

Guidelines for Making a Professional Phone Call

Remember, for this project, most of the people you will be calling are busy, professional adults. This may also be the first and only impression you make on them so it is important to follow the guidelines for the phone call and leaving a message. While what you say is important, how you say it is equally important.

Tips for making a call:

- **Be sure to speak slowly and clearly whether you are speaking to a person or voice mail.**
- Begin by giving your name and other important details. “Hello, my name is _____. I am a student at Kemps Landing Magnet School. I am calling to speak to _____ about _____.” (You can begin a conversation with a human being or a message with these sentences.)
- When leaving a message, you may need to repeat both your name and call back phone number to make sure the person listening hears it correctly. Also consider spelling your name if it is not a common name.
- A message should also include a good time to reach you later. “I can be reached after 4pm but before 8pm. Thank you.”
- **A message should not include everything you want to discuss with the person. Be specific, but concise.**
- **Be sure to be ready if you do get the person you need to speak to on the first try. Do not put the caller on hold while you look for your notes.**
- Make sure you are in a quiet place so you are not distracted. You will make a bad impression if you are shouting at the dog or laughing at a movie during the call. DO NOT answer call waiting during a business call.
- Make sure to return calls in a timely manner. You are communicating with a business person or community leader who has taken the time to return your call. A prompt return call shows you appreciate their time and effort.
- At the end of the call, ask if it is acceptable to call again if you have questions later.
- Make sure to thank the person for his or her time.

Tips for receiving a call:

- If your caller ID does not clearly show the caller is a friend or someone you know, answer in your best professional way.
- Answer the phone by the third ring or make sure your voice mail is set to pick up by the third ring. People are not inclined to wait much longer and will assume you are not available and hang up.
- If you are the contact person for your group, make sure the message on your home phone or cell phone is appropriate and professional. You can always change it after the project is done.
- Make sure you check your messages frequently, especially if you are expecting a call from a contact for the project.
- Be prepared with your questions and concerns. Do not put the caller on hold while you search your binder or your room for what you need to conduct the call.
- Take notes during the call so you do not need to call again to ask the same questions. Make sure to ask for correct spellings and details at the time they are said.
- Make sure your tone is positive. If you sound bored or tired, you may offend the caller. Remember: you need this person to help you with your project because they have information or expertise.
- Try to be as careful as possible with pronouncing words, especially scientific terms and other unique words you do not use regularly. Practice difficult words or names ahead of time if possible. Apologize if you make a mistake, then move on.
- Again, thank the caller at the end of the call and ask if it is acceptable to contact him or her again if necessary. (Not to ask the same questions because you lost your notes, but for follow-ups and additional information.)