

Curious Question #13 –Answering Machine Greetings

Transcript

Harp: Hi. You've reached Harp...

Maura: And Maura...

Harp: At Culips.com. We're not available right now, but leave your name and number after **the tone** and we'll get back to you as soon as possible. Thanks everyone!

Maura: **Just kidding.** Did you leave us a **message**? No. This is actually the **Curious Questions** podcast at Culips.com. In this podcast we answer your English questions.

Harp: So send us your questions at questions@culips.com.

Maura: In this episode we have a fun question for you. It is from Mathieu in Montreal.

Harp: *I want to record my greeting for my **voicemail** in English for the first time. But I just don't know what to say. Can you give me some examples for what I should say? I work as a tech support. I would like a standard greeting. Thanks for your help.*

Maura: There are many different ways to do this. We will look at the standards for home and at work, and also look at some more fun ones. Some people like to be creative with their **voicemail** greetings.

Harp: Some people who are funny put crazy things on their **answering machines**. Some people put music or sing songs.

Maura: Here is a classic example of a funny **answering machine message**. One of my friends has this **message** right now. The **message** starts with simply saying, "Hello? Hello?"

Harp: The person who is calling thinks that someone has answered and is trying to respond. It is funny because it is confusing. We will try out this example for you.

Maura: *Hello?*

Harp: *Hello, is Jon there? Hello?*

- Maura: *Hello? Hello?...**Just kidding**. No one is here to talk your call. Leave a **message** and we'll call you back.*
- Maura: **I got you there**, eh?
- Harp: I thought someone was there.
- Harp: This is just one example of how some people try to be creative with their **messages**. Matthieu works as tech support, so he probably needs something more serious. Let's give you a few examples:
- Maura: *Hi. You have **reached** Mathieu at Tech Support. I am unable to come to the phone right now. Please leave a **message** and I will call you back.*
- Harp: *Hello. You have **reached** the **voicemail** of Sharon. I am not available right now. Please leave your name and number and I will get back to you as soon as possible.*
- Maura: *Hello. This is Karen. I'm either on the phone or away from my desk. Please leave a detailed **message** and I'll call you back as soon as possible. Thanks.*
- Harp: Something like these ones sounds good. If you want to leave someone else to contact you can say, "If you need immediate assistance dial zero." Or, "If you need assistance right away, please call 514-555-2323."
- Maura: That is not our real number, so don't try calling. OK! And your average **answering machine** in a home is not that different. You can say the names of the people, the family name, or the phone number. Here are some more examples:
- Harp: *Hi. You've **reached** the Smith family. We're not in right now. Leave us a **message** after **the beep** and we'll call you back.*
- Maura: *Hello. You have **reached** 514-522-2987. We're not able to come to the phone right now. Please leave us a **message** and we'll get back to you. Have a great day!*
- Harp: That's everything for us today, so we'll leave you with a little song **message**.
- Maura: **Here we go**.
- Maura & Harp: *Hello. There's no one home. Leave your **message** at the sound of the tone.*

Maura: So, if you want to know the words to our song go to our website and click on Lipservice, they are in the transcript.

Harp: So again, if you have any questions please email us at questions@culips.com. That's everything for us.

Maura: See you next time!

Harp: Bye everyone!

Detailed Explanation

The greetings for **answering machines** or **voicemail** are pretty standard. Most greetings include three things:

1. The person's name,
2. A **message** saying that they are unavailable, and
3. Instructions for leaving a **message**.

Let's look at some of the words in those greetings.

Message

A **message** is the small voice explanation that is left by the person who called. In this episode, we also called the phone greeting "a **message**." The greeting is also a type of **message** because you are leaving a **message** for the people who call you.

Answering machine / voicemail

Both an **answering machine** and **voicemail** do the same function: they answer your phone when you are not there or you are busy.

An **answering machine** is a real machine with a cassette recorder or digital recorder that answers your phone and records incoming **messages**. **Voicemail** is the "new" **answering machine**. It is a part of your phone system and is used in almost all offices and on cellphones.

Reached

"**Reached**" is a common word used in **voicemail** greetings. The literal meaning of "to reach" is to physically extend your arm to touch or take something.

In this case, we use "**reached**" as we have made an effort to call someone and when the phone is answered, we have **reached** the place we wanted to call.

The tone/the beep

We gave examples like, "Leave your **message** after **the tone**." "**The tone**" or "**the beep**" is the sound you will hear before you are supposed to leave a **message**.

Just kidding

Do you know this expression? I said, "Hello? Hello?...**Just kidding**. No one is here to take your call. Leave a **message** and we'll call you back."

We say “**just kidding**” when something is a joke. We can also say “**just joking**.” They mean the same thing. Something that we did or said was not serious. It was funny.

I got you there

I said to Harp, “**I got you there**” after the joke greeting. This greeting is funny and confusing because the person calling thinks that someone answered the phone. This **answering machine** greeting sounds like someone has answered the phone but really it is a recorded voice.

In our example, Harp thought that someone was talking to her, but it was just a funny greeting. I tricked Harp or fooled Harp. “To trick” or “to fool” someone is to make them believe something that is not true.

To say, “**I got you there**,” means “I fooled you” or “I tricked you.” I **got** Harp because she believed that someone was talking to her but it was just a recording.

Phone numbers

In Canada and the USA, local* phone numbers are seven digits long. This means they have seven numbers, like 555-1234.

In some big cities we have to dial the area code (for example, “416” is the Toronto area code) and the phone number (555-1234) to reach someone.

There are many different area codes within Canada. For example, Montreal’s area codes are “514” and “438” and Vancouver’s is “604.”

When we call long-distance we dial “1” plus the area code for the location we are calling. The area code is always three digits long. So, if I wanted to call my friend in Vancouver, and I was in Montreal, I would have to dial 1-604-555-1234.

*“Local” means “within the same city or general area.”

More greetings

Harp also says, “Some people put music or sing songs (on their **answering machines**).” We gave you an example of someone singing a song at the end of this episode. Some people may sing their greeting instead of just speaking.

Some people also add music at the beginning or end of their greetings.

These types of funny greetings are often not viewed as professional. If you are expecting a call about a job, it is best to keep your greeting standard.

If you are interested in making a greeting of your own, look at our transcript for some examples. You can simply replace the personal information we used with your own information.

Here we go

This is an expression we say before we start something. We say “**Here we go**” before we start something fun or exciting.

We used it before our funny song!

Quiz (see the answers at the bottom of this Lipservice)

1. Catherine: Hello?
Kyle: Hello, is Paul there? Hello?
Catherine: Hello? Hello? ... Just kidding. No one is here to take your call.
Leave a message and we'll call you back.

What kind of voicemail greeting is this?

- a) standard
- b) funny

2. **What are some ways that people make funny voicemail greetings?**

- a) sing songs
- b) tell a joke
- c) speak in other languages
- d) all of the above

3. ***You have _____ Joseph's voicemail. I am not available right now. Please leave a message and I will call you back.***

Please fill in the blank.

- a) talked to
- b) reached
- c) answered
- d) responded

4. ***Hi. This is the voicemail of Sophia Smith. Please leave a _____ and I'll call back.***

Please fill in the blank.

- a) greeting
- b) response
- c) message
- d) tone

5. What is some extra information that some people include on the voicemail greeting at work?

- a) where to call if assistance is needed right away
- b) songs they like
- c) family information
- d) a joke

Answers: 1.b 2.d 3.b 4.c 5.a