UNDERSTAND VOICEMAIL MESSAGES ABOUT HOUSE-SITTING

Understanding voicemail messages is an important real life skill, especially when the message includes **instructions**, **responsibilities**, or **requests**. In this subtopic, students learn how to listen for key details in short messages related to **house sitting**—a common situation in many English speaking countries where a person stays in someone's home to take care of it while the owners are away.

Voicemail messages about house sitting often include **specific tasks**, **schedules**, and **important reminders**. The speaker may talk about pets, plants, alarms, cleaning routines, or visitors.

These messages usually use clear, everyday language, but they can feel fast or informal, so knowing what to listen for makes the process easier and more manageable.

WHAT HOUSE SITTING USUALLY INVOLVES

House sitting responsibilities can vary, but most messages include information about:

- **Pets**
  feeding, walking, cleaning, medicines
- **Plants**
  watering, sunlight, indoor vs. outdoor
- **Security**
  alarm systems, keys, lights, doors
- **House rules**
  visitors, appliances, trash, internet
- **Schedules or instructions**
  when to arrive, how long to stay, how to contact the homeowner

Understanding these categories helps listeners anticipate and identify information quickly.

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COMMON FEATURES OF VOICEMAIL MESSAGES

Voicemail messages often have a typical structure:

A. Greeting

- *"Hi, this is Sarah…"*
- *"Hey Mark, thanks again for helping us…"*

B. Purpose of the call

- *"Just calling to give you the instructions for house sitting."*
- *"I wanted to remind you about a couple of things for this weekend…"*

C. Key information

Usually includes:

- tasks
- times/dates
- locations
- warnings or important notes

D. Closing

- *"Call me if you need anything."*
- *"Thanks again. Talk soon."*

Recognizing this structure helps students follow messages more easily.

USEFUL VOCABULARY FOR VOICEMAIL AND HOUSE-SITTING

Tasks and responsibilities

- feed the cat / walk the dog
- water the plants
- take out the trash
- check the mail

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- turn off / turn on the lights
- clean the litter box
- lock the doors
- open the windows for fresh air

Security and house rules

- alarm system
- keypad / code
- spare key
- Wi Fi password
- emergency contact
- instructions
- schedule

Voicemail language

- *“I just wanted to…”*
- *“Don’t forget to…”*
- *“Make sure you…”*
- *“You might need to…”*
- *“It’s important that…”*

These appear frequently in everyday spoken messages.

STRATEGIES FOR UNDERSTANDING VOICEMAIL MESSAGES

✓ Listen for key nouns and verbs

These carry the important information:
water, *feed*, *alarm*, *key*, *plants*, *dog*.

✓ Pay attention to time references

- *tonight*, *tomorrow morning*, *every day*, *around 6 p.m.*

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✓ **Identify the tone**

Voicemail tends to be informal:

"Hey, just a quick reminder…"

✓ **Don't worry about every word**

Focus on:

- tasks
- times
- instructions
- warnings

✓ **Listen for repeated information**

Important tasks are often repeated or rephrased: *"Please water the plants every other day… every two days should be fine."*

MODEL VOICEMAIL MESSAGES

Voicemail 1 – Basic House Sitting Instructions

"Hi Emily, this is Laura. Thanks again for house sitting this weekend.
Just a quick reminder: please feed the cat twice a day–morning and evening. The food is in the cabinet under the sink. Also, don't forget to water the plants in the living room. They only need a little water every two days.
One more thing: the Wi Fi password is on the fridge, and the alarm code is 4582.
If you need anything, send me a message. Thanks so much!"

Voicemail 2 – House With Pets and Security System

"Hey Daniel, thanks for helping us! We're leaving early tomorrow, so you can come by the house after 10 a.m. The dog needs a walk in the afternoon–around 4 or 5 is perfect.
Make sure you turn on the porch light in the evening. Also, the alarm system is easy: enter the code 9201 and press 'OK.' The spare key is under the mat. Call me if anything comes up. We appreciate it!"

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Voicemail 3 – More Detailed Instructions

"Hi Sofia, it's Mark. Just calling to go over the house sitting plan.
Please check the mailbox every day and keep the windows closed at night. The plants in the kitchen need water every three days, but the outdoor ones need a bit more—maybe a small amount every evening.
The cat is friendly, but she likes to hide. If she doesn't eat, try warming the food a little.
You might need to reset the router if the Wi Fi stops working—the button is on the back.
Thanks again. We'll be back on Monday morning."

MODEL CONVERSATION ABOUT VOICEMAIL MESSAGES

A: Did you listen to Laura's voicemail about her house?
B: Yes. She said the cat needs food twice a day and the plants need water every two days.
A: Right. And did she mention the alarm code?
B: Yes, she did. It's 4582. She also said the Wi Fi password is on the fridge.
A: Perfect. I think we've got everything.

HELPFUL PATTERNS STUDENTS SHOULD RECOGNIZE

Pattern	Example
Don't forget to + verb	*Don't forget to feed the cat.*
Make sure you + verb	*Make sure you lock the door.*
You might need to + verb	*You might need to reset the router.*
The (object) is in/on…	*The key is under the mat.*
If you need anything…	*If you need anything, call me.*

These appear repeatedly in voicemail messages and are essential for understanding instructions.

Reference:
Redman, Stuart. (2017) English Vocabulary in use. Cambridge. Recovered from: https://www.cag.edu.tr/uploads/site/lecturer-files/387-2-english-vocabulary-in-use-pre-intermediate-and-intermediate-redman-2017-4th-264p-sayfalar-silindi-3br9.pdf