



ABOUT YOU

Answer the questions and talk about your ideas.

- 1 How much time do you spend talking on the phone?
- 2 Do you think people spoke on the phone more in the past than now?
- 3 In which situations do we hear other people talking on the phone?
- 4 Is it interesting to listen to other people's phone conversations?

Telephones could be used in people's homes from 1877 in the USA. Mark Twain wrote this essay in 1880 so it was a very new invention. Phones were very heavy and the sound quality was not very good. You couldn't call people directly – you used a *switchboard*, a kind of control centre where someone connected you to another number.

- 1 Read the text. As you read, think about this question.
What do you think is the relationship between the two people having the phone conversation?

A Telephonic Conversation (1880) Mark Twain

A telephone conversation – when you are sitting by and not part of that conversation – is one of the strangest things in modern life. Yesterday I was writing while such a conversation was going on in the room – a conversation

- 5 with only one end to it. You hear questions asked; you don't hear the answer. You hear invitations given; you hear no thanks in return.

Yes? Why, how did that happen?

Pause.

- 10 What did you say?

Pause.

Oh no, I don't think it was.

Pause.

No! Oh no, I didn't mean that. I meant, put it in while it is

- 15 still boiling.

Pause.

What?

Pause.

Yes, I like that way, too; but I think it's better with sauce.

- 20 Pause.

What did you say? Children, do be quiet!

Pause.

Oh! Hat! I thought you said you bought a cat!

Pause.

- 25 Since when?

Pause.

Why, I never heard of it.

Pause.

No! It seems impossible!

- 30 Pause.

Who did?

Pause.

Really!

Pause.



- 35 But I never allow them to eat candy. And of course, they can't, until they get their teeth, anyway.

Pause.

What?

Pause.

- 40 Oh, not at all – go right on. He's here writing – it doesn't bother him.

Pause.

Very well, I'll come if I can.

Pause.

- 45 Visitors?

Pause.

No, we never put butter on them.

Pause.

Oh, I think that is too much; we never pay more than fifty

- 50 cents for them.

Pause.

Must you go? Well, goodbye.

Pause.

Yes, I think so. Goodbye.

- 55 Pause.

Four o'clock, then – I'll be ready. Goodbye.

Pause.

Thank you ever so much. Goodbye.

2 Read the text again and answer the questions.

- 1** What does the writer think is strange about some telephone conversations?

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- 2** What do you think are the main topics of this conversation?

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- 3** Which mistakes does the speaker mention?

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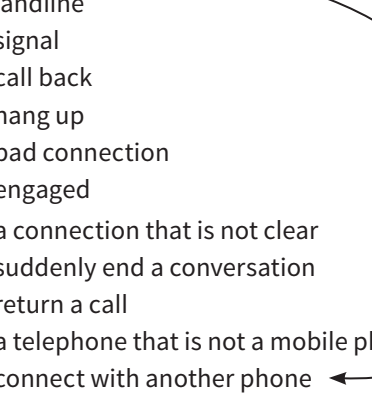
- 4** What do you notice about the way the conversation ends?

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VOCABULARY

3 Match the expressions to the meanings.

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- 1** get through
2 landline
3 signal
4 call back
5 hang up
6 bad connection
7 engaged
- A** a connection that is not clear
B suddenly end a conversation
C return a call
D a telephone that is not a mobile phone
E connect with another phone
F the thing you need to make a call
G already being used

4 Complete the sentences with a word or expression from Activity 3.

- 1 In the mountains, we couldn't get a That's why I didn't call.
- 2 We never use the at home but my dad wants to keep it.
- 3 I think I should This is a very and I can't hear you.
- 4 Why did she? Did you say something stupid?
- 5 I called you three times yesterday but I couldn't You were

WRITING

5 Work with a partner. Choose one of these situations:

- a parent and their teenage child
- two friends
- a shop assistant and a customer
- a grandparent and a grandchild

Write a telephone conversation between the two people you choose. Try and include at least three of the words and expressions from Activity 3.

This image shows a full page of primary-ruled paper. It features multiple sets of horizontal dashed lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. The paper is otherwise blank, with no margins or additional markings.

SPEAKING

6 Perform the phone conversation using the dialogue you created in the Writing activity.