**Procedure for taking bookings (Rottnest)**

1. **Take call from teacher**: Introduce yourself by name and then ask what you can do for them. Remember you are the first point of contact for the company so it’s very important what kind of impression you want to give. Be upbeat and friendly but still very professional. People will respond better to somebody that gives off a positive vibe.
2. **Ask details**: School’s name, contact number, email, dates, numbers, meals. Try to get as much information as possible for the first contact. It will help you later to remember the group.

Try to up sell the morning teas, afternoon teas, and suppers (Make it sound like all the other schools get these items, ‘standard meals’). If you can try to sell them a BBQ meal as this costs the school more and is less work for our staff. Teachers are able to cook the meal on the barbeques outside. Make it an ‘outdoor experience’. Teachers won’t often know about this option even being available unless you mention it to them. It can also make the dining room less congested if people are eating outside. If a teacher says that they don’t want lunch ask them what they’ll be doing instead. Try to up-sell the take away lunches (rolls) and tell them that it’s as easy as them making it themselves and putting it in their bags in the morning. Less drama and each person can choose what goes directly in their roll (You don’t get this kind of choice at subway)

1. **Explain the booking process to the organizer**: Some teachers have been doing bookings with us for 5+ years and some teachers will be contacting us for the first time. It is important that they are aware of the process involved and that it is explained to them clearly so that they feel comfortable. The main point to explain is the confirmation of booking form and quotations. By sending out the confirmation form and them sending it back to you will give them a basic quote. However for add ons it will be important for you to quote them so that they aren’t sprung on with any nasty surprises. By being open and transparent the booking and invoicing process will be made smoother. It is also important that they are aware that we have limitations on what we can and can’t cater for. Vegetarians, even vegans, gluten intolerant, and lactose intolerant, can all be catered for. We just need to know well in advance so that the cook can order in and prepare food in time. Reminding the teacher that you need to know 10 working days in advance for special dietary requirements is extremely important. We want to make the catering experience as comfortable as possible, but sometimes we have to ask for meals to be substituted if the request is well outside of the standard.
2. **Record information into excel sheet**: Write down any information in regards to special items ie wants extra muffins, soft drinks, deliveries. Also record any special deals that may have been made as a reference for later. Put as much information as possible straight into the booking spread sheet and immediately press ‘SAVE’. Accidents happen all the time and can be avoided by saving documents as soon as you make any changes.
3. **Record information into calendar.** Click on the commencement date of the camp and put in the following information: total numbers, beginning meal- end meal, group type (Adult, Senior High School, and/or Primary School), name of organization, and either a © for confirmed or (T) for tentative. Even if it is just an enquiry make sure it is on the calendar so that you have a reference point to follow up. If you have any documents in relation to the booking attach it to Google calendar. In the description box write down any relevant information that might help you and anybody else that might need to access it.

**In Google Calendar the entry will look like this 87 B-L SHS Mercy College (T)**

1. **Send school email information**: As soon as all the information is recorded in both the excel spread sheets and Google Calendar send an email to the camp organizer with all the information that you discussed over the phone. Make sure that you’re professional in the email and always check that you are addressing the correct person.

Sometimes you may hear an email wrong or there is some miscommunication. In having a contact phone number you can always call back and get the email again. Don’t let the email slide with the excuse ‘it didn’t work’.

Attach the following documents: Confirmation of booking form, Menu, Dining Hall Procedures, Special Dietary Requirements Policy, and a pricelist of items available.

If you are sending a quote make sure that you triple check it first and manually make sure that the quote is correct.

If the organization is not a regular school (smaller regional schools, education programs, private functions etc) it is important to remind them that there is a deposit required.

1. **Print off email in regards to camp and or confirmation of booking sheet**: File away in portable display file. This will be your life line in case you are away from the office. Having things digital is handy but it is equally important to have a hard copy. Things can easily get accidentally deleted. Internet can go down. Websites go bust. There is a whole variety of things that could go potentially wrong. By having a hard copy you can hopefully avoid information loss. Make sure you also attach all documents to Google Calendar.
2. **Contact school 2 weeks prior to camp**: It’s good to remind the teacher about any deadlines they may have missed in terms of getting back to you ie dietary requirements and any special extras. It is also good business to be in touch with organizers as it will put their mind at ease. You want to make this experience as pleasant as possible for them. Many teachers may be quite relaxed about organizing a camp, for others the thought is closer to hell. By being professional and reassuring you can calm down even the most stressed organizer.
3. **Contact school 1 week prior to camp**: This will be most likely the last time you have direct contact with the teacher unless of course they have more questions. You’ll want to find out the following information: Final number of students, final special dietary requirements, times of meals (if you don’t already have it), and any other information that you’re not clear on. When you have all the information you need make sure you wish them luck on their camp (this is just a friendly gesture especially when you are dealing with very anxious teachers) and that it was a pleasure dealing with them.

At the start of every second month email the group bookings accommodation coordinator for an update of schools who are staying at Rottnest Island. In the past there have been issues involving getting more information out of RIA surrounding the name of the person organizing the event and the specifics of the organizations. An example of this is a booking for Sacred Heart: RIA would not tell us which Sacred Heart was attending nor would they tell us who was organizing it. In the end a bit of investigation work had to be done to find out who was organizing it. You can do this by Googling the name of the organization and finding contact information via their website (usually under ‘contact us’)

The current bookings manager on Rottnest Island is Melissa Grier. She can be contacted by email [RESERVATIONS@rottnestisland.com](mailto:RESERVATIONS@rottnestisland.com), or by telephone**:** (08) 9432 9118

1. Record information of bookings in Calendar *Example:* ***Mercy College (T)***
2. Record information of bookings in Spreadsheet

**If teacher hasn’t contacted office**:

1. Look through previous year’s spread sheet to see who the last teacher was.
2. Ring school and ask if the same teacher is running the camp OR if the school is new ask who is running the camp and if you can get an email address/telephone number.
3. Contact the school offering catering services with booking sheet, prices etc.
4. Print off email in regards to camp and or confirmation of booking sheet- file in filing cabinet under the month of the camp. Also attach any documents in relation to Google Calendar.
5. Contact school 2 weeks prior to camp starting to get final meals and numbers and dietary requirements.
6. Contact school 1 week prior to camp and request a final update on meals, numbers, times, and dietary requirements.

Remember to fax Captain’s Kitchen every Thursday (Busy season Friday) the updates for the camp. Email anything that is urgent. The telephone fax number is (08) 9292 5999 and email is [sherellerotto@hotmail.com](mailto:sherellerotto@hotmail.com).

**Procedure for taking bookings (Nanga Bush Camp/WAC)**

1. **Wendy will inform office of what schools are booked in:** Nanga Bush Camp will email you the booking sheets when she gets them from the schools. On the booking sheet it will give you information regarding the organizer, the group, the numbers, and the dates. Once a month also ring Nanga Bush Camp to find out if there are any booking sheets you missed just to cross check that everybody has all the information.
2. **Enter bookings into calendar:** Click on the commencement date of the camp and put in the following information: total numbers, beginning meal- end meal, group type (Adult, Senior High School, and/or Primary School), name of organization, and either a © for confirmed or (T) for tentative. Even if it is just an enquiry make sure it is on the calendar so that you have a reference point to follow up. If you have any documents in relation to the booking attach it to Google calendar. In the description box write down any relevant information that might help you and anybody else that might need to access it.

**In Google Calendar the entry will look like this 87 B-L SHS Mercy College (T)**

1. **Email organizer:** booking forms with last year’s menu (for a reminder of what they had) as well as the price list and ask what meals they’d like to start and finish with as well as any specifics for the camp. Most teachers will go with the same menu as last year. In the event of it being a new school tell them of an introductory offer of a 5% discount as well as cheese platters for the staff in the evening.
2. **Print off menu and file in cabinet as well as emails in relation to booking.** File away in portable display file. This will be your life line in case you are away from the office. Having things digital is handy but it is equally important to have a hard copy. Things can easily get accidentally deleted. Internet can go down. Websites go bust. There is a whole variety of things that could go potentially wrong. By having a hard copy you can hopefully avoid information loss. Make sure you also attach all documents to Google Calendar.
3. **Fax Gail menu.** It is important that you fax Gail as soon as you get the menu for the camps so that she can double check it. Gail works with teachers every year and will know what their particular preferences are.Gail also has a good understanding of how different kitchens work and what will and won’t be doable. Gail will also be able to help out with any menu changes and suggestions.Some kitchens do not have a commercial oven so only one item will be able to fit into the over so always check with Gail.

**You can get in contact with Gail by ringing and faxing her on (08) 9538 1173 and her mobile number is 0429 402 060.**

1. **Contact school 2 weeks prior to camp starting to get final meals and numbers and dietary requirements.** It’s good to remind the teacher about any deadlines they may have missed in terms of getting back to you ie dietary requirements and any special extras. It is also good business to be in touch with organizers as it will put their mind at ease. You want to make this experience as pleasant as possible for them. Many teachers may be quite relaxed about organizing a camp, for others the thought is closer to hell. By being professional and reassuring you can calm down even the most stressed organizer.
2. **Contact school 1 week prior to camp and request a final update on meals, numbers, times, and dietary requirements.** This will be most likely the last time you have direct contact with the teacher unless of course they have more questions. You’ll want to find out the following information: Final number of students, final special dietary requirements, times of meals (if you don’t already have it), and any other information that you’re not clear on. When you have all the information you need make sure you wish them luck on their camp (this is just a friendly gesture especially when you are dealing with very anxious teachers) and that it was a pleasure dealing with them.

**Procedure for taking bookings (New Norcia)**

Groups and Bookings at New Norcia will send an update every few months with details of who they have booked in. We don’t contact the schools and only work directly with the groups and bookings manager. At the moment Antonia is the bookings manager and you can contact her on **(08) 96548018**. New Norcia will send us an email with the meal requirements for each group as they come. We work on a sort of contractual basis and invoice New Norcia instead of the school.

1. **Put groups straight onto calendar.** New Norcia will send an email with the breakdown of all the groups attending for the year. It will have information regarding numbers, and dates of commencement and finishing. It’s important that we have all the bookings in the calendar so that we can monitor cycles of when we are busy so that we can arrange our staff accordingly but also to see if we can do any other bookings. Most of the time we can find casual workers to do a job here or there but we can’t rely on their availability.

**In Google Calendar the entry will look like this 87 B-L SHS Mercy College (T)**

1. **Contact New Norcia in regards to upcoming camps.** After you’ve looked over the bookings that were sent to you ring New Norcia and discuss the bookings. There may be some additional information that will be handy to know. There may also be groups that we requiring a special deal which you will want to know about in advance**.**

If a group’s camp is coming up and you still have not received a menu from New Norcia give them a call 2 weeks before the commencement. Leave room for human error as they may have forgotten to send it off or you may have accidentally missed the email. By being in constant communication with the people you work with you’ll find that information is less likely to go astray.

1. **When menu arrives forward to cook.** Normally you’d only need to worry about sending it to Edward as he is the cook that manages New Norcia. However if Edward is unable to do the camp (You will know in advance) then you would fax the menu to Gail. Edward is normally CCd into the email with the menus but it is important to make sure you also forward it to him in case for whatever reason he didn’t receive it. Also forward any dietary requirements or special requests.
2. **Attach menu to booking in calendar:** Once you’ve forward on all the information attach it to the Google calendar under the booking. This way if there is a problem with email the information is still easily accessible. It also makes it more transparent about what is happening on each camp.
3. **Print out booking and put into filing cabinet:** Again, like all bookings it is important to keep hard copies of everything.
4. **Forward any changes onto cook for the camp:** In the event of any last minute changes ring Edward (or Gail) and let them know straight away, also email them any changes and update the calendar. The cook will let you know what is and isn’t doable and you will need to relate this back to New Norcia.

**Frequently Occurring Problems**

1. **An organizer rings the company last minute with special dietary requirements (sometimes even a day before the camp).** Be calm and find out all the specifics of the dietary requirements. Tell the organizer that you will ‘have to check with the cook is it is possible’ and then hang up. As soon as possible ring up Sherelle and discuss with her to see if there is a possibility to cater for this last minute request. If it is not possible ring back the organizer and apologize about the inconvenience of not being able to cater for the requirement and remind them of the policy. If it is possible let the organizer know as soon as possible that we can cater for the special requirements.
2. **A person has special dietary requirements outside the standard:** This does not include Vegetarians, Vegans, Lactose intolerants, and basic allergies (nuts, strawberries, kiwi fruit, shell fish, bananas). With people requesting Halal food we are able to inform them that the butchering company (Dardanup Butchering Company) supplies Halal chicken. Halal meals will either be replaced with a chicken alternative or will be treated as vegetarian. Celiacs (gluten free) are also able to be catered for but they need to bring their own bread as it is unavailable on the island.
3. **A teacher is aggressive/and or unreasonable:** Remember that you are dealing with the general public so you are bound to get people from all walks of life. Remain professional and courteous as always. If they are still not listening and get to the point of arguing ask them to perhaps write in an email what it is that they exactly would like so that there is no miscommunication, supply them with the email address, and then hang up. You are not there to be abused. Being professional at all times will help you separate any offense that is thrown at you. If an organizer is being unreasonable it may not be worth your time to get worked up in the drama. Try to remain flexible but if they will not go with our policy then you may need to tell them that our services might not be what they are looking for after all.
4. **A teacher surprises you with last minute number changes:** Like with the special dietary requirements it is important to ring the cook as soon as possible (email and fax are too slow, only use as a last resort in case of emergency). Any information ahead of time is better than none. If the cook is able to cater for the extended numbers they will let you know that they will do their best. If they are unable to they will often come up with a compromise (perhaps a change in menu to suit the new numbers). Let the organizer know what has been discussed with the cook.

If the numbers have dropped significantly still let the cook know ASAP so that they can cancel/change any food orders. Tell the organizer that the original final numbers still apply.

1. **Teachers aren’t answering the phone and/or email:** It can be frustrating when a teacher is not answering their mobile or email. It happens quite a bit and you need to be patient. One thing you can do is ring the school and ask if there is another person that they can direct you to that is also running the camp. I have found this to be quite helpful in the past. Another option is to speak to the administrations officer and stress the importance of the organizer getting back to you. I have found this to also get a faster response where there was none before.

1. **A teacher requests a birthday cake:** Students will often have birthdays whilst on camp and it seems to be tradition for teachers to have a cake for them. We can provide this for the same as long as we have some notice. Our birthday cakes come in the form of Sara Lee slab cakes that have been decorated. There is only milk chocolate ones available. The birthday cake can be substituted for a dessert if the teacher would like to save some money. If the camp is the following week make sure you speak first to the cook before saying that you can do it. You don’t want to accidentally promise something we can’t deliver.

**Invoicing Bookings**

Every Monday morning all the groups get invoiced for the previous week’s camp. We invoice AFTER the camp because if there are more people attending the camp we can charge them as such. However, if there are less people attending then we will charge at the **confirmed numbers**.

**Rottnest Island**

1. **Speak to Sherelle about the previous week’s camps:** Sherelle will give you an up to date idea of what happened the previous week in terms of final numbers, meals attended, and any extra bits that they wanted whilst they were on the island. Sometimes schools will change their minds while they are on camp about what they exactly want. This is out of your control and cannot be helped from the office’s position. You just need to know about the changes so that you may invoice them accordingly.
2. **Open up the confirmation of booking spread sheet:** The fastest way to work out the final figure for the camp is by entering all the meals and numbers into the spread sheet. This will give you the final figure. You will also need to look at your notes to see if you have given them the standard year’s prices or possibly the previous year’s prices. Always check this before filling out the spread sheet. Also make note if the school was on a special deal which may have had a set quote regardless of the final numbers.
3. **Add any extras:** If the group had anything out of the standard for example a School BBQ package or a deluxe morning tea then you will manually add to the total these items.
4. **Send invoiced amount to Finance**: Once you have the final figure send the invoice to finance stating the name of the school, the dates of the camps, the numbers of the students and adults, and the meals they had.

**An example of an invoiced description would be as follows:**

Catering for Kolbe College at Kingstown Barracks for the duration of the 1/3/13-4/3/13 for the confirmed numbers and meals of 13 students and 4 adults starting with breakfast on the 1/3/13 and finishing with lunch on the 4/3/13.

**Another example would be:**

Catering for Kolbe College at Kingstown Barracks on the 2/3/13 for 15 adults and 12 students for one lunch and one dinner.

You don’t need to worry about whether or not the school has paid a deposit as finance will manage that and add it to the invoice as well as apply any credits if there are any. What you will need to provide the finance department with is if the school has given you an order number. This will make it easier for the finance department to chase up any outstanding invoices.

**Nanga Bush Camp / WAC**

1. **Speak to Gail about the previous week’s camp:** Nanga Bush Camp tends to have the most fluctuation when it comes to final numbers compared to any of the other camp sites. The numbers will change but unlike Rottnest Island there won’t be any surprise add ons or meal changes. Gail will give you the final numbers for the camp and you will charge them at their confirmed numbers rate or higher (never lower).
2. **Check the menu:** The menu will have the price which you quoted the organizer. Also double check the quote that you have given them.
3. **Email Finance Invoice:** Work out the final figure and then email it to Finance in the same fashion that you would Rottnest Island. Make sure that the description is clear in what we are invoicing.

**An example would be as follows**:

Catering for Kolbe College at Nanga Bush Camp for the duration of 1/3/13 – 3/3/13 for 15 Adults and 40 SHS @ $40.40 per person per day for 2.333 days (7 main meals)

If however the booking is a Package Deal then you would have to let finance know to invoice Nanga Bush Camp. You can see on the booking forms if the camp is a package deal as it will be clearly stated. If you are unsure it is always wise to double check with Nanga Bush Camp groups and bookings.

**An example invoiced description for a Package Deal would be as follows**:

Catering for Kolbe College at Nanga Bush Camp for the duration of 1/3/13- 3/3/13 for 17 SHS and 5 adults for Package Deal C.

Similarly to Rottnest Island you won’t need to worry about deposits as finance will manage that aspect. However always provide finance with an order number if the school as given you one.

**Invoicing New Norcia**

1. **Speak to Edward and New Norcia about the Camp**: Like Sherelle and Gail both Edward and Toni will be able to give you more of an up to date understanding of what happened whilst on camp in terms of final numbers. Like Nanga Bush Camp there won’t be any extra surprises to add on. New Norcia’s numbers will also fluctuate a bit so the final numbers on the menu can’t be relied on to be accurate.
2. **Check the menu and the price list**: As we don’t send quotes out to New Norcia it is important when invoicing to always double check the price list. The prices are set up as a sliding scale in accordance to how many people attended. 20 people will have a much higher per date rate per person in comparison to a group with 60 people. If the group is a senior high school group then the adults will be priced at the same rate as the students. If the group however is a mixed group of senior high school, primary school, and adults then each person is charged according to which price bracket they belong to.
3. **Come up with a final figure**: Like Nanga Bush Camp we charge New Norcia at a per day rate where each main meal equals to 0.333 of a day. If however the group went for a special or they had certain items added then you will also add that to the invoice separately.
4. **Email finance final figure and description**: When you have come up with the final figure send finance the description as well as final figure.

**An example of a description for New Norcia would be as follows**:

Catering for Kolbe College for the duration of 1/3/13 – 4/3/13 for 40 SHS and 3 adults @ $40.40 per person per day for 2.333 days (7 main meals)

**The following example is for a mixed age group**:

Catering for Kolbe College for the duration of 1/3/13 – 4/3/13 for 40 SHS @ $40.40 per person per day for 2.333 days (7 main meals)

Catering for Kolbe College for the duration of 1/3/13 – 4/3/13 for 2 Adults @ $45.30 per person per day for 2.333 days (7 main meals)

Catering for Kolbe College for the duration of 1/3/13 – 4/3/13 for 10 Primary School @ $32.90 per person per day for 2.333 days (7 main meals)

**The following example is for a fluctuation of numbers throughout the camp**:

Catering for Kolbe College for the duration of 1/3/13 – 6/3/13 for 43 SHS @ $40.40 per person per day for 0.666 days (2 main meals)

Catering for Kolbe College for the duration of 1/3/13 – 6/3/13 for 38 SHS @ $40.40 per person per day for 2.333 days (7 main meals)

Catering for Kolbe College for the duration of 1/3/13 – 6/3/13 for 40 SHS @ $40.40 per person per day for 3.333 days (10 main meals)

**How to speak on the phone**

When a group organizer rings the office to make an enquiry it is always important that you give off a professional and relaxed air about yourself. You want people to know that you are confident in your work and that you can provide them with exactly what they are looking for. You are the first point of contact and you want to leave a positive impression. A happy customer is usually a lot easier to deal with and they will be more likely to ask you any questions they have. A happy customer is also more likely to refer other people to us and thus giving us more business and making the company more money.

Here are some pointers on sounding professional on the phone. This excerpt was taken from the ‘Little Things Matter’ blog which you can find at [www.littlethingsmatter.com](http://www.littlethingsmatter.com)

“**1. Prepare For The Call**—When I make business related calls I always take the time to prepare. I’ve found that the more prepared I am for a call, the more confident and ready I am for the ensuing discussion. If it’s a simple call, I may take as little as a minute or two to think about my agenda and get mentally prepared. If on the other hand it’s a very important call, I may spend as long as thirty minutes to prepare.

Let me encourage you to start thinking about every call you make and see what you can do to be better prepared.

**2. Always Begin by Introducing Yourself**—When you place a call to someone, always start by introducing yourself to whoever answers the phone. Here are four different examples:

If I call a person at a company and the phone is answered by someone other than the person I am calling, I will introduce myself by saying, “Hi, this is Todd Smith calling for Mike Black. Is Mike available?”

Using the same example, if I have a call previously scheduled with Mike, I would reference the appointment in my greeting by saying, “Hi, my name is Todd Smith, I am calling for Mike Black. We have a 2:00 call scheduled.” By mentioning that you have a specific appointment, the call will take on some urgency.

Using the same example, if Mary answers the phone and identifies herself, I suggest including her name in your greeting such as, “Hi Mary, my name is Todd Smith; how are you doing today?” After we exchange pleasantries, I would proceed by saying, “I am calling for Mike Black. We have a 2:00 call scheduled.”

Not only should you be friendly to everyone you meet, whether its in-person or over the phone, but it is especially important to be nice to the receptionist or personal assistant of the person you are calling. This person generally has influence and making a positive impression with this person will always help.

If the person you are calling answers the phone, begin by introducing yourself as part of a friendly greeting such as, “Hi Mike, this is Todd Smith. How are you doing today?” You never want someone to wonder who’s calling.

**3. Focus on Your Phone Energy**—This past week I spoke on the phone with a woman in the sales industry who was struggling with her career. On the phone she spoke slowly with a very soft, quite voice. As I listened to her talk, I thought to myself, I have never met anyone who was highly successful who spoke slowly with a soft, quiet tone.

I am not suggesting that you have to go over the top with your energy, voice tone and speed, but I believe it is important to sound like you are happy to be alive, that you are enjoying a successful career and that you are genuinely pleased to be speaking to the other person.

People who sound upbeat and positive almost always make a better impression than those who don’t. And if you are in outside sales, I don’t think there is a prayer of succeeding if you don’t present yourself as I’ve just described.

**4. Be Friendly**—Whether you are talking to a co-worker, friend, prospective client or the CEO of a company with whom you are interviewing, you should always strive to be friendly on the phone. As you may recall from my post How Likable Are You people are naturally drawn to people who are likable.

In the business and political world, people who are likable have a clear advantage. The more you speak with a smile on your face and with a friendly tone, the more people will like you and want to do business with you and/or your company.

**5. Make the other person feel comfortable**—When speaking with people for the first time, in some cases you may sense they are a little uncomfortable. This is especially true when you are on the receiving end of someone’s call. When I sense people are a little uneasy, I always try to be extra friendly to make them feel comfortable. This additional effort almost always allows the person to relax and results in a more engaging conversation.

**6. Speak With a Confident Tone**—Whether you realize it or not, you are presenting your personal brand every time you have a conversation with someone. If you want to brand yourself as a self-assured professional, then you need to sound confident but not so confident that you sound arrogant.

Before people will buy anything you have to offer, they must first buy you, and they won’t buy you if you don’t present yourself as a confident person. If you want to move up the pay scale in your career, you must be a person who presents yourself as being self-assured, yet humble.

Think of the most successful people you know and consider how their confidence is subtly conveyed in their oral communications. Then compare how they sound to the people you know who are not successful. I’m confident you’ll recognize the difference.

**7. The “Two Second” Rule**—Yesterday I had a phone conversation with a man who did not let me finish my sentences. He constantly interrupted me and interjected his thoughts about what I was saying. Needless to say, I was annoyed and completely turned off.

You should never interrupt people when you are speaking with them in-person and this holds true for telephone conversations as well. When you are on the phone with people, show them the respect and common courtesy of letting them finish what they are saying, before responding.

Since you can’t see the person, it’s hard to know if they are finished with their thought or just pausing to go on to the next sentence. So it’s a good idea to follow the “two second” rule. Wait two seconds to make sure they have finished. If you start to talk and they are not finished, always encourage them to finish before sharing what you have to say.

**8. Carry A Note Pad**—I carry a pad of paper with me everywhere I go. The first sheet is my daily “To Do” list. This allows me to always stay on track with my daily action plan and be prepared to make notes at any given time.

When I am conducting a business call, I almost always find myself taking notes. In some cases these notes concern things that I will be responsible for after the call is finished. If I write them down I won’t forget. In other cases, I find myself making notes of things I want to share or discuss when it is my turn to talk.

Writing down my thoughts during the conversation enables me to focus on the subject rather than trying to remember I want to convey when the other person stops talking. This also prevents me from jumping into the conversation prematurely.

**9. Know When to Not Use Your Hands Free Device**—If you are having an important conversation regardless of whether it’s with your spouse, friend, or prospective client, speak directly into the phone.

In almost every case, I can recognize when people are talking on their hands-free device. I can hear background noises if others are around, hollow echo sounds if they are in a room that doesn’t absorb noise, and road noise if they are in the car. I can even hear them multi-tasking by opening bags of food, shuffling papers on their desk or typing on their computer.

And it’s just plain harder to hear when someone is using a hands free device. I find this annoying because it requires me to focus more intently to understand what they saying. When you make important calls, you don’t want people to get frustrated because they are struggling to hear what you are saying or distracted by whatever is going on around you.

This tip is only for important calls. I recognize the value of using hands free devices and don’t want to discourage you from using them in appropriate circumstances. I also recognize that in some states it’s a requirement to use a hands free device while driving in your car.

**10. Don’t Use a Speaker Phone**—Unless you are in a room with a group of people who are part of your conversation, don’t use your speakerphone for any phone call. Talking on your speakerphone is 10 times worse than the concerns I raised in the previous point about using a Bluetooth device. Even if you are calling your best friend, show them the courtesy of talking directly into the phone.”