Using the telephone

There are quite a lot of phrasal verbs with *call, phone, or ring* that relate to using the telephone. These exercises include some of these, as well as a number of other phrasal verbs that describe things that you do, and things that happen, when you are telephoning someone.

1 Match the phrasal verbs in bold with their definitions (a–h).

1  I need to **top up** my mobile. ..........  
2  I’ve just called Chris, but he’s not **picking up**. .........  
3  The signal isn’t very strong – my phone keeps **dropping out**. .........  
4  I’ll **call** you **back** later. ........
5  He **called in** to say he was sick. ........
6  He **rang off** before I could explain the problem. ........
7  She **phoned in** to the Andy Charles show. ........
8  We got **cut off** while we were talking. ........

a  to telephone someone again in return for a telephone call they have made to you  
b  to stop someone being connected when they are having a telephone conversation  
c  to make more money available to be spent on calls on a mobile phone  
d  to end a telephone conversation  
e  to call a radio or television station because you want to talk on a programme that is being broadcast at the time  
f  to telephone the place where you work, usually to say that you are not able to go there  
g  to answer a phone  
h  (of a mobile phone) to lose its signal
Complete the phrasal verbs in Beth and Jack’s conversations.

Beth

1. Where’s Amy? She’s usually in the office by now.

Jack

She just called in to say that she’s ill.

2. I’m afraid I’m in a meeting now and can’t talk.

Jack

Okay – I’ll call you later.

3. Could I have a quick word with Peter while he’s on the phone?

Jack

Sorry – he just rang.

4. Is there an ATM around here? I need to top my mobile.

Jack

Why don’t you just do it online?

5. Did you call Kerry?

Jack

Yes, I did, but she’s not picking.

6. Is that Harry on the phone?

Jack

Well it was – we just got cut.

7. What did she say?

Jack

I’m not sure. My phone kept dropping, so I couldn’t hear her very well.

8. I disagreed with all the callers on that programme.

Jack

Well why didn’t you phone and tell them?
Complete the sentences with phrasal verbs from exercises 1 and 2. Use the correct form of the verb.

1. Anita just ....................................................... sick – she said she has a cold.
   
2. I need to ....................................................... my phone. It’s low on credit.
   
3. I think Nick must be in a meeting. I just called him, but he didn’t ....................................................... .
   
4. I was in the middle of a phone call to Ava when we got ....................................................... .
   
5. I’m a bit busy right now, Chris. Can I ....................................................... you ....................................................... later?
   
6. A guy ....................................................... to the show, complaining about footballers’ salaries.
   
7. There’s not a very good signal here – my phone keeps ....................................................... in the middle of calls.
   
8. I was going to say no, but he ....................................................... before I could reply.
Using the telephone – Answer key

Exercise 1
1 c
2 g
3 h
4 a
5 f
6 d
7 e
8 b

Exercise 2
1 in
2 back
3 off
4 up
5 up
6 off
7 out
8 in

Exercise 3
1 called in
2 top up
3 pick up
4 cut off
5 call [you] back
6 phoned in
7 dropping out
8 rang off