

You and your telephone
a digest of good telephone usage

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Your telephone personality

*can be
an
important
advantage*

The telephone today is playing a more and more important part in our social and business contacts.

Most of the people we meet are met first by means of the telephone and many of the people we know are known only by their telephone personalities.

You know yourself how first impressions gained in telephone conversations have become lasting impressions. You realize that many people know and judge you on the basis of their only contact with you—telephone conversations.

Naturally, you want to make a good impression and naturally it follows that careful attention to your telephone personality is an important method of making good impressions.

This pamphlet points the way. It will help you to take a revealing look at your present telephone personality and see whether there are ways to improve the personality you project in your telephone talk.



Your telephone personality and your job

In business, every telephone call is important. In speaking with someone else in your company, you should be business-like and efficient. In speaking with customers, remember you are representing your company.

When you are shopping, you appreciate salespeople who greet you pleasantly, serve you courteously and make helpful suggestions. They make your visit to the store a pleasant experience for you.

Telephone calls should produce a similar feeling. Telephone contacts should be handled with the same courtesy used in face-to-face contacts.

Many customers will judge you and your company by your telephone personality. Every call is an opportunity to make friends for your company and making friends for your company is an important part of your job.

If you are a secretary, you will be required to perform a variety of telephone services—receiving calls, making appointments and taking and delivering messages. Speaking and acting for your employer, you should handle all calls with courtesy and with thoroughness.

You will make the day easier and more pleasant for yourself and others and add to your reputation as a good secretary if you are competent and pleasant.

In special training for secretarial work, emphasis is placed on skillful handling of telephone contacts. It always helps when people talking with a secretary find her interested and helpful.

Telephone courtesy does more than mark you as a pleasant person. Good telephone manners and work well done can lead to promotion and better pay.

Your telephone

The telephone has become so much a part of our daily lives that we seldom, if ever, think of it as a scientific instrument designed to carry our voices over great distances and reproduce them accurately.

Voice sounds, like all sounds, travel by means of air waves. When we speak into the telephone, these air waves are converted into electrical currents which travel over the wires and are then converted again into the sound waves that others hear.

Like any scientific instrument, the telephone should be used cor-

rectly if it is to do everything it was designed to do.

A clear, distinct, well-modulated voice is one of the marks of a good personality.

If you speak clearly into the telephone, your voice will be reproduced accurately and will create a good impression on those who hear it.

You should hold the telephone mouthpiece one inch from the lips and speak directly into the transmitter.

If you hold the mouthpiece four or five inches away from your lips, your voice trails off into the air and sounds weak and thin to the person at the other end of the telephone line.

If you speak over or under the mouthpiece, the same effect results—the same bad impression is created.

Voice volume

When you keep the telephone mouthpiece properly placed before your lips and speak directly into it in a normal tone of voice, the person to whom you are speaking will hear you as well as if you were conversing in the same room. Shouting is unnecessary

and may be interpreted as impoliteness. You would not shout at a guest in your home, or at a customer in your place of business; raising your voice to a telephone guest, or customer, makes you appear in a bad light.

Voice personality

When you carry on a conversation in person, your personality is reflected by your tone of voice, your manner of speaking, your facial expression and your general bearing.

When you carry on a telephone conversation, your voice is you. It goes alone to represent you, so it is important to develop a telephone voice that represents you at your best.

Above all, your voice should be natural and unaffected.

You should speak unhurriedly and distinctly. There is no need to speak at an exaggerated slow rate but you should speak slowly enough to be understood without having to repeat. Talking rapidly or slurring words can make questions like "What did you do?" sound like "Wadjado?"

Your telephone voice should convey to those who hear it a tone of personal interest in the person

who is speaking and in what is being said.

Little things

In telephone conversations, as in everything else, little things can make a big difference.

Consider the little things in the following telephone conversation. Suppose you work at Ajax Rug Cleaning Service. You answer the telephone and hear:

“*This is Brow’s at two-fi-ni. . .*”

“Would you repeat, please?”

“*This is Brow’s at two-fi-*”

“I’m sorry I can’t hear.”

By this time the caller is shouting and all you hear is a loud, confused rumble of noise.

If the caller spoke at normal rate and in a normal tone of voice, you would hear:

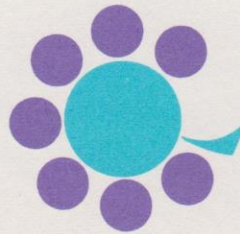
“*This is Brown’s at 259 Main Street. Would you call for some rugs, please?*”

“Yes, we’ll pick them up in the morning. That’s Brown at 259 Main Street?”

“*Yes. Thank you.*”

“Thank you. Good-bye.”

Little things make big impressions—good or bad.



The voice with personal interest is

*pleasant
friendly
cordial
cheerful
interested
helpful*

The voice without personal interest is

*repellent
indifferent
impatient
expressionless
inattentive
mechanical*



Handling incoming calls... answer promptly

When a telephone rings, it announces the arrival of a customer or guest—just as the ringing of a door bell does.

Try to answer it promptly, at the end of the first ring if possible.

This simple act of courtesy indicates friendliness and good manners and immediately creates a good impression on the caller.

Identify yourself

In answering the telephone, it is important to identify yourself to the caller. Many of us are accustomed to answering the telephone with the single word, "Hello," but that is just a waste of time for after all, who is "Hello"?

In answering your own telephone, announce your name.

"Miss Williams" or "Johnson"

If you answer for someone else, announce the called person's name and your name.

"Mr. Johnson's office, Miss Roberts."

Ordinarily, the title "Miss" or "Mrs." should be used by a woman when answering. How-

ever, it is appropriate for a man to just use the last name.

Suppose you are working in the Spare Parts Department of a pump manufacturing company which has a private telephone switchboard. A customer has called and told the switchboard operator he wants to talk to someone about pump fittings. The bell on your line rings; you answer; and the conversation goes like this—

"Parts."

"Parks?"

"Parks? There's no one here by that name."

"Is this the Spare Parts Department?"

"Yes."

"Well, I want to order a fitting."

"Oh! All right; I can take the order."

Contrast that careless handling with this time saver—

"Spare Parts Department, Wilson (or Mr. Wilson)."

"This is the Acme Pipe Company. I want to order a fitting."

Now suppose you are working for

a company which does not have a private telephone switchboard, or calls come to you direct (Centrex). Contrast the following ways of answering.

“Hello!”

“Is this the Brown Company?”

“Yes.”

“Who is speaking?”

“Miss Dunn.”

“Do you have. . . ?”

And the correct way:


“*This is the Brown Company. Miss Dunn.*”

“Do you have. . . ?”

It is much more direct and business-like to let the calling party know immediately that he has reached the Brown Company and is speaking to Miss Dunn. Consider the time and effort you save yourself and others by answering calls correctly.

Be sure to give both your company’s name and your own name distinctly so that the customer understands them. Adding your own name introduces you to the customer and starts the call off

with a pleasing personal touch.

Remember always that *how* you answer—the first impression you give the customer—can determine his attitude toward your firm. 

Yours is the telephone voice of your firm and can easily convey the impression, “We are glad you called us.” It can just as easily convey the impression that you are yawning and saying under your breath, “Get lost!”

Be ready to talk

When you answer the telephone, you should be ready to give your full attention to the call. Lifting the receiver and continuing a conversation before acknowledging the presence of your telephone customer or guest is like opening your front door and keeping your head turned away from the caller at the door, or ignoring the customer by fussing round while he stands in the store waiting for your attention.

Inattention is impolite and detracts from your telephone personality.

Don’t leave the line abruptly

Suppose a customer calls to ask

about an order he hasn't received. He won't be very happy if the conversation goes like this:

"Hello. Order Department."

"This is Anton's Sweet Shop. I placed an order a week ago. Why haven't I received it?"

"Hold the phone." (After a considerable pause.) *"What was the name?"*

"Anton's Sweet Shop."

"Just a moment." (Another pause.)

"That's being shipped today."

How much better it would be to handle the call this way—

"Order Department, Miss Dale."

"This is Anton's Sweet Shop. I placed an order a week ago. Why haven't I received it?"

"I'm sorry, there's been a delay. If you'll wait, please, I'll look up your order."

"Surely."

(After a pause.) *"Just a moment, please. I'm still looking up that information."* (Another pause.) *"Thank you for waiting. I find that some items weren't in stock, but we have them*

now and your order will be shipped today, sir."

This customer is irritated at the delay in filling his order. The handling in the first case, where you left the line without an explanation and returned and left it again, increases his irritation. Your not requesting him to wait while you look up the information is like a face-to-face conversation in which you leave the customer to get information and fail to excuse yourself.

At the conclusion of the first conversation, there was no expression of thanks to him for his patience and no apology regarding the delay in the order. The second way of handling corrects all these careless mannerisms and leaves the customer with the feeling that you have been most attentive.

If you know it will take several minutes to secure the information, it would be better, instead of keeping the customer waiting, to inform him that you will investigate and offer to call him back, as follows—

"It will take me a few minutes to

secure that information, Mr. Jones. May I call you back?"

Before leaving the line, be sure to get the name and telephone number of the person calling and all the facts necessary to answer his question.

Transfer calls properly

You have received a call which should have been directed to another department and wish to transfer the party.

One way is like this:

"Engineering Department. Davis."

"I just received a shipment of wrenches and some of the threads are jammed."

"Call the Service Department about that."

The correct way would be:

"Our Service Department will handle that for you. Just a moment and I'll have you transferred." Signal the operator on the same telephone on which you are talking by depressing the plunger slowly to the count of 1-2 pause, 1-2 pause. (In some cases an automatic recall signal will be activated with one depression of the plunger.) Ask her to transfer the call by saying: *"Will you please transfer this incoming call to the Service Department?"*

In the first case, the customer was left to shift for himself. In the

second, he was extended the courtesy of having his call transferred with a minimum of inconvenience to himself.

Another consideration would be to tell the customer the proper person or department who would handle his problem and offer to have someone call him if he wishes. Careless or indifferent treatment gives the customer the impression that his business is not wanted. Courteous treatment of customers is good business.

Take messages correctly

You have been told to call Mr. Stanley and request that Mr. Milton's appointment with him be postponed for an hour. The conversation goes like this—

"Mr. Stanley's office, Miss Green speaking."

"This is Miss Blue, Mr. Milton's secretary, calling."

"Yes."

"Mr. Milton had an appointment with Mr. Stanley for 10 o'clock this morning. He has been delayed and would like to postpone it until 11 o'clock, if that time is satisfactory to Mr. Stanley."

"Just a moment, please, and I'll see." (Pause.) "Yes, that will be satisfactory to Mr. Stanley, but he would like Mr. Milton to meet

him at 11 at the State Hotel instead of at his office."

"Thank you. Mr. Milton will be at the State Hotel at 11."

It is important that extreme care be taken when receiving and delivering messages over the telephone to avoid misunderstandings. A message taken incorrectly may lead to the loss of a sale or even a customer. It is always good practice, too, to make a written record of telephone numbers of business contacts.

The capable secretary

The secretary who handles calls capably and courteously creates a favorable impression of herself as well as her employer. To the caller, she is the company.

When you receive a call for your employer you can handle it poorly:

"Hello."

"Is this Mr. Baker's office?"

"Yes."

"Is he in?"

"Who is calling?"

"Mr. Stanton."

"Hold the line."

—or you can handle it well:

"Mr. Baker's office, Miss Turner."

"Is Mr. Baker in?"

"Yes, he is. May I tell him who is calling, please?"

"Yes, this is Mr. Stanton."

"Thank you, Mr. Stanton. One moment, please. I'll tell him you are waiting."

Here is another contrast. This way—

"Mr. Milton's office."

"Is he there?"

"No; he's not here."

"All right. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

or this—

"Mr. Milton's office, Miss Watson."

"Is he there?"

"Mr. Milton is not in the office. May I take a message?"

"Well, you might tell him Johnson of the Special Products Company called."

"Thank you, Mr. Johnson. I'll tell Mr. Milton you called."

Some Don'ts

Don't say "He isn't in yet."

Don't say "He's gone for the day."

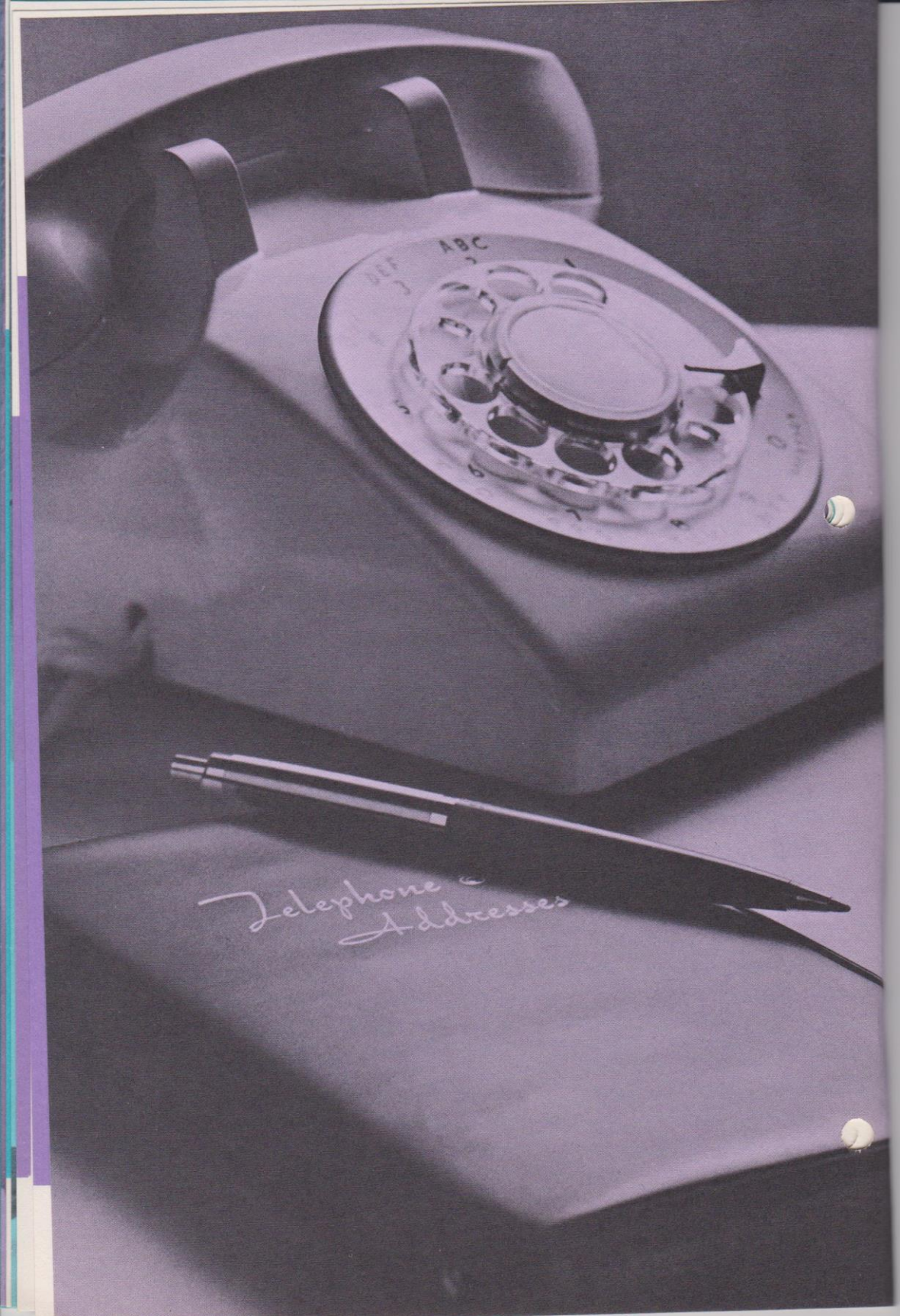
Don't say "Who's calling?"

Don't say "He's not back from lunch yet." (If it is after 2:00 p.m.)

Don't say "He's busy now."

Don't say "He's on the floor somewhere."

Don't say "He's in conference."



Making calls

Telephone numbers that you call frequently are easy to remember.

You may recall others only vaguely or not at all. If you are uncertain about a number, you will save yourself time and inconvenience by looking it up. Calling wrong numbers is a waste of your time and money.

Personal calling list

The easiest way to check telephone numbers is to keep a personal calling list.

You may prefer a "little black book," or other personal telephone directory that can be kept near your telephone.

For your convenience a "Blue Book of Telephone Numbers" in two sizes, pocket and larger, is available at your local Bell Telephone Business Office. Just call or stop in for your free copy.

Lists are easy to keep up to date as business establishments usually print their telephone numbers on letterheads and advertisements.

Make a habit of writing down any number that you may have occa-

sion to call. That will insure having it handy if you need it in a hurry.

When a new Telephone Directory is issued, check your personal calling list to keep it up to date. Directories are published frequently and include all listings up to the date of issue.

Telephone directories

If you are not sure of a telephone number and it is not included on your personal calling list, consult the directory. Alphabetical sections list telephones in the alphabetical order of subscribers' last names. The Yellow Pages list business and professional people by category.

Information service

Numbers too new to be listed in the latest Directory can be obtained by calling "Information." Calling "Information" for a number without first consulting the Directory means making two calls to reach one telephone. You can save time and effort by using the Telephone Directory.

If you secure a number from an information operator, be sure to write it down promptly; in addition, if the operator gives you an area code, be sure to write it down with the telephone number.

Correct dialing

When you wish to make a telephone call, lift the receiver to your ear and listen for dial tone. This steady humming sound indicates that the telephone equipment is ready to handle your call. Do not start dialing before you hear this signal.

During busy periods, there may be a slight delay before you hear the dial tone. Always wait for it.

Be sure to dial correctly. Mistakes in dialing waste calls and are annoying to the person called in error.

Most mistakes are caused by transposing numerals . . . for example, dialing 1324 instead of 1234.

Do not confuse the figure 0 with the letter O. The figure 0 appears in the last opening of the dial, along with the word OPERATOR; the letter O appears in the sixth opening, along with the letters M and N.

When dialing place your finger in the hole of the dial associated

with the figure you wish to dial, pull the dial steadily around to the finger stop, then release dial allowing it to return to its original position. If you interrupt it as it runs back to normal or force it back, you may get a wrong number.

Allow one minute (ten rings of the telephone) or more for your party to answer before you hang up.

If you make a mistake in dialing, hang up for a moment and begin again. Be sure to wait for the dial tone.

End the call politely

When the conversation has been completed, finish your part of the call by saying "Good-bye"; then replace the receiver carefully. If you let it drop and the person at the other end of the line has not yet removed the receiver from his ear, your noisy hang-up will cause an unpleasant bang in his ear. Hanging up noisily is like slamming the door with a bang as soon as you have said good-bye to a caller. Politeness forbids slamming telephones, too.

Placing a call for your employer

It is good telephone usage for a person to place his own call. Sometimes, however, your employer may ask you to call a num-

ber and get the man he wants to speak to. In such cases it is uncooperative to insist that the called party be on the line before you connect your employer. As soon as you determine that the person you are calling is available, signal your employer to go ahead. He should be ready to talk as soon as the connection is made. *And the person called has a right to expect the caller to be on the line.*

Making out-of-town calls

There are two types of out-of-town calls: station-to-station and person-to-person. A station-to-station call is one where you want a particular number in a distant place, and will talk with anyone at that number. A person-to-person call is one in which you ask for a particular person or extension number at the distant point. The charge for the station-to-station call begins when the called telephone answers. The charge for the person-to-person call, somewhat higher, begins only when you reach the person or extension you want.

Placing out-of-town calls may be only a small part of your job, but you can save yourself much time if you keep the following pointers in mind:

Plan your call. Have at hand all the information you'll need. Call by area code and telephone number whenever possible—your call will go through faster. It's a good idea to keep a list of out-of-town numbers and area codes you may have occasion to call. If you do not have the number, you can dial direct to the Information Operator in many places. Simply dial the area code and 555-1212. These places are indicated by a symbol on a list of area codes in the front of your telephone directory. If the place you want is not shown, dial Operator and ask for Information in the distant city. There is no charge for calls to Information.

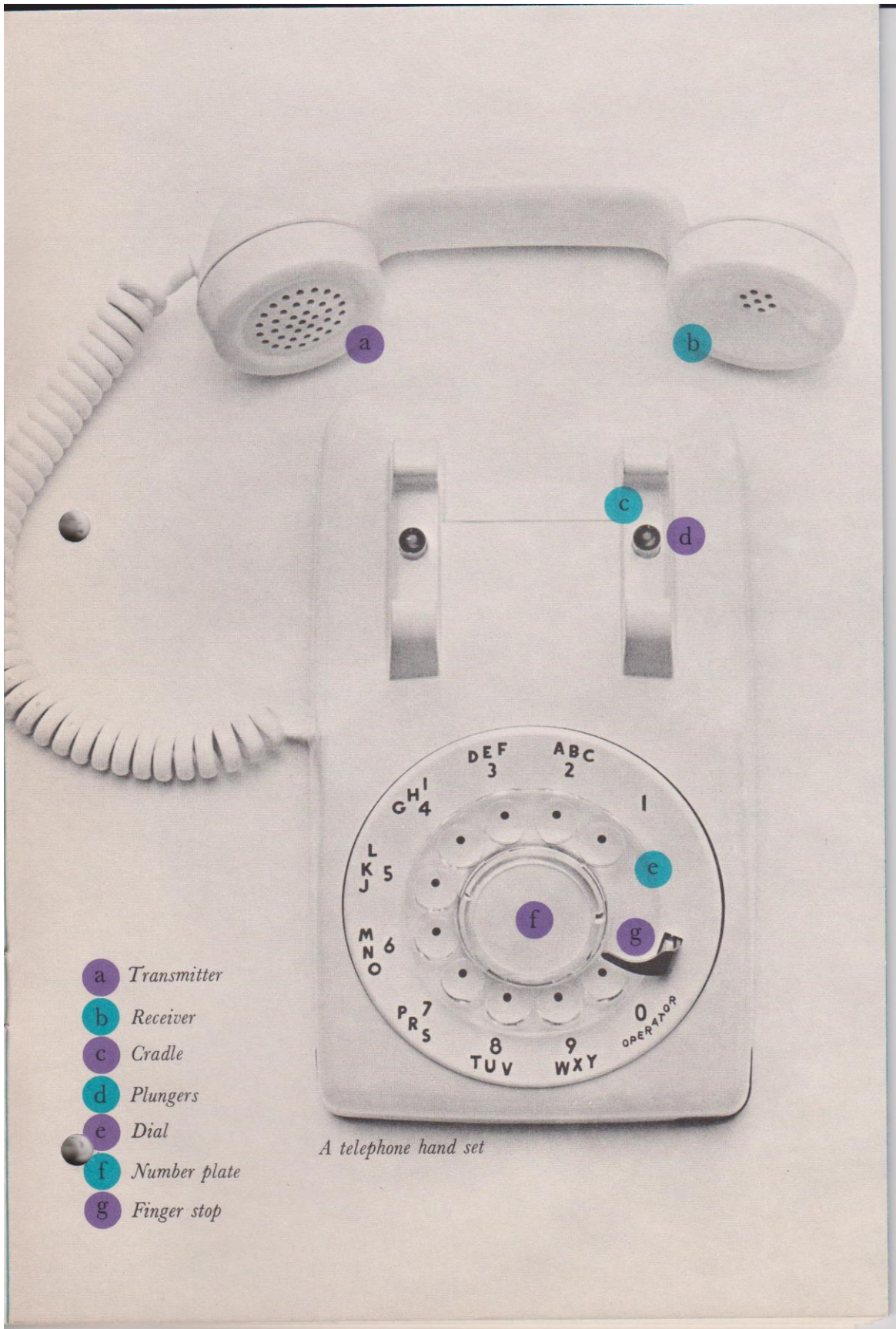
When you get the number, be sure to enter it along with the area code in your Personal Telephone Directory.

If the operator is handling the call, stay on the line until she gives you a report or completes the call.

If the call cannot be completed immediately and you find that you are unable to remain at the telephone from which you placed the call, leave word with someone who will be nearby as to when you will return or where you can be reached.

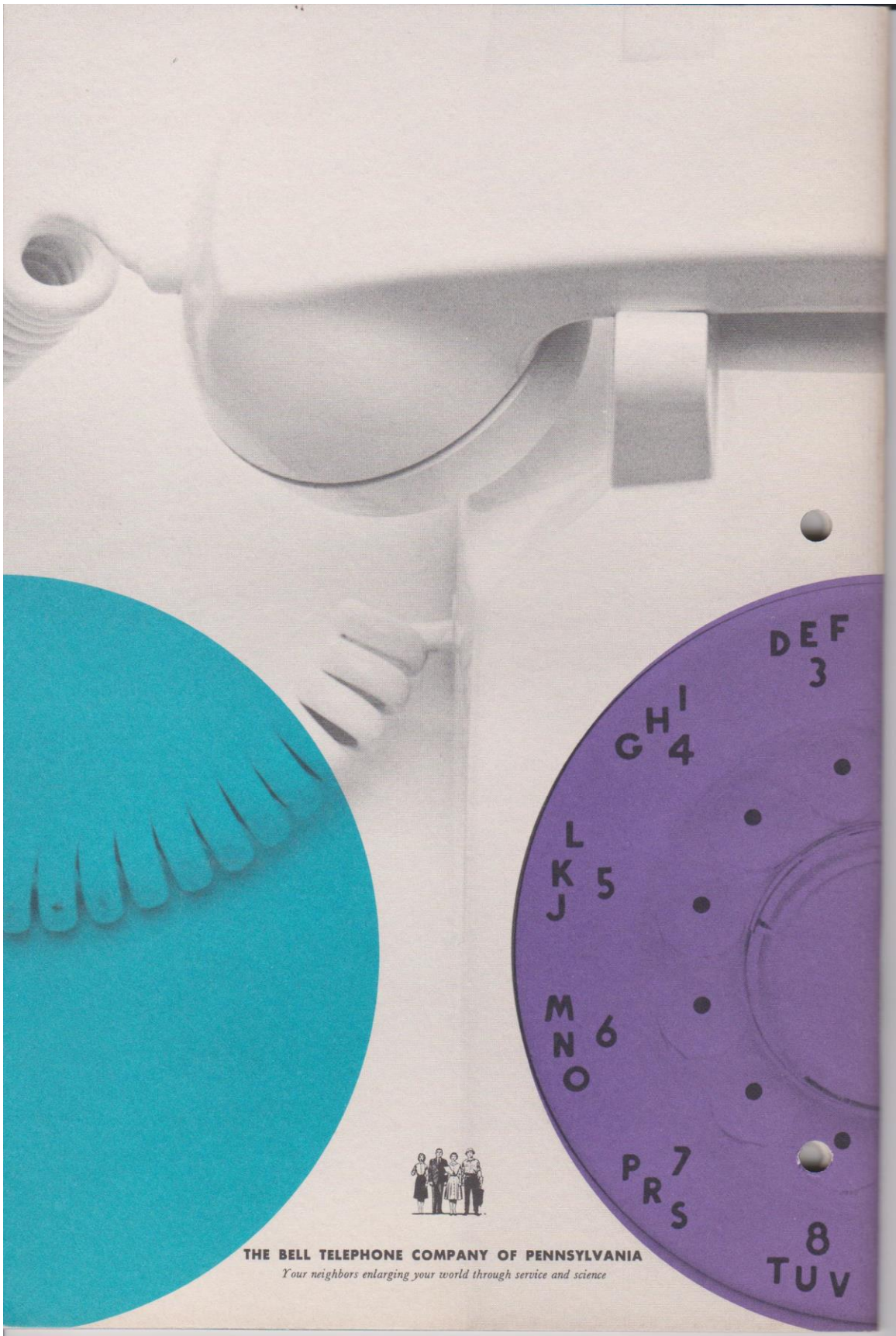
Questions and Answers

1. What advantage is there in answering the telephone promptly?
2. How far should the transmitter be held from the lips?
3. Should you shout into the telephone in order to be heard?
4. Why should you wait to dial until you hear the dial tone?
5. What happens if you transpose numerals or digits when dialing?
6. Why should you avoid interfering with the telephone dial?
7. What is the advantage of a Personal Calling List?
8. Why should you take care not to bang down the receiver?
9. Do you answer a business call with "Hello"?
10. How should you answer someone else's business telephone?
11. If you leave the line to look up information for the person calling, what should you say?
12. What is the best course to follow if you find that the information cannot be obtained for several minutes?
13. Suppose a business call reaches your extension by error. What should you do?
14. How do you transfer a call to another telephone?
15. If you leave your desk for a point out of earshot of your telephone bell, what should you do?
16. You are a secretary, and your employer is not in. The telephone rings. Should you first ask who is calling, and then say that your employer isn't in?
17. When placing a call for your employer, should you insist that the person to whom he wants to speak be on the line first?
18. Does tone of voice make a difference in telephone calls?
19. In making out-of-town calls, is it quicker to call by number—give the operator the name—?
20. Should you stay on the line after placing an out-of-town call?
1. By failing to answer promptly, you may miss important calls.
2. The transmitter should be held about one inch from the lips.
3. No. Conversational tone gets through more clearly.
4. Your call is likely to go astray if you dial before hearing dial tone.
5. Transpositions may bring the wrong number or no number at all.
6. Wrong numbers may result.
7. A Personal Calling List saves your time in looking up numbers. It also helps assure you of the right number.
8. Banging the receiver is discourteous to the person at the other end of the line.
9. No. In answering a business call, identify yourself—never say "Hello."
10. Identify yourself by name and offer to help or to take a message.
11. "Will you wait, please, while I get the information?"
12. It is best to offer to call back.
13. Offer to transfer the call to the proper extension, or offer to have the proper person call back.
14. Signal the operator properly and ask her to make the transfer.
15. Leave word where you can be reached.
16. Never answer a question with a question. Say: "Mr. A isn't in at the moment. May I take a message?"
17. No. Anyone placing a call should be ready to talk immediately.
18. A warm, pleasant voice is always more effective.
19. It is quicker to call by number.
20. Unless the operator reports a delay, your call will go through more quickly when you stay on the line.



- a Transmitter
- b Receiver
- c Cradle
- d Plungers
- e Dial
- f Number plate
- g Finger stop

A telephone hand set



THE BELL TELEPHONE COMPANY OF PENNSYLVANIA
Your neighbors enlarging your world through service and science



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