

WARE'S LANGUAGE NOTES

Telephone hang-ups ? Ne raccrochez pas !

It's a wonderful device we love to use to talk to our friends and relations, but what happens when you need to ring for a doctor's appointment, or to find out if a shop has something you need in stock ? Even if you are lucky enough that the phone is answered by a human, all you're likely to get is « *Allo !* ».

So the first thing you need to do is check that you are talking to who you think you are.

« *C'est bien le cabinet de Docteur ?* » *That IS Dr X's surgery, isn't it ?* or « *Je suis bien chez M. Tel / chez Leclerc ?* » *That is Mr So-and-so's house/ Leclerc's, isn't it ?*

That little word *bien* is a kind of check word that you can use in all sorts of situations to make sure you're on the right track. (*C'est bien la route de Limoges ?, le train de Paris ? etc*)

If you want to talk to someone in particular, then you'll ask

« *Est-ce que (pronounced Esker) je peux parler à Monsieur/Madame Tel, s'il vous plaît ?* » - *Can I speak to Mr or Mrs So-and-so, please ?*

Then when you get started in, there are a number of odd expressions that you will meet or need –

« *Ne raccrochez pas* » or

« *Ne quittez pas* » - *Don't hang up*

« *Je vous le passe* » - *I'm putting you through*

« *C'est de la part de qui ?* » - *who wants him ?* or

« *Qui est à l'appareil ?* » - *who is that speaking ?*

« *C'est à quel sujet ?* » - *what's it about ?*

Or worse :

« *Non, il n'est pas là !* » - *He's not there*, in which case you might ask

« *Est-ce que je peux lui laisser un message ?* » - *Can I leave a message for him/her ?* or if you're feeling brave :

« *Quand est-ce qu'il sera de retour ?* » - *When will he be back ?*

Back to the surgery and you know you're talking to the secretary so off we go :

« *Je voudrais prendre rendez-vous avec Dr , s'il vous plaît* » - *I'd like an appointment.....*

Remember they'll use the 24 hour clock, so *quatorze heures* is two o'clock, not four !

Of course, sometimes you are not in control – for instance a French person rings YOU and has the wrong number. You'll find them hard to dissuade ! But you can say :

« *Il y a une erreur* » or

« *Vous avez le mauvais numéro* » or even

« *Vous vous êtes trompé de numéro !* »

You will probably need all three to get the message across.

Bon courage