

Conference Call Etiquette

Teleconference hosts should e-mail the following information to guests. By following the conference call etiquette, you and your callers will experience a smoothly-run call with minimal if no hassle!

Preparing for the Call

Environment and Equipment

Your environment and equipment can contribute to a successful teleconference for everyone. Please plan ahead and consider the following:

- **Location.** Much of what you hear in your surroundings will be transmitted to everyone on the call. Please call from a quiet location. Remember to reduce the volume on your ringer if you have a 2-line phone and please disable call waiting (*70 for most local phone companies).
- **Speakerphones, Cordless phones, Voice over Internet (VoIP), and sometimes wireless Headsets.** Each of these can contribute unwanted noise to the call. If you use a cordless land line, stay close to the base unit to minimize signal loss. If you are using a cell phone, be aware that traveling or even moving around in your home or office can reduce or drop your signal. Headsets should have fresh batteries. If there is a problem with static or other noise, guests should first remove their headsets, then, if this doesn't help, mute themselves to see if the problem resolves. As a final option, everyone may hang up and dial back in.
- **Mute Button.** Guests, please use your phone's mute button, if there is one, or use *6 to mute yourself and *6 again to unmute yourself. Background noise, the dog barking, even heavy breathing, could be a problem for the other guests. Please use mute rather than putting the call on hold, especially if you have music on hold (as everyone will hear the music).

During the Call

Timeliness

Please dial the teleconference number at the appointed time.

- Please make sure you have the correct time of the call for your time zone. If you are given the time for your teleconference in the Eastern time zone and you are unsure of how that converts to your time zone if it is different, go to <https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/>
- **Entering and Exiting the Call.** Many of our Telebridges have tones that sound when you enter and exit the call. Be aware that if you come late or leave early (or hop on and off the call), you may create a distraction. If you have to leave the call early, it's polite to inform the host at the beginning of the call or by email, if possible.

- **If You're Late:** No problem; it happens. Just try to silently catch onto the flow of conversation and, if you're very late, be careful about asking questions that may have already been answered.
- **Ending the Call:** Please end the call 5 minutes before the end of the hour. Guests can help the Host end on time by handling any incomplete issues and hanging up promptly.

Tips for Communicating Effectively

Participating in a Teleconference can be fun and enjoyable, particularly if everyone is mindful of a few communication principles.

- **What you will hear.** After you dial the telephone number of the conference, you will hear a recording say something like "Please enter your PIN followed by the pound sign (#)."^{**} You may then be asked to state your name. This will allow the host to receive a list of participants. If you're the first participant you may hear a recorded message saying you're the only one on the conference or you may hear silence until someone else joins. On most bridges, those already connected will hear a short tone when you join the teleconference, and the teleconference host will usually say something like, "Hi, who just joined the teleconference?" or "Welcome, hold on a moment while everyone joins the teleconference." If you're late, the host may not acknowledge you. That doesn't mean you're not welcome. Just listen silently until you catch up with the meeting topic before speaking.
- **Let Your Host(s) Moderate.** Particularly on large conferences, frequent uninvited comments or cross talk among participants can cause confusion. Please wait until the Host asks for questions or comments and then address the Host directly, stating your name. For example: "Mary, this is Paul and I have a question. . .Some groups may prefer to have two hosts: one to deliver content and one to pay attention to the process. The second host might help direct questions and comments. Email is a great tool in this situation — guests can email the second host who can queue their questions and deliver them to the first host at the appropriate time.
- **Use Your Best Manners.** Because you won't be able to judge the expressions and body language of other participants, interpreting the meaning of ambiguous language or voice tones adds a new dimension to the conversation. It's best to choose your words precisely, assume that the other participants have good intentions, and, when needed, ask for clarification.

Recording

Guests may not record the teleconferences. First, it's illegal unless everyone has given permission. Second, there might be intellectual property involved. If the host is taping a teleconference, s/he must let everyone know at the beginning of the teleconference.

^{**}PIN is the term used by Telebridge to refer to the personal identification number you are assigned as the Host or Guest. Other terms that may be used on the recording when you dial into the Telebridge are "conference call code," "passcode," "PIN code," "PIN number," "moderator code," and "participant code."