

Basics

When we exchange information, it is easy to mishear and make a mistake. This is especially true when we need to understand times, dates and names of people and places. We often need to check and confirm what we hear when we speak on the phone.

There are different ways we can make sure the right information has been exchanged:

- We can ask the other person to repeat what they said.
- We can repeat the information we hear back to the other person.
- We can confirm or correct what the other person thinks they heard.

In practical, social and academic situations, you need to hear and give information. It is essential that you know how to check information has been exchanged correctly.

The academic context

When you are working with other students in pairs or groups, you will exchange information. In a lecture or during a presentation, you might want to check that you've heard a specific piece of information correctly. You will need to learn how to check, confirm and correct information in a polite and appropriate way.

Key features

- Use of predictable requests and questions

Can you repeat that?
Did you say 15 or 50?

- Use of predictable fixed expressions

I didn't catch that.
So, that's Sunday the 25th at 3 p.m.

- Appropriate choice of formal or informal options

Formal: I'm sorry – I didn't catch that?
Informal: What did you say?

- Use of appropriate stress and intonation

Is that with a **G** /dʒi:/ or a **J** /dʒeɪ/?

Challenges / difficulties

In a situation in which you don't understand what somebody says, you often feel anxious or silly. You might not want to admit that you haven't understood, or you might not have the confidence to ask the other person to repeat the information.

How can I develop this skill?

The best way is to practise whenever you get the opportunity. Even if you think you've understood information, practise checking it. If you give somebody information, speak clearly and check that they've understood.

Learning outcome

When you have developed this skill, you will interact more naturally and effectively. You will be less likely to make mistakes due to having misheard information.

Theory to practice

- 1** **01 Listen to the conversation. Highlight an example of checking, an example of confirming and an example of correcting.**

Transcript

01

- Fatima** Hi, Thomas. It's Fatima. I want to book a meeting room for next Tuesday.
Thomas For next Thursday. Let me check.
Fatima No, for next Tuesday.
Thomas Next Tuesday. OK. And for how many people?
Fatima Eight people and me.
Thomas So, a room for nine people?
Fatima That's right.
Thomas OK. That's fine, Fatima. I'll send you a confirmation email.
Fatima Thanks. Bye.

- 2** **Is each sentence used for checking information, correcting information or confirming information? Tick the correct box.**

	Checking	Correcting	Confirming
a So, that's 9.15 in the lecture hall.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b Could you spell that for me, please?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c No, Thompson is with an H. T-H-O-M-P-S-O-N.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d Sorry, I didn't catch your surname.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e Actually, I said Leeds. That's in Yorkshire.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f OK, June 26 th it is. I can't wait.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g Can you say that again, please?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h joetswift22@hotmail.com. Is that right?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i It's with a G rather than a J.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j How much did you say that was?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 3** **02 Listen and check the stress and intonation in each sentence from Exercise 2.**

- 4** **Practise saying all the sentences from Exercise 2 with a partner.**

TIP

When we correct somebody, we often introduce what we say with *actually*. This prepares the listener to be corrected.
Actually, we're meeting at 7.15, not 7.50.

Ways to get more practice

- Listen to proficient speakers giving and receiving information. Notice the expressions they use to check, correct and confirm, and the intonation they use.
- Record yourself practising the sentences and dialogues from this Factsheet and the Worksheet. Decide if you are happy with your intonation.
- Practise the dialogues with classmates.