

English for the office

Brendan Moore

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First published 1979

Published by
THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD
London and Basingstoke
Companies and representatives throughout the world

ISBN 0 333 25443 0

Printed in Hong Kong

The author and publishers wish to acknowledge the following illustration sources and to express their gratitude to Barclays Bank and the Post Office for their help and advice and permission to reproduce several original documents

Barclays Bank Ltd Barclaycard Northampton British Airways,
British Rail, H M Customs & Excise Ian K Dale March Weil
Wrexham, The Esso Petroleum Co Ltd Graham of Basingstoke,
Stephen Grigg Hampshire House Hotel Basingstoke
Hertz Rent a Car Charles Kendall & Partners Ltd
Kleinwort Benson Ltd, (Bankers) Lloyds of London
The Metropolitan Police, Scotland Yard The Society of Motor
Manufacturers & Traders Ltd The National Coal Board
The National Westminster Bank Ltd Basingstoke The Post Office
Wiggins Teape Ltd and Alfred Marks Bureau, for their help
in the cover illustration

Contents

I General secretarial practice

- 1 Reception 1
- 2 Bookings and appointments 12
- 3 Travel arrangements 26
- 4 Directions 40

II Post and telecommunications

- 5 Post Office services 50
- 6 Using the telephone 61
- 7 The telephone in business 71
- 8 Telegrams, cables, telegraphic services 81
- 9 The telex/teleprinter 91

III International payments (small private transactions)

- 10 International Money Orders 98
- 11 Cheques/General banking 108
- 12 Eurocheque/Travellers cheques 119

IV International payments (business transactions)

- 13 Letters of Credit/Bank transfers 126
- 14 Invoices 136
- 15 Bills of Lading/Air Waybills 147
- 16 Bills of Exchange 158

V Correspondence

- 17 Letters of enquiry; replies to enquiries 168
- 18 Follow-up letters, sales letters, orders 179
- 19 Letters for packing, forwarding, despatch, shipping 191
- 20 Letters of complaint 201
- 21 Letters of adjustment 211
- 22 Insurance 220
- 23 Letters of introduction; references 232
- 24 Lay-out of modern business letters; comparison of old and modern styles 245

VI Interpretation of data

- 25 Reports and questionnaires for interpretation 255
- 26 Statistics (graphs, charts, tables) for interpretation 263

VII Revision and tests

- 27 Revision and tests 1: General secretarial practice 271
- 28 Revision and tests 2: Post and telecommunications 276
- 29 Revision and tests 3: International payments 281
- 30 Revision and tests 4: Correspondence 287

Reception



announce (v.) To call out a person's name, position, etc.

appearance The outward or surface look of a person or thing

appointment A time and place fixed or arranged for a meeting

arrangement An ordered procedure for fixing or setting dates and places for travel, work, meetings

clerical work Work in an office which involves reading, writing, filing

client A customer; often used for a regular customer of a business lawyer or other professional services

deal (v.) To act (in business); to transact business; to do

duties jobs; functions

executive A person in a position of management or administration

hesitancy doubt; delay; waiting before decision

inefficiency The inability to produce properly or in sufficient quantity

matter (n.) question ; problem ; subject
note (v.) To write down for future reference
notify To give information of something
operate (v.) To work ; to use
procedure A method of doing or conducting business ; a course or system of action
receptionist A person employed to receive visitors, customers, hotel-guests
refer (v.) To look up in a dictionary ; to send somebody to consult someone else
represent To act for a company ; to be in a responsible position on behalf of a company
switchboard (n.) A system or apparatus for connecting telephones
tact (n.) The ability to say and do things without hurting or insulting other people
task duty
title (n.) A description of a person's position or status in an organisation
visiting card A small card with a person's name, position, address, telephone number and other details printed on it

Secretaries who receive visitors are called receptionists. There are various kinds of receptionists, however. In a small firm, the 'receptionist' may have to receive visitors, do some typewriting and clerical work, and operate the switchboard as well. A doctor's receptionist may have additional duties. In a large firm, on the other hand, a receptionist normally does nothing apart from receiving visitors and making appointments and travel arrangements.

There are different tasks and procedures involved in receiving visitors with an appointment and without an appointment. Receptionists should be notified by executives or their secretaries of all the appointments which have been made each day. This should be done in advance or at the beginning of each day. Executives should report their movements (for example, going to see an important client, going to lunch) to a receptionist throughout the day. If the receptionist has this information, she can receive and talk to visitors without any hesitancy when they arrive, and there will be no appearance of inefficiency.

A. Dialogues

Conversations between receptionists and visitors can take many forms, but there are some greetings, requests, explanations, suggestions, and apologies which are very widely used. For example :

Receptionist Good morning, sir. Can I help you ?

Visitor Good morning. My name is Fitzherbert, and I represent Johnson's Pharmaceuticals. I have an appointment to see Mr Dantini.

Receptionist Yes, Mr Dantini is expecting you, Mr Fitzherbert. If you'd like to take a seat, I'll let him know you're here.

The receptionist then dials Mr Dantini's extension number.
Mr Fitzherbert of Johnson's Pharmaceuticals is here.
Shall I send him up? Thank you.

(to visitor) Mr Dantini will come down and see you right away, Mr Fitzherbert.

Visitor Thank you very much.

Note that Mr Fitzherbert had an appointment. He introduces himself in an elaborate way and tells the receptionist that he has an appointment. She should know this in advance, so she can say that Mr Dantini is expecting him. Visitors may not always introduce themselves so well. For example

Receptionist Good morning, madam. Can I help you?

Visitor Yes. I would like to see Mr Dantini, please.

Receptionist Yes. . . . You must be Miss Hutchinson. Mr Dantini is expecting you.

Note that the secretary does not ask if the visitor has an appointment. She could say: *Do you have an appointment with Mr Dantini?* but this would sound rather cold. It is better to assume that Mr Dantini has an appointment with the visitor and check in the appointments list first. If there is no record of an appointment, then the receptionist should ask the above question.

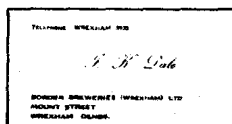
When a visitor who has not made an appointment arrives, the receptionist should offer him a seat, and promise to contact the person he wishes to see, or someone else who can deal with the matter. The receptionist may be offered a business visiting card, with the name, title and company printed on it. If the visitor does not present a visiting card, the receptionist should note the name of the caller, the date and time, the firm he represents (if any), who he wishes to see, and who he is referred to. If there is a delay, the receptionist should offer the visitor some reading matter. If it is a long delay the visitor would appreciate some form of explanation. The receptionist should apologise for any delay. The executive or his secretary will usually come down to the reception area to greet the visitor and then bring him to the office. If they don't, the receptionist should escort the visitor to the executive's office. The receptionist should announce the visitor's name, title and company and should introduce him to the executive.

Receptionist Good morning, sir. Can I help you?

Visitor Yes. I would like to see Mr Dantini, please.

Receptionist Do you have an appointment?

Visitor No, I'm afraid I haven't. I'm from Wilson Cars, and



I've come to see Mr Dantini to discuss sales of our new model.

Receptionist Could I have your name, please?

Visitor Ramsbotham. John Ramsbotham.

Receptionist If you'd care to take a seat, Mr Ramsbotham, I'll see if Mr Dantini is free.

Visitor Thank you.

Receptionist (to Mr Dantini on his extension) *I have a Mr Ramsbotham of Wilson Motors who wants to see you. . . . Thank you.*

(to Mr Ramsbotham) Mr Dantini will come down to see you in about five minutes, Mr Ramsbotham. There are some magazines on the table over there if you'd like to read them.

Visitor Thank you.

If the visitor has an appointment, it is usually a good idea to address him or her by name. This is a friendly gesture, and makes the visitor feel that he or she is welcome. If the executive is busy, and the visitor is unable to wait, the receptionist should make another appointment.

Receptionist Good morning. Can I help you?

Visitor Yes. I have an appointment with Mr Dantini.

Receptionist Mr Fraser?

Visitor Yes, that's right.

Receptionist I'm afraid Mr Dantini is engaged at the moment. Would you mind waiting?

Visitor Well . . . How long will he be?

Receptionist About twenty minutes.

Visitor Oh, that's too long. I have another meeting at 11.

Receptionist Can the Assistant Manager deal with it?

Visitor No. I got in touch with Mr Dantini myself on the telephone yesterday and discussed details with him. I doubt if anyone else would know about the matter.

Receptionist Perhaps you would like to make an appointment for some other time?

Visitor Yes, I suppose that's the best idea in the circumstances. I'll be in this area on Friday morning. Friday morning at 10.30. Is that all right?

Receptionist Yes, I'll make a note of that and ask Mr Dantini to confirm. Does he have your telephone number?

Visitor Yes, but I'll leave my card, just in case he has lost the one I gave him.

Receptionist Thank you, Mr Fraser. I'm sorry about the confusion but we'll see you on Friday.

Visitor Yes. Thank you. Goodbye.

If it is necessary to tell a visitor that it is impossible or inconvenient for an executive to see him, this may have to be done tactfully. If the executive is away from the office, it is

not too difficult. The receptionist may ask if someone else in the office can help. If the executive is in the middle of a meeting, the receptionist should explain carefully what is happening. If the executive simply hasn't enough time or doesn't want to see the visitor, then the receptionist has a difficult job and must explain or make suggestions with tact. A future appointment can be arranged.

Receptionist Good morning. Can I help you?

Visitor Yes. I'd like to see Miss Wilson.

Receptionist Is Miss Wilson expecting you, sir?

Visitor No, I'm afraid not.

Receptionist Could I have your name, please?

Visitor Sproat. Jeremy Sproat.

Receptionist If you'd like to take a seat, Mr Sproat, I'll see if Miss Wilson can see you.

(to Miss Wilson on her extension) *I have a Mr Jeremy Sproat here, who wants to see you. Yes . . . you can't? All right.*

(to visitor) I'm afraid Miss Wilson can't see you at the moment. Would you like to see someone else who can deal with the matter?

Visitor No. I must see Miss Wilson.

Receptionist I'm afraid that's not possible at the moment, sir. Please leave your card and I'll ask Miss Wilson to get in touch with you herself. Perhaps she can arrange an appointment for some future date.

Other responses by a receptionist, explaining reasons why an executive cannot see a visitor, and making suggestions:

1 'I'm afraid Mr Dantini can't see you today. He's away from his office at the moment. Can the Assistant Manager deal with the matter?'

2 'I'm afraid Mr Dantini can't see you today. He's in the middle of a meeting at the moment. Would you like to make an appointment for next Wednesday?'

If the receptionist accompanies the visitor to the executive's office, he announces the visitor's name, title and the company he represents. He then introduces the executive to the visitor.

This is Mr Fitzherbert, the Representative from Johnson's.

This is Mr Dantini, the Sales Manager.

This is Miss Hutchinson, the Research and Development Manager of Tyne Textiles Ltd.

This is Mr Dantini, our Sales Manager.

B. Language practice

1 Notice how a receptionist asks a visitor to wait for a short time, while he or she contacts the person the visitor wants to see.

If you'd like to take a seat, I'll tell him you're here.

Ask a visitor to wait, using these words :

- 1 wait a few minutes/Mr Dantini/come and see you
- 2 take a seat/I/contact the Sales Manager
- 3 sit down over there/the secretary/bring you up to the office
- 4 take a seat/I/see if the Director is free
- 5 wait a few seconds/I/ring his extension
- 6 come this way/the messenger/show the way to the office
- 7 wait in the reception room/I/get/in touch with the Sales Manager
- 8 take a seat/I/ask/him to come down
- 9 wait a few minutes/I/phone through to his secretary
- 10 take a seat/I/ask/his secretary to see you

2 Note how you can say that you will tell somebody something, in a formal, arranged way :

I'll let you/him know when it arrives, etc.

Say that you will 'let someone know' the following :

- 1 If he is free
- 2 Who is available in the office
- 3 What time he returns
- 4 The best time and date for an appointment
- 5 How much you can claim for travelling expenses
- 6 Where the Sales Manager will be on Friday morning
- 7 How to fill in the application form
- 8 When Mr Jones is free
- 9 As soon as the secretary rings back
- 10 Where Mr Hopkins' office is

Ask someone to 'let you know' something in this way :

Will you				?
Please	let me know	when Mr Hopkins	returns	.

- 1 Where is the Director's office ?
- 2 When will the meeting finish ?
- 3 Who will be free this afternoon ?
- 4 What can I do to help ?
- 5 How can I contact Mr Dantini ?
- 6 How can I assist you ?
- 7 What time suits you ?
- 8 What do you want me to do ?

3 Notice how you ask if someone else can help, if the person the visitor wants to see is not present.

Can the Assistant Manager *deal with it*?

If a visitor comes to the receptionist and asks to see the Production Manager, the receptionist tells him that he is not present. Ask the visitor if the following people can help:

- 1 The Research and Development Manager
- 2 The Production Manager's deputy
- 3 Mr Hopkins
- 4 His secretary
- 5 Anyone else
- 6 The engineering department
- 7 Any other manager
- 8 The Sales Manager
- 9 Someone in the General Office
- 10 Our Representative

4 Apologies: Note how a receptionist apologizes for a delay.

<i>I'm sorry for the delay. He is</i>	in the middle of	a meeting.
	attending	

Apologize for the following:

- 1 The delay/Mr Hopkins/busy
- 2 The error/The secretary/attend/meeting
- 3 The delay/The Sales Manager/away/on business
- 4 The inconvenience/The Director/at lunch/an important client
- 5 The delay/Mr Dantini/attend/conference

5 Regret: Notice how you express regret when someone is not present.

I'm afraid Mr Hopkins can't see you today. He is away on business.

Express regret in the same way for the following:

- 1 The Sales Manager is ill.
- 2 Mr Ward is in the middle of a meeting.
- 3 The Director is out. He went to have lunch.
- 4 The Manager's secretary is attending a conference.
- 5 The Representative has been detained by fog at London Airport.
- 6 The Managing Director will be very busy all day.
- 7 The Production Manager is in our other office.
- 8 The Director cannot be contacted at the moment.
- 9 Mr Dantini has another appointment.
- 10 Miss Wilson is too busy to see you at all today.

6 Sometimes a receptionist keeps a register of visitors, and often the visitors write the details of their visit in this register.

The register for November 29th, the date on which the receptionist's conversations in this unit took place, would look like this:

Date	Name of visitor	Title	Firm	Time of arrival	Action	Referred to
29 NOV	R. FRASER	SALES MANAGER (EUROPE)	IMB ELECTRONICS	09.45	APPOINTMENT 2/12 10.30	
29 Nov.	M. Fitzherbert	Representative	Johnson's Pharmaceuticals	11.00	✓	Mr Dantini
29 Nov.	J. Ramsbotham	Director	Wilson's Cars	12.10	seen	Mr Dantini
29 Nov	C. Hutchinson	Research and Development Manager	Tyne Textiles	14.30	✓	Mr Dantini

This is a record of the date and time of a visitor's call, who the visitor is and his position or title in the firm, the name of the firm, the action taken, and the executive who has seen the visitor.

Notice that the record closely follows the conversations between the receptionist and the visitors.

Mr Fraser arrived at 9.45 a.m. but Mr Dantini was in the middle of a meeting, and Mr Fraser couldn't wait. The receptionist made an appointment for the following Friday.

Mr Fitzherbert arrived on time, he had an appointment at 11 a.m., and was sent to Mr Dantini's office.

Mr Ramsbotham arrived with no appointment, but Mr Dantini was free, and so they met.

Miss Hutchinson arrived on time and saw Mr Dantini.

Now look at this receptionist's register :

Date	Name of visitor	Title	Firm	Time of arrival	Action	Referred to
Nov. 30	C. Jones (Mr)	Marketing Manager (Europe)	Cressey Electric	09.15	Appointment 5/12 (Mr Ward)	
Nov. 30	A. J. Carson (Mr)	Representative	Spinster Foods Ltd.	10.00	✓	Mr Hopkins
Nov. 30	R. Culver (Mrs)	Research Assistant	Windsor Textiles	11.15	Seen	Miss Wilson
Nov. 30	K. Shepherd (Mr)	Representative	AMI International	12.30	None	—
Nov. 30	S. R. Francis (Miss)	Director	Bond Fashion Ltd.	13.00	✓	Mr Dantini

7 Write the conversations between the receptionist and the visitor for the five visits recorded (above) in the receptionist's register. Write the conversations in dialogue form, in the same way as the conversations between the receptionist and the visitor earlier in this unit.

C. Vocabulary

I Note the phrases used in this unit :

By name Refer to him *by name*. (Don't call him 'sir'.)

In advance Inform me of the appointment *in advance*.
(before it happens)

In the middle of He is *in the middle of* arrangements for the conference. (he is very busy)

In touch with I'll get *in touch with* his secretary. (I'll contact his secretary.)

Out of the question You can't see him. It's *out of the question*. (impossible)

Insert the correct phrases in the passage below.

If a visitor wants to meet an executive in a large firm, he should make an appointment If he doesn't, he may

arrive while the executive is some important discussions or meetings.

When an important client arrives, the receptionist should address him or her to give a friendly and welcoming impression. After the visitor arrives, the receptionist should contact the executive's office as soon as possible. If he isn't available, she should ask the visitor if he would like to make an appointment or get him himself later.

The most difficult part of a receptionist's job is to apologize, explain, and make suggestions when a meeting with an executive is

2 Insert the correct words in the appropriate spaces in the passage below.

appointment	duties	procedure
announces	escorts	refer
area	gesture	register
arrangements	movements	suggestion
client	notify	tact

A receptionist in a small firm may have to use the typewriter, operate the switchboard, and perform other clerical, in addition to receiving visitors. In a large firm a receptionist can concentrate on welcoming and looking after visitors.

A visitor to a large firm should make an, because executives are often very busy and do not have much time for visitors. Executives and secretaries should the receptionist in advance about important appointments, and about the of executives, especially when they are out of the building on business. Executives often ask receptionists to make travel for them, such as booking hotel rooms and airline tickets.

There is a certain for receiving visitors. A receptionist should find out if the visitor has an appointment or not. If the visitor is an important, the executive or his secretary will come down to the reception to greet the visitor. Sometimes the receptionist or another secretary, or accompanies, the visitor to the executive's office. Using the visitor's name when he arrives is a friendly and gives the visitor a good impression of the firm. When the receptionist and the visitor arrive at the executive's office, the receptionist the visitor's name, title and position, and introduces the executive to him.

When a visitor cannot be satisfied, the receptionist should apologize and make some for an alternative meeting. If a meeting is impossible, the receptionist should express regret and explain, with, what has happened, so that the visitor's feelings are not hurt.

A receptionist should keep a which includes dates times, names and the firm the visitor works for. A receptionist can then to this if there is a request for information.

2

Bookings and appointments



book (v.) To ask for or require a hotel room, a theatre seat, or a car, for a date or period in the future

car hire A method or system of using a car, which belongs to an institution which specializes in keeping a range of cars, and paying a fee for the use of the car

colleague (n.) A person who works with you

comprehensive insurance Insurance (in motor car insurance) which protects a driver and the other driver who might be involved in a collision, and both cars

confirm (v.) To inform someone that you are certain of your arrangements

diary A book which has days and dates, and space for