
- "Stick to the timings on the agenda."
- "Our equipment is working fine, it must be yours."
- "Will you all stop speaking at once!"
- "Give others a chance to speak"
- "I have to go."
- "That's the wrong page/ document."
- "All British voices sound the same to me."
- "I need a break."
- "Two Johns?? What on earth can we do about that?"/ "Shall we call one of you little John and the other big John?"
- "He is my colleague, John. Say hello John."
- "Call me Mr Case."
- "That wasn't John. That was me."
- "There's nothing we can do about the sound. You'll just have to put up with it."
- "It's very noisy your end."

Compare the phrases on the next page with your ideas for suitable phrases. Are there any which you think don't have the right level of formality for your business teleconferences?

What other things do you/ will you often have to say in teleconferences? What are different ways of saying those things, and which are the right level of formality for you?

Suggested answers

- “Your microphone isn’t working.” – “There seems to be some kind of a problem with your microphone.”/ “Could you check your microphone?”
- “Speak up.” – “Sorry, I can’t hear you very well.”/ “Could you speak a little louder?”
- “Wait.” – “Just a moment/ minute/ second while I...”
- “I can’t understand what you’re saying.”/ “I have no idea what you are talking about.” – “I can’t quite understand...” “I’m having problems understanding...”
- “Speak slower.” – “Could you possibly speak a little slower?”
- “Please repeat.” – “Would you mind saying that again?”
- “Let me finish what I am saying.” – “If I could just finish explaining this point...”
- “Let me speak.” – “Could I say something here?”/ “May I come in here (for a second)?”
- “It’s time to start.” – “Shall we get started?”/ “We have to finish by 12, so...”
- “Isn’t Alex supposed to be there too?” – “Is Alex not there?”/ “I didn’t hear Alex’s voice.”
- “Everyone has to say something.” – “Let’s/ I’d like to hear from everyone on this.”
- “Our side will start the discussion.” – “Shall we go first?”/ “Do you mind if we set out our position first?”
- “You should all have the agenda in front of you now.” – “Does everyone have a copy of the agenda?” “Can everyone see the agenda?”
- “I have no idea which part of the document you are talking about.” – “Could explain which part you are speaking about?”/ “I’m having problems finding that part of the document.”
- “Stick to the timings on the agenda.” – “Can we all try to stick to the timings on the agenda so that...?”
- “Our equipment is working fine, it must be yours.” – “I can’t find anything wrong with our equipment, I’m afraid. Can you check yours?”/ “Do you think it could be your end?”
- “Will you all stop speaking at once!” – “Let’s try and speak one at a time.”
- “Give others a chance to speak” – “Perhaps someone else can comment on this before we come back to you.”
- “I have to go.” – “I’m afraid I have to go to another meeting, but I’ll make sure we meet up again soon.”
- “That’s the wrong page/ document.” – “Actually, I meant...”/ “Actually, I was talking about...”
- “All British voices sound the same to me.” – “I’m afraid I’m having problems distinguishing who is who.”
- “I need a break.” – “Would this be a good time to take a break?”
- “Two Johns?? What on earth can we do about that?”/ “Shall we call one of you little John and the other big John?” – “Could we call one of you John T and the other John P?”
- “He is my colleague, John. Say hello John.” – “This is my colleague John. John, would you like to say hello?”
- “Call me Mr Case.” – “Please call me Alex.”/ “There are two Alex’s, so I’m afraid you’ll have to call me Alex Case or Alex C.”
- “That wasn’t John. That was me.” – “Actually, that was me, Alex.”
- “There’s nothing we can do about the sound. You’ll just have to put up with it.” – “I can’t think of what to do. Can we just carry on with it as it is?”
- “It’s very noisy your end.” – “Can I just check if that noise is the line, or is there perhaps some background noise?”