# Handout for Module 2 Lesson 1

## Verbal Communication – Phone Calls

Phone calls are another important communication tool. Think about phone calls you have made to try to get information from someone. You definitely form an opinion about someone or someplace from a phone call. A phone call has an advantage over email, in that you can hear the tone of voice. Keep the following tips in mind on phone calls:

1. Speak clearly, and speak directly into the phone.
2. Use a pleasant tone of voice.
3. Try talking with a smile on your face. It really does improve your tone. This is not just true over the phone, but also in face‐to‐face conversations.
4. Always identify yourself; people need to know to whom they are talking.
5. If you need to put someone on hold, be polite and ask the caller if this action is acceptable.
6. Make sure that you are considerate of your caller’s time, as long wait times can make a caller feel unimportant and hinder building rapport.
7. Always return calls as promised.
8. As with all conversations, try not to interrupt the conversation of your caller. Sometimes, this is a difficult task on the phone because someone pausing is often confused with stopping. However, if you are really listening, you should know if the speaker has finished his or her thoughts.
9. Avoid answering the phone if you are eating or chewing gum. This can be very disturbing and can prevent effective communication with your caller.
10. Before beginning a phone conversation, be sure that you have time so that the call is not rushed.
11. Listen attentively to the caller to be able to understand his or her questions, requests, and/or concerns.
12. During the conversation, avoid shuffling through papers, typing on the computer, or making other noises.
13. Have a message prepared when you call someone in case you are connected to their voicemail; this prepares you for what to say during your message.
14. If leaving a call back number on a voice mail, speak slowly and repeat the number before disconnecting.
15. If you dial the wrong number, be polite and explain that you have made an error. Do not just hang up without explaining your error.
16. If you are taking a message, make a note about the message, the date and the time of the phone call, the name of the caller, and his or her full contact information as provided. If you are unable to understand his or her name, ask for the correct spelling for accuracy.

## Verbal Communication – Public Speaking

Another activity where an Extension volunteer may be asked to speak is at a presentation. It is well known that some people are very fearful of public speaking. As a volunteer, before delivering your message, it is important to practice, practice, practice. There are several methods to practice your materials. For example, you can practice in front of a mirror, a mock audience, or using a video camera. Contact a local organization, such as Toastmasters, that can also assist you to gain key public speaking skills and to remove the fear out of the experience.

Suggestions for giving presentations:

1. First, grab the attention of the audience. This can be done by telling a story, a joke (if relevant and tasteful – jokes are not for everyone), or something to get them interested.
2. Have an introduction and a summary or conclusion, not just a bunch of facts for your presentation. A presentation needs to be organized and have a direction, so the audience can follow it easily.
3. Maintain appropriate eye contact. This means looking at the audience, but be careful not to stare at one person.
4. Use examples and visual aids when possible. If done correctly, these tools help the audience remember. Plus, it adds interest to the presentation.
5. Use short sentences. People can get lost when the sentences are too long.
6. Use a pleasant voice, speak slowly and clearly.
7. Try to use the “Rule of 3s.” This rule suggests that people find things more enjoyable and easier to remember if presented in groups of three. Think about all the things that are in threes: 1) Go, Fight, Win; 2) Blood, Sweat, Tears; 3) Stop, Drop, Roll. There does seem to be something special about groupings of threes. A series of three often creates a progression of learning– your audience can easily remember your first, second, and third point.
8. It is important to involve your audience, whenever possible. This could be in the form of asking questions, including an activity, or having some sort of discussion group.
9. Utilize a microphone if one is available, or speak loud enough to be heard. Confirm with the audience that you are being heard clearly.
10. Read your audience for cues. If they look bored or tired or lost, you need to regroup. Maybe take a break, include some kind of activity, or try to explain things in a different way.
11. Be prepared for and use a variety of approaches to help your audience to learn your material. Good public speakers are prepared and equipped to use a variety of approaches to gain the audience’s attention and to be able to reach a wide variety of people. A variety of approaches also helps when you may ‘lose’ your audience. Even with sturdy practice, you may need to regroup and try another approach to deliver your message to be able to meet the needs of your audience.
12. Avoid filler words such as “um” and “uh” as they are distracting to the flow of your message; a little silence is acceptable.
13. Show your personality. Try not to read. This is hard, particularly if you get nervous, so practice, practice, practice. When you are presenting, pretend you are talking to a friend. Plus, remember you know the subject, so you will be fine.
14. If something goes astray during your presentation, be sure to handle issues with poise and grace. People will almost always remember how you handle a rough situation. Consider light comedy or quote that is fitting for the error.
15. Lastly, do not think, as the presenter, that you have to have all the answers – you just have to be willing to help people find the answers.

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