

Early Telephone Etiquette



The invention of the telephone modified social communication and called for new forms of etiquette. During the years 1916-1919, the Bell Company created newspaper ads to teach their customers how to adapt to the nature of the telephone conversation and how it was different from face-to-face dialogue. True or False: The following points of etiquette appeared in national ads run by the Bell Company:

1. You need not dress to receive visitors in order to talk on the telephone.

- True False

2. Concentrate on the conversation. Speak directly into the telephone. Don't try to carry on a conversation with a cigar in your mouth, or slouching, or with your feet up on a desk.

- True False

3. In starting a telephone conversation, say who you are.

- True False

4. If the person you are calling on the telephone is far away, it is not necessary to speak louder than you would if you were calling someone nearby.

- True False

5. The other person cannot see your facial expression or manner or hand gestures that might, in a normal conversation, soften or change the meaning of your words.

- True False



6. Don't assume that everything you hear comes from the other person: crossed wires, weather conditions, and party lines may bring in other conversations or sounds.

- True False

7. If you get a busy signal, it does not mean that the person you are trying to reach does not wish to speak to you, or that the operator is being rude or lazy.

- True False

8. If you answer the phone and there is no one on the other end, the person calling may have hung up because of impatience, or may have realized that he or she was calling the wrong number.

- True False

9. Don't become angry if someone calls you in error.

- True False

10. If the person you are talking to does not respond to what you have said, he or she may have been cut off inadvertently.

- True False

Sources:

"Prof. Bell's Telephone," *The Daily Constitution* (Atlanta), March 1, 1877, p. 2.

Possibilities of the Telephone," *Boston Daily Globe*, May 7, 1877, p. 4.

Robert Siegel, Interview with Professor Allen Koenigsberg, National Public Radio, 1999
<http://www2.cs.uh.edu/~klong/papers/hello.txt>

<http://teachinghistory.org/history-content/quiz>