

# The ABCs of Telephone Collections

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**Anticipate** your needs before you start your call. Have all of the information and tools you will require ready before the call.

**Believe** in your ability. If you have confidence in yourself, you'll have a better chance of reaching your goals.

**Control** the conversation. Be firm and businesslike. Keep in mind your goal of payment in full.

**Develop** a "third ear." Listen closely for clues in what is said, what isn't said, and how it's being said.

**Encourage** the debtor to talk. Let him tell his own story in his own way.

**Focus** attention on developing a definite plan of action that will completely resolve the account.

**Guard** against showing any signs of belligerence or anger. A good collector cannot afford a bad temper.

**Help** yourself by not accepting arrangements that are not in your company's best interests.

**Identify** the debtor, yourself, and the amount of the claim. Be sure you are talking to the person who can authorize payment.

**Sell** the debtor on the benefits of paying the account in full.

**Talk** clearly and distinctly when making a collection call. If you speak too fast, train yourself to slow down. This helps avoid any possibility the debtor may misunderstand you.

**Utilize** your mistakes. They will help you to improve your technique.

**Vary** your approach. If you're not getting through, try a different tactic.



**Jot** down notes as you talk to the debtor; don't trust your memory. You need an accurate record of your telephone interviews.

**Key** your focus on the real problems and solutions.

**Lead** the debtor to develop a plan of action that will resolve the account in full. Allow the debtor to make the initial offer.

**Move** quickly on reasonable settlement offers by getting approval immediately.

**Negotiate** the most advantageous settlement possible.

**Observe** any signs of the debtor holding back information or making inconsistent statements. These may be clues to his intentions.

**Pause** for a short time after stating the purpose of the call. This throws the burden of the conversation on the debtor and gives him a chance to offer payment or explain his reasons for non-payment.

**Quench** any tendencies to preach, moralize, judge or argue. Avoid fighting words.

**Review** your notes. If there are previously broken commitments, keep a close eye on whether the debtor keeps future promises.



**Withhold** agreement to accept a partial payment until you are fully satisfied that there are no other means of obtaining payment.

**X-ray** all the facts. If you encounter a problem you can't resolve, enlist the aid of your supervisor or a more experienced collector on your team.

**Yield** only when you are convinced that the claim is impossible to collect.

**Zero-in** on every call you make. Persistence and patience pay off.