

B2

PHONE & VIDEO CALLS

MONOLOG · 4 MIN.

Clarifying a Number That Sounds Different over the Phone · Podcast

Was that fifteen or fifty? How to say, dictate and check numbers on the phone safely — including the German traps "null" and "five and twenty".

Listen to the episode +
comprehension test:

<https://www.englisch-lehrer.com/podcasts/clarifying-a-number-that-sounds-different-over-the-phone>

NAME

DATE

BRICK 1 · LEARN THE KEY PHRASES



Read the eight phrases with meaning and example. You will hear all of them in the episode.

ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	EXAMPLE
fifteen or fifty	fünfzehn oder fünfzig	<i>Did you say fifteen or fifty? That changes the whole order.</i>
phone number	Telefonnummer	<i>Could you give me your phone number one digit at a time?</i>
double five	zweimal die Fünf (55)	<i>The code is double five, nine, three.</i>
to read something back	etwas zur Kontrolle wiederholen	<i>Let me read that back to you, just to be sure.</i>
to hang up	auflegen	<i>Repeat the number before you hang up.</i>
to dictate a number	eine Nummer diktieren	<i>Let me dictate the number slowly — don't race.</i>
a bad line	eine schlechte Verbindung	<i>Sorry, you're breaking up — it's a bad line.</i>
Did you say ...?	Haben Sie ... gesagt?	<i>Did you say thirteen or thirty?</i>



BRICK 2 · FILL THE GAPS



Complete the missing word from the conversation.

oh

null

nil

love

one-five

five-one

five-oh

fifty

01 In British English, zero on the phone is usually ' _____ '

02 Did you say fifteen — _____ ?

BRICK 3 · TRUE OR FALSE?



Tick one. T = true, F = false.

01 In British phone English, zero is often said as 'oh'.

T ☐ F ☐

02 The trainer says 'five and twenty' is correct on the phone.

T ☐ F ☐

BRICK 4 · ORDER



Number the steps of the conversation (1–5).

- 01 ☐ If unsure, ask: Did you say fifteen — one-five?
- 02 ☐ Dictate digits one by one with 'oh' and 'double'
- 03 ☐ Read the number back before hanging up
- 04 ☐ Stress fifTEEN and FIFty differently
- 05 ☐ Avoid the German traps 'null' and 'five and twenty'

BRICK 5 · YOUR VERSION



Write two sentences of your own using phrases from Brick 1.

MINI-CHECK – CAN I DO THIS YET?

- ☐ I can announce a delay politely.
- ☐ I can propose an alternative.
- ☐ I can promise written confirmation.

Listened twice and ticked everything? Then you are ready for the real conversation.



Cut-out flashcards

× Cut out, fold on the line – English in front, German on the back. Or practise digitally:

<https://www.englisch-lehrer.com/podcasts/clarifying-a-number-that-sounds-different-over-the-phone>

fifteen or fifty

Did you say fifteen or fifty? That changes the whole order.

fünfzehn oder fünfzig

phone number

Could you give me your phone number one digit at a time?

Telefonnummer

double five

The code is double five, nine, three.

zweimal die Fünf (55)

to read something back

Let me read that back to you, just to be sure.

etwas zur Kontrolle wiederholen

to hang up

Repeat the number before you hang up.

auflegen

to dictate a number

Let me dictate the number slowly — don't race.

eine Nummer diktieren

a bad line

Sorry, you're breaking up — it's a bad line.

eine schlechte Verbindung

Did you say ...?

Did you say thirteen or thirty?

Haben Sie ... gesagt?

Answer key

Check only when you have finished. Every answer comes with the **why**.

BRICK 2 · FILL THE GAPS

01 **oh**

False friend: on the phone, 0 is "oh" (or "zero") — never "null". The British use "nil" only for football scores and "love" in tennis.

02 **one-five**

To double-check, professionals repeat the digits one by one: "Did you say fifteen — one-five?" That rules out any mix-up.

BRICK 3 · TRUE OR FALSE?

01 **True**

True — "In British English, zero on the phone is usually 'oh'."

02 **False**

False — "twenty-five is NOT 'five and twenty'"; in English the tens always come first.

BRICK 4 · ORDER

01 **1.** Stress fifTEEN and FIFty differently

02 **2.** Dictate digits one by one with 'oh' and 'double'

03 **3.** Avoid the German traps 'null' and 'five and twenty'

04 **4.** Read the number back before hanging up

05 **5.** If unsure, ask: Did you say fifteen — one-five?

KEEP PRACTISING LIVE

Want to practise these phrases in a real conversation?

Online lessons with real teachers — English training since 2004 · Berlin · Hanover · Online.

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