

Pro Forma for Teachers Calling Parents

Your introduction is your verbal handshake.

Have a clear vision of what you want to achieve.

You have lost 55% of your ability to communicate effectively when you can't see each other. The tone of your voice and how you say things is vital as it accounts for 84% of your ability to communicate on the phone and can convey confidence in what you say, your state of mind and your attitude

Rehearse in your mind what you want to say. Have an outline to make sure you hit the important points once the call begins.

Closed questions are useful for taking control of the call and should be used when you need specific information.

Throughout the call, paraphrase and summarise back to the caller what you have heard to ensure you are on the same page throughout and avoid the 'wrong train syndrome' Match the caller's vocal energy – if he/she are speaking quickly, then respond with a reasonably fast and energetic style. Acknowledge how they feel – if they say they are disappointed, you can reply that you can see they are disappointed. Match the caller's language if possible.

Demonstrate that you are listening, and shown empathy with the caller. You should now aim to move the call on from an expression of feelings to agreed action.

- Clarify the situation
- Acknowledge any error – whether personal or organizational
- Outline what, if anything you can do
- Outline what if anything the caller can do
- Discuss what other options may be open to you both – for example to involve someone else
- Agree what you are each going to do
- If you want to set up appointments, have some convenient times in mind.
- Stand up while you talk.
- Smile and use a friendly tone.
- Don't get into idle chit chat

Don't Argue! No matter how wrong the person may be, if you begin challenging what they are saying and arguing with them on the phone, you will never make any progress at solving the problem. Instead, you will just intensify the situation

“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” is key to problem solving. They want you to realize that their problem is a major issue to them and that they don’t just want you telling them what you are going to do.

- Don’t behave towards someone in a way which is kind and friendly but nevertheless shows that you are being condescending
- it is not always right to be right. When dealing with difficult people on the phone, if you can lead them to the answer and allow them to discover it on their own, it will make them feel better. You may have to eat a piece of humble pie when they tell you that they figured it out and you didn’t, but at least they will end the call feeling good instead of upset and wanting to end the business relationship. Besides remember, it’s not about you, it’s about them.

Prompt conclusion

Find a breaking point in the conversation. When there is a pause in the conversation, use this time to speak up. Be patient. Interrupting someone, growling, grunting, or sighing loudly is rude and may offend the person. State a reason for ending the conversation so the person on the other line doesn't think you are just hanging up on them. Apologize for having to end the conversation. Plan a time where one of you can talk again, or say that you'd like to talk again sometime. Perhaps you can talk online with the person. Pause for a brief response and then say goodbye before you hang up.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHINKANaVal>