

The Rules of Conference Call Etiquette

1. **There must be a clear leader/moderator of the call** – This is the person that keeps the call on track. Time is valuable. When you multiply the time spent on a call times the number of people on the call, multiples of hours are spent on a conference call. There has to be a driver of the bus.
 2. **There must be an agenda** – Not only must there be an agenda, but it needs to be in front of everyone. The agenda keeps the meeting on track, and allows all on the call to know the purpose of the call. It gives direction.
 3. **Announce yourself** – This was the single biggest difference between the “free-for-all” call and the quick and efficient one. Announcing yourself when you speak has two huge benefits. First, it is polite to let those on the call know who is speaking since they can’t see you. Don’t assume people know the sound of your voice. Second, it almost entirely eliminates interruptions. I was surprised by this, but think about it. You aren’t as likely to cut someone off or talk over someone if you are announcing who you are first. “This is Jack from Ohio and I’m going to interrupt you now.”
 4. **Practice impeccable phone etiquette** – There is nothing worse on a call than background noise. Typing is heard. A side conversation is happening. The background noise kills the mojo of the call and is simply rude. It is so easy to be distracted on a call like this and start checking email, etc. I get it. Just make sure your line is muted.
 5. **Make sure you have a good connection** – Cell phones are tricky. Regardless of my love for Verizon, sometimes I will still have a bad connection. If at all possible, dial in from a landline. I am not a fan of VOIP in this context.
 6. **Set these ground rules and the beginning of the call** – This is the leader’s job. At the beginning of the call, the leader should welcome everyone and then lay out the ground rules. Don’t assume that those on the call understand the guidelines for a quick and efficient call. The leader’s role is huge in setting the tone, keeping the call on track, and making sure that everyone is engaged. If someone is not speaking up, call them out and invite them to share their thoughts.
3. Don’t use the hold feature – If, during a conference call, you put your phone on hold, the DSBPC “on-hold message” will begin to play --for ALL to hear! Turning off the microphone or placing the handset on mute is the correct option if you are just listening to the conference call.
4. Find a quiet location, call in on time, and set time aside for the call. All participants within one location should gather to participate in the call in order not to tie up any more lines than necessary. Avoid the urge to multi-task during the call.
5. Follow the facilitator’s expectations, which were sent prior to the conference call.
6. Keep your phone muted until the facilitator is opening the line for questions or comments.

8. Avoid talking over or interrupting other speakers. It is advisable to keep a notepad and pen handy for recording thoughts so they don't escape you as you listen to others.

9. In order to maintain a professional demeanor, some comments should not be made in this public forum. Remember that your meeting is being RECORDED.