

Emergency 911

Unit
10



HELP!

If you own a television, you've seen them: amazing **rescues** from burning buildings, **victims** rescued from the bad guys, and lives saved in hospital **ERs**. From the comfort of your couch, you've seen the TV **versions** of real-life drama. The downside of these TV dramas is that they make emergencies seem very simple. Unlike in real life, TV problems are **resolved** in just an hour. But the upside of emergency shows is that people see what they have to do to get help.



The most important information to know in an emergency is a very simple phone number: 911. Even schools teach this number to small children at an early age. There are plenty of stories of kids as young as three years old making a 911 phone call that has saved a life.

The phone number is the same for fire, medical, and police emergencies: 911.

The phone number is the same from both **landlines** and **cell phones**: 911.

When a landline call comes in, the emergency **dispatcher** may be able to see the phone number and the exact **location** of the call, but not always. Calls from

a cell phone may not **display** the same information. The most **critical** thing to remember when making an emergency call is to remain calm. It's a **matter of life and death**. You must be understood when making this call. Because everyone tends to speak very quickly and excitedly when they are nervous or afraid, it can be even more difficult to understand second language speakers in an emergency. For this reason, it's **vital** to remember the following instructions:

- ✓ Stay calm.
- ✓ Speak slowly and clearly.
- ✓ Know what information the operator will need.

The **operator** will ask many questions so that she can **get a good picture** of the problem and send exactly the right kind of help. She'll ask for **essential** information like: Who? What? Where? When? It's important to answer all the questions slowly and clearly. Don't worry; she's not wasting time. Even while you're answering her questions, the operator is contacting the right emergency system. You must stay **on the line** with the operator until help arrives. Do not **hang up!**

The 911 dispatchers are specially trained to ask very clear questions about the emergency. The dialogues below are examples of the kinds of conversations you may have. Remember, the operator will ask different questions as he or she learns about your emergency.

HELP! FIRE!

DIALOGUE 1: TRACK 28

DISPATCHER: 911. What is your emergency?

CALLER: HELP!HELP!MYHOUSEMYHOUSE!HURRY!HELPME!

DISPATCHER: Ma'am, I can't understand what you're saying. Please calm down. What is your location?

CALLER: My house. It's burning! There's a fire in my house! Can you send a fire truck? Help!

DISPATCHER: What is the address?

CALLER: 123 Peachtree Street! Can you send a fire truck? Please help!

DISPATCHER: Help is **on the way**, ma'am. What room is the fire in?

CALLER: It's in the kitchen. The curtains **caught fire** when I was cooking. HURRY!

DISPATCHER: Are you still in the house?

CALLER: Yes!
 DISPATCHER: You must
 CALLER: Yes, the door
 DISPATCHER: Ma'am, I
 CALLER: Okay, okay. I'm
 DISPATCHER: Is there a
 CALLER: MY DOG! MY
 DISPATCHER: Ma'am—
 on the way. The firefights
 CALLER: I hear the siren

TIP 1 → There is no c
 or cell phone

TIP 2 → Mistakes hap
 up. Stay on t
 "Sorry, I diale
 there is an er

VOCABULARY

- ⓐ caught fire: went into
- cell phone: mobile ph
- critical (also **vital, ess**
- dispatcher: person w
 needed
- display: show
- ER: short form for a ho
- ⓐ get a **good picture**: u
- ⓐ hang up: end a phone
- ⓐ landline: a home (wire
- location: place
- ⓐ **matter of life and dea**
- on the line: on the ph

CALLER: Yes! Yes! I'm in the bedroom.

DISPATCHER: You must get out of the house right away. Can you do that?

CALLER: Yes, the door is right here.

DISPATCHER: Ma'am, go outside, but stay on the line with me.

CALLER: Okay, okay. I'm outside now. PLEASE HURRY!

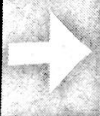
DISPATCHER: Is there anyone else in the house?

CALLER: MY DOG! MY DOG! My dog is in the house!

DISPATCHER: Ma'am—Do **NOT** go back into the house. The fire trucks are on the way. The firefighters will find your dog.

CALLER: I hear the **sirens!** I can see the truck! They're here! They're here!

TIP 1



There is no charge for 911 calls. They are free calls from landlines or cell phones.

TIP 2



Mistakes happen. If you dial 911 by mistake, do not just **hang up**. Stay on the phone until the dispatcher answers, and just say, "Sorry, I dialed by mistake." If you just hang up, they may think there is an emergency at your house.

VOCABULARY

① **caught fire:** went into flames

• **cell phone:** mobile phone

• **critical** (also **vital, essential**): extremely important

• **dispatcher:** person who sends police or other services where they are needed

• **display:** show

• **ER:** short form for a hospital **E**mergency **R**oom, where emergency victims go

① **get a good picture:** understand clearly

① **hang up:** end a phone call after you've called a number

① **landline:** a home (wired) telephone

• **location:** place

① **matter of life and death:** a situation of extreme importance

• **on the line:** on the phone; do not hang up

- **on the way:** traveling to the destination
- **operator:** a person who answers phone calls for an agency or company
- **rescue:** save from danger
- **resolved:** settled
- **siren:** the loud noise that goes with the flashing light on the top of an emergency vehicle
- **version:** type, kind
- **victim:** someone who is hurt in some way



PRONUNCIATION POINTER

The letter groups *ough* and *ough* are very tricky in English. They sound like *aw*. *Caught* sounds like **cawt**. *Bought* sounds like **bawt**. *Taught* sounds like **tawt**.

GRAMMAR REMINDER 1: Modal Verbs of Necessity:

Have to, Must

Have to shows that something is necessary. **Don't have to** means that something is not necessary. **Have to** can be used in the past, present, or future.

You **have to** stay calm. (present)

You **will have to** give your address when you call. (future)

We **had to** call 911. (past)

Must also shows that something is necessary. It's stronger than *have to*. You won't hear *must* so much in spoken English, but you'll often see it written. The negative is *must not*, which expresses that something is not allowed. It can be used in the present or future sense only. Its form does not change.

You **must** stay on the line. (present)

You **must** call later. (future)

You **must not** hang up if you call 911 by mistake.

GRAMMAR REMINDER 2: Modal Verbs for Requests:

Can, Could

You can use *can* and *could* to ask for something. *Can* may be more common, but *could* is a little more polite.

Can you send a fire truck, please?

Could you send a fire truck, please?

CHAPTER 2: TRACK 29
 OPERATOR: Paramedic 128. W
 CALLER: HELP! HELP! I need a
 OPERATOR: Okay, sir, what's th
 CALLER: I'm not sure. I'm outs
 Lawrenceville. I need an am
 OPERATOR: Sir, we'll get help
 coming?
 CALLER: Um, it's my cell phon
 ... Hurry! Can you send a
 OPERATOR: Okay, sir, what's t
 CALLER: There's a guy lying h
 He's not breathing!
 OPERATOR: Okay. He's not bi
 CALLER: Right.
 OPERATOR: Okay, sir, an amk
 CPR right now. I'll help you ov
 CALLER: The neighbor is doir
 responding! He's not movi
 OPERATOR: Okay, sir, the arr
 times. Did you witness wha
 CALLER: No, I didn't see wha
 OPERATOR: Okay, sir, I've dis
 keep up the CPR until the
 CALLER: Thank you! This gu
 OPERATOR: Okay they shou
 CALLER: Yeah, here they are!
 OPERATOR: Okay, sir, call us

HELP! HE'S NOT BREATHING!

DIALOGUE 2: TRACK 29

OPERATOR: Paramedic 128. What's the address of your emergency?

CALLER: HELP! HELP! I need an ambulance!

OPERATOR: Okay, sir, what's the address?

CALLER: I'm not sure. I'm outside. It's . . . it's . . . I think it's Taylor Road. It's Lawrenceville. I need an ambulance!

OPERATOR: Sir, we'll get help right away. What's the phone number you're calling from?

CALLER: Um, it's my cell phone. It's 555-1006. Please hurry. There's a guy here . . . Hurry! Can you send an ambulance?

OPERATOR: Okay, sir, what's the **nature** of the emergency?

CALLER: There's a guy lying here. He's not **conscious**. He's not breathing! He's not breathing!

OPERATOR: Okay. He's not breathing? He's **unconscious**?

CALLER: Right.

OPERATOR: Okay, sir, an ambulance is on the way. But I need you to start **CPR** right now. I'll help you over the phone until they get there.

CALLER: The neighbor is doing CPR, but the guy isn't **responding**. He's not responding! He's not moving and he's not breathing.

OPERATOR: Okay, sir, the ambulance is on the way. They'll be there in minutes. Did you **witness** what happened to the man?

CALLER: No, I didn't see what happened.

OPERATOR: Okay, sir, I've dispatched all this information to the **paramedics**. Keep up the CPR until they get there. They're just a few blocks away.

CALLER: Thank you! This guy isn't responding to anything!

OPERATOR: Okay they should be there.

CALLER: Yeah, here they are! Thank you, sir, thank you.

OPERATOR: Okay, sir, call us back if you need any help.



Many public libraries, schools, and hospitals offer free first aid and CPR classes. It's always good to know what to do in an emergency, while you're waiting for help to arrive.

VOCABULARY

- **CPR:** Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation; pressing on a person's chest, breathing into his mouth to try to get his heart started again
- **conscious:** awake; aware of surroundings
- **nature:** kind, type
- **paramedics:** specially trained people who can do first aid and some medical treatments in an emergency
- **responding:** reacting
- **unconscious:** not awake; not aware of anything; no reaction of any senses
- **witness:** see

GRAMMAR REMINDER 3: Modal Verbs of Advice, Possibility, Ability—*Should, Would, Could*

These will all be followed by the verb in its base form.

Should is used when giving strong *advice* to do something.
You **should** teach children about emergency calls.

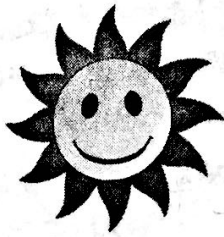
Would is used to express what you might do in a certain situation.
I **would** volunteer at the firehouse if I had more time.

Could expresses *possibility* and the *ability* to do something in the past.
There **could** be a problem if they don't get enough volunteers.
I **could** run four miles when I was younger.



PRONUNCIATION POINTER

Another tricky string of letters is *ould*. The letter *l* is not pronounced, so *ould* sounds like **ood**. *Could* sounds like **kood**. *Should* sounds like **shood**. *Would* sounds like **wood**.



Grammar Fun Fact!

Americans sometimes use a funny expression to say that they wish they did something differently. They say, "shoulda woulda coulda." Think things through before you do them, and you'll never have to say, "shoulda woulda coulda"!

HELP! STRANGER DANGER!

DIALOGUE 3: TRACK 30

OPERATOR: 911. What's the exact location of your emergency?

CALLER: Hi, um, well my address is 2495 Cary Street. But it's across the street. I don't know the address.

OPERATOR: Okay, ma'am. I didn't get that. Are you on a cell phone? Tell me that address again.

CALLER: Yeah, um, it's . . . I don't know, it's 2495 Cary, but it's across the street.

OPERATOR: Okay, that's fine. Is that where you're calling me from, ma'am?

CALLER: I'm calling you from my cell phone. I think I need the police.

OPERATOR: Okay, ma'am. What's the nature of the emergency?

CALLER: Well, I'm across the street. I'm not sure . . . My neighbor's away, and, um, um, there are two guys. I think they're **breaking into** the house. Um, it looks like there are two guys. **HEY! THEY JUST BROKE A WINDOW!** One guy just ripped through the **screen door!** They're looking around to see if anyone saw them! Can you get the police here? Hurry!

OPERATOR: Okay, ma'am, we'll have someone there right away. Do you recognize the people at all?

CALLER: No, not at all. It's not my neighbor; they're away. **I have no idea** who these guys are, but they just broke the window and **kicked in** the door! I think you need to get the police here fast.

OPERATOR: Can you describe the men, ma'am?

CALLER: They're inside now. I don't know. I don't know. **To be honest with you,** I didn't really notice what they were wearing or anything. Um, I think one

guy was pretty tall. He was wearing some kind of baseball cap, I think. And, uh, the other guy **entered** through the window before I got a good look at him. **All I know is** these guys broke into the house! Can you get the police here?!

OPERATOR: Ma'am, they're on their way. Do you know if the guys have a **weapon**?

CALLER: I don't know; I couldn't see from my angle. They **had a hard time** trying to kick in the door. Um, but, um, they **smashed** the window with a bat, I think. A baseball bat.

OPERATOR: Okay, ma'am, they're on their way. Don't hang up until they get there.

CALLER: Okay. Thank you. Wait, okay, here they are! Thank you!

TIP 4



If you want to speak with a police officer, but it is *not* an emergency, you should *not* call 911. You can find the phone number of the local **precinct** in your phone book.

VOCABULARY

- **all I know is:** a strong way to say *this is the important fact*
- **breaking in:** forcing one's way in
- **entered:** went in
- ① **had a hard time:** had difficulty with something
- ① **I have no idea:** a stronger way to say *I don't know*
- ① **kick in:** hit with one's foot and smash open
- **precinct:** local police station
- **screen door:** an outer door that allows air into the room, but not the bugs!
- ① **smashed:** broke suddenly and noisily
- ① **to be honest with you:** a way of saying *really*
- **weapon:** something that is used to hurt someone

MORE FUN WITH IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS: Fire

- **You're fired!:** bad-news words for when you lose your job
*You've been late every day for the last two weeks, and you haven't finished one project. **You're fired!***
- **Holy smokes!:** Wow!
***Holy smokes,** my neighbor just won a thousand dollars!*

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• **old flame:** a former boyfriend or girlfriend
*Susan was not happy when her boyfriend kept talking about his **old flame**.*

• **out of the frying pan and into the fire:** going from a bad situation to a worse one
*She thought it was a bad day when the bus splashed her new skirt, but it was **out of the frying pan and into the fire** when she spilled hot coffee and burned herself.*

• **fire off:** write something quickly and send it off immediately
*When she read the article in the newspaper about the animal shelter, she wanted to **fire off** an e-mail to her friends to ask them to help.*

Did You Spot It?



Remember: *could* is also used for ability in the past. In this example, *couldn't* means *was not able to* see.

Example: I **couldn't** see from my angle.