

Teleconference Etiquette 101

Basic Level

No Prerequisite Required

Have you ever been on a teleconference call where there was background noise that made it difficult to enjoy the call, or even to participate at all? For a teleconference to be a pleasant and professional experience, all the participants need to know how to properly use their teleconference technology and exercise some very basic courtesy. These few tips are the foundation for providing an enjoyable and valuable experience for all the participants in the teleconference.

1. **Choose a quiet location.** Everyone else on the call hears every noise you make. Close your door and consider putting a “Do Not Disturb – Teleconference In Session” sign on the door. If you don’t have a private office, find an available office or conference room to use for this purpose. Reserve a quiet location so this won’t be left up to chance. Even if you use the mute button on your phone, as mentioned below, you still need to be in a quiet location for when you un-mute your phone to speak.
2. **Learn your phone.** Become familiar with your telecommunications equipment before you join a teleconference call, so you don’t have to practice on everyone else. Learn how to turn off features that may interrupt the call. This is particularly important if you can’t make the call from the phone in your workstation, as mentioned above.
3. **Call in on time.** Most teleconference providers or systems feature a call announcement when someone joins the call. This can be a chime, bell or some other sound. So each time someone joins the call late, a word or two from the ongoing discussion is lost to everyone already on the call. Would you walk into a conference late if a chime sounded through the public address system when you opened the door, instead of the words the speaker was saying? That’s exactly what happens when you call into a teleconference late.
4. **Use the mute button.** Learn how to use this button or feature on your phone in advance and consider other locations and/or equipment if your phone doesn’t have mute. Even if you are behind a closed door in your private office, there is the possibility of noise. This is particularly true if you simply can’t devote your full attention to the call and think you have to check your e-mail, thumb through your mail, or whisper to someone who just walked into your office. The keyboard sounds, the paper rustling or virtually anything you decide to do will make noise, so please use the mute button or feature on your phone. Also, don’t forget to take your phone off mute when you want to join a conversation. Then put it back on mute until the next time you want to join the conversation.
5. **Never put the call on hold.** Whether you think you have music on hold or not, do not put the conference call on hold. There are many different features on phone systems that can start to work either right away or after a call has been on hold for a while. All of these features will disrupt the

- conference call in a major way. Everyone else on the call is powerless to correct the problem. In some cases dozens of people will be wasting their time trying to pick out a conversation around the “music on hold” or “We value your call. Please continue to hold and someone will be right with you.” announcement from your system. If you simply must make a call, hang up your phone. The simple “tone” announcement on most conference call systems that tell us someone left the call is infinitely preferable to almost total disruption of someone putting the call on hold.
6. **Avoid cellular and cordless phones.** If you need to be moving around that much during the conference call, perhaps you should consider having someone else attend the call in your place. The potential static and poor connections of these types of phones is likely to lower the quality and value of the conference call for everyone. If you are traveling and must use a cellular phone, find a location that has excellent service (lots of bars) and don't move around during the call. Also make sure your battery has sufficient charge to last for the entire call. And keep in mind the quiet location and all the other teleconference etiquette tips.
 7. **Do you need a speakerphone?** If you have a group participating in the teleconference at your location, it might make it more valuable to get them together and use a speakerphone. However, consider that a speakerphone is probably being used at several locations, including the site where the teleconference is being moderated. Speakerphones, particularly those built into your desktop phone, can add to the overall noise of the teleconference and create a “hollow” or “tunnel” sound on the call. So if you need one, by all means use one. But if it's just you alone at your location, consider whether or not you need to use one.
 8. **Turn off call waiting.** If you have this feature on your phone, everyone on the call will hear the sound it makes when someone is trying to reach you. This feature is not only something you have on your cellular phone, but can be found on many other kinds of phone systems as well.

The bottom line is that one single person can waste the time of everyone else on the call by being careless about teleconference etiquette. These eight tips are listed below, in reference form, so you can cut them out and put them next to your phone as a reminder when joining a teleconference call.

Teleconference Etiquette Reference

1. Choose a quiet location.
2. Learn all the features of your phone.
3. Call in on time.
4. Use the mute button.
5. Never put a teleconference call on hold.
6. Avoid cellular and cordless phones.
7. Do you really need a speakerphone?
8. Turn off call waiting.