



## Top Tips for Conference Calls

Teleconferences always run better if there are some clear protocols. Here are some suggestions.

### Before the call

- Ensure that someone takes responsibility for preparing and chairing the call - including
  - confirming start and finish times.
  - compiling an agenda and circulating it to everyone in advance. The agenda should be descriptive - that is, for each item, it should be clear what the 'task' is to be undertaken in relation to that item (hear an update, share views, reach a decision etc).
  - ensuring that it's clear what preparation is expected for the meeting (e.g. circulating a paper, reading the paper, etc).
  - sending round details of the number to call, any associated PIN, and whether the number is toll-free.
  - ensuring that someone has agreed to take a note of key decisions and action points.
- All participants should make sure they are calling in from somewhere quiet and with minimum distractions.
- Let the chair know if you cannot make the call.

### At the start

- When you join the conference, announce your presence.
- At the start of the call, make time for
  - a round of introductions
  - confirming the agenda and altering it if needed
  - confirming the end time
  - discussing and agreeing any ground rules

### During the call

- During the teleconference - and this may sound laborious, but it really helps - for each item or point, the person chairing should give everyone a chance to contribute by going around the group in a set order, e.g. alphabetical order of first name, (with people 'passing' if they like). People should say when they've finished on each point, so that others don't interrupt or get twitchy about how they're going to catch the chair's eye.
- If the conversation is flowing more freely, people should state their name when talking.
- Keep interruptions and distractions to a minimum - rustling, snuffling, chewing, tapping, side conversations all add to the background noise for everyone.
- Some conference call systems have a 'mute' facility, which automatically mutes people's phone lines when they are not talking.



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### **At the end**

- At the end of the meeting, make time for
  - a final round of checking that there's nothing else people would like to raise
  - confirming action points
  - confirming the arrangements for the next meeting
  - feedback on anything that needs to be done differently at the next meeting (process review)

### **More tips**

Do you have more tips to share? Send them to [penny@penny-walker.co.uk](mailto:penny@penny-walker.co.uk) or comment on the blog.