



Teaching speaking and listening

a toolkit for practitioners



learning **forwork**

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence



About the Key Skills Support Programme

These materials have been produced as part of the Key Skills Support Programme (KSSP).

The Key Skills Support Programme is funded by the Department for Education and Skills. Its main purpose is to help practitioners in training providers, schools and colleges to improve the quality of key skills and Skills for Life provision and to support the preparation of young people for the key skills qualifications.

DfES has appointed Learning for Work to manage the programme for the work-based route, and to work with those actively involved in the field to:

- improve the confidence and competence of teachers and trainers to deliver key skills and Skills for Life
- help a wide range of key skills and Skills for Life practitioners through a programme of events and training courses
- provide best practice materials for practitioners, employers and managers
- support practitioners as they foster progression from Skills for Life to key skills and other forms of learning.

Acknowledgements

The Key Skills Support Programme would like to thank the following people and organisations for their help:

Writing team

Debbie Cole, Christine Ellis, Barbara Mason, John Meed, Deborah Record, Anna Rossetti, Graham Willcocks

Critical review and additional material

Vicky English, Metis Training; Claire Hobson, Kingston Maurwood College; Tony Holloway, Gordon Franks Training; Caroline Hudson, Real Education Research; Sandra Kay, North Lancs Training Group; Lorraine Price, Metis Training

Thanks are also due to Professor Ron Carter, University of Nottingham

© Crown copyright 2007

Design by Eatcake Design

Photographs by James Barke

Printed in England by Portishead Press, Bristol

Contents

Welcome to the speaking and listening toolkit	1
Setting the scene	5
Introduction	5
The challenge of teaching speaking and listening	7
How this toolkit can help	8
Speaking and listening skills	10
Characteristics of spoken language	12
Speaking and listening in national standards	14
From standards to teaching	16
Identifying learners' skills	19
Introduction	19
Activity Self-assessment card sort	21
Activity The speaking and listening circle	27
Sensitivity to others	31
Introduction	31
Guidance The role of empathy and respect	33
Activity Consequences	37
Activity Respect?	39
Activity What's my response?	43
Activity Empathy, sympathy or apathy?	49
Speaking with individuals	53
Introduction	53
Activity Telephone conversations	57
Activity Who do you talk to at work?	59
Activity Giving information	63
Guidance Language style	65
Activity Adapting your style to give information	67
Activity Receiving visitors	69
Guidance Representing the organisation	71
Activity Dealing with customers	73
Activity Responding to customer enquiries	75
Activity Preparing to talk with your manager	79
Guidance Non-verbal communication	81
Activity Meanings of non-verbal communication	85
Activity What am I really saying?	87

Activity	Soap opera	91
Guidance	Assertiveness	95
Activity	How assertive are you?	99
Guidance	Dealing with conflict	103
Activity	Dealing with a customer complaint	105
Guidance	Asking questions	107
Activity	An open and shut case	111
Activity	Pairs interviews	113
Guidance	Job interviews	115
Activity	Mock interview	117
Activity	How Socrates did it	121
Research	Speaking 'sloppily' is essential to good communication	123
Activity	Using 'markers' in speech	127
Activity	Using transcripts	129

Listening **131**

	Introduction	131
Activity	Object exchange	133
Activity	Listen and learn	135
Guidance	Active listening	139
Activity	Effective listening at work	141
Activity	Listening trios	143
Activity	Listening questions	145
Activity	Listen to the radio	147
Activity	Taking instructions	151
Guidance	Taking messages	155
Activity	Take a message	159
Activity	Observing a team briefing	163
Activity	Reflective listening	169

Speaking in a group **171**

	Introduction	171
Activity	Human bingo	175
Activity	One piece at a time	177
Activity	Adapting style to audience	179
Guidance	Planning contributions to meetings	183
Activity	Preparing to take part in a meeting at work	185
Activity	Jargon busters	189
Activity	A house built from jargon	193
Guidance	Different approaches to discussion	195
Activity	Starting a discussion	197
Guidance	Agreeing ground rules	199
Activity	Setting the ground rules for discussion	201

Guidance	Helping learners to be effective in discussion	203
Activity	Using a talk map	209
Activity	'Let me begin by saying...and that concludes'	211
Guidance	Moving a discussion forward	213
Activity	Move it on!	215
	Talking to a group	219
	Introduction	219
Activity	Just a minute	223
Guidance	Mind maps and cue cards	225
Activity	It's so easy!	229
Guidance	Planning a talk or presentation	231
Activity	Planning the talk or presentation	233
Guidance	Using visual aids	239
Guidance	Practising the talk or presentation	241
Activity	Rehearsing the talk or presentation	243
Activity	Giving the talk or presentation	247
	Getting more from the toolkit	251
	Introduction	251
	Giving feedback	252
	More than words	253
	Individual learner needs	254
	Keying practitioners into speaking and listening	255
	Continuing professional development	260
	Toolkit resources	261
	Other useful resources	265



Welcome to the speaking and listening toolkit

Speaking and listening is a major component of key skills and literacy qualifications. It is also one of the three elements of the new standards for functional English. However, there is a significant lack of material available to help teachers, trainers and tutors to develop their learners' skills in this important area and this is the principal reason for producing the toolkit.

The toolkit contains a wealth of resources to make teaching speaking and listening explicit, relevant and engaging for learners. It goes beyond commonly taught aspects such as talks, presentations and formal discussion to help improve all aspects of everyday communication – at work and in daily life.

The importance of speaking and listening

Good oral communication is essential to every aspect of life and work. Many surveys have identified it as one of the skills most highly valued by employers.

People with good communication skills:

- can relate well to colleagues and customers
- are able to get information they need from organisations and individuals
- can explain things clearly and contribute to meetings and discussions
- are more successful in their careers
- have more positive and productive relationships with others.

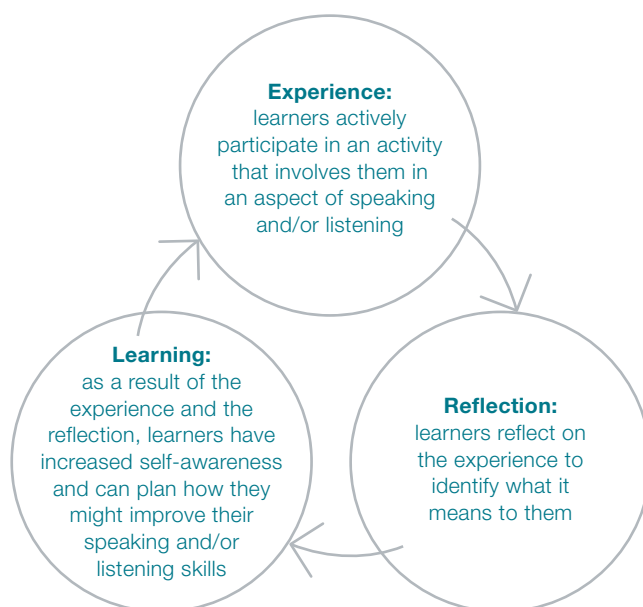
Who the toolkit is for

The toolkit is written for teachers, trainers and tutors. You may be a key skills specialist, a Skills for Life teacher, a vocational trainer or an assessor. Whatever your role, you are likely to find something of value in it.

There are activities in the toolkit that can be used with learners working at Entry level 3 and levels 1, 2 and 3. You will need to select the ones that are most appropriate for your learners.

The approach

The toolkit focuses on practical examples arising from real situations where learners need to speak and listen – particularly in the workplace. It is based on the following learning process:



How the toolkit is organised

There are eight sections in the toolkit.

Setting the scene deals with key issues in teaching speaking and listening.

Identifying learners' skills uses self-assessment to help learners become more aware of their current speaking and listening skills and areas they may want to develop.

The next five sections include resources for teaching five important aspects of speaking and listening. These are:



Getting more from the toolkit, the final section, will help you extend your use of the toolkit as part of your own continuing professional development (CPD).

What the toolkit contains

There are two types of resource in the toolkit.



Activities

There are 51 activities in the toolkit – all with clear, step-by-step instructions. They are varied in terms of how long they will take, whether they are for off-job, near-the-job or on-job learning and whether they can be used with groups, individuals or both.

Activities include:

- short 'icebreakers'
- work-based activities
- role plays
- scenario-based activities
- quizzes and questionnaires
- skills practice.

Some of the activities include checklists, recording sheets or handouts for you to give to learners. However, we have kept the need for reading and writing to a minimum.



Guidance

The guidance pages give you an overview of an aspect of speaking and listening such as non-verbal communication, active listening and effective discussions. They will often include points that you may want to make in discussions with your learners. You can use them:

- to update or inform your knowledge of the topic
- to prepare an input for a group
- as a focus for discussion with an individual learner
- as the basis for a learner handout.

Using the toolkit

No one is likely to use all the activities with their learners. You will need to select the ones that you think will be most useful and relevant for a particular learner or group. You may also want to adapt some of the activities or relate them to a specific occupation or sector.

However you use the toolkit, we hope that it provides the basis for innovative teaching that your learners will enjoy and that helps them to improve and develop important skills which will benefit them in their future life and work.



Setting the scene

Introduction

Speaking and listening is probably the least rigorously taught aspect of the communication key skill and adult literacy qualifications. Resources for this area have focused primarily on ESOL – learners for whom English is not a first language. However, developing speaking and listening skills is also vital for first language speakers.

Despite the importance of good abilities in speaking and listening to success at work and in everyday life, there is little, if any, development of learners' skills in this area for people whose first language is English. While speaking and listening forms part of the national adult literacy standards, the communication key skill and the functional English standards, contact with the field suggests that the areas that are taught tend to be limited to talks, presentations and formal discussion.

This toolkit has been developed to provide a resource and structure to support teachers, tutors and assessors to help their learners develop their oral communication skills and so become more successful and effective in their work and daily life.

Why speaking and listening matters

Speaking and listening – oracy – is fundamental to every aspect of life and work. People with good oral communication skills:

- can relate well to colleagues and customers at work
- are able to get the information they need from organisations and individuals they have to deal with
- can explain things clearly and make a case for themselves
- have a reduced risk of experiencing conflict and aggression from others
- have more productive relationships with other people
- are more successful in their careers.

Employability

Generic employability skills are now part of the national agenda in post-compulsory education and training, and communication is, arguably, the most important of these.

Oral communication is one of the skills most highly valued by employers. Survey after survey of employers' skills needs reveal that they are looking for staff who are good at communicating.

The National Employers Skills Survey 2005* from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) showed that the main skill gaps were:

- customer handling (38%)
- oral communication (35%)
- problem solving (34%)
- teamworking (34%).

** National Employers Skills Survey 2005: key findings (LSC 2006)*

All of these require good communication skills.

In August 2006 the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and KPMG reported on a survey of over 1,400 UK employers which found that communication skills topped employers' 'wish lists' – rating them higher than general literacy abilities. CIPD says:

research shows that employers want more focus on communication, interpersonal skills and developing a work ethic.

The CBI puts oral communication high on the agenda in research into employers' views on what the functional skills should cover, reporting that:

oral communication in the workplace is of vital importance – employees must be articulate enough to raise questions and to ask others about concerns and issues.

Working on the Three Rs: Employers' Priorities for Functional Skills in Maths and English (CBI 2006)

The challenge of teaching speaking and listening

If we taught children to speak, they'd never learn.

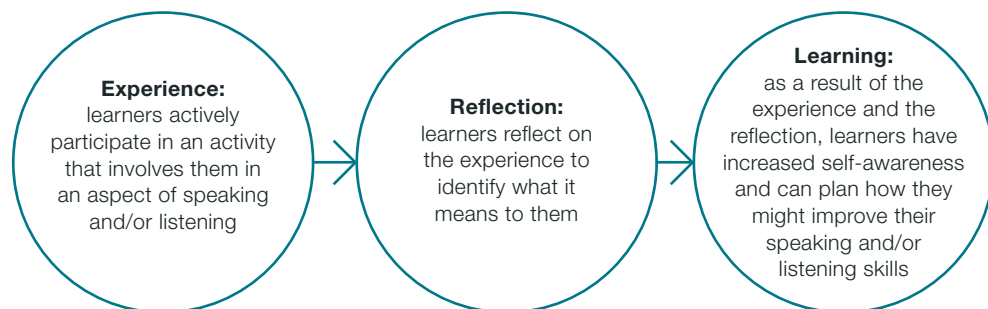
Frontispiece to *How Children Fail* by John Holt (Penguin 1982)

Talk is the first form of language most of us learn, but we are probably unaware of how we learnt it, or the level and types of skills we possess. We are almost certain not to have been taught the skills in a formal situation. When we talk, our mind is dealing with large amounts of information, and it is doing so with remarkable agility, speed and subtlety. The processes are dynamic and constantly change as new meanings emerge during an exchange. This is largely unconscious and we rarely reflect on what it involves.

This is the principal challenge in teaching speaking and listening. In at least some areas, most of us will be operating at the level of both 'unconscious competence' and 'unconscious incompetence'. That is, we may be very good, for example, at active listening or at adapting how we talk to different audiences, but may not know exactly why or be able to describe what we actually do – perhaps because we are not aware of the specific skills involved. We may also be unaware of those areas where we could benefit from development.

This toolkit has been developed with the belief that we can *all* improve our speaking and listening, and that developing greater self-awareness is the key to improving our ability in this area. It tries to make intuitive knowledge about language explicit and thus to promote clearer awareness of how to speak and listen effectively.

Explicit teaching of speaking and listening provides an opportunity to use interesting and innovative approaches that learners will enjoy. The activities in the toolkit are designed to develop a range of interpersonal skills that will be of benefit to learners throughout their lives. The toolkit is based on the following learning process:



How this toolkit can help

The actual resource for teaching speaking and listening is present everywhere – in everyday speech. This toolkit focuses on explicit teaching about spoken language, using learners' and others' own talk as the basis for reflection and analysis.

The overall approach we take to teaching oracy is to focus on talk – using the spoken language as both the medium and the message. It is based on:

- practical examples arising out of real exchanges – either in a group session or at work
- learners using these to arrive at their own understandings of oral communication
- clear and explicit focus on specific aspects of speaking and listening.

The topics do not need to be taught in a particular order. It is unlikely that there will be time to use all the activities in the toolkit with an individual or group of learners. You will therefore need to select those that you think are most appropriate and that will engage your learners best.

The toolkit should not be seen as a 'course' on speaking and listening. You should look for opportunities to include relevant activities in what you do already and, wherever possible, to integrate them with NVQ and technical certificate teaching.

How the toolkit is organised

There are a further seven sections in the toolkit.

- **Identifying learners' skills** contains a self-assessment activity that raises awareness of what's involved in speaking and listening. It identifies the learner's current skills and areas they may want to develop.
- **Sensitivity to others** focuses on the importance of empathy, trust and respect in all oral communication.
- **Speaking with individuals** covers aspects of one-to-one communication including asking questions, receiving visitors at work and non-verbal communication.
- **Listening** focuses on the important skill of listening actively.
- **Speaking in a group** looks in detail at how to take part in meetings and discussions effectively.
- **Talking to a group** aims to help develop learners' confidence and abilities in giving a short talk or presentation.
- **Getting more from the toolkit** helps tutors and teachers extend their use of the toolkit and use it as part of their continuing professional development.

There are two types of resource.



Guidance

The guidance pages are written for you as a teacher or tutor. They give an overview of an aspect of speaking or listening, such as organising a discussion or non-verbal communication. They will often include points you may want to make in sessions with your learner(s). You can use the guidance in a number of ways:

- to update or inform your knowledge about the topic
- to prepare an input or introduction to the topic for your learners
- as the basis for a learner handout
- as a focus for discussion with an individual learner.



Activities

All activities have clear, step-by-step instructions and most require little or no preparation. Some also include checklists, recording sheets or handouts for you to give to learners. They are varied in terms of:

- how long they will take – some are short, simple ‘icebreakers’; others will need more time
- where they might be used – for example, on the job, off the job or near the job – although some activities can be used in any context
- whether they are aimed at a group or individuals.

There is a list of all the toolkit activities and guidance sheets on page 261.

Speaking and listening skills

Top 10 speaking and listening skills at work

Skills for Life: Make it your business (DfES 2004) lists the top 10 speaking and listening skills needed in most places of work.

- 1 Respond to questions from colleagues and customers.
- 2 Follow verbal instructions.
- 3 Ask questions.
- 4 Greet colleagues and customers appropriately.
- 5 Talk to colleagues and customers, using appropriate and polite language.
- 6 Take verbal messages and pass them on to colleagues.
- 7 Use technical language.
- 8 Give verbal instructions or other information.
- 9 Contribute to meetings.
- 10 Contribute to training sessions.

What good speakers and listeners do

Spoken communication involves a wide range of behaviours and skills. The list below is not exhaustive!

A good speaker...	And a good listener...
Relates to the listener	Is easy to talk to
Is respectful of others	Shows respect, focuses on the speaker
Encourages trust	Makes supportive comments
Shows empathy	Moves conversation along
Is purposeful and clear	Knows when and how to interrupt
Uses appropriate vocabulary	Concentrates and appears attentive
Speaks with fluency	Creates an atmosphere of trust
Is confident and credible	Picks out the main points
Is approachable and responsive	Reflects back and paraphrases
Uses body language well	Understands feelings
Involves listeners	Remembers

A good speaker...

Enables participation
Knows what to leave out
Generates interest
Uses silence well
Varies pitch/pace/tone according to the situation

And a good listener...

Is able to infer
Knows when to question/speak
Is comfortable with silence
Makes links – to existing knowledge and with other things said
Appears attentive
Uses appropriate body language

Characteristics of spoken language

It is worth considering the key characteristics of spoken, as opposed to written, language. These are that it:

- takes place in real time and space
- usually involves face-to-face communication
- involves speakers and listeners adjusting to context – for example, who, when, where.

Speakers give shape and structure when they talk

- They explicitly signpost things for the listener using words such as ‘now’ and ‘so’ to indicate a change of topic.
- What is said can be meaningful even if it’s half-finished or seems incomplete. Speakers often avoid over-elaborating and rely on mutual understanding of the context.
- Single words or phrases such as ‘anyway’, ‘alright’ or ‘really’ can be highly meaningful.

Speaking takes place in real time and place

- Spoken language is mostly unplanned because it usually happens with little opportunity for advance planning or editing.
- Because they are unplanned, spoken exchanges tend to be open and fluid. Speakers can change direction and topic, return to things they’d forgotten, insert anecdotes and so on.
- Spoken language is varied in style. Speakers can adapt and switch from one level of formality to another as the situation demands.

Communicating face to face

- Speaking is essentially a collaborative and interactive process. It is an exchange. We may finish each other’s comments, interrupt, disagree with or extend what is said.
- Speakers get and give feedback as they talk and listen using comments like ‘Exactly’, ‘Right’, ‘Good’, ‘Oh I see’ and simple vocalisations such as ‘Mmmm’, ‘Uh’, ‘Oh’.
- Speakers use more than words: pitch and tone of voice, volume, silence, eye contact, gestures and body movements all convey meaning. Listeners give non-verbal feedback such as nodding the head.

Adapted from *Introducing the grammar of talk* (QCA 2006)

On page 126 you will find the top 40 spoken words from Cambridge International Corpus (CIC). These are drawn from naturally occurring, everyday contexts such as workplace exchanges, service encounters and family conversations. They come from every region of the country and there is a balance in terms of gender, age and social class of the speakers who are recorded.

Speaking and listening in national standards

This toolkit is aimed primarily at work with learners from Entry level 3 to level 2. Here is how speaking and listening features in the national standards for adult literacy, the communication key skill and functional English.

Level	Adult literacy core curriculum	Communication key skill	Functional English
Entry 3	<p>Listen and respond to spoken language, including straightforward information and narratives, and follow straightforward explanations and instructions, both face-to-face and on the telephone</p> <p>Speak to communicate information, feelings and opinions on familiar topics, using appropriate formality, both face-to-face and on the telephone</p> <p>Engage in discussion with one or more people in a familiar situation, making relevant points and responding to what others say to reach a shared understanding about familiar topics</p>		<p>Respond appropriately to others and make more extended contributions in familiar formal and informal discussions/exchanges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use strategies to clarify and confirm understanding • give own point of view and listen to and respond appropriately to others' points of view • use formal and informal language as appropriate • follow the main points of discussions and make relevant contributions, respecting others' turn-taking rights <p>in familiar formal and informal exchanges and discussions</p>
Level 1	<p>Listen and respond to spoken language, including information and narratives, and follow explanations and instructions of varying lengths, adapting response to speaker, medium and context</p> <p>Speak to communicate information, ideas and opinions adapting speech and content to take account of the listener(s) and medium</p> <p>Engage in discussion with one or more people in familiar and unfamiliar situations, making clear and relevant contributions that respond to what others say and produce a shared understanding about different topics</p>	<p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepare for the discussion so that you can say things that are relevant • judge when to speak and how much to say • say things that suit the purpose of the discussion • speak clearly in ways that suit the situation • listen carefully and respond appropriately to what others say • use body language to support what you are saying and to show you are listening 	<p>Take full part in formal and informal discussions/exchanges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make relevant contributions to discussions, responding appropriately to others • prepare for and contribute to formal discussion of ideas and opinions • be flexible in discussion, making different kinds of contributions • present information/points of view clearly and in appropriate language <p>in formal and informal exchanges and discussions</p>

Level	Adult literacy core curriculum	Communication key skill	Functional English
Level 2	<p>Listen and respond to spoken language, including extended information and narratives, and follow detailed explanations and multi-step instructions of varying length, adapting response to speaker, medium and context</p> <p>Speak to communicate straightforward and detailed information, ideas and opinions clearly, adapting speech and content to take account of the listener(s), medium, purpose and situation</p> <p>Engage in discussion with one or more people in a variety of different situations, making clear and effective contributions that produce outcomes appropriate to purpose and topic</p>	<p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use varied vocabulary and expressions to suit your purpose • adapt what you say to suit different situations • listen carefully to what others say • identify the speaker's intentions • move the discussion forward 	<p>Make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to complex information and give a relevant, cogent response in appropriate language • present information and ideas clearly and persuasively to others • adapt contributions in discussions to suit audience, purpose and situation • make significant contributions to discussions, taking a range of roles and helping to move discussion forward to reach decisions <p>in a wide range of contexts, including those that involve others who are unfamiliar</p>
Level 3		<p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop points and ideas, with an awareness of others' feelings, beliefs and opinions • encourage others to contribute <p>Make a presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepare a formal presentation to suit your purpose • match your language and style to suit the complexity of the subject, the formality of the situation and the needs of the audience • structure what you say to progress logically through each stage of your presentation • use a variety of techniques to engage the audience, including images 	

From standards to teaching

The national standards are explicit and detailed, but closer reading can leave us thinking that it's all very well, but how do we teach these skills? They are complex and interrelated and people are likely to use a combination of skills in any exchange.

In a paper presented to a symposium in 2006, John Vorhaus of the National Research and Development Centre (NRDC) explained some of the difficulties associated with the speaking elements at level 2 of the adult literacy core curriculum:

All these elements represent laudable learning goals, and they are increasingly called upon in a culture in which articulacy, clarity and associated interpersonal attributes are at a premium. Still we can underestimate how distinctive some of these elements are...If we want to recruit learners' motivation, and to make the most of teachers' expertise, we need to have a secure grip on exactly what we are expecting of them.

The two examples below give an idea of some of the difficulties teachers can face when trying to help learners meet the standards.

Example 1

'Speak clearly and confidently in a way which suits the situation.' (Adult literacy level 2)

'Communicate clearly in a way that suits the situation and respond appropriately to others.' (Communication key skill level 1)

Not everyone who speaks clearly speaks with confidence, and confident speakers are not always clear speakers. How do we decide what the right amount of detail is? How do we balance precision of speech with using plain language?

Example 2

Discussion is perhaps one of the most complex aspects of speaking and listening. It includes:

- knowing when to interrupt
- respecting turn-taking rights
- making relevant contributions
- helping move discussions forward
- adapting contributions to suit audience, purpose, etc.

Knowing when and how to interrupt alone requires high levels of interpersonal skills and a measure of self-confidence.

Teacher or assessor judgement is crucial to deciding whether standards have been met, and experienced practitioners usually know when a learner needs more practice or to build their skills further. For instance, returning to the first example of communicating to suit the situation and responding appropriately, the guidance and activities provided aim to build these skills by practising aspects of them including:

- planning what to say
- handling a telephone call
- speaking to colleagues, managers and customers
- giving a talk or presentation.

The toolkit aims to give clear guidance on how to approach teaching a wide range of speaking and listening skills and to present a range of purposeful and enjoyable learning activities that can enhance both teaching and learning.

Identifying learners' skills

Introduction

Initial and formative assessment of learners' speaking and listening skills is not straightforward and this is particularly true for learners whose first language is English. One of the reasons for this is that most oral communication is likely to involve a range of skills and behaviours so it is hard to separate them into smaller components.

For example, dealing with a customer could involve active listening, giving information, speaking clearly, showing empathy, asking questions, using persuasive language ...and probably more.

A good way to identify learners' existing abilities in speaking and listening is through self-assessment and the main activity in this section provides a resource for doing this. It uses a set of cards with statements that describe a skill or behaviour important in effective speaking and/or listening such as:

- *'I ask questions if I don't fully understand'*
- *'I can judge the right time to say something in a meeting'*
- *'I pay attention to people when they are talking to me'.*

Learners sort these cards according to their confidence in their ability to do what the statement says.

One of the reasons why this is an effective method is that it involves learners in a 'physical' activity and provides opportunities for a more relaxed discussion than would be the case with a more 'formal' assessment. The card sort exercise will also:

- raise awareness of the range of skills involved in speaking and listening
- help to identify the areas learners want to develop
- contribute to formative assessment by providing a basis for reflection on progress.

You will be able to supplement this with other sources of information such as:

- your own observations and exchanges with learners
- how they participate in group discussions
- your knowledge of the specific skills their jobs involve
- feedback from employers.

Self-awareness is a major factor in good oral communication and the card sort activity is designed to promote greater awareness, as well as to identify strengths and areas for development.

Confidence – the critical factor

Confidence is as important as competence in speaking and listening, and this will be reflected in the self-assessment exercise. Confidence and competence go hand in hand and increasing your learners' confidence will help them to develop their skills. A learner may be able to do some of the things described in the card sort but may not feel confident enough about their ability. On the other hand, they may be overconfident because they don't fully appreciate what is involved. Building confidence in speaking and listening matters just as much as developing skills and your teaching will need to take this into account.

Good self-esteem is the basis for successful learning and you will need to be sensitive to this in initial and formative assessment. Low self-esteem will get in the way of a learner's speaking and listening. It is therefore important that the self-assessment activity does not have a negative effect on a learner's self-esteem. Its function is not to identify weaknesses so much as to help them become aware of the range of speaking and listening skills needed in the workplace.

Selecting, adapting and adding cards

There are 50 statement cards in the set. A good number to use is 24. Select the ones you want to use or adapt or change the cards to make them more suitable for your learners.

You can also add further statements on the blank cards provided in the set. You may want to add cards that are more directly relevant to specific sectors. For example, learners who work in a customer service sector may benefit from additional items on dealing with customers or making a sale. People in a care environment may need more cards about talking sensitively to clients and service users. A motor vehicle apprentice may find the activity more relevant if it includes cards that refer to specific examples of where speaking and listening is used in their job.

Self-assessment card sort

Purpose

This self-assessment exercise is a good starting point for working with learners on speaking and listening. It can:

- act as an initial assessment tool
- help to identify learners' existing skills and the areas they want to develop
- raise awareness of the range of skills involved in speaking and listening.

The exercise is based on a card sort. There is a set of cards on which there are statements that relate to the skills involved in speaking and listening. Learners decide whether they feel that the statement applies to them always, sometimes or hardly ever.

The discussion you have with the learner is a vital aspect of this activity so, ideally, it should be done on a one-to-one basis. This will allow you to probe for further information, clarify any issues and get a clear idea of the learner's overall level of confidence in speaking and listening.

Preparation and resources

You will need a set of cards and a copy of the 'Card sort record sheet'. If learners are going to do this activity on their own, you will also need a copy of the 'Card sort instructions' which explain how to do it.

Instructions

- 1 Look at the cards yourself and decide whether you want to use them all – you can remove cards that you do not think are relevant and/or add your own. An ideal number to use is 24.
- 2 Explain to the learner(s) that speaking and listening involves a whole range of skills that we often take for granted.
- 3 Locate the three heading cards, **Always**, **Sometimes** and **Hardly ever**, and lay them out on a table.
- 4 Shuffle all the other cards and put them in a pile face down.
- 5 Ask the learner(s) to turn over the top card and ask themselves '*Is this statement true for me always, sometimes or hardly ever?*' Put the card below the relevant heading card. Encourage learners to think carefully before making a judgement.

- 6 Do the same with other cards, so that the learner builds up three columns or piles of cards. Discuss issues that arise along the way. You could:
 - ask the learner why they put each card where they did or why they made a specific choice
 - ask supplementary questions such as *'How would you do this?'* or *'When have you done this?'*
 - make links to other key skills or life skills.
- 7 Discuss with the learner what would help them to move more cards to the **Always** pile.
- 8 Transfer what you agree to the record sheet. You may like to revisit this at a later review.

Card sort instructions

- 1** Locate the three heading cards, **Always**, **Sometimes** and **Hardly ever**, and lay them out on the table.
- 2** Shuffle all the other cards and put them in a pile face down.
- 3** Turn over the top card. Ask yourself whether this statement is true for you always, sometimes or hardly ever. Put the card below the relevant heading card.
- 4** Do the same with other cards, so that you build up three columns or piles of cards. Discuss anything you are not sure about with your tutor or trainer.
- 5** Think carefully before you make a decision. And it's alright to go back and move a card if you change your mind.
- 6** Discuss with your tutor or trainer why you put each card where you did. What would help you to move more cards to the **Always** pile?

Card sort record sheet

	Always	Sometimes	Hardly ever
I remember verbal messages and pass them on	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am happy with the way I answer the phone at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I recognise when I don't understand what someone has said	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I check that I've understood instructions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel confident talking to a new person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know when to smile during a conversation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I encourage people to ask me questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I speak clearly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other people understand what I say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I give information in a logical order	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I ask other people to repeat things that I haven't heard clearly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I choose words that my listeners will understand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I stick to the point when I'm speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I explain my ideas clearly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I pay attention to people when they are talking to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I adjust how I speak according to the situation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can identify the important points when I take a phone call	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I encourage other members of a group to speak	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I respect other people's opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know when to shut up	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I let other people have their say in a discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can help to move a conversation on	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can summarise a discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can bring a conversation to an end	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Always	Sometimes	Hardly ever
I am courteous when I speak to customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I ask questions if I don't fully understand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can give a 2-minute report to my team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I listen carefully to other people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People say I'm a good listener	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I show people that I understand how they feel when they share a problem with me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think about what I'm going to say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can judge the right time to say something in a meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can get my view across in meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I notice how other people react when I'm speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People usually trust what I say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know how to disagree politely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I play a full part in a group discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can interrupt appropriately	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can take the heat out of a difficult conversation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can make eye contact with people I'm speaking to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I turn to the person speaking to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am aware of my facial expressions when I'm talking to others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can take my turn in a conversation or discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can change the tone of my voice to suit the situation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I take my time when explaining things to others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can plan a talk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can choose the right words for a presentation slide	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can choose images for a talk or presentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can give a short talk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
An audience can hear what I'm saying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The speaking and listening circle

Purpose

This one-to-one activity is designed to help learners discuss their own speaking and listening skills using a visual tool.

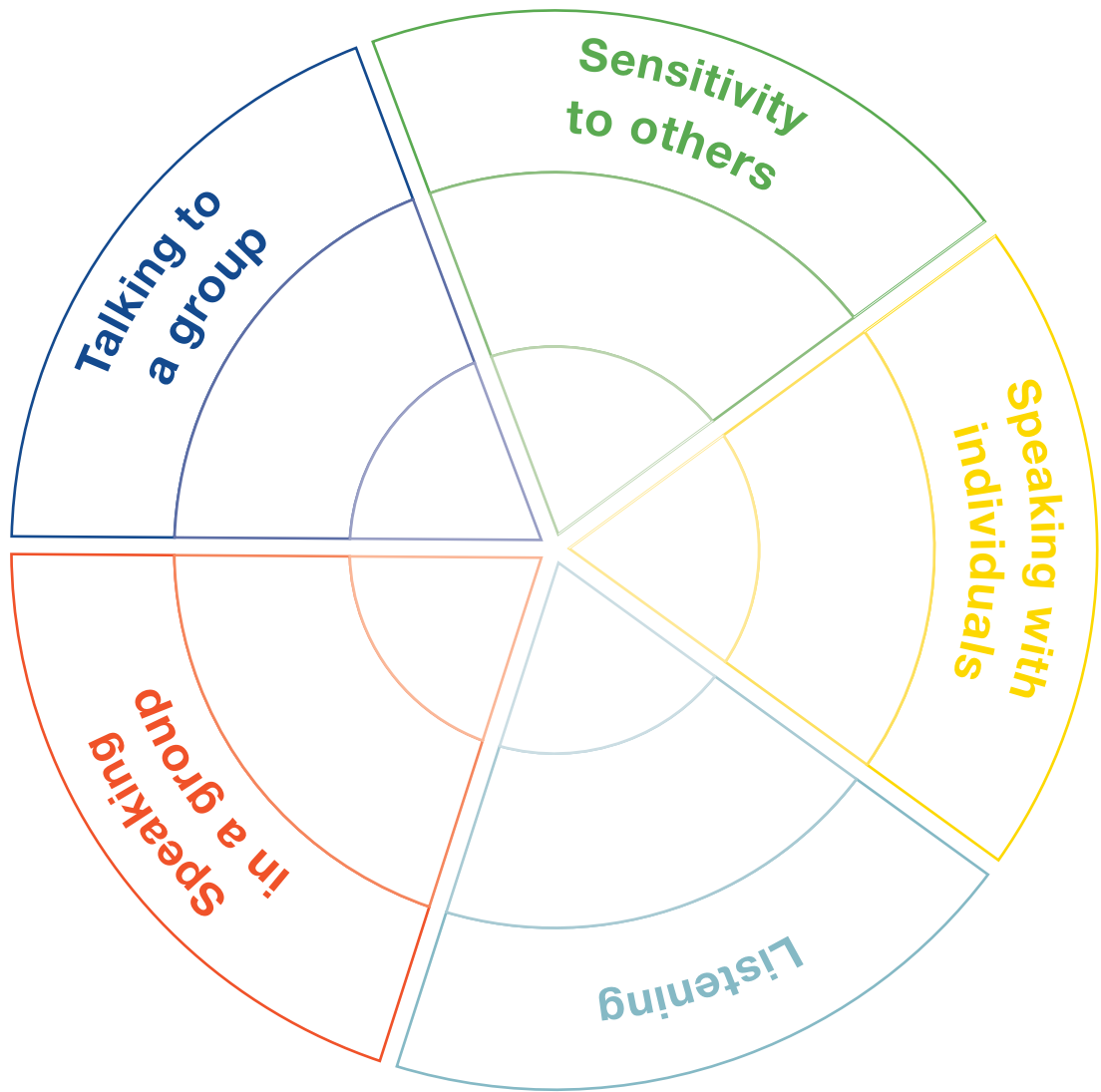
Preparation and resources

You may wish to do the card sort activity first but this is not essential.

You will need a copy of the speaking and listening circle handout for your learner, plus five different coloured pens or crayons.

Instructions

- 1 During a discussion with your learners, introduce the circle handout. Explain that it provides a framework for thinking about where they are now with their speaking and listening skills and which skills they need to develop, at a broad level.
- 2 Begin with one segment – for example, Speaking with individuals. Ask them when they need to do this at work and in daily life. Discuss how confident they feel about speaking with individuals such as friends, adults, colleagues, managers, customers, etc.
- 3 The learner then colours in:
 - all three spaces if they feel really confident in a variety of situations
 - the inner two spaces if they feel quite confident in a few situations
 - the inner space only if they are not confident in this area.
- 4 Continue with the other segments.
- 5 When you have completed the circle, you can plan ways of developing specific skills.
- 6 You may like to use the circle again in a review session.



Sensitivity to others

Introduction

Something quite complex is going on when we are in conversation with someone, even though it can seem everyday and mundane.

Effective communication takes place when we respond appropriately to the other person and the messages they're sending us – and that's more than just their words. The way we communicate demonstrates instantly and powerfully whether we respect the other person. It creates respect or disrespect, shows warmth or a lack of it, and either builds or destroys trust.

There are several factors at work when we speak and listen to each other effectively – with empathy and respect. They are key skills for life as well as for the workplace. Learning them helps us to get on better with friends, family and colleagues, and is vital to our success at work.

Teaching points

The starting point for understanding the importance and skills of being sensitive to others is for the learner to recognise how it feels when someone is not sensitive to them.

The 'Consequences' activity shows why sensitivity matters in everyday situations. The consequences of not showing sensitivity are poor relationships, anger, mistrust and a lack of respect.

The next activity, 'Respect?', shows that everyone suffers from other people's lack of sensitivity and confirms the emotional effects. It:

- reminds learners of how it feels
- confirms (in the group discussion) that other people feel the same as we do
- demonstrates the importance of empathy and respect (for us, and so for others)
- validates the skills and behaviours behind empathy and the communication process.

Understanding and internalising what makes us feel that someone is (or is not) displaying sensitivity allows us to turn the picture round.

The activity 'What's my response?' and its follow-up 'Empathy, sympathy or apathy?':

- demonstrate the importance of empathy
- provide an opportunity to practise the skills of empathy and respect
- show the differences between empathy, sympathy and apathy.



The role of empathy and respect

Empathy

Empathy is a very potent communication skill to possess. One dictionary definition is 'being able to understand someone's feelings as if they were your own'. And while that gets us so far, it doesn't convey how precious genuine empathy is in bringing us together.

Empathy turns people around...to our side because we understand and respect where they're coming from...away from anger because they know we've seen things from their point of view and valued their opinion...and they can accept our view more readily because we've treated them as a real person.

Empathy is the thing that gets us beyond our differences – age, sex, religious beliefs and race – to our similarities – our membership of the human race.

There are literally hundreds of occasions in a normal day when we should and could show empathy. For instance:

- if a friend tells you that his partner has left him
- if your friend's boss misses a deadline and your friend has to stay late to finish her work because she didn't receive the report on time
- if you damage something belonging to a customer and they tell you that it had a high sentimental value for them
- if an appointment has been double-booked so Mrs Jones can't have the perm she wanted before her 60th birthday party.

In all these, a successful outcome would be where we have understood how the other person felt and why it mattered to them – and we show it. So taking the first example, empathy is looking and sounding as if we know how it feels when a relationship ends.

It isn't sympathy. That would be if we said, *'Oh dear...what a shame. Aaaaah!'* And apathy isn't even an option – if we laughed, or said, *'Sorry, tell me another time. Got to go and get a pizza.'*

Respect

Respect is the esteem we show towards someone. If we don't show respect, we are indicating that we do not care about them or value them or their views. We show respect in our behaviour, and a key element in that behaviour is the way we communicate and show empathy. We need respect from other people, and they have a right to it from us.



Communicating feelings

Obviously, the words we utter do matter, but our actions, expressions, posture and physical behaviour convey more of the message than the words – as long as we can see the other party. Our tone of voice also has a really significant effect, and this plays an even bigger part when we're on the phone and cannot see the person we're communicating with.

Tone of voice

A famous study by Albert Mehrabian explored the relative impact of facial expressions, tone of voice and spoken words. In one part of the study, subjects listened to words spoken in different tones and were then asked to assess what the speaker really meant. The results showed that tone carried more meaning than the individual words themselves.

You can try it for yourself. Find someone to listen to you and say '*Fascinating*' so it sounds like you really are interested. Then say it again with a heavily sarcastic edge. Now ask them what message each one conveyed. What were you really saying?

Body language

Body language is one aspect of the non-verbal communication that we use all the time – often on a subconscious level. We subconsciously 'read' whether someone is angry or approachable, attentive or preoccupied, happy or sad, from the way they walk, stand, sit or look at us.

People start forming impressions of us as soon as they meet us. And our posture, facial expression, eye contact and gestures speak louder than our words. They send out clear signals about our interest, openness and attentiveness, and express what is going on inside. They give clues about whether our words are consistent with what we are really feeling. Being aware of our body language can allow us to send a consistent message. Smiling, making eye contact, using open gestures and using good posture can convey interest, empathy, respect and openness.

There is a handout for learners summarising the main principles of sensitivity to others on the next page.

Sensitivity to others

An important part of being a good listener and speaker is being sensitive to other people.

Sensitivity is not just about being good, gentle and kind to people. The main principles are:

- empathy
- respect
- communicating your feelings through your tone of voice and body language.

Empathy

If you can empathise with someone else, you can understand their feelings as if they were your own.

Empathy is not the same as sympathy. For example: a friend tells you that his girlfriend has left him. If you are being empathetic, you ask him how he's feeling and listen carefully to what he says. Being sympathetic means you would say, *'Oh, I'm sorry to hear that, what a shame'* but wouldn't bother to try and understand how he feels.

Respect

This is the regard or esteem you have for someone else. If you behave in a respectful way to others, you show that you care about them or value their views.

Communicating feelings

What you say and how you say it are important but your behaviour can make all the difference in how you show your sensitivity to others. Choosing the right words, using an appropriate tone of voice and your expressions, posture and general body language all play a part in communication.

Tone of voice How you say something can show your true feelings and your voice can give real meaning to your words.

Body language Everyone uses body language all the time and doesn't often pay much attention to it. It includes your posture, gestures, facial expression and eye contact. When you are aware of your own body language, you can use it to help you communicate with others.

Consequences

Purpose

This activity will help learners appreciate what might happen next if there is no real empathy, respect or warmth. It will increase their understanding of the importance of empathy and respect in relationship building, including reading a situation and anticipating the likely outcome, depending on the behaviour used.

Preparation and resources

Prepare a set of consequence cards – add to the examples we've given and/or invent some that relate specifically to learners' own lives and experiences.

Instructions

If we don't show empathy and respect – especially in emotional situations like our examples – an already difficult situation can blow up out of control.

The person who feels that their feelings have been ignored can react quite badly – with anger, distress and/or temper.

Empathy and respect cannot undo a problem, mistake or a wrong action. But appropriate behaviour does put both parties more on the same side, and leads to more constructive outcomes.

- 1 Introduce the activity to learners.
- 2 Explain that it is a light-hearted activity with a very serious side – if we misread a situation and fail to show empathy and respect, the consequences to us can be very uncomfortable or distressing.
- 3 Shuffle the consequence cards and deal them. Each learner reads out their card and they, or the group, predict what will happen next – making as many different predictions as possible.
- 4 Ask the learner(s) to discuss how the outcome may have been different if empathy and respect had been shown at the right time. Specifically ask them what they might have said to rescue the situation.



Respect?

Purpose

This activity uses a questionnaire to enable learners to recognise and reflect on the sort of behaviour that shows whether other people value them as individuals and treat them with respect.

Preparation and resources

Prepare a copy of the questionnaire for each learner.

Instructions

- 1 Introduce the activity to the learner(s).
- 2 Explain that the best way to understand the importance of treating people with respect is to reflect on how you feel when it happens to you (or doesn't).
- 3 Hand out the questionnaire and give the learner(s) time to complete it.
- 4 Once it is completed, talk to the learner(s) about their experiences from the questionnaire.
- 5 Then discuss:
 - how it feels
 - the impact of being treated that way
 - where different behaviour would make a positive difference.
- 6 Reflect. Has the activity made them think differently about their own responses to people?



Respect? The questionnaire

<p>1 When this happens... In a shop, the assistant answers my question without looking at me</p>	<p>I do/do not feel valued and respected because...</p>
<p>2 When this happens... My boss/tutor praises me in front of other people</p>	<p>I do/do not feel valued and respected because...</p>
<p>3 When this happens... I ring up to complain about something and the person at the other end sounds as if they think it's my own fault – as if I'm making it up</p>	<p>I do/do not feel valued and respected because...</p>
<p>4 When this happens... I ring up to complain about something and the person at the other end listens carefully then says they're really sorry – it shouldn't have happened</p>	<p>I do/do not feel valued and respected because...</p>
<p>5 When this happens... I make a suggestion in a meeting and it's completely ignored. Then someone else makes the same suggestion and they're told it's brilliant</p>	<p>I do/do not feel valued and respected because...</p>

<p>6 When this happens... My boss/tutor criticises me in front of other people</p>	<p>I do/do not feel valued and respected because...</p>
<p>7 When this happens... Someone I haven't seen for some time smiles at me, uses my name and asks how I am</p>	<p>I do/do not feel valued and respected because...</p>
<p>8 When this happens... People I've just met forget my name or get it wrong</p>	<p>I do/do not feel valued and respected because...</p>
<p>9 When this happens... I arrive on time for an appointment but the person I've come to see keeps me waiting</p>	<p>I do/do not feel valued and respected because...</p>
<p>10 When this happens... In the middle of a conversation, the other person glances at their watch</p>	<p>I do/do not feel valued and respected because...</p>

What's my response?

Purpose

This group activity will help learners to recognise the behaviours that show empathy and to practise empathetic statements. It will help them to become more aware of other people's feelings, 'listen' for feelings, recognise the impact of their behaviour on others and express empathy.

Preparation and resources

Prepare the scenarios – add to the examples on the next page and/or invent some that relate specifically to the learners' own work and experiences. Make a copy of the feedback form for each learner.

Instructions

Empathy is the ability to sense, understand and 'feel' someone else's emotions as if they were your own – walking in their shoes or inhabiting their skin for a moment. It's an essential skill for getting on with people, reading exactly what they're saying and feeling. Only when you can do that can you respond appropriately and move the situation to a positive conclusion.

There's a difference between empathy and sympathy. And empathy is a very long way from apathy.

- 1 Explain the difference between empathy, sympathy and apathy using this example.

When in a hole...

You're walking along and see that someone has fallen down a hole.

If you imagine:

- you're them
- what it feels like to be down the hole
- what they're going through,

that's **empathy**.

If you stand there and feel sorry for them...say, '*It must be awful*', and '*Oh dear, what a shame*', that's **sympathy**.

If you walk on because it's not your problem, that's **apathy**.

- 2 Introduce the activity to the learners: in groups of three, they are going to role play some scenarios to test their understanding of empathy (as opposed to sympathy).
- 3 In each role play one learner shows empathy with someone else in the group. The third learner observes discreetly and makes notes on the feedback form you have given them, identifying empathetic statements.

- 4 The observer explains what they saw, and the trio discusses the activity.
- 5 As the observer feeds back an empathetic statement, the group discusses other ways they could have phrased it – to build up their own library of empathy phrases. The list could include, for example:
 - *'I'm sorry you feel that...'*
 - *'I understand what you're saying...'*
 - *'I can see you felt...'*
 - *'I know that I would feel...'*
- 6 When they've completed one role play, they change roles.
- 7 Then they do it one last time, so that each participant plays each role.
- 8 After the third role play, discuss what happened in the full group. Draw out and reinforce the positive use of empathy – both statements and any other examples, such as body language, non-verbal prompts, etc.

Example scenarios for role play

Motor vehicle

A repair to a customer's car was not completed on time, possibly because the garage scheduled too much for that day, possibly because a part was delayed. When the customer comes to collect her car at the agreed time and it is not ready, she realises that she will not now be able to get to her daughter's school play on time.

Hairdressing

You are washing or cutting a customer's hair. In the course of the conversation the customer tells you that:

- she thinks that her husband is cheating on her, or
- her pet has just died, or
- her car was broken into and her bag with family photographs in it was stolen.

Sport and recreation

A member of your gym tells you that he has been dropped from the football team because of a sports injury. He's feeling really miserable about this.

Administration

A colleague and friend is having problems with the manager of your section. She says the manager is bossy, unreasonable and short-tempered. You find the boss to be OK and want to help your friend without being disrespectful to your boss, who you admire.

Catering

The van bringing the kitchen's usual order of fruit and vegetables is late. When the driver finally arrives, he tells you that a child chasing a dog ran out in front of the van. He managed to avoid hitting the child, but killed the child's pet dog.

Child care

Parents picking up their child are very worried that he will be leaving the nursery soon to go to school. However, they have not got a place at the school of their choice and have no clear idea where their son will go.

Feedback form

If you notice an empathetic statement, note down:

- what it was
- when it was used
- the effect it had on the other person.

The empathetic statements I noticed were when you said...

Sometimes people show empathy in other ways as well – body language, little signs and signals. Make a note of them too.

As well as the statements you used, you also did some other things that showed empathy. They were...

Make a note of any areas where they used sympathy rather than empathy. Be careful when you explain though – use empathy and remember how it feels when someone gives you feedback.

You showed sympathy rather than empathy when you said...

Sometimes, people don't react at all – either because they are embarrassed and don't know what to say or because they just don't care that much. This comes across as unfeeling – as apathy. It's often recognised by what we don't say as much as what we do say. Make a note of any times you noticed apathy.

Your response showed apathy because you...

Empathy, sympathy or apathy?

Purpose

This simple activity for individuals or groups helps learners to recognise the differences between empathy, sympathy and apathy. It builds on the 'What's my response?' activity.

Preparation and resources

Make a copy of the 'Empathy, sympathy or apathy?' quiz sheet for each learner.

You may like to prepare other questions, either adding to the examples on the next page or inventing some that relate specifically to learners' own lives and experiences.

Instructions

Empathy happens when you put yourself in someone else's place for a moment, understanding what it is like to be them. It's a powerful way of connecting with people.

Sympathy is different. You feel sorry for someone. You pity them but you don't really put yourself in their position.

Apathy is when you are not moved by the other person's position at all. You might observe it but it does not touch you in any way.

Behaving with empathy, sympathy or apathy has very different effects on the other person. This activity helps learners to explore the differences.

- 1 Give each learner a copy of the 'Empathy, sympathy or apathy?' quiz sheet.
- 2 Ask them to read out one of the items.
- 3 Ask them to discuss which response shows empathy, which one shows sympathy and which shows apathy.
- 4 Draw out and reinforce the positive use of empathy. In particular, focus on how the person delivering the statement and on the receiving end of each statement might *feel*.

Answers

The responses showing empathy are: 1(c), 2(a), 3(b), 4(b)

Sympathy responses are: 1(b), 2(b), 3(a), 4(c)

Apathy responses are: 1(a), 2(c), 3(c), 4(a)



Empathy, sympathy or apathy?

<p>1 'I'm annoyed that this is the third time I've asked you to fix the rattle on my car door and it still makes a noise. And you've charged me for it!'</p>	<p>a You know, you can never completely get rid of noise in a car. It always happens.</p> <p>b I don't blame you, it's awful. It shouldn't have happened – it doesn't normally.</p> <p>c I'm really sorry about that. It must have been really irritating for you. I'll get onto it right away to make sure we find out what's causing it.</p>
<p>2 'I made a special journey to come in to have my hair coloured and you're telling me now that your colourist is off sick. Didn't anyone think to call me?'</p>	<p>a That must have been very frustrating for you – and it must have seemed thoughtless of us not to call. I am sorry.</p> <p>b Do you know, you're absolutely right. We're rubbish at that and I'd ask the manager for your cab fare home if I were you.</p> <p>c Well, there was obviously a problem. She wouldn't be off on purpose you know, just to annoy you.</p>
<p>3 'I spent ages posting all those invoices into the computer and now you're telling me you forgot to include VAT on all of them?'</p>	<p>a I know. It's a pain, isn't it? Just when you thought you'd finished too.</p> <p>b I am really sorry. I guess I'd feel just as fed up in your place.</p> <p>c Well, look on the bright side. It'll give you a chance to improve your keyboard skills when you do it all over again.</p>
<p>4 'So you can't get my heating back on till tomorrow? That's no good. My father is very ill and can't cope with the cold.'</p>	<p>a We physically can't get the part till then. Haven't you got any extra blankets?</p> <p>b Oh, I am sorry. That must be really difficult for you. Is there somewhere else he could stay, or do you have a plug-in heater perhaps?</p> <p>c Is he really? That's <i>all</i> you need right now, isn't it?</p>

Speaking with individuals

Introduction

Most of the speaking that takes place at work is on a one-to-one basis so it's valuable to raise learners' awareness of what happens when we talk with individuals. Learners need to know what makes a conversation effective – such as appropriate language and tone of voice.

There is a wide range of situations where learners have to talk to individuals at work, such as taking messages, giving information, dealing with customers or working with colleagues. This section covers:

- **who learners talk to at work and what they expect of them**
- **communicating with customers and visitors**
- **using an appropriate style**
- **preparing for meetings**
- **asking questions.**

It also introduces other important aspects of communication including non-verbal communication and assertiveness.

Purpose and audience

It's easy to talk to another person without thinking or without any particular aim. So the first thing a learner needs to think about is *why* they need to address another person. What is the purpose? They may need to ask a question, give information or respond to a question.

Conversations are affected by the relationship between the speakers. If it's the boss or a client, the speaker may need to adopt a very different vocabulary, tone and body language than if they're speaking to a colleague or friend.

An effective speaker will think about:

- their relationship to this person within or outside the organisation
- how formal or informal the speaking should be
- what the other person knows about the topic already
- what they need to know
- how this dialogue will affect them.

Discussing examples, experiences and case studies is probably the best way of raising awareness both of the complexities of the communication process and of how to adjust communication so that it is appropriate to both the individual and the situation.

Thinking and planning

It's easy to speak before thinking. Advice to learners should be **stop and think before speaking!** There are good reasons for this: the speaker is less likely to become muddled or give an incomplete account and ideas can be presented logically. Pausing and reasoning can also help to calm any emotions such as anger or fear that might make the dialogue less effective.

What's in a dialogue?

Part of having an effective dialogue with someone else is being able to identify the intentions of the other person. Is this going to be a friendly exchange, a formal instruction, a question or a complaint? This may be gauged by past experience, facial expression, posture, tone of voice, periods of silence and so on. The learner should use these clues but not pre-judge the situation as this can lead to using negative body language or tone.

Picking up the nuance of the situation at the beginning is important, and young people can find this difficult. Adults will often 'soften' language by using suggestion rather than instruction, and this may not be picked up. Here's a real example from a training provider.

XYZ Training was expecting an important visitor. Mel was about to go outside and have her mid-morning cigarette. Her supervisor said, *'I don't think there's time to do that before the visitor arrives.'* Mel said in a friendly way, *'Don't worry, I'll be finished before they get here.'* And off she went. She hadn't picked up that what her supervisor was actually saying was, *'Under no circumstances should you go outside now; our important visitor might arrive and I don't want them to see you lolling outside smoking a cigarette.'*

Teaching points

Mutual respect

An important ingredient in any good dialogue is respect. We have already touched on this in the previous section on sensitivity to others, but it is worth reminding learners of the part respect must play when speaking to other people. As a teacher, you can model this to your learners, by listening to their views carefully and taking their comments seriously.

Confidentiality

Learners will sometimes be involved in discussions in which confidential information is dealt with. Many organisations will have policies about client, service user and employee confidentiality and learners should find out about these and become familiar with them. It will be helpful for learners if you can raise the topic and talk to them about what kind of information is usually kept confidential and how to maintain others' privacy. It's important to remind learners that, if they are speaking to a customer, they will need to show their company in the best light. This may sometimes mean that full details of a situation are not shared.

Gossip can lead to a lack of confidentiality and you could demonstrate how damaging gossip can be by asking learners for examples or discussing some situations or case studies.

Assertiveness

Being assertive is about using a positive and clear style without being aggressive. Does the learner feel able to ask questions or make comments without feeling incompetent or stupid? Can they stand up for themselves if a co-worker is rude or unreasonable? It's important to be honest and direct, but at the same time to respect the feelings and rights of other people. Guidance on assertiveness as well as an assertiveness self-assessment questionnaire for learners are included in this section.

Listening

Being able to listen attentively is just as important as being able to speak clearly and informatively. The next section of the toolkit covers this in detail.

Telephone conversations

Purpose

Telephone conversations are a simple way of raising awareness of the importance of speaking clearly and choosing language according to the purpose and audience.

Preparation and resources

Preparation is simple: you will need chairs and a reasonable-sized room. For some conversations you may need to use mobile phones or a local map.

Instructions

1 Ask learners to sit on the chairs in pairs, back to back, and to improvise a variety of 'telephone conversations' such as:

- chatting to a friend about a club or event they are about to attend
- ringing up a doctor or dentist to make an appointment
- responding to a job advert and ringing up for more information
- giving directions for how to get somewhere
- dealing with a customer complaint.

You could focus on just one type of conversation, such as customer complaints.

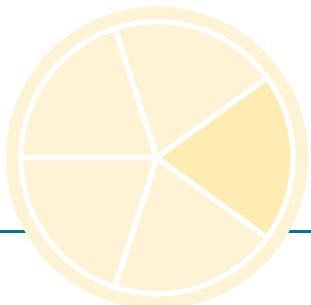
2 Once they start, observe some of the different aspects of the conversations – for example:

- the informality/formality of the language
- the need to prepare/not to prepare what to say
- the way people respond
- the way they listen
- the clarity, pace and tone of the speaking.

3 Discuss with the learners how the conversations differed, bringing out the points above.

I use mobile phones to make it as realistic as possible. The phone acts as a prop and makes learners less self-conscious.

Teacher in a land-based college



Who do you talk to at work?

Purpose

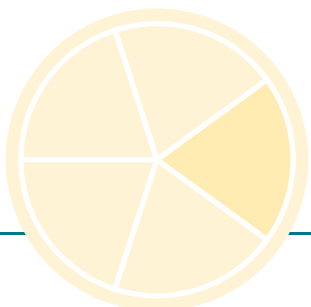
This activity aims to increase learners' awareness of how many different people they talk to at work. It will help them to think about how we change what we say and how we say it according to who we are talking to.

Preparation and resources

You will need a copy of the example spider diagram for each learner and a piece of paper for learners to draw their own.

Instructions

- 1 Give out the spider diagram and explain it. Ask the learner(s) to create their own diagram of the different people they talk to at work, such as colleagues, customers, manager/supervisor and what they talk to them about.
- 2 Get them to share their lists with you, a partner or a small group and see if they can come up with any more people or things they talk about.
- 3 Ask learners if they think they speak in exactly the same way to everyone on their diagram, or do they adjust their language?
 - Do they think they use the same words?
 - Do they use the same tone of voice?
 - Are they formal or casual?
 - Would they ever use swear words?
 - Do they sit or stand differently?
 - Do they need to observe confidentiality – for example, are there some things they wouldn't tell some people?
- 4 Discuss how they think different people at work will expect them to communicate (see the checklist overleaf). You can also ask them to reflect on whether they ever speak to the same person formally *and* informally – and if so, when do they think it's appropriate to do this? Explain that this often happens in small organisations.
- 5 It is important to emphasise to learners that, while a pleasant chat with colleagues on a neutral topic helps to build relationships, they should be careful to avoid potentially harmful chit-chat or gossip.

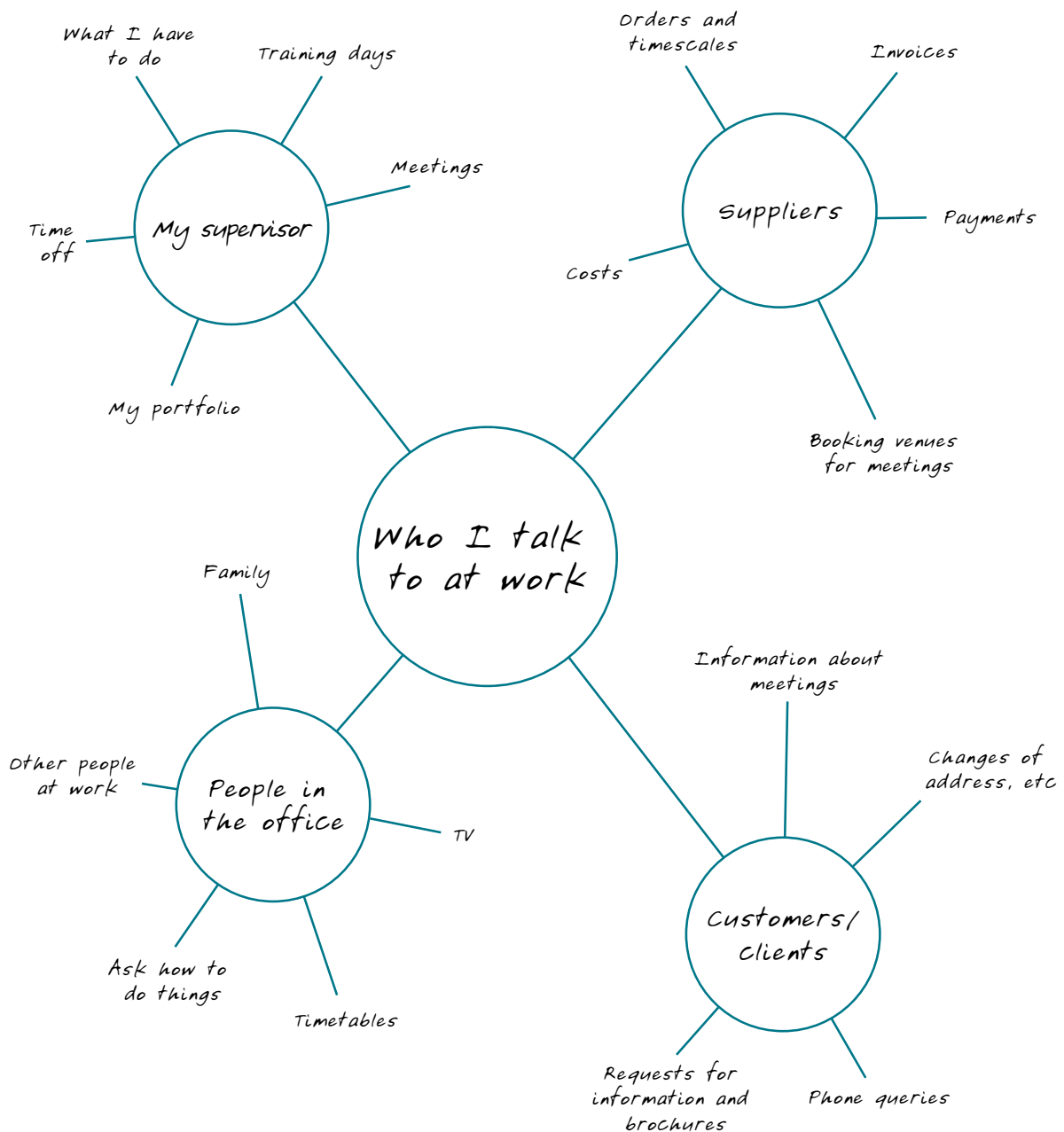


Checklist: What people at work might expect

People in different roles at work will have different expectations about how learners should relate to them.

- **The manager** will expect to be treated with respect.
- **Experienced colleagues** will expect learners to listen to and respect their knowledge and any advice they give.
- **The work supervisor** will expect learners to follow their instructions and ask for help if they need it.
- **Workmates** may want to chat on a more personal level and share work problems. (But beware idle gossip!)
- **Customers** will expect anyone dealing with them to listen, understand what they say and respond in a courteous and professional way.

Who do you talk to at work?



Giving information

Purpose

This is an opportunity for learners to practise giving information to others.

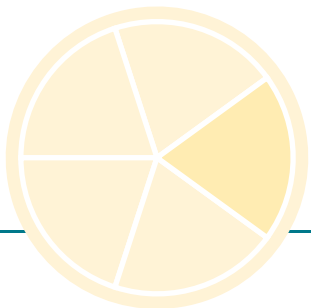
Preparation and resources

This activity needs little preparation apart from thinking up some scenarios. You can base these on the following suggestions or you can involve your learners and ask them to think of a topic and their audience.

- Describe how to make a cup of tea.
- Tell a stranger how to get to the nearest station.
- Explain to a colleague the best way to lift a heavy object.
- Give your tutor a summary of a recent assignment.
- Tell a customer how to fill in an order form.
- Explain to your manager your most recent activity at work.

Instructions

- 1 Learners work in pairs and take turns to give information. Remind them to:
 - take a few minutes to think about what they want to say
 - prepare their information
 - be clear and precise
 - stick to the facts
 - be aware of their tone, pace and language, depending on who they are speaking to.
- 2 Afterwards you can ask learners to reflect on these points, and think about what went well and what they might do differently in future.





Language style

Improving how we talk can take time and effort, but there are some useful hints you can give learners that will help them to use an appropriate style for the situation and audience. Our speech is made up of a number of different elements, including:

- **vocabulary** – the words we use
- **register** – the type of language we use in different situations
- **tone of voice** – serious, chatty, nervous, excited, happy, angry, etc.
- **pace** – the speed with which we speak
- **medium** – the way we communicate our message (as instructions, information or requests), how we do this (at a meeting, one to one, on the telephone) and other influences, such as our use of body language.

Vocabulary

Encourage your learners to extend their vocabulary, using articles about their sector, trade journals and other publications. They could look for three new words in an article and be given the task of finding out what they mean. Talk about the different types of words they will use every day, such as formal vocabulary with managers or customers at work, jargon with colleagues and informal or colloquial words with friends or family. Ask them to make a list of at least three different examples of each. There is a 'Jargon busters' activity in the section on speaking in a group (page 189) which you can use to explore this topic further.

Register

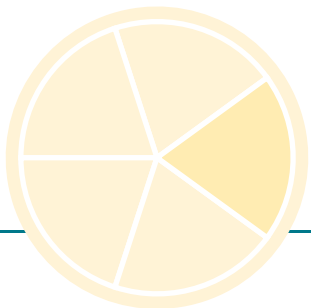
It's not just different words we use in different situations – our whole language can shift slightly. For example, we might change:

- the length of our sentences
- our style – whether we use formal, chatty or deliberately vague speech.

This may best be explained to learners through the use of some examples and it follows on neatly from discussing vocabulary. You could ask learners to listen to three different types of conversation at work, including, for example:

- a formal meeting including managers or colleagues
- someone dealing with a customer
- colleagues chatting in their lunch break.

While they are listening, they need to be aware of the different registers being used and jot down a few notes so that they can compare the differences when feeding back later.



Tone of voice

Again, this is best explained through demonstration. You or your learners can say a range of simple statements in different tones, such as irritated, friendly, bored and interested. Ask each other what the tone conveys and, most importantly, how they made the listener feel. The important point to get across is that the tone must be appropriate for the situation and the audience.

Pace

Encourage your learners to practise changing their pace of speech for different audiences. You could ask them to match up the pace with different people and situations at work; get them to make a list of different people and situations and put them into the following categories.

Fast	Moderate	Slow

Examples might include:

- speaking quickly with friends or colleagues we know well
- using a moderate pace in a meeting with a supervisor to give detailed information
- slowing down speech with someone who is having difficulty understanding us.

Remember to explain that these are examples and it's only through practice that learners will find the right pace for the right person and time.

Medium

Finally, using the right channel for expressing ourselves is a key factor in getting our message heard. If you need a colleague to carry out a task quickly, then using a short, clear instruction, face to face or by telephone, will be the right approach. However, if you want to impress your manager with some information, then preparing a short talk with some notes is an appropriate medium. Dealing with someone who is angry is usually best done face to face, rather than by telephone. Being able to observe others' body language will also give useful clues.

Adapting your style to give information

Purpose

This activity provides practice in speaking to different people at work. Giving information at work has been identified by employers as one of the 'top 10' speaking and listening skills. The activity will raise learners' awareness of how we change our style of language according to the type of information we are giving and the person we are speaking to.

Preparation and resources

You will need to think of examples of information giving at work, in contexts appropriate to your learners. Some scenarios could include:

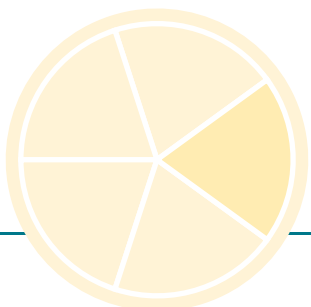
- explaining a task to a new colleague
- showing a customer a product
- apologising to a manager for being late
- telling a parent what their child has done that day
- helping a friend send an email.

Instructions

- 1 Ask learners to think about the type of information they have to pass on to other people at work and how they vary the way they speak to different people. Make a list of examples using the following format:

Information you give	Who you give it to	Style of language used
Apologising for being late	Line manager	Polite, apologetic tone, not slouching

- 2 Ask your learner(s) to select an example of information they give and deliver that information to at least three different types of people they come across at work.
- 3 When they have finished, the learner(s) can give feedback, reflecting on what information they included or left out each time and how their language and non-verbal communication varied.



Receiving visitors

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to get learners to think about what is involved in receiving visitors and to draw up their own checklist of good practice. The activity emphasises the importance of following company procedures and can be extended with an optional role play.

Preparation and resources

The learner(s) will need paper and pencils.

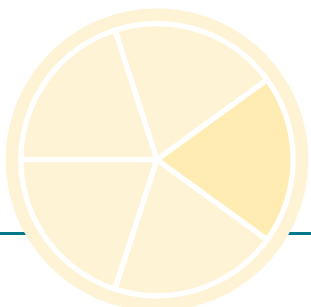
Use the list below to prepare a series of headings or a handout for the learner(s):

- Being organised
- Following company procedures
- Representing the company well
- Making the visitor feel welcome
- Safety and security.

The tutor checklist overleaf gives more details that you can include when briefing the learner(s).

Instructions

- 1 Explain to the learner(s) the importance of receiving visitors – they will need to represent their organisation appropriately and make their visitors feel welcome.
- 2 Ask them what visitors come to their workplace. Are they customers, service users, suppliers, inspectors, others?
- 3 Give the learner(s) the headings and make sure that they understand them, providing an example of company procedures if necessary.
- 4 Ask them to write a checklist for receiving visitors, using the headings.
- 5 When they have finished, ask the learner(s) to read out their lists. Discuss these ideas with them.
- 6 As they suggest items, record the ideas under the relevant headings. Add any other important points that the learner(s) may have missed.
- 7 Ask the learner(s) why they think that following company procedures is important. Ask them to tell you if there are set procedures at their organisation for dealing with visitors. If they don't know, ask them to find out before the next session.
- 8 You could give the learner(s) a copy of the checklist that they compiled, plus any points that you have added, at their next session.
- 9 Working in pairs, or with you, learners could practise 'receiving visitors' as an optional role play activity. 'The visitor' then gives feedback.



Tutor checklist

Being organised

If a visitor is expected, find out in advance the visitor's name, who they are visiting and at what time. Make sure that the receptionist (if there is one) has their details.

Following company procedures

Sign in and out at reception; give a pass or badge; ask the visitor to wait until collected; comply with health and safety requirements such as giving protective clothing or equipment. If necessary, find out which employee does which part of the process.

Representing the company well

Think about behaviour (polite) and appearance (well-groomed according to dress code if applicable).

Making the visitor feel welcome

Be friendly, shake hands and smile; introduce yourself and say '*Good morning/afternoon*'; offer a seat and a drink; thank them for the visit when they leave.

Safety and security

How do they know if a visitor should be allowed in? What are the risks of admitting an unauthorised visitor?



Representing the organisation

As we saw in 'Receiving visitors', representing your organisation well is an essential part of good customer relations – and good customer relations increase the likelihood of keeping customers and improving profits.

There are some key elements to representing your organisation successfully, such as behaviour, appearance and language skills.

Behaviour

Employees need to be polite and friendly at all times, even if the customer or visitor becomes angry. It is important to keep calm and to try to defuse the situation and reduce conflict. It is also important to be helpful – if someone wants to know more about a product or service, for example. This also means offering to find out more for a customer if you do not know the answer. The dangers of bluffing should be stressed here.

Appearance

It is important to dress according to the company's dress code if there is one and appropriately for the setting. For example, employees may have to dress formally for an occasion outside the organisation. Appearance is equally important within the organisation, where there will sometimes be unexpected visitors.

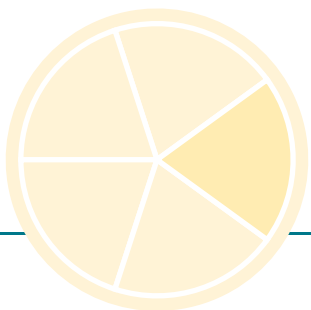
Language skills

We know that employers value speaking and listening skills highly: it comes through consistently in every survey of employers. This is because they have identified a link between these skills and happy customers, leading to greater customer loyalty and therefore increased profits.

When dealing with customers, employees need to make sure that their tone of voice matches what they are saying. It is no good checking whether a customer is satisfied using a bored tone of voice. Employees need to build a rapport and demonstrate empathy through the words they choose and their tone.

On the telephone, employees will need extra language skills because the listener cannot get any clues from body language. For example, they will need to speak very clearly, and respond more frequently (without interrupting) so that the customer knows that someone is not only there but listening actively as well.

The following case studies show how seriously two organisations (a car manufacturer and a bank) have taken the issue of listening and speaking skills.



Case studies: Speaking and listening in the workplace

Some companies take a proactive stance on the issue of speaking and listening skills, leaving little to chance in their efforts to improve the speaking and listening skills of their employees.

One of the world's top car makers identified the link between good customer service and the likelihood of a customer buying another of their cars. They routinely call a random number of customers to ask them how their query or complaint was dealt with by their Europe Customer Service Centre. And one of the questions is specifically about their future buying behaviour.

This gives the company a firm grip on what poor customer service costs them in lost sales. They started a call behaviours programme to improve service to customers.

The programme focused on the elements that make up good listening and speaking skills. It covered everything from building rapport with the tone, pace and warmth of the operator's voice, to demonstrating understanding and empathy, to precise questioning skills.

The firm produced a teaching pack and CD-ROM to show the correct behaviours in action. This was given to every employee in their call centre as a resource pack, backed up by a week's intensive training.

Further back-up is provided by their team leaders, who regularly listen in to calls, play them back to operators and coach them on their speaking and listening skills. Their aim is to keep the team focused on improving the quality of the service they offer to customers.

One of the UK's major banks has put language so squarely on the agenda that there is a specific target in each person's annual appraisal called 'contribution to the bank's tone of voice'.

The bank recognised a decade or so ago that how it wrote and spoke to customers could be a real differentiator in a crowded financial services market. They believed that investing in this area would give them a competitive advantage.

They have put a great deal of effort into improving the written and spoken language skills of their employees. They started with the standard call scripts for telephone banking and set up project teams of staff to work on new, more natural phrasing. They took the chance of freeing up their staff from scripts, offering prompts instead as guidance. With training and coaching, staff quickly became adept at speaking to customers more personally.

Their investment has paid off. In recent research, consumers said that they were more likely to recognise this particular bank's tone of voice than that of any other bank – and it was the closest to the way they hoped a bank would speak to them.

Dealing with customers

Purpose

This activity is designed as preparation for responding to customer enquiries. It aims to explore who customers are and encourage learners to think about service users and internal customers as well as external clients. Learners will also identify types of enquiries and how they might respond to them.

Preparation and resources

Think about the types of customer enquiry your learners' organisations are likely to receive.

Look at the guidance on 'Representing the organisation' and 'Asking questions' in this section so that you can share some of the points with your learners.

Learners will each need a copy of the 'Sensitivity to others' principles from page 35 and a pen and paper.

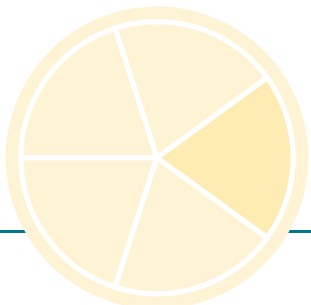
Instructions

1 Discuss the types of customers that the learners' organisation(s) have and the nature of their enquiries. Ask your learner(s) the following questions:

- Are the customers internal or external?
- Are they sometimes known as service users?
- What kind of enquiries do you get?
- Who deals with these enquiries?
- Are the enquiries face to face or over the phone?

Learners can make a note of the types of enquiries using these headings:

Customers	Needs	Who takes enquiries?	How?	Comments



- 2** Next, discuss with your learner(s) how best to respond to these example enquiries. Use the sensitivity principles as a prompt. Learners can make notes under the 'Comments' heading. Key questions you might use include:
- What tone of voice is appropriate for the enquiry?
 - What is the appropriate body language?
 - How will you show your respect?
 - How would you empathise with that person?
 - What happens if you can't handle the enquiry?
- 3** Review the points with your learner(s) and remind them that they will need to tell a customer openly when they don't know the answer to part or all of an enquiry (with a promise to find out and get back to the customer as soon as possible – preferably arranging a time).

Responding to customer enquiries

Purpose

This activity, which can be adapted to any sector, will help learners practise responding to customer enquiries and evaluate their own performance. It is relevant to learners who need to deal with customer enquiries and can be used in a face-to-face or telephone context. It works best with two or three learners per group.

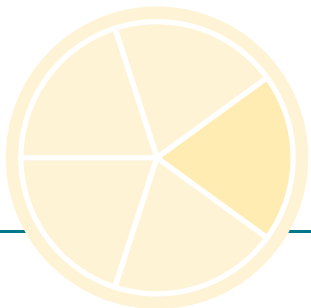
Preparation and resources

If you have used the previous 'Dealing with customers' activity, you will have some ready-made scenarios. Otherwise, think about the types of customer enquiry your learners' organisations are likely to receive or ask learners to contribute ideas.

Each learner will need a copy of the 'How did I respond?' self-evaluation sheet for this activity.

Instructions

- 1 Explain to learners that they are going to play the roles of an employee and a customer, in a customer enquiry situation. An observer can also take part and make notes on the others' performance.
- 2 The learners can choose different customer enquiries and swap roles until all of them have had the chance to play the employee dealing with the customer enquiry.
- 3 After they have finished all the role plays, ask each learner to fill out a self-evaluation sheet. You may feel that it's appropriate to discuss their evaluation with them individually afterwards.



How did I respond?

1 = I really need to work on this

2 = OK, but I need to improve

3 = Pretty good

4 = I did this really well

Did I...	Rating	Notes and examples
Speak in an appropriate tone of voice?	1 2 3 4	Warm, friendly, polite, interested, helpful
Look or sound confident, face to face or on the phone?	1 2 3 4	Smiling, good posture, making eye contact, speaking clearly and loudly enough
Use appropriate body language, if dealing face to face?	1 2 3 4	Avoid crossing arms and legs, keep an open posture, make eye contact (not continuous)
Say things to show active listening and to move things along?	1 2 3 4	'Mmm', 'That's right', 'Yes, exactly', 'Right then, I'll...', 'OK, that sounds...'
Show sensitivity and empathy?	1 2 3 4	Use sensitivity principles such as 'I don't want to bother you with...' and empathise, e.g. 'I know, it's difficult isn't it?'
Show that I understood what the customer wanted?	1 2 3 4	Listen carefully and use checking techniques such as 'So you're saying that...' Ask open, closed or supplementary questions appropriately
Respond clearly?	1 2 3 4	Provide clear and concise information or explanation
Check that the customer understood and was satisfied with my response?	1 2 3 4	'I hope that's helpful', 'Does that answer your question?'
Offer to find out, if I couldn't deal with the enquiry?	1 2 3 4	If you don't know, say that you will find out and say when

Preparing to talk with your manager

Purpose

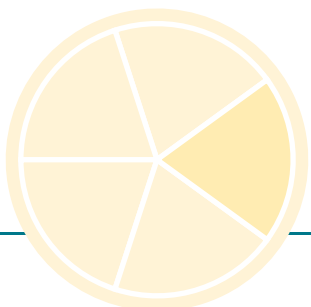
This activity emphasises the usefulness of preparing for a meeting and helps learners to plan for important one-to-one meetings.

Preparation and resources

Think of a time when preparation was vital to a one-to-one meeting that you had in the past. Consider how to share this with the learner(s). You may also like to look at the guidance on 'Assertiveness' and 'Dealing with conflict' later in this section.

Instructions

- 1 Introduce the activity by saying that thinking about a one-to-one meeting before it takes place can be helpful and constructive. Ask the learner(s) to think of the benefits of preparing for:
 - a review with an assessor or trainer (they should all be familiar with this)
 - an appraisal or performance review with their boss
 - a disciplinary meeting.
- 2 Ask learners to think about how they should prepare for a review with their trainer or assessor by considering these questions:
 - What's the purpose of the review?
 - What will the meeting cover?
 - What information will they need to provide?
 - What information do they want to gain?
 - What do they, and their trainer, want the review to achieve?
- 3 Discuss an example of a one-to-one meeting that the learner has recently had, using these questions:
 - How could things have been improved by preparation?
 - What sort of preparation would have been appropriate and why?



Optional extra

If a learner is likely to face a difficult meeting, such as a disciplinary, or one where there could be a conflict, you may like to help them to think about how they can achieve the best result from a difficult situation.

Much of this is to do with planning how to behave in the meeting and might include:

- having a clear explanation (and perhaps notes) of what has taken place
- being honest and open – assertive but not aggressive
- thinking about what tone and body language should be used
- being prepared to listen and respond
- preparing any questions that might be appropriate
- knowing how they might deal with their own or other people's emotions.



Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal behaviour is a powerful communication tool and something we all use all of the time. Much of the time we use this behaviour in an unconscious way, and this makes it a form of communication which can be very revealing about our thoughts, moods and feelings. The more aware we are of our non-verbal behaviour, the more we can control our communications with other people and also use our knowledge to interpret their thoughts and feelings.

Non-verbal behaviour includes any type of communication which is not speech. It includes:

- vocal signals
- body language
- personal presentation.

This guidance gives some more detail about each of these ways of communicating and some hints about how to interpret them. It is important to encourage learners to think about the overall picture they can build up from someone's non-verbal communication, as well as their verbal communication. It is vital to remember that non-verbal communication can be open to a range of interpretations and that analysing just one element in isolation could be misleading.

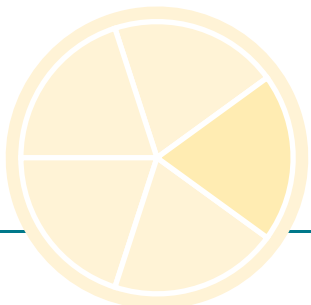
Vocal signals

This means the tone or pitch of voice used when speaking. How we say something can give the listener a good indication of how we feel. For example:

- a high-pitched tone might be used when someone is excited, happy or perhaps stressed
- a raised voice can show anger but also frustration or irritability
- a serious message is usually conveyed in a low-pitched tone.

We also use sounds when speaking with others such as '*Mmm*', '*Aha*', '*Er*' and these too can show how we are feeling, whether we are interested, bored, alert, tired, etc. The section on listening goes into more detail about how to use these sounds to good effect when in conversation with others.

Mixing non-verbal messages is something that is easily done, but our vocal signals can betray our true feelings. For example, asking a colleague how they are feeling but using a bored tone shows a lack of interest in them.



Try this with your learners

To practise looking out for and controlling these signals you could ask learners to think up some other examples of mixed messages where the voice indicates the true mood or feelings. For example:

- saying sorry to someone but in a cross voice
- asking someone to explain a task again while suppressing a yawn
- sympathising with someone about their bad day and laughing.

Body language

Body language can encompass a range of elements, including:

- gestures
- posture
- facial expressions
- eye contact
- body contact
- personal space.

Gestures can include use of hands, head and body. It can be easy to interpret gestures such as pointing and nodding but there are more complicated ones too. It is important to point out to learners that, as with vocal signals, some types of body language can mean more than one or even a range of things.

Posture is a key part of non-verbal communication and, along with our tone of voice, can be one of the first ways we make an impression on others. Walking into a room with upright posture and head up, ready to make eye contact, will convey a message of confidence. We can also check others' posture for clues: someone slouching in their chair at a meeting gives the impression that they are bored or not listening.

Facial expressions are often very informative about how people feel. Once people are skilled at controlling their expressions, however, we may need to look at other non-verbal cues.

Eye contact is something that many people find hard to make in formal situations or when meeting people for the first time. It will help your learners when they find out that they don't need to maintain eye contact with their listener or audience all the time. They should also be aware that eye contact can be considered rude in some cultures and might be difficult for people with a visual impairment. You can give learners some useful tips.

- Make eye contact at the start of the conversation or meeting.
- Avoid locking eyes and staring at the other person continuously – this can appear threatening in some situations.
- Look at the person during the conversation but break eye contact by looking at your notes or at the activity you are doing.

Body contact can be a very tricky area indeed and, while learners need to be aware of this and how to interpret others' contact, they should take great care to avoid physical contact with customers, colleagues and managers.

Other people making physical contact with us can be very powerful:

- touching our arm to get our attention or underline a point
- an arm around the shoulders to congratulate or comfort someone
- a prodding finger showing aggression.

Learners in social, care, health or education workplaces will have very specific guidelines to follow about body contact with customers or service users and your discussions may need to incorporate these rules.

There is one piece of body contact, however, that you should encourage your learners to practise, and that is a firm handshake. This is an important part of the first impression they could make on someone, so build their confidence by getting them to practise this with each other and yourself.

Personal space is also a complex element of non-verbal behaviour and open to different interpretation, particularly if people are from a mix of cultures where the amount of space means something different to different people. It is best described as literally the space we need around ourselves to feel comfortable in the company of others. This can be the space between you and a customer when standing looking at a product, or the space between the chairs at a meeting. The general rule to discuss with learners is to avoid standing too close to someone as it can seem threatening and feel overwhelming but also to avoid being too distant and appearing disinterested.

Try this with your learners

A physical activity to demonstrate this to learners is to ask them to pair up and stand opposite each other so that they feel comfortable and then estimate the distance between them. Ask them to consider whether they would need more or less space if the other person were:

- a close friend
- their manager
- a customer or service user
- a stranger next to them on a train.

You can add other examples or get them to identify other situations, such as an informal team meeting, a formal departmental meeting, a night out with friends and so on.

Personal presentation

As well as adopting appropriate body language and using the right kinds of vocal signals we also need to think about how we present ourselves to others.

This includes:

- appearance – wearing the right kind of clothes for the situation
- mannerisms – checking ourselves for irritating habits and trying to minimise them
- social manners – smiling when meeting people, introducing yourself, greeting people appropriately, learning and using others' names.

This is sometimes a sensitive area for learners since you are asking them to reflect on how they look and appear to others. Depending on the confidence of your learners, you can either ask them to analyse each other's presentation or encourage them to observe others at work and report back on the impressions that colleagues make.

Meanings of non-verbal communication

Purpose

This simple group, pairs or individual card game explores the meaning of different types of non-verbal communication (NVC). The activity will help learners to identify and interpret NVC, bearing in mind that this form of communication is often open to a range of interpretations.

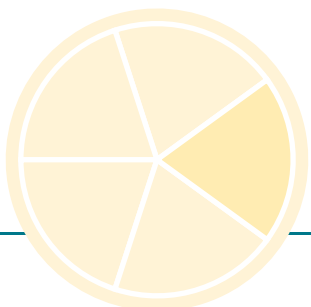
Preparation and resources

Use the set of cards provided and add to them if you wish. Learners will be asked to match cards of different types of non-verbal communication with their possible meanings.

Instructions

- 1 This can be used flexibly with any number of learners. You could have several sets of cards and divide the group into teams and make this competitive, or simply use them with pairs or with an individual learner.
- 2 Separate the cards into two piles, one of non-verbal communication and the other of possible meanings and give them out to the learner(s).
- 3 Stress that there may be different possible interpretations for each item, then ask the learner(s) to match them up.

Non-verbal communication	Possible meaning
Arms crossed	Defensive
Arms open, hands are palms up	Relaxed, openness
Tight-lipped	Disagreement
Eyebrows raised	Disbelief, sarcasm
Feet pointing at speaker	Interested or attracted
Slumped in chair	Bored
Playing with hair	Unconfident
Raised voice	Angry
Talking quickly	Excited
Tilted head	Listening carefully



What am I really saying?

Purpose

This activity involves a series of short tasks which help learners to spot and interpret non-verbal messages, including gestures, posture and facial expressions.

Preparation and resources

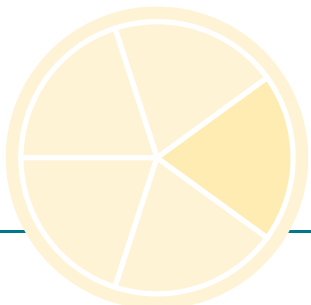
Look at the three checklists on the following pages. Decide which ones you want to use and whether you would like to add any extra items to the lists. It may also be appropriate to remove some items from the lists to take account of individual learning needs.

Learners may need a pen.

Instructions

You can use the checklists in a variety of ways:

- get the learner(s) to identify the meaning
- put the words onto cards for a matching activity
- try some role play with the learner(s)
- ask the learner(s) to take away the lists and do some non-verbal communication spotting at work or when watching television to see if the meanings are accurate.



1 Gestures

Use the list in the way that suits your learner(s) and the situation. Once the learners have linked the gesture with the meaning, discuss the topic with them. Questions could include:

- Which gestures do you use at work a lot?
- Are there any gestures you will now try to avoid?
- Which gestures did you observe in others?

Gesture	Meaning
Hand on cheek	Thinking, listening carefully
Open palm	Sincerity, openness
Palms down	Controlling or authoritative
Tilted head	Interested
Touching or rubbing nose	Rejection, doubt, lying
Rubbing eye	Doubt, disbelief
Hand in hand, eyes down	Boredom
Rubbing hands	Eagerness, anticipation
Heads clasped behind head	Confidence, superiority
Pinching nose, eyes closed	Disagreement, negativity
Tapping or drumming fingers	Impatience
Steepling fingers	Authoritative
Playing with hair	Lack of confidence, insecurity
Stroking chin	Decision making
Biting nails	Nervous, insecure
Pulling at ear	Indecisive
Clenched fist	Aggressive

2 Posture

As with the section on gestures above, the checklist can be used flexibly and reviewed with learners to influence their own use of posture.

Posture	Meaning
Crossing arms, legs or ankles	Feeling defensive
Hands on hips	Aggressive
Arms open	Relaxed, open
Sitting with legs apart, feet on the floor	Confident
Feet or body turned towards the speaker	Interested
Slumped	Bored
Standing up straight	Assertive

3 Facial expressions

Use the checklist below as you wish. An additional easy activity to do with your learners is to ask them to practise positive and negative facial expressions in pairs – one person could talk about something that interests them while the other makes a range of expressions. Ask the speaker how the expressions made them feel.

Facial expression	Meaning
Smiling	Encouragement, listening
Nodding	Agreement
Thin lipped	Disagreement, unhappiness
Raised eyebrows	Disbelief, sarcasm
Rolling eyes	Bored, mocking
Shaking head	Disagreement
Frowning	Displeasure, anger
Making eye contact	Assertive
Avoiding eye contact	Unassertive
Staring eyes	Aggressive

Soap opera

Purpose

This activity will help learners to recognise the effects of non-verbal communication (NVC) on listeners. Because the activity is based on a dramatic performance, the NVC is likely to be more marked and easier to identify.

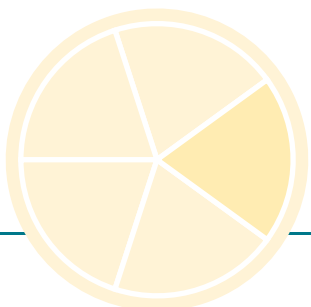
Preparation and resources

Record an episode of a soap opera – try to pick one that is popular with your learners so that they will be familiar with at least some of the characters.

You will need a video or DVD player and a copy of the 'Soap opera record sheet' for each learner.

Instructions

- 1 Explain the activity to your learners. They will be watching a video/DVD and will need to make a note of any non-verbal communication they see. You may need to give them examples of what you mean by NVC.
- 2 Hand out the record sheets. Explain that they will only fill in the first two columns while they are watching. Ask learners to make a note of the character's name and what they did (not what they said) every time they notice an example of NVC.
- 3 Play the tape/DVD – you may want to use only part of the programme – say 10–15 minutes.
- 4 After they have watched, ask them to complete the third column about the effect that the NVC had on the listener(s) – i.e. the other actors involved in the exchange or discussion.
- 5 Ask learners to give feedback on the activity. How you do this will depend on the size of your group: with a large group you may ask them to share what they saw in pairs or fours; with a small group you can have a single discussion.



Soap opera record sheet

Character	What he or she did	What was the effect?



Assertiveness

Assertiveness is a vital communication and life skill. Learning how to be assertive can:

- increase people's confidence and self-esteem
- help gain the respect of others
- improve decision-making and problem-solving abilities
- enable people to handle conflict if it occurs.

Lack of assertiveness can affect relationships and quality of life because people end up not getting what they want and have a right to expect.

What is assertiveness?

An assertive attitude says: *'I matter and you do too.'*

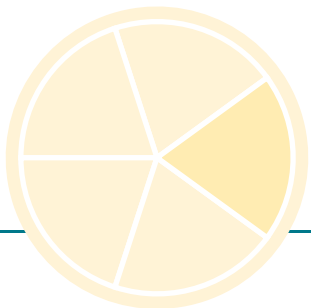
Assertiveness is a way of relating to the outside world, backed up by specific oral communication skills. To be truly assertive a person needs to see themselves as being of worth and having a right to enjoy life. At the same time they value others equally and respect their right to have an opinion and to enjoy themselves.

Assertiveness is the ability to express feelings, opinions, beliefs and needs directly, openly and honestly. It means doing this in a way that does not violate other people's personal rights or humiliate them in any way.

Basic rights

Before someone can be assertive and comfortably express their opinions, needs and wishes they must believe that they have a legitimate right to do so. This means that they must believe:

- *'I have the right to do anything which does not affect the rights of others.'*
- *'I have the right to ask for what I want.'*
- *'I have the right to my own values, beliefs and opinions.'*
- *'I have the right to say I don't understand.'*
- *'I have the right to tell others how I wish to be treated.'*
- *'I have the right to make mistakes.'*
- *'I have the right to change my mind.'*
- *'I have the right to say "No".'*
- *'I have the right to like myself – even though I'm not perfect.'*



Other ways of relating to others

There are two other main ways of relating to others: being passive or being aggressive.

Being passive means allowing the needs, opinions and judgements of others to become more important than your own. People sometimes think that asserting their rights and needs means being selfish, but this is not true.

Being aggressive means expressing your rights at the expense of others and not recognising that they have equal rights. Aggression can result from bottling up feelings which eventually explode – leaving no space for communication.

Assertiveness is a path through the middle of these two extremes: neither overbearing nor weedy, this attitude to communication is characterised by directness, clarity and firmness, anchored in respect for others and for yourself.

How to be assertive

No one can become assertive overnight. Knowing what it is and how it can benefit us or deciding to become more assertive is only the starting point. Becoming more assertive involves changing behaviour patterns that have built up over years. It can be frightening the first time we react differently to a situation – even something small like saying that you can't work late can be daunting.

Body language

An important part of assertiveness is open, secure body language. Actually practising standing in an assertive way can make it much easier for people to be assertive.

Passive body language is the classic 'victim' stance of hunched shoulders, avoiding eye contact. An aggressive stance could involve clenched fists, pointing fingers, staring eyes or standing too close to the other person's 'comfort zone'.

Assertive people generally stand upright but in a relaxed manner, looking people calmly in the eyes with an open posture.

Helping learners to know how it feels to be assertive can help them to recognise that it can be part of them. Just standing in a confident, calm way can be empowering.

Try this with your learners

This very simple exercise is a good first step to becoming more assertive. Ask a group of learners to walk round the room. As they walk, ask them to change how they do it. Say 'passive' and they have to walk in this way, then in an 'aggressive' way and then in an 'assertive' way. This is a powerful way for learners to recognise what each means.

If you have limited space, another way of doing this is by mirroring, where one person reflects back to another their behaviour and expressions. Learners sit in pairs facing each other and try different types of body posture such as:

1st person	2nd person
Aggressive	Passive
Assertive	Aggressive
Passive	Passive, etc.

– ending up with both people using assertive posture.

Assertive behaviour

There is still a lot of misunderstanding about what assertiveness actually is. Many people either confuse the term with aggressiveness or think that it is only for quiet types who need to be more outspoken. So it is worth running through what assertiveness really is and how it works.

There are three simple rules for assertive behaviour.

- **Be direct** – you can't expect others to read your mind or understand how you're feeling if you don't tell them. Don't pad your statements out with excuses or apologies.
- **Stay calm** – don't allow yourself to become angry or feel bullied – remind yourself of your rights.
- **Stick to your guns** – if you are met with a refusal, or even abuse, repeat your statement or request calmly until the other person understands.

Try this with your learners

How you express yourself – for example, through tone of voice – can matter as much as what you say. Learners can benefit from trying out different voice techniques so that they express themselves assertively. Think of a few phrases that learners can learn to say assertively. You can, as with the body posture exercise, contrast this with speaking passively and aggressively. Examples could include:

- *'I'm afraid I can't stay late tonight.'*
- *'Do you know that this is a non-smoking restaurant?'*
- *'What do you mean by that?'*

You could follow on by asking your learners about situations where they find themselves acting either aggressively or passively. How could they change their response to a more assertive one? What might they say or do differently?

Just the beginning

It's important to be aware that developing assertiveness skills doesn't mean that you get your way all the time but you will be expressing yourself simply without scoring points at other people's expense or getting drawn into an argument.

Our ability to be assertive affects everything that we are and do – from routine activities right through to the important choices in our lives. Few of us are lucky enough to be naturally assertive all the time, and most of us will admit to facing a number of situations which we find hard to deal with. Many of us can identify with one of the three patterns of behaviour; others identify with two or even all three at different times. For example, some of us are very assertive at work but are passive or aggressive in our relationships with our families.

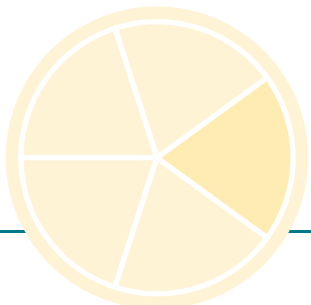
It takes practice to become more assertive, but with practice it gets a lot easier.

How assertive are you?

Fill in this questionnaire to assess your current level of assertiveness.

Tick the response that most nearly describes what you would do in the situation described.

<p>1 You work with someone who is really chatty. They are stopping you from finishing an important piece of work.</p>	<p><i>Do you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a let them carry on because you don't want to upset them and finish what you are doing after work? b explain that you need to finish your work and ask that you finish the conversation another time? c tell the person to shut up and stop bothering you?
<p>2 You have chosen to sit in the non-smoking area of a pub, when another customer lights up a cigarette.</p>	<p><i>Do you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a feel annoyed and wait for someone else to say something? b politely ask the smoker to move or put their cigarette out? c speak to the smoker loudly and rudely, saying that you will report them to the pub manager?
<p>3 A helpful sales assistant has shown you every pair of shoes in the shop in your size, but there is still nothing you really like.</p>	<p><i>Do you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a buy something anyway so as not to hurt the assistant's feelings? b thank them for being so helpful but decide not to buy anything today? c blame the shop for not stocking shoes that fit your requirements?
<p>4 You are in a group discussion at work. A colleague asks you a question about your work and you don't know the answer.</p>	<p><i>Do you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a make up an answer even if it's wrong? b tell your colleague you're not sure just now but you'll give them the information later? c not answer and instead attack your colleague by asking a question you know they can't answer?
<p>5 Someone who is important to you is being gossiped about nastily in a group of friends.</p>	<p><i>Do you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a pretend not to hear? b say how upset you feel and ask them to stop? c shout at them and put them all in their place?



<p>6 A friend who's always telling you their problems rings you up just as you are settling down to watch your favourite TV programme.</p>	<p><i>Do you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a listen patiently, wishing you could see the programme? b say it's not convenient right now but you'll ring back later? c get annoyed, saying this is your precious free time, and asking them not to phone again?
<p>7 Everyone at home blames you for making all the mess.</p>	<p><i>Do you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a agree to clear up all the mess, but feel resentful and unfairly treated? b tell the family how you feel and get them to see that other people make a mess too? c lose your temper and refuse to clear up ever again?
<p>8 Your boss criticises you for a mistake you have made.</p>	<p><i>Do you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a feel about 3 years old and very guilty? b say you will think about the comments and try to learn from the mistake? c lose your temper and deny it at all costs?
<p>9 Your boss makes an unkind joke about you.</p>	<p><i>Do you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a pretend not to hear? b tell your boss that this upsets you and ask them to stop? c launch into a tirade about not being taken seriously?
<p>10 A friend you see occasionally wants to visit you when you are really busy.</p>	<p><i>Do you:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a tell them you would love to see them? b say it's not convenient this weekend and try to arrange it for another time? c let them know how annoyed you are to be bothered when you are so busy?

Now count up how many a's, b's and c's you have scored.

How assertive are you?

If your responses were mainly a's, this means that you have a tendency to react **passively**.

If your responses were mainly c's, this means that you have a tendency to react **aggressively**.

The **assertive** response, as you have probably guessed, is the one described in the b responses.

Assertive people respect themselves and the people they are dealing with. They are able to accept their own positive and negative qualities and do not need to put others down in order to feel comfortable with themselves. They acknowledge that they are in charge of their actions, choices and life.

Aggressive people, on the other hand, cannot afford to consider the other person's point of view because they are hell-bent on winning. Although they come across loudly and forcibly, they have little self-esteem. They always need to prove their superiority by putting others down. Faced with a threatening situation they respond with an all-out attack that aims at the other person's most vulnerable points.

Passive people find it difficult to make decisions and to take responsibility for what happens to them. They see themselves as victims of unfairness and injustice and usually find someone else to blame for the things that go wrong. They find it impossible to ask for what they want, but expect others to guess. Faced with any kind of confrontation, they give in or run away.



Dealing with conflict

A conflict arises when you have a disagreement with someone else that you find hard to resolve. Learners may have experienced conflict at work if they have found it hard to get along with a colleague, feel they have an unsympathetic boss or have found their work criticised. You may wish to ask learners for examples from their workplace or discuss some scenarios with them to avoid focusing on their personal situations.

Ways to deal with conflict

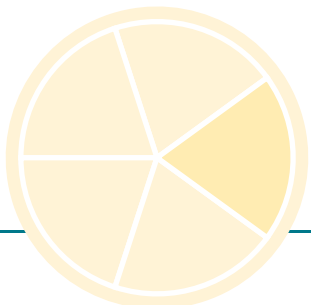
There are three main ways that we can deal with conflict. We can:

- **avoid** the conflict – deny that it exists or avoid the people with whom there is conflict
- **diffuse** the conflict – deal only with minor points but not tackle the major issues
- **face** the conflict – admit that it exists and start a dialogue.

To resolve conflict, people must be prepared to have a dialogue – to listen to the other person's point of view and state their own case in a calm manner. The power of the calm voice is not to be underestimated! Talk to your learners about times when they might have tried to avoid or diffuse conflict rather than facing it.

Picking up non-verbal clues

As with all dialogue, it's important to take clues from the other person's non-verbal communication, and to be aware of your own. To show that you are open to discussion you need to adopt an open body posture: make sure that you haven't got your arms crossed or an angry expression on your face. Relax and be friendly. Maintain eye contact, and nod your head to show that you are listening and that you can appreciate what they are saying. There are a number of activities you can try with your learners to help them identify and practise using positive non-verbal communication.



Aggressive or assertive?

Conflict can be faced aggressively or assertively.

Being aggressive	Being assertive
Refusing to admit when the other person has a good point	Being open about what you want – but not demanding it
Making fun of what the other person says	Finding out what the other person wants to achieve
Repeating your case unnecessarily	Looking for common ground
Disagreeing strongly	Stating your case clearly and honestly
Swearing or using insulting language	Trying to understand the other person's point of view
Criticising the other person	Showing that you are listening to what the other person says
Repeatedly interrupting the other person	Using positive body language
Not being open about what you really want	Using a calm voice
Raising your voice	

The next activity provides an opportunity for learners to practise using assertive techniques to resolve conflict when dealing with a complaint.

Dealing with a customer complaint

Purpose

This activity provides practice in handling a customer complaint. Learners can practise facing conflict and using non-verbal communication to deal with the situation.

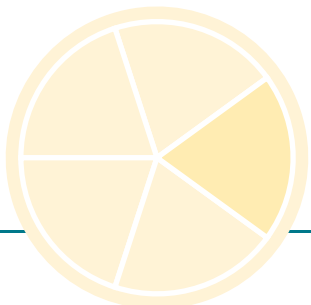
Preparation and resources

Little preparation is required. You can produce some scenarios for complaints in advance or draw up a list with your learner(s). Examples that you could customise include:

- a customer complains about a faulty product or service
- a service user is unhappy about the last person who dealt with them, who they thought was rude and uncaring
- a manager of another section, who is an internal customer, is annoyed because you have missed the deadline on a piece of work
- a colleague, also an internal customer, complains that you haven't followed a procedure properly.

Instructions

- 1 Ask learners to work in pairs, or work with a learner one to one, and choose an appropriate scenario. Get them to identify who is the customer and who will deal with the complaint. Give them 5 minutes to role play the situation and remind them to:
 - be assertive, not aggressive
 - use open body posture and positive gestures and facial expressions
 - speak in a calm voice
 - try to empathise with the complainant.
- 2 After 5 minutes ask them to stop and reflect on the situation. Did they:
 - manage to resolve the conflict
 - deal with the complaint fully
 - offer to find out information if they didn't know the answers
 - succeed in staying calm
 - communicate using a range of positive non-verbal signals and gestures?



- 3 If the learners are working in pairs, ask them to swap over and try and resolve a different complaint. Review the activity after another 5 minutes.

*I tell my learners that calm spreads.
A loud voice adds fuel to an already
volatile situation.*

Key skills tutor



Asking questions

A significant part of speaking with others involves the skill of asking questions. This sounds deceptively simple but the questions need to be:

- relevant
- timely
- appropriate.

Learners will need practice in asking questions which suit the subject, slotting them into a conversation without interrupting and also using open, closed or supplementary questions, as explained below.

Good questioning skills will bring learners a range of benefits. They can:

- help to overcome shyness when meeting people for the first time
- show interest in the other person
- promote thinking skills, by questioning a situation or what others are saying
- assist in the tasks of fact finding and problem solving.

The benefits of open questions

While learners are practising their questioning techniques they may initially rely on closed questions which won't get them very far and will close down a conversation or exchange quite quickly.

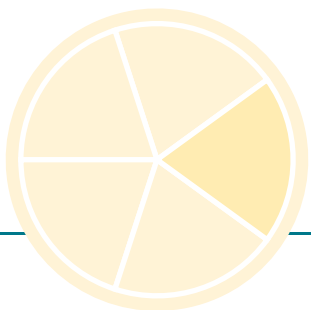
This guidance shows you how to give your learners experience of the advantages of asking open questions in order to find out more and extend a conversation.

Begin by showing learners the difference between types of questions.

Open questions

Discuss the benefits of this type of question. For example, they can be used to:

- start a conversation
- allow the other person to tell you what they think and feel
- get information from someone
- establish empathy
- encourage the other person to express their opinions and feelings
- find out more about someone's experiences.



Use some of the examples below and then get learners to come up with their own.

- *'How would you like your hair today?'*
- *'What problems are you having with your car?'*
- *'How would you feel about swapping shifts with me?'*
- *'Which products are you interested in?'*
- *'What colour scheme do you have in mind?'*
- *'What happened at the meeting with your boss?'*

Because of their particular uses, open questions are extremely valuable when dealing with customers and other people in the workplace.

When using open questions, however, it's important to make sure that people are given enough time to answer; they may need to think first. If they sound confused, the question may need to be put in a different way: for example, *'How do you...?'* might be changed to *'Can you explain to me how to...?'*

Closed questions

These are useful when you need:

- precise facts
- to check details
- a yes or no answer.

Examples are:

- *'What time was that?'*
- *'Which one do you like?'*
- *'Are you free tomorrow?'*
- *'Did you go?'*

The limitations of closed questions

You could ask your learners to find out some information from each other or you but only by asking closed questions. Topics could include:

- hobbies
- holidays
- job responsibilities
- what you did over the weekend.

This exercise will quickly reveal how limiting this type of question can be and demonstrate that, without being able to use open or supplementary questions, it's very hard to find out much.

Supplementary questions

These can also be described as ‘encouraging’ or ‘follow-up’ questions which are designed to keep the conversation going and to elicit more detail.

Examples include:

- *‘Can you tell me a bit more about that?’*
- *‘Then what happened?’*
- *‘How do you mean?’*
- *‘In what way?’*
- *‘This is useful. Could you go on?’*
- *‘Why do you think that?’*

An open and shut case

Purpose

This activity demonstrates the difference between open and closed questions. Learners turn closed questions into open ones.

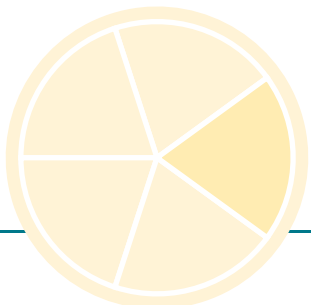
Preparation and resources

You can use the example questions provided or supply your own questions, using the same format.

Instructions

- 1 The questions can be used either as a simple handout for learners to complete or as a verbal activity where learners rephrase the questions.
- 2 Remind learners to try and use words such as how, what, which, etc. to start their sentences.
- 3 When the learners have completed the questions, discuss with them their suggestions, the difference in the replies they might get and where improvements can be made.

Closed question	Open question
<i>'Is this how you want your hair?'</i>	
<i>'Is it your clutch that's giving you the problem?'</i>	
<i>'Can you swap shifts with me?'</i>	
<i>'Do you like any of these products?'</i>	
<i>'Do you like this colour?'</i>	
<i>'Did the meeting go OK?'</i>	
<i>'Have you had a good day?'</i>	
<i>'Do you like beach holidays?'</i>	
<i>'Can I tell you about our new service?'</i>	
<i>'Do you like the new menu?'</i>	



Pairs interviews

Purpose

This is a pairs activity for groups to practise asking open questions and to reflect on what they find out as a result.

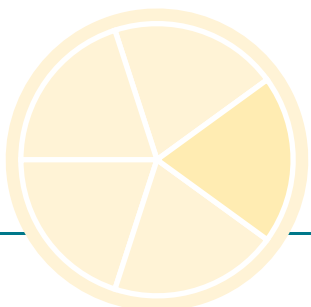
Preparation and resources

Prepare a range of scenarios or use some of the ones below.

- Find out about your partner's interests and hobbies.
- Ask your partner about the kind of job they do.
- What was their best day at work?
- What was their worst day at work?
- What would be their ideal holiday?

Instructions

- 1 Explain the difference between open and closed questions and that open questions are likely to generate more information.
- 2 Divide the group into pairs and give each individual a scenario; different scenarios will help to avoid repetition when they swap roles. Ask one person to be the questioner and the other the questioned.
- 3 Give them 5 minutes to find out as much as they can about the given topic from their partner by using open questions. If you want them to feed back information, they will need to make notes.
- 4 After 5 minutes, ask learners to swap roles and scenarios.
- 5 Circulate round the pairs to listen out for the different types of questions they are using so that you can give positive feedback on good examples later.
- 6 Ask learners to reflect on how easy or difficult it was to ask open questions and what they found out.





Job interviews

In job interviews learners will be on the receiving end of different types of questions. A good interviewer or panel will use the whole range of questioning techniques, including probing questions. Some less scrupulous interviewers may even ask leading questions. You may wish to give learners examples of these so that they can be prepared.

Probing questions help to get further details and check accuracy. For example:

- *'What caused that, do you think?'*
- *'How did you reach that stage?'*
- *'Can you tell me about the way you tackled that job?'*

Leading questions are to be avoided and do not usually result in any useful information being shared; they often reflect the views of the questioner:

- *'Don't you agree that...?'*
- *'Isn't it the case that...?'*

Both are ways of saying *'I think...'*

Preparing learners for job interviews may be an activity which already features in your training programme; below are some hints, along with an activity which provides some useful practice.

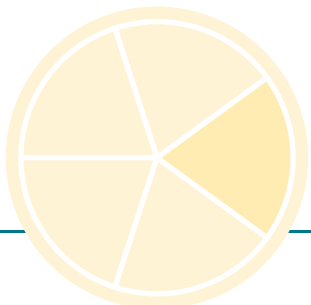
Interview preparation hints

Find out about the organisation or company by looking at their website, if they have one, and reading any leaflets or brochures. This will show your interest in them and also help you decide if the organisation will suit you.

Read through the information you have about the job – for example, advert, job description, person specification – and think about what the interviewer or panel might ask you. Make a list of things you might be asked, such as:

- *'Can you tell me about your relevant experience?'*
- *'Why do you think you are suitable for this job?'*
- *'What skills have you got?'*
- *'Tell us about your training and qualifications.'*
- *'Is there anything you would like to ask about the job?'*

Decide how you will answer these and make some notes to help you focus on the important and most positive information about yourself.



List the questions you would like to ask the interviewer or panel. Your questions should show interest in the job and might include:

- *'What else could you tell me about the work of the department?'*
- *'What other responsibilities does the job require?'*
- *'What kind of training or development do you offer your employees?'*

It is usually best to avoid asking about pay and conditions too early in the interview as it might not show enough interest in the job. If some things are not clear, then ask this at the very end or wait until you have a job offer and then enquire.

Ask someone to practise with you so that you can try out your answers.

Think about how you want to present yourself on the day and choose the clothes for your interview.

Practise using open body language and try some of the skills and techniques from the section on talking to a group to present yourself confidently.

Mock interview

Purpose

This activity will help learners to practise their interview skills. It will build confidence about taking part in any interview – not just a job interview.

Preparation and resources

Find job adverts that suit your learners' level – search newspapers, journals, trade magazines and websites. Request job descriptions and/or person specifications – this is something learners could do themselves as part of the practice situation.

Give each learner/observer a copy of the 'Interview score sheet'.

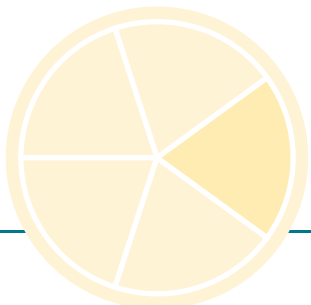
This might be an activity which extends across more than one session.

Instructions

- 1 Divide the group into threes, give each trio the information about the job and allocate their role of interviewer, interviewee or observer. Ideally, you will have enough time for each member of the trio to practise the role of interviewee.
- 2 The interviewer will need time to prepare their list of questions – they can be helped by the observer. The interviewee can use this time to think about possible questions they will be asked, how they will deal with them and any questions they have of their own.
- 3 Allow 15 minutes per interview, during which time the observer uses the score sheet. Circulate around the trios to listen out for the kinds of questions they are asking and answering; make a note of any good examples for feedback.
- 4 The feedback session should allow for all members of the trio to comment on how well the interview went. The observer should feed back their notes and state whether, in their opinion, the interviewee would have got the job – how you handle this will depend on the confidence of the group.

Once learners have built their confidence I get them to practise with a panel of interviewers, including a local employer.

E2E tutor



Interview score sheet

1 = Really need to work on this

2 = OK, but need to improve

3 = Pretty good

4 = Did this really well

Did they...	Rating	Notes/comments
Give clear answers to questions?	1 2 3 4	Short statements, in a clear voice, with enough detail to answer fully without rambling
Give relevant information?	1 2 3 4	Include information about previous jobs, training, skills and qualifications that suits the job. Avoid unnecessary information
Sound positive about themselves?	1 2 3 4	Make the most of their achievements and successes
Show interest in the job?	1 2 3 4	Relate their experience to this job, show that they have read the job description and know something about the company
Look confident?	1 2 3 4	Smiling, good posture, making eye contact, speaking clearly and loudly enough to be heard easily
Use appropriate body language?	1 2 3 4	Avoid crossing arms and legs, keeping an open posture, sitting up straight, making eye contact with the person asking the questions (particularly relevant if it is a panel of people)
Present themselves well?	1 2 3 4	Appropriate clothes and good personal hygiene
Ask relevant questions?	1 2 3 4	Have one or two questions prepared which show that they have thought about the job

How Socrates did it

Purpose

This group activity encourages learners to ask questions in order to gain knowledge about an aspect of their programme.

It's called 'How Socrates did it' because it is based on the teaching method of the Greek philosopher Socrates. He believed that learners more effectively realise how much they already know about a topic and are better motivated to learn more if they can *only* get information from the tutor by asking questions.

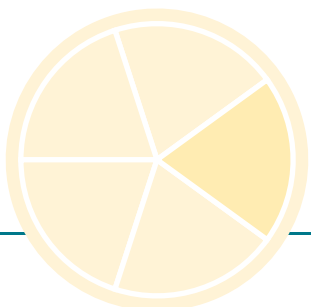
Preparation and resources

You will need to decide on a topic for a session. This could be vocational (for example, stripping a gear box, mixing colour) or key skills based (for example, converting fractions to decimals, how to lay out a letter).

You do not need to prepare the content but may need to take relevant visual aids or equipment.

Instructions

- 1 Tell your learners the topic for the session and explain that they will have to learn about it only by asking questions. You are not going to give any input other than to answer their questions.
- 2 Learners ask questions and you answer them accurately but briefly.
- 3 When you feel that they have gained sufficient information, stop the activity.
- 4 Review how much learners have learnt from the session.
- 5 Discuss whether this approach made them listen more carefully to your answers and/or remember more of what they heard.



Speaking ‘sloppily’ is essential to good communication

Ron Carter from the University of Nottingham has carried out research that gives us some fascinating insights into the real nature of spoken English – and how different it can be from written English. First, here is an item from the *Times Educational Supplement* (March 2003).

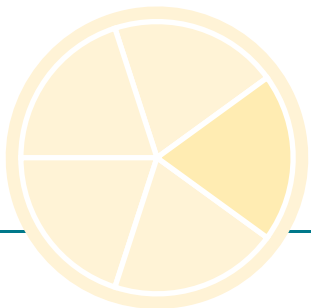
Teenage talk – not vague but sophisticated?

Professor Ron Carter, who is leading the Curriculum Qualifications Authority’s pilot project on the grammar of speech, believes that pupils should not be discouraged from using vague terms such as ‘like’ or ‘whatever’, which he says can be quite a sophisticated use of language.

He argues that teenagers and others often deliberately use vague language (‘or something’, ‘sort of’, ‘like’) because they do not want to alienate people by sounding too authoritative. Professor Carter said: ‘I call this successfully vague language. Words such as “like” and “thing” are inclusive, because they are not threatening to the listener. They also give the speaker thinking time.’

Written versus spoken words

He argues that for centuries the written word has been given too much importance, and that this has not helped us to develop effective listening and speaking skills in everyday life. In recent decades, however, spoken language has become increasingly important and has even begun to influence the written language, mainly via the widespread use of spoken forms in texts and email.



Spoken English databases

Another significant development is the arrival in the late 20th century of extensive databases of spoken English. These have increased our knowledge of the real forms and uses of everyday spoken English enormously – thanks to the databases we can now see, for example, which words are used most frequently (see the word frequency lists on page 126, taken from the 700 million word Cambridge International Corpus (CIC)).

The importance of ‘vague’ and ‘sloppy’ words

The CIC word frequency lists for spoken and written English make interesting reading. As we see, the word *‘yeah’* features at number 8 in the top 40 frequent spoken words, but does not appear at all in the written English frequency list. In fact, *‘yeah’* is used more to show that the listener is ‘following’ the conversation than to show agreement with what is being said.

‘Mm’ and *‘er’* appear at numbers 15 and 17 in the spoken list respectively. Ron Carter says that, although these ‘words’ would not be allowed in Scrabble, nonetheless they are so frequent and important in spoken English (essential in showing hesitation, pauses and agreement) that they appear in the top 40.

These words and others like them are also used in conversation to establish power relationships. For example, a boss who says *‘Ah well’* or *‘Okay’* to an employee can (according to tone of voice) interrupt, change the subject, assume agreement or control the length of the conversation.

There is no punctuation in spoken language so we use phrases such as *‘First of all...’*, *‘And so...’*, *‘Going back to...’* to structure communication, making it more effective. *‘Well’* occurs nine times more frequently in the spoken rather than the written language, as a way of punctuating what is being said. Even in formal talk, speakers use *‘now’* and *‘so’* to mark a new ‘stage’ in what they are saying. Handling these ‘markers’ well is an important skill.

Ron Carter also identifies ‘purposefully vague’ words and phrases such as *‘it’s like’*, *‘you know’*, *‘that kind of thing’*, *‘stuff’* and *‘whatever’* as another key element of spoken English: they soften informal speaking and make it less direct, in a way that is unnecessary in writing. We also tend to leave out some of the more ‘obvious’ words – for example, *‘Loads to tell you about!’* rather than *‘I’ve got loads to tell you about.’*

Though often considered a sign of ‘sloppy’ language, his central point is that these phrases are actually essential to good communication, when used carefully and intentionally. He regards them as a vital speaking skill in many aspects of everyday life, including the workplace.

Interestingly, these forms are working their way into some types of writing, as informality becomes more common. Jamie Oliver is quoted as an example of this trend: his recipes read like an email. Magazine articles have become chattier. Ron Carter suggests that this trend is a sign of cultural change: people are speaking to each other more as equals.

What does this mean for teaching and learning?

In conclusion, he offers some useful advice.

- We shouldn't judge speakers by the standards of the written language – we don't speak in sentences, for example.
- Words and phrases such as '*Yeah*' and '*I mean*' are crucial to building and maintaining relationships when speaking and listening. So is purposeful vagueness.
- Recording and transcribing conversations helps learners to develop language awareness and noticing skills. For example, they can identify words that signal active listening. Access to English databases online can be very motivating here.
- Learners benefit from exploring, analysing and reflecting upon their own speaking and listening experiences.
- Learners should be assessed on informal as well as formal speaking skills.

Top 40

Taken from Cambridge International Corpus (CIC)

Spoken words		Written words
the	1	the
I	2	to
and	3	and
you	4	of
it	5	a
to	6	in
a	7	was
yeah	8	it
that	9	I
of	10	he
in	11	that
was	12	she
it's	13	for
know	14	on
mm	15	her
is	16	you
er	17	is
but	18	with
so	19	his
they	20	had
on	21	as
oh	22	at
we	23	but
have	24	be
no	25	have
laughs	26	from
well	27	not
like	28	they
what	29	by
do	30	this
right	31	are
just	32	were
he	33	all
for	34	him
erm	35	up
be	36	an
this	37	there
all	38	said
there	39	one
got	40	been

Using ‘markers’ in speech

Purpose

‘Discourse markers’ are the individual words and phrases that are used to mark boundaries in conversation. We use them to move from one topic or bit of business to the next. This activity will help learners to be aware of the important functions of these words and to identify those that they and others use.

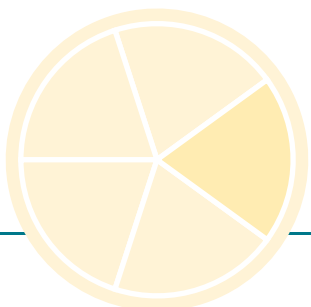
Preparation and resources

You will find it helpful to read the summary of research on ‘Speaking sloppily’.

You will also need the cards with the top 40 most frequent written and spoken words in English.

Instructions

- 1 Using the two packs of cards, ask learner(s) to match up words that are the same, and put them next to each other. This will leave those that are different.
- 2 Discuss:
 - Are there any surprises in the two lists?
 - Focus on the vocalisations (‘*mm*’, ‘*er*’, etc.) – these are often thought to be the mark of poor speech, but are they?
 - What job do these words do?
 - Are they important?
- 3 Ask learners to watch out for the markers that they and others use. Do they have a preferred one?
- 4 Look at the top 40 spoken words. Discuss how they might be used:
 - to show agreement with the person you are talking to
 - to show that you are listening actively
 - in openings and closings
 - to check that people are following what’s being said
 - to soften expression and instructions.



Using transcripts

Purpose

This activity involves using a transcript of an everyday conversation to make explicit the way we speak. It will help learners to look more closely at specific aspects of spoken language and recognise how important non-verbal communication is in a conversation.

Preparation and resources

You will need to record and transcribe a conversation – preferably involving one or more of your learners. Alternatively, you can use a conversation you were involved in, either at work or home as the basis for the activity. You could even record a small section of a radio phone-in programme. Whatever you choose, the conversation will not need to be more than 5 minutes long. When transcribing you should include vocalisations such as ‘umm’, ‘er’.

You will need a copy of the transcript for each learner – and perhaps a copy of the recording.

Instructions

Most learners are surprised by seeing transcripts of talk. Simply recording and transcribing a short discussion or conversation can provide a wealth of material. People will be intrigued and surprised by:

- the number of pauses and gaps there are
- how few of the statements are complete sentences
- how speakers signal changes of topic to the listener(s)
- how face-to-face conversation affects the language used
- how the relationship between the people affects the way they talk.

1 Give out the transcript and allow learners a few minutes to read it.

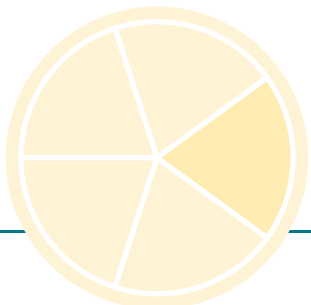
2 Ask them for their first impressions – perhaps using the points above as prompts if necessary. Did anything surprise them?

3 Ask learners what was missing from the transcript that is present in speech – for example, tone of voice, non-verbal communication. Did this make it harder to follow?

4 You could finish by playing the recording to them if you choose.

I also compare the transcripts of real speech with speech in novels.

English teacher



Listening

Introduction

Some people are described as ‘good listeners’ and it’s always a compliment. Being able to listen attentively and to understand and remember what you’ve heard is a valuable skill. When you think about someone who you consider good at conversation, you may well find that it’s because they listen more than they speak. You’re picking up on their listening skills, not necessarily their speaking skills.

Listening is often thought of as a personal attribute which you either have or don’t have, but we can all become better listeners. The result is likely to be improved relationships, less conflict and increased effectiveness – in short, better communication with colleagues, clients, supervisors, friends and family.

This section explores the range of skills a good listener needs:

- **listening actively**
 - **reflective listening**
 - **asking questions to check what you’ve heard or when you haven’t understood**
 - **differentiating between hearing and listening**
 - **listening for main facts and instructions.**
-

Listening at work

There are many situations in which a learner will need to listen. At work they will be:

- given instructions – perhaps about a piece of equipment or a procedure
- taking messages – from customers or colleagues
- involved in meetings – where key facts and decisions will be discussed
- learning new skills or techniques – by listening and observing more experienced colleagues
- dealing with customers or service users – who may not be very clear or have a problem or complaint.

Some people find it hard to retain information, to concentrate or to ignore all the other stimuli around them. The activities in this section will help learners to listen attentively to instructions, ask questions while listening and identify the main points of what they've heard. The section also looks at what's meant by 'active listening' and the role of non-verbal communication.

A good listener

First, it's important to be clear about what a good listener actually does. What makes someone good at listening is a consistent behaviour pattern. They do the same things each time – and they are tangible and teachable. Good listeners:

- show that they are listening by making sound prompts ('Uhh', 'I see', 'Yes') and by their body language (nodding, facial expression, eye contact)
- show that they understand by reflecting back what the person said, either in the person's own words or by paraphrasing ('So you said that your cab was late...')
- show that they have got beyond the words to the real feelings behind the statement ('So you were getting worried about missing the appointment when your cab was late')
- ask questions to check their understanding and dig further for clarification
- know what type of question to ask – when to ask a closed question ('What time did the cab arrive?') or an open question ('So, what happened?') when looking for different types of information
- concentrate and cut out distractions to be able to focus on the person speaking.

Starting point

The starting point for helping a learner to improve their listening skills is awareness of both self and others. Ask them, either individually or in groups, to think about someone they know who they would describe as a 'good listener'. Then ask them to consider what this person does that makes them say this.

The learners can then think about how the way they listen is similar to or different from this person.

Object exchange

Purpose

This activity functions as an icebreaker for a group of learners, while getting them to practise their listening skills. It will show learners how easy it is to lose track of even simple information when there are a lot of distractions and activity in the room.

Preparation and resources

You will need a flipchart or whiteboard, a pen, a timer and space for learners to move around.

Instructions

- 1 Ask the group to close their eyes for a moment and think of any object. You can give them an example if you wish, such as 'a glass of juice' or 'a cat'. Tell them to imagine that they are holding the object and then ask them to open their eyes again.
- 2 Ask each participant to name their object and write a list on the flipchart. Add your own if you are joining in.
- 3 Explain that the purpose is to carry out as many exchanges of their object as possible within 5 minutes. You may need to demonstrate with someone: tell them your object, find out what their object is and then move on to the next person and do the same, and so on. Check that everyone understands what they are doing.
- 4 Set the timer and shout 'Go!' Encourage the group to rush around, swapping objects quickly. When the timer rings, shout 'Stop!' Then ask everyone to sit down and remember the last object they were told.
- 5 Go round the group asking what objects they have and tick them off on the list. You will find that several objects have gone missing, that some objects have multiplied and usually that there are some completely new ones too!
- 6 Reflection. Once the list is complete, ask the group to reflect on what happened during the activity. Draw out the points that listening carefully when receiving information is just as important as talking and that it can be difficult to remember precise information when there is a lot of background noise.

Listen and learn

Purpose

This individual or group activity encourages learners to reflect on their listening at work and to recognise how important listening is to their work and career. It will help learners with their listening skills – in particular, listening actively and concentrating on what is important.

Preparation and resources

You will need a copy of the 'Listening log' for each of your learners.

Instructions

- 1 Introduce the activity to the learner(s) by discussing how important listening is at work – we learn and find out much of what we know about our jobs from listening.
- 2 Ask the learner(s) to think about when they listen at work – for example, receiving instructions, teamworking, meetings, interaction with customers, taking messages, chats with colleagues.
- 3 Give the listening log to the learner(s) and explain that they should choose one day at work when they will focus on listening. At the end of the day they complete the log by:
 - listing the main times during the day when they listened
 - noting down something important that they learnt or found out each time.
- 4 At the next session, discuss the listening log. Consider questions such as:
 - When did they learn a lot from listening, and why was this?
 - When might they have found out more, and how could they do this another time?
 - Did they find it easy to listen attentively at particular times of day or in specific situations?
 - Were there times when their attention wandered, and why was this?
 - Did they do things to listen actively – for example, use non-verbal communication?

I ask my learners to think about what they have learnt by listening in the previous day or week.

Literacy tutor

Listening log

Times when I needed to listen

What I found out or learnt

Active listening

If you feel you have something important to say but no one listens to you properly, it can be upsetting and frustrating. Active listening is a way of paying attention to other people so that they feel you understand what they are saying.

Active listening means listening for a purpose, perhaps to get information or to solve a problem, but it can also involve simply showing support or taking an interest in how a person feels.

Listening is a skill which is usually taken for granted, but it is a very important part of oral communication – it makes a real difference to any exchange. And it can be improved and developed, provided we are aware of how a good listener behaves.

How can you show that you are listening actively?

- Set aside what you are doing in order to concentrate on the speaker.
- Make sure that your mind is focused so that you can give the speaker your full attention.
- Make eye contact with the speaker from time to time.
- Sit where you can be seen without the person having to turn to you to see you – arrange chairs so that you are at a slight angle, where each of you can comfortably see the other one.
- Sit close enough for comfort and so that you can easily be heard without having to raise your voice. Check whether the distance between you feels comfortable for both of you. Remember that people vary in the amount of 'personal space' they need.
- Be quiet – if you don't interrupt, it will encourage the other person to speak.
- Nod your head and accept what they say.
- Use expressions like '*I see*', '*Yes*' and '*Mmm*'.
- Check your understanding from time to time. Say, '*So you mean...?*'
- Paraphrasing – this doesn't just mean repeating what the person has said but putting it into your own words.
- Maintain eye contact with the person you are talking to – but do not stare at them so intently that they begin to feel uncomfortable.
- Use 'open' body language, such as leaning forward, facial expressions and gestures that show you are actively listening and interested.
- Ask 'open questions'. These are questions that encourage the person to share their thoughts and feelings, rather than give 'Yes', 'No' or one- or two-word answers.
- Try to really 'hear' what the speaker is attempting to say, including any emotion behind it. Avoid jumping to conclusions or judging people.

Sometimes people listen selectively – only picking up on what they want to hear, focusing on information that backs up their point of view; they may think they know in advance what the speaker is going to say. Some learners are very good at pretending to listen (something we may all have done at school or at some time in our lives).

While it's good to show that you are listening by making encouraging sounds, nodding your head or asking questions, some people can interrupt too much. Or they feel the need to argue or express their own opinions before the speaker has time to finish. A good listener maintains the flow by giving the speaker time to talk and organise their thoughts.

You're not listening!

People can tell when someone isn't listening to them actively even if they can't put their finger on the precise reason. Someone who isn't listening might show it by:

- looking away from the speaker or having a glazed expression
- their sitting or standing position – for example, slumped in a chair
- 'closed' body language such as folded arms
- looking at their watch, yawning, tapping their fingers or fidgeting
- shrugging their shoulders.

Effective listening at work

Purpose

In this activity learners agree a set of principles for effective listening that apply to both one-to-one and group listening at work. The activity will help increase learners' awareness of the essential elements of good listening, including the importance of active listening.

Preparation and resources

You will need paper or a flipchart to note learners' suggestions. You may want to recap the main points about non-verbal communication in the guidance on page 81.

Instructions

- 1 Begin by asking the learner(s) to give examples of when they listen one to one or in a group in the course of their work. You can write these up as two lists.
- 2 Ask them to come up with at least two examples of how listening is the same in the two contexts. You may need to prompt them – for example, by getting them to think about the difference between active and passive listening or non-verbal communication. Add these examples to the lists.
- 3 Then ask the learner(s) to think of at least two examples of how they listen differently in the two contexts, again adding to the lists.
- 4 Go on to ask about things that can get in the way of listening such as:
 - lapses in their own concentration
 - the speaker not getting to the point
 - problems with the environment such as background noise.Add these obstacles to the notes.
- 5 Finally, ask the learner(s) to agree a set of principles of good listening – referring to the notes or flipchart will help here.
- 6 Ask them to try out some of these principles at work over the next week or so, and to note what happened for review at the next session.

Listening trios

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to increase learners' awareness of good listening (and speaking) skills and to encourage them to develop these skills. The activity will help learners by giving them the opportunity to practise and observe these skills, taking different roles within a small group.

Preparation and resources

A pen and paper will be needed for the observer in each group.

Instructions

- 1 Ask learners to work in threes, with one person taking each of the following roles:
 - speaker
 - listener
 - observer (this could be you).
- 2 The speaker then chooses a topic they will talk about. This could be something that happened at work or in their personal or social lives. They will talk about this for 3–5 minutes, so you will need to give them a minute or so to think through what they will say.
- 3 While the speaker talks:
 - the listener listens, reflects back, uses non-verbal communication and asks questions
 - the observer watches and makes notes as appropriate.
- 4 After 3–5 minutes the trio reflect on how it went, focusing on the positive aspects – what both the speaker and the listener did well.
- 5 If you have time, ask the trio to swap roles and do the exercise again. Ideally, everyone should experience the three roles.
- 6 Finally, draw out what everyone has learnt from the activity about good speaking and listening skills.



Listening questions

Purpose

This activity focuses learners on the role of questions in the listening process to seek clarification, check understanding and support the speaker. Learners will practise using 'listening questions' in a work setting, followed by feedback and discussion. The activity can be used with individuals or with a group.

Preparation and resources

You may like to recap on the information on open and closed questions in the guidance on page 107.

Instructions

- 1 Begin by discussing why we use questions to help our listening:
 - **to seek clarification** if we don't understand something fully or need more information – for example, *'Could you explain that more fully?'* or *'Could you give me an example?'*
 - **to check understanding** – for example, *'So you would like me to trim half an inch off the back?'* or *'You'd like me to move the chair closer to the window?'*
 - **to support the speaker** and encourage them to continue – for example, *'So, what happened next?'* or *'How did you feel about that?'*
- 2 Make sure that learners are clear about the difference between closed questions, which need a yes/no answer and are good for checking understanding, and open questions, which need a fuller answer and are good for supporting the speaker.
- 3 Encourage the learner(s) to give examples from their own work. You could also model the activity – for example, if a learner needs to tell you about something they have been doing, you could make explicit your own 'listening questions' as they speak.
- 4 The next stage is to help the learner(s) to find an opportunity to practise 'listening questions' at work. Depending on their employment sector, they might:
 - talk one-to-one with a client
 - take part in a team discussion about a service user
 - handle a customer enquiry.
- 5 Spend some time thinking about possible questions. Encourage the learner(s) to make a few notes after the event.
- 6 Learners then carry out the task on an individual basis.

7 It is a good idea to review the activity as soon as possible afterwards. The following questions can help to structure the discussion:

- What questions did you use?
- Did your questions help to seek clarification, check understanding or support the speaker?
- How did the speaker respond?
- How well did the discussion go?
- What have you learnt from this?

Listen to the radio

Purpose

This activity can be used with groups or individuals to help learners identify the main points when listening, using the context of a radio programme. They will be encouraged to recognise the times when we listen more actively and to identify the 'clues' that trigger this type of listening.

Preparation and resources

Bring in a radio or use the 'listen again' option on BBC radio websites. Alternatively, a learner could listen to a radio programme at home and you could discuss it when you next meet.

You will need to choose a programme appropriate to your learners' interests and level. It should be a talk programme, such as a news programme or an interview, rather than a music programme. You may want to involve learners in choosing the programme.

Each learner will also need a copy of 'Radio programme: the main points'.

Instructions

- 1 Explain to learners that active listening is a vital skill – but it is tiring and difficult to maintain over a long period. Good listeners are able to move in and out of active listening (for example, in meetings or during a presentation) because they notice clues that tell them when they should listen actively again.
- 2 Give learners the record sheet so that they can make notes about the programme as they listen.
- 3 When the programme has finished, you can use these discussion questions:
 - Did they capture the main points of the programme? Do learners' lists differ? How?
 - Did they find themselves drifting during the programme? Did this matter?
 - How does our attention come and go while listening? What kinds of clues help us to 'switch on' again for vital bits of information? (Examples could be a change of speaker, a change in tone of voice or a question.)

I play background music during a session. Then I ask learners to listen carefully to the lyrics of a particular track. This helps them to see the difference between just hearing and actually 'tuning in'.

E2E tutor

Radio programme: the main points

Title of programme:

Date:

Time:

As you listen to the programme, note down the main points you hear.
Aim for 6 to 8 short points:

Was there anything that made the programme easy or hard to listen to?

Were there any important things that you might have missed?

Were there times when you listened more or less carefully?

Taking instructions

Purpose

Learners need to recognise what is involved in taking instructions and practise doing it. This activity will help them to listen attentively to instructions and to check and confirm that they have understood.

Preparation and resources

Before you start, you will need to think of examples of when learners are given instructions. If appropriate, you could also involve the workplace supervisor in looking for occasions when the learner takes instructions.

Make a copy of the 'Instruction record chart' for each learner.

Instructions

- 1 Ask learners for recent examples of instructions they have been given and discuss how successful this was. This will help to draw out the principles of taking instructions such as listening and checking.
- 2 Discuss points that influence the effectiveness of instructions including:
 - the person giving the instructions – for example, how clear they are
 - the person receiving the instructions – for example, how well they listen
 - the environment – for example, noise levels.
- 3 At this point you could get them to practise giving and receiving instructions, with you or with each other – how to connect up computer cables or how to get to the bus stop, for example.
- 4 Ask learners to pay particular attention to instructions they receive at work over the next week or so. Give them the 'Instruction record chart' to log the occasions when they take instructions.
- 5 At the next session talk about the instructions they have taken. Discuss things like:
 - the environment (noise levels, interruptions, stressful conditions)
 - the relationship between the people giving and receiving instructions
 - the quality of the instructions
 - how well they were able to listen
 - whether they asked questions and how they felt about this
 - whether they made any notes
 - whether there was anything they didn't understand
 - how they can get better at taking instructions.

Instruction record chart

Date	What the instructions were about	Notes

Taking messages

One of the most common situations for listening at work is when we are taking a message. This sounds easy, but people often find it hard to get right. Taking a message requires:

- careful listening
- accurate recording of the facts
- liaison to pass on the message.

Types of messages

Learners will be expected to take messages from a range of people including customers or service users, colleagues, supervisors and other callers. They will also take messages in a number of ways, including:

- in person
- by telephone
- through email.

Barriers to message taking

It is worth exploring with your learners some of the barriers that they come across when taking messages and how they deal with them. You could ask your learners to make a list of the problems they experience when taking a message and then discuss ways to overcome these. The table below gives you some ideas.

Barriers to taking an accurate message	Solution
Others not speaking clearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't be afraid to ask the caller to repeat the message or to slow down so that you can make a note of what they are saying • Make sure that you can take at least a name and telephone number so the person can be easily contacted
Names or words that are difficult to spell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the caller to spell out names or technical words • Sometimes it's acceptable to make a guess. If the message is an informal note for a colleague, then spelling isn't so important

Barriers to taking an accurate message	Solution
People leaving messages when you are busy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure that you have a pen and paper to hand so you can jot down the main facts • Don't try to remember messages without making a note
Angry or demanding callers or customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay calm and offer to take a message if you are unable to deal with the problem. Make sure that you get the key facts • Smile and be reassuring if you are face to face
Email messages which are not clear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reply to the sender and request further information • Remember that it is a written document, so make sure that your response is polite

Passing on a message

Talk to your learners about ways to pass on a message. Some organisations have pre-printed message pads or particular guidelines about taking messages which learners will need to follow. Many companies, however, do not and it is worth being specific with learners about the kind of information they need to note, including:

- name of caller
- date and time of call
- main points of the message
- contact details, including telephone number
- initials or name of person taking the message.

An example could look like this:

J's mother telephoned at 9.30am on 30.10.06. She will collect J at 12.30 today and take him to the dentist. Please make sure that he has had his lunch and brushed his teeth. She will bring him back to the nursery after his appointment.

Any queries, she can be reached on 0876 44803

Sandra

Sometimes it's a little more complicated and the information might need to be changed or the message might be best relayed in person, if it is sensitive or contentious. Here are some examples.

- *Please can you tell Mr B his car won't be ready today?*

This message will probably be passed on in person or by telephone. The customer will also want to know *why* his car isn't ready, so that information needs to be added to the message before it is relayed.

- *Your team member is not doing a good job and they have made a mess of the data again.*

This message could be very upsetting for the recipient and will need to be handled carefully and in person to make sure that the problem is solved.

- Sometimes it is tempting to write notes like this one:

To all staff: don't leave a mess in the kitchen. Whoever did this should tidy it up.

Because this message reads like a personal attack on the staff or colleagues, it is unlikely to have the desired effect. Leaving a message like this can upset people and cause conflict. Worse still, genuine concerns could go unnoticed because of the way they have been expressed. It is better to speak to people directly and keep written messages for factual information.

Important and urgent messages

Learners may need to practise distinguishing between messages that can be left for colleagues or supervisors and those needing some urgent attention.

Ask your learners to give you examples of everyday messages they take and then those that are important or urgent and need more rapid responses. Their lists might include these types of messages:

Everyday	Important/urgent
Please can you ask Raj to phone back when he's free?	Mrs A needs to have her medication changed
Let me have your parts order by the end of the week	The caller has a burst pipe, can we visit today?
Find out when the job needs to be finished	This child is allergic to nuts
Remind parents that hats and gloves will be needed now it's getting cold	Please can you phone back by 11 am?
Towels will now be kept behind the sinks	The deadline is today
	Your tickets must be collected by 5 pm

Take a message

Purpose

Real work situations are used in this activity to improve message-taking techniques and practise listening for key facts.

Preparation and resources

You can introduce the activity and discuss the outcome while you are with the learner(s) – during a workplace review, for example. The rest of the activity takes place at work.

You will need a copy of the 'Message record chart' for each learner.

Instructions

- 1 Discuss with your learner(s) the kind of messages they take regularly.
- 2 Give each learner a 'Message record sheet' and ask them to make a note of their work messages on the chart for about a week. (If they are in a job role where they take a lot of messages, then one day may be long enough.)

They will need to log:

- who leaves the message
- the nature of the message
- whether it was important or urgent
- how they relayed the message
- any problems they experienced.

They may need to get permission to do this from their supervisor or at least let them know they are working on this activity. Some messages might be confidential and you will need to advise your learner(s) to avoid noting the detail of these.

- 3 When they have completed the chart, discuss the activity with them and get their feedback on:
 - the situation – how busy they were, interruptions, stressful conditions
 - the relationship with the caller – known or unknown to them, dealing with anger or a complaint
 - how well they were able to listen
 - how well they were able to note the main facts
 - whether there was anything they didn't understand
 - how they can get better at taking messages – what they would do differently.

Message record chart

Who the message was from	What it was about	Important or urgent?	What I did with the message	Problems or barriers

Observing a team briefing

Purpose

This activity will help learners to listen for and identify the main points of a discussion. It also provides an opportunity to reflect on how people listen and to think about how they can improve their own listening skills. It is relevant to all sectors where learners attend team briefings.

Preparation and resources

Learners will need a pen and notepad and a copy each of the 'Checklist' and 'Reflection' sheets.

Instructions

- 1 Brief the learner(s) on the purpose of the activity and discuss how they can get permission from their supervisor to play an observational role at a team briefing.
- 2 Rather than taking an active part, their role is to act as an observer in order to use their listening skills and to observe other people listening.
- 3 During the briefing they complete the checklist and use their notepad to record anything else of significance. Afterwards, they reflect on what they heard at the meeting, using the 'Reflection' handout to write down key points and their thoughts about how people listened.
- 4 At the next session use the notes they made on the reflection sheet as a basis for discussion, either on a one-to-one basis or by encouraging them to share information as a group.
- 5 Finally, ask them how this experience might help them to improve their own listening skills.

Most of my learners don't have regular team briefings so I arrange with their supervisor for them to sit in on a different kind of meeting at their workplace.

Work-based trainer



Checklist

Who was at the meeting?

Where was the meeting held?

What was discussed?

How was the meeting conducted? *(tick all appropriate)*

- formally/informally through discussion.....
giving out paper using visual aids.....
supervisor issuing instructions

Why was the meeting held? *(tick all appropriate)*

- to give out information to ask for opinions
to issue instructions to give feedback

When was the meeting held?

- before work..... during work
at lunchtime at tea break
after work

Reflection

After the meeting take some time by yourself to reflect on what you have heard at the meeting. Use your checklist to remind you of some of the key points. Use this sheet to record the information and your thoughts.

1 What were the key points that were discussed?

2 What specific information was given out?

3 What instructions were issued (if any)?

4 What did you notice about how people listened?
Were there signs of active listening?

5 What was it like to be an observer?

Reflective listening

Purpose

This activity gives learners practice in listening closely to a speaker, encouraging them to speak freely without interruption. This is a useful skill for anyone but it is particularly important in occupations such as child care, care, health and hairdressing.

You should use this activity with an established group who know each other fairly well.

Preparation and resources

You will need a room or space which provides a relaxed and comfortable environment. It is also important that pairs do not intrude on, or overhear, each others' conversations.

Instructions

- 1 Ask learners to get into pairs. They should choose a partner who they feel able to talk to.
- 2 One of each pair identifies a problem they are having and explains it to their partner. This needs to be a problem they are willing to share and should not be too personal. A work-related one would be best.
- 3 The partner's task is to listen and not to interrupt the speaker or add any comments until they finish. They will also need to use silence well and allow for pauses.
- 4 The person who is talking continues until they have aired the issue fully.
- 5 In the review or debrief learners should consider the following questions:
 - How did the listener feel? Was it hard to listen and not to speak?
 - Did the speaker feel that they understood their problem better by talking it out in detail to a good listener? Did they find they came up with a possible solution?
- 6 The pairs swap roles and follow the same process.



Speaking in a group

Introduction

Along with presenting or giving a talk or presentation, speaking in a group can seem one of the most daunting parts of spoken communication. Building learners' confidence through preparation and practice can make a big difference to their ability to take part in group discussions and even enjoy having their say.

There are some straightforward ways to help learners improve their skills when speaking in a group which are covered in this section. A step-by-step process to building discussion skills is worthwhile and the following are the key stages:

- **having a clear purpose**
 - **listening attentively**
 - **using the right language and tone of voice**
 - **making appropriate contributions.**
-

Whether a discussion or meeting is formal or informal will make a difference to how the learner participates. A discussion with a colleague at work may be very informal but may be more formal if a supervisor or manager is involved. In situations like team meetings there are often formal rules which people need to be aware of and respect – such as catching the eye of the chairperson if you have something to say, rather than just saying it.

A clear purpose

Being clear about the purpose of a discussion or meeting will help learners decide what they should say, how to say it and perhaps when to say it. At work, discussions are often a medium for getting things done. Learners need to know what any discussion is aiming to do. For example, is it to pass on information about clients in a care home from one shift to another? Or is it to work in a group to plan a way of scheduling a particular job so that it gets done efficiently?

Once the purpose is clear it is much easier for an individual to see how they can participate and make their contribution. For example, if they are the person passing on information, they will contribute best by organising what they need to say, speaking clearly and making sure that other people have understood. If they are planning a task together, they will need to recognise the importance of listening carefully so that they can act on what has been agreed.

Listening attentively

Usually much more time is spent in a group listening to what other people say rather than speaking. Listening is a way of finding things out: a good listener works out what the speaker wants to say and the purpose of their contribution. Good listening involves both listening closely and identifying the speaker's intentions.

- **Listening closely** – and showing it. Paying attention and listening closely means tuning in to what the other person thinks or feels (which may mean tuning out your own thoughts and feelings). An active listener shows that they are listening in the way they sit or stand in relation to the other person. They are likely to ask questions to check what they have heard and to summarise what has been said.
- **Identifying the speaker's intentions** – and responding appropriately. What does the speaker want to happen as a result of what they have said? Intentions may be expressed by the speaker's tone of voice or manner rather than their words. It is important to be able to recognise when someone is signalling that they feel irritated or upset, so that the response can be appropriate. In some cases – such as when dealing with a complaint – this can be difficult.

Using the right language and tone of voice

Learners need to speak clearly, at the right volume and in an appropriate tone of voice. Some people find one or more of these difficult, and while they can all be practised, improvements can take time and may be closely bound up with a person's self-confidence. Mumbling or speaking too loudly is often a sign of anxiety or lack of confidence. If someone 'strikes the wrong note', it may be because they lack the experience to judge a more suitable one.

It is therefore important to give learners chances to practise – for example, by providing opportunities for them to talk in different contexts, so that they get used to describing things, explaining the reasons for them or how they work, expressing their own ideas, etc. You can suggest ways of extending vocabulary, perhaps by trying out words and expressions they have heard other people use or by building up lists of technical words.

Making appropriate contributions

When learners do get an opportunity to speak in a discussion or meeting, it is essential that what they say is appropriate in response to others, as well as to the situation and the point of the discussion. Again, this skill takes time to develop. The activities in this section therefore aim to tackle this in a variety of ways to give plenty of opportunities for practice.

Getting started

With a new group, or a group who do not have much experience of discussion, it can help to begin with some simple and enjoyable activities which will help them get to know each other and start talking.

Human bingo

Purpose

This is a group activity, useful for induction, which gives learners practice in speaking with others and finding out about their peers. It will help learners to speak clearly, take turns to allow others to share information and listen actively.

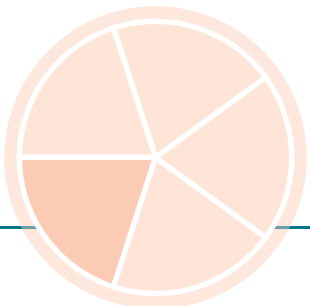
Preparation and resources

Make up a set of cards in advance with a range of descriptors written on them, such as the ones on the examples below.



Instructions

- 1 Each person is given one or two descriptor cards.
- 2 Give learners 10 minutes to move around the room and ask other group members if the descriptor on their card(s) applies to them. If so, they get them to sign their name on their (the speaker's) bingo card. The person with the most names is the winner.
- 3 When they have finished, learners can reflect on the activity by noting who shared the same likes and dislikes or characteristics. They can also talk about what else they found out about each other.



One piece at a time

Purpose

Practising turn taking in discussions demonstrates how important it is to have everyone's input for communication to work well. This fun activity is suitable for pairs or small or large groups.

Learners will experience a barrier to non-verbal and verbal communication and practise taking turns and working cooperatively. They will become more aware of the effectiveness of working together rather than in isolation and of using both non-verbal and verbal communication.

Preparation and resources

You will need enough 50-piece jigsaw puzzles to provide one puzzle per group or pair of learners, plastic bags and a timer. Groups should be no bigger than four.

Divide each puzzle into bags according to the number of learners in the group.

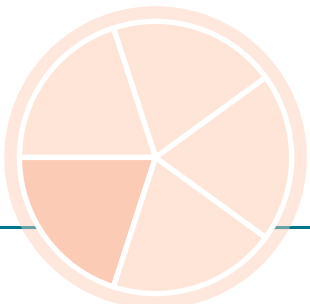
Instructions

Learners put together the puzzles in their pairs or groups, initially using no verbal or non-verbal communication; later they will be allowed to communicate.

- 1 Give each learner a bag of puzzle pieces and tell them that they have 2 minutes to take turns to put down one piece of the puzzle. They must do this without speaking to each other or touching anyone else's puzzle pieces.
- 2 After 2 minutes tell them they now have a further 2 minutes to carry on taking turns putting down pieces, still without speaking but they can now touch other people's puzzle pieces.
- 3 Now give them 5 minutes to finish putting together the puzzle in any way they can. They can now speak to each other. When 5 minutes is up, ask them to stop.
- 4 Get the pairs or groups to compare how well they did and to reflect on what happened when they couldn't communicate as opposed to when they were allowed to collaborate (first non-verbally and then verbally).

I made a jigsaw from a picture of the skeleton of a horse to make the activity more relevant to my learners.

Equine trainer



Adapting style to audience

Purpose

This activity demonstrates how we change our style of language – in pace, tone and level of formality – to suit the audience. It will encourage learners to consider how relationships affect speaking style. They will practise choosing different ways of speaking to suit the context.

Preparation and resources

You might like to refer to the guidance on ‘Language style’ on page 65 of the toolkit first, so that you can explain to your learners the different elements of spoken language style.

On individual cards prepare a series of scenarios that require the speaker of a group of three to convey a message or give some information to two very different audiences. Below are some examples, and you could ask learners for some ideas.

- A learner has to explain why they are late to a friend *and* to their tutor.
- A retail apprentice tells a customer *and* a colleague that they have run out of a particular item of stock.
- A car mechanic has to explain to a customer *and* to their supervisor why the customer’s car has not been serviced on time.
- A care worker explains to an older service user why their family has not come to visit them *and* passes on the same message to a social worker.
- A learner in child care asks a child *and* her parent about her favourite food.

You will also need a copy of the ‘Observation sheet’ for each scenario.

Instructions

- 1 Divide learners into groups of three, giving a different scenario card to each person in the trio.
- 2 Explain that everyone in each group will take a turn giving a message to the two different audiences. The listener and the observer will need to swap roles when the speaker is communicating with the second audience.
- 3 The observer in each group listens and looks out for the changes in register, tone and pace, as well as any non-verbal changes between the two versions, which they then note down on the sheet provided.
- 4 Check learners’ understanding of the task, including the observation sheet, and monitor groups while the activity is in progress.
- 5 Reflect with the group on the differences they have noticed in their speech according to audience.

Observation sheet

Language style	Audience 1	Audience 2
Register/vocabulary		
Tone of voice		
Pace		
Facial expression and gestures		



Planning contributions to meetings

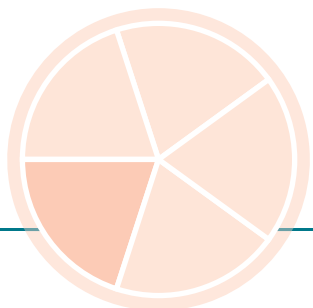
Formal and informal meetings will be situations for which most learners need to prepare. Helping your learners to plan for meetings will raise their confidence in these situations. Different kinds of meetings that learners might attend include:

- formal group or section meetings attended by senior staff and supervisors
- informal team meetings run by the supervisor
- formal and informal one-to-one meetings with their supervisor or tutor
- informal one-to-one handover meetings with colleagues, such as childcare, care, health or retail workers between shifts
- informal meetings with clients, such as a hairdresser discussing what a customer would like
- formal meetings with service users or clients, such as a care plan review meeting or a discussion with parents
- informal meetings with other suppliers, such as a handover to other trades on a site.

You can start by asking learners to think about what meetings are like at their workplace and to talk about what they are for, the content of the discussion and who attends the meetings. This will help learners to reflect on what kind of preparation is required and also what behaviour is expected, including the style of discussion, their own contribution and the language used.

Preparation for a formal section meeting might include:

- looking at the agenda and thinking about the items for discussion
- deciding where on the agenda the learner might have an input
- making some bullet points or notes for these contributions
- practising talking through the points to find the right language, pitch and tone to use
- looking up background information in files or on the internet.



Preparing to take part in a meeting at work

Purpose

This is an individual or group activity to emphasise the importance of being prepared for meetings at work. It will help learners to clarify the purpose and aims of a meeting; consider the impact of different people and their roles in a group; be prepared to accept different points of view; research their subject; prepare contributions and examples; prepare prompts and notes.

Preparation and resources

The area of health and safety covers most employment sectors for the purposes of this activity, as does 'team meetings'. Alternatively, you could ask your learner(s) to come up with some ideas for workplace meetings that reflect situations they are likely to encounter such as:

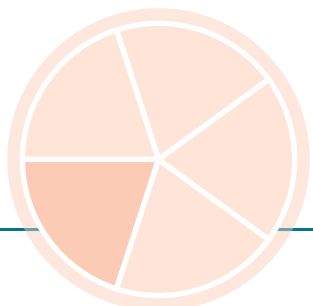
- hair consultation
- care plan review meeting
- parents' meeting to discuss a child's progress
- site handover to another trade
- team meeting to review weekly sales targets
- section meeting to plan work for the next 6 months
- admin meeting to decide on a new telephone system.

You will also need to provide a copy of the handout 'Meetings at work' for each learner to make notes for the meeting.

Make sure that learners have access to resources in order to research information that they will need in the meeting, such as files and/or the internet.

Instructions

- 1 Ask learners to prepare for their chosen meeting and make notes on the handout as they do so. (This activity can be one which learners take away and report back on at a later date.)
- 2 Learners should feed back on their preparation and also be prepared to talk through some of the points they would raise at the meeting. This provides good practice for making a contribution at a meeting.



Meetings at work

Type of meeting

Purpose

Who attends?

What is discussed?

Your role

Points you will make

Information to research or prepare

Jargon busters

Purpose

Demystifying jargon and technical language used in the workplace promotes confidence when participating in meetings. This activity will help learners to listen actively and to question what they hear.

Preparation and resources

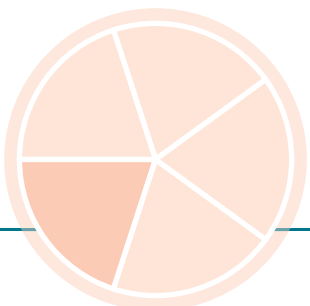
Think about the jargon that is used in your learners' training programmes. The 'Jargon buster' handout should be copied for each learner.

Instructions

- 1 Talk to the learners about the jargon, technical language and abbreviations that are used in their workplace. To get them started you could talk about the terms used in their training programmes – for example, NVQ, tech cert, SfL, ILP.
- 2 Ask them to spend a day or a week busting that jargon by making a note every time they hear a piece of jargon, an abbreviation or a technical phrase.
- 3 The task is then to interpret that jargon or find out what it means. They can use the handout to record their findings and then report back on what they have learnt.
- 4 Learners can build up their own glossary of words and phrases for their sector.

I encourage my learners to record jargon and technical terms in a notebook.

Skills for Life teacher



Jargon buster

Jargon, abbreviation or technical phrase	Meaning

A house built from jargon

Purpose

Familiarising learners with jargon makes it easier for them to understand it.

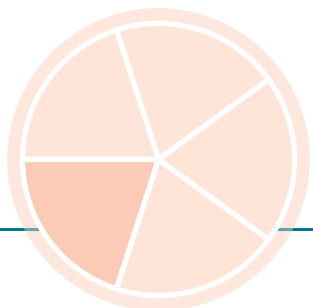
Preparation and resources

If you have tried the previous activity, your learners will have a ready-made list of words or phrases for others to guess. If not, start by asking learners to think of jargon and technical phrases they come across at work. This is an activity you could do one to one in the workplace too.

Each learner will need a pencil and a piece of paper.

Instructions

- 1 One person thinks of a piece of jargon and the others have to guess what it is by suggesting letters of the alphabet.
- 2 For every wrong guess a line of a house is drawn, i.e. walls, doors, windows, roof, chimney, etc.
- 3 The winner is the one who guesses the word or phrase before a complete house is drawn.





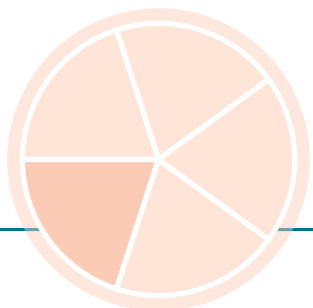
Different approaches to discussion

Different formats

There are a number of different formats for a discussion which you could try out with your learners.

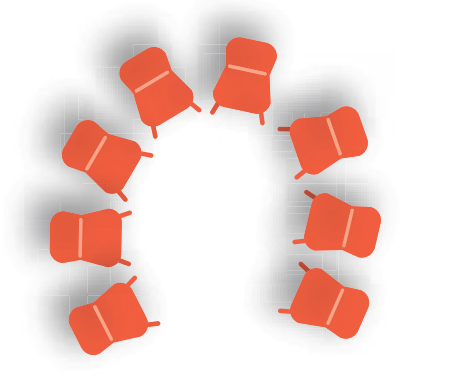
- **Debate** – usually two points of view are put forward and then discussed by the whole group.
- **Panel** – an audience listens to and then questions a number of people discussing a topic.
- **Forum** – everyone has an active role in the discussion.
- **Pairs** – one-to-one discussions which are less threatening to start with than larger groups.
- **Snowball or pyramid** – learners work in pairs, then fours, then eights and so on.
- **Small groups.**
- **Free discussion.**
- **Controlled discussion.**
- **Step-by-step** – a type of controlled discussion which is guided with questions.

Selecting which type of framework for discussion will depend on who will take part in the group discussion and how well they will interact – if you have new learners reluctant to speak up in a group, you might start with pairs work and then build up to small groups and free discussion. Your decision will also be influenced by the aims or subject of your discussion. Being clear about the degree of formality required is essential.

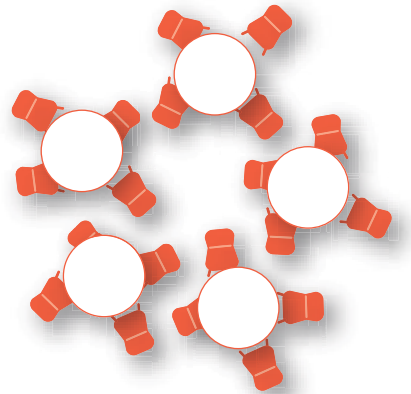


Arranging the room

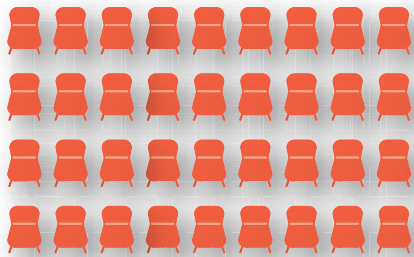
The environment or setting for a discussion is important. This includes the space you use, the layout of tables and chairs, and other resources such as whiteboard, flipchart, internet or library access for learners to search for information. You could illustrate the following range of layouts using pictures.



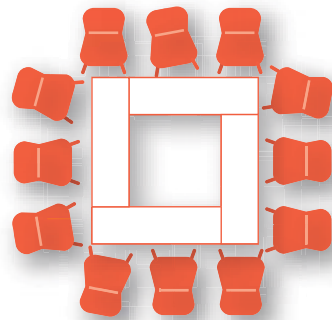
U-shape



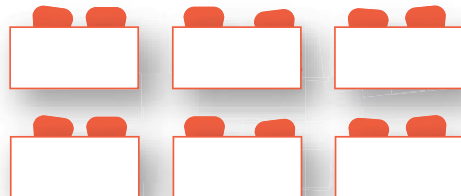
café style or rounds



theatre style



hollow square



classroom style

Starting a discussion

Purpose

This activity supports learners in starting a discussion and putting forward their points of view, and encourages them to participate fully.

Preparation and resources

Plan how you will start your discussion. Tempting as it is to ask 'Who would like to start?', this often allows a talkative learner to dominate the group. Think through some options or stages to encourage less articulate learners to participate fully.

You might prepare some appropriate audio-visual aids to set the context. Examples include a photograph of someone with hair extensions, a short film showing dog grooming methods, a recording of a call centre worker dealing with a complaint, magazines or journals from your sector.

If you are working with a mixed group, you will need to choose general topics. You might split learners into smaller groups or pairs and give them a general topic to discuss, such as the effect the internet is having on their industry.

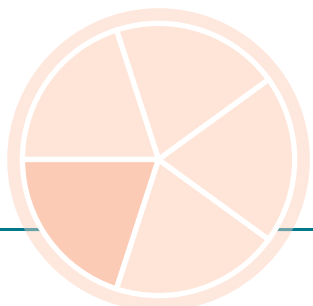
Instructions

There are a number of ways in which you could approach this activity.

- 1 Ask each learner to suggest one visual image linked to a topic. It is sometimes easier to talk about an image than a topic in general.
- 2 Depending on your learners, a more formal start might be appropriate. For example, you could give the learners a prepared statement on a topic which you would like them to discuss.
- 3 Once you have decided on a discussion topic, ask learners to make three statements about it. Each statement should contain only one sentence and, whilst short, could be controversial in order to spark debate.
- 4 Separate the group into two smaller groups, one for and one against an idea and begin the discussion. Individuals should be encouraged to express their views. Allow learners to swap sides during the discussion if they change their mind or are neutral.

If there's time, I include a fact-finding task before the discussion. This means that learners have more information to support their points of view.

Communication specialist





Agreeing ground rules

Teams that meet regularly may well have already worked out their ground rules and these may not always be apparent to learners joining the group. Encouraging learners to think through rules that they might apply to a group discussion can help them look out for this kind of agreement in their own workplace. These are three examples.

- Allow each person to speak without interruption.
- Listen to each other carefully.
- Give time for others to ask questions.

Recognising barriers

It is important to be aware of some of the barriers that can inhibit someone from speaking in a group.

While learners may feel that their own shyness or lack of experience is the main barrier to speaking in a group, it can be helpful to reflect on the range of things that can get in the way of effective group discussions. This will alert learners to how others are feeling and promote their confidence in taking part.

These are some of the barriers to effective communication.

Language

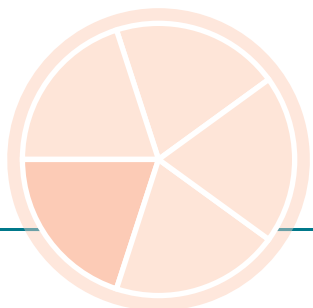
- Use of technical language or jargon excludes those not 'in the know' – many employment sectors have their own jargon.
- Language may be used inappropriately – for example, informal language that is used in a formal setting and vice versa.
- A participant may not have English as their first language.

Environment

- A noisy environment can make it hard to hear what others are saying and can be distracting – think of a meeting held in a busy sales office or in a repair shop.
- Other environmental factors, including heat, light, lack of space or lack of facilities, can have an effect.

Time

- There may be a lack of time – for example, handovers at the end of a colleague's shift.
- Meetings can sometimes take too long and participants' attention can wander.



Stress

- If workers and managers are under stress, they may not be actively listening during group meetings and discussions.
- Lack of preparation can make it difficult for many people to make their contribution with confidence in a group discussion.

Setting the ground rules for discussion

Purpose

This activity is designed to help learners understand how a discussion should work and gives each person a clear framework for speaking. Learners will need to throw in ideas and use brainstorming, discussion, listening and negotiating techniques.

Preparation and resources

Make up a set of cards in advance, some blank and some with 'rules' on them. For example:

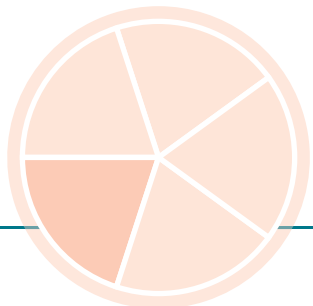
- No one must interrupt when the speaker has their turn.
- Speakers must be given 2 minutes to speak.
- Each person must ask one open question.

There should be enough cards to provide each pair or group with one rule card and several blank cards.

Instructions

- 1 Introduce the activity and explain that ground rules for discussion can help everyone have their say, keep the discussion on track and achieve its aim.
- 2 Divide the group into smaller groups or pairs and give each group/pair one card with a 'rule' on it and some blank cards on which to write their own rules, as agreed within the group.
- 3 Ask them to spend 15–20 minutes completing their set of rules, going through a process of brainstorming ideas, discussing, agreeing and finally writing them on the cards.
- 4 When their time is up, ask each group to read out their rules and make a note of them, highlighting where there is duplication.
- 5 Encourage the whole group to discuss these ground rules and agree which ones they wish to adopt as their rules. The group can then refer back to these throughout their discussion work together.

This approach to encouraging learners' ownership of the rules usually means that they will follow them more readily in the future and remind each other of them, without your intervention.





Helping learners to be effective in discussion

Discussion or conversation?

It is important to clarify the difference between conversation and discussion.

The first is social, without structure or purpose, and can go off track. Discussion should be where people share information about a subject, with a purpose. Here are some criteria to help when describing a discussion to learners. A discussion:

- must have a subject
- may be informal or formal
- can include a range of points of view
- involves questioning
- allows critical thinking and speaking
- is usually chaired or facilitated
- sometimes benefits from a debriefing.

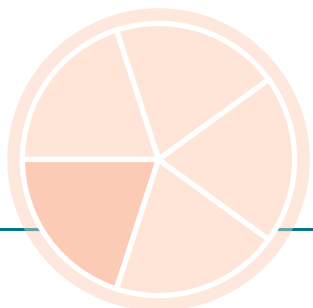
Discussion can provide an opportunity for learners to think through a question or problem which appears straightforward but is actually more complex. For example, a customer care situation in retail could involve a discussion of disabled access to the clothes department. There are lifts so disabled customers can access the department. However, things are not so simple: a wheelchair-bound person may need help in the changing rooms. How will the learners deal with that situation?

An important aim of discussion is the acquisition of knowledge through sharing ideas, listening to others and trying out their ideas. In conversation, people usually take it in turns to speak but avoid silences or pauses, sometimes filling them with phrases or chit-chat. A good discussion, however, will allow for silences to develop and give participants thinking time. Because of this, discussion might feel less comfortable to learners and tutors at the beginning, but it is important as a chairperson or facilitator not to rush to fill these silences.

Active listening

Active listening is also an essential part of participating in discussions; learners should therefore be encouraged to practise this. Here are some elements of active listening.

- Listen carefully to each speaker.
- Identify the main points that are being made.
- Do not be tempted to guess what a person is going to say before they say it.
- Pay attention to their non-verbal messages.



- Avoid distractions.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Don't interrupt the speaker(s).
- Think about what the speaker is saying and be prepared to alter your viewpoint.
- Follow through any ideas or opinions others have expressed.
- Avoid making comments unrelated to the discussion.
- If you don't understand what someone has said, ask.
- Try to make sure that everyone in the group has a chance to speak, and avoid dominating the discussion.
- Make your own contribution as clearly and briefly as possible.
- Don't be afraid to put forward opposing views.
- Be supportive of others and build your confidence in discussions together.

Non-verbal communication

In addition to active listening, employing other types of non-verbal communication can assist in moving on a discussion. Ask your learners to look out for and practise these tips at team meetings.

- **Posture** – someone sitting up straight shows interest in the discussion; turning your body towards the speaker or chairperson can help to attract their attention as well as demonstrating attention to what they are saying.
- **Eye contact** – making eye contact can show or gain attention and help to interrupt a speaker or indicate that you wish to make a contribution.
- **Gestures** – a gesture can also attract someone's attention. For example, putting up your hand can indicate that you wish to speak.
- **Facial expressions** – can provide others with feedback during the discussion.

Helping learners prepare for discussion

Learners need not find planning and preparation daunting, if they are given practice in writing two or three bullet points about a topic that will come up in a discussion. Their preparation can also include saying aloud the points they wish to make to help them find the right words, tone and pace. A more formal discussion might require them to find out some information in advance, by looking at a file, researching on the internet or asking a colleague.

The handout and checklist that follow give learners some key points to bear in mind when they take part in a discussion.

Discussions

Preparation

- Be clear about the purpose of the discussion.
- Know who else is going to be there – and why.
- Think about what you want to say and need to find out.

Making contributions

- Take your turn – it's important that everyone has a chance to speak if they want to.
- Keep what you say short – stop talking when you've said enough.
- Don't interrupt people – wait until they finish speaking.
- Stick to the point.

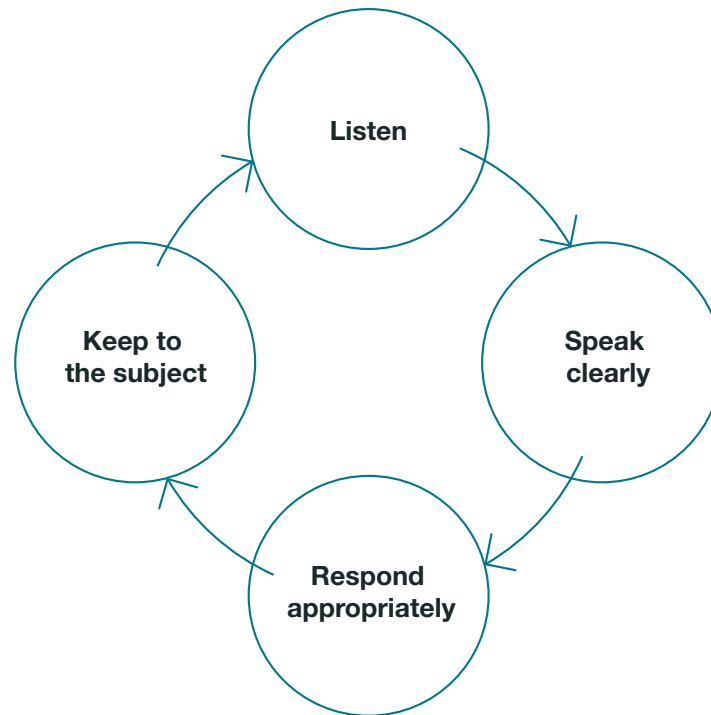
Listening

- Concentrate on what others say.
- Show that you are listening by looking at them.
- Avoid looking distracted.
- Be ready to ask questions to get more information or to make suggestions.

Moving discussion forward

- Summarise where you've got to and check that everyone has understood.
- Suggest ways forward or for someone to do something after the discussion.
- Remind people when you have spent enough time on a topic and need to move on.

Discussions checklist



When you take part in a discussion, ask yourself these questions:

- **Why** am I speaking? How will it help the discussion?
- Am I providing **information** or an **opinion**?
- Am I using words that the other people will **understand**?
- Am I **speaking clearly**?
- Have I got the **volume** right – loud enough, but not too loud?
- Am I saying things in a **logical order**?
- Am I **sticking to the point**?
- Do I **look** at other people when they speak?
- Do I **notice** how other people **react** to what I say?
- Do I **stop talking** when I've said enough?

Using a talk map

Purpose

This is an activity that aims to focus learners on the roles we play and the ways in which we interact in a group discussion.

The activity will help learners to analyse speaking patterns in a group, recognising and interpreting the ways in which we interact, such as who takes which role within the group and which person does most of the talking.

Preparation and resources

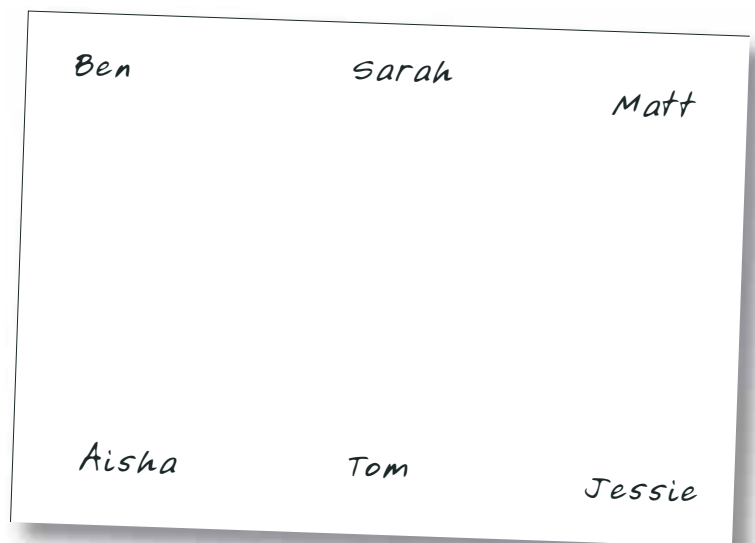
Learners will need an opportunity to observe a discussion. This could be:

- their work team – in which case they will need to arrange this with their supervisor, perhaps suggesting a 5- or 10-minute window in an otherwise normal group meeting so that they can opt out to complete the observation activity
- their fellow learners – in which case it can be done during a discussion in a training session.

Each learner will need a sheet of paper, a pencil and a rubber.

Instructions

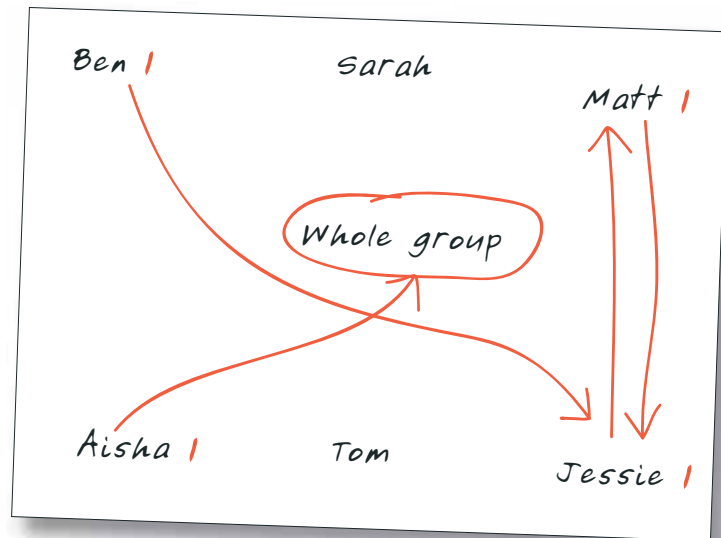
- 1 Introduce the activity and explain that the learners' role is to be the observer of the group. They will need to sit outside the group but make sure that they can see and hear all group members.
- 2 Explain that, while they are observing the group, they will need to record the interaction as follows:
 - On their sheet of paper, write the names of the group participants in the positions they are sitting, like this:
 - Add a box in the middle labelled 'Whole group'.
 - Every time a person speaks, put a mark next to that person's name.



- Try to show the lines of interaction. For example, if Ben speaks, then Jessie and then Matt, it would look like this:

If someone addresses the whole group, draw the arrow from the speaker to the 'Whole group' box.

- At the bottom of the sheet you can also note down any significant interactions you notice – for example, Jessie encouraging Sarah to get involved.



- 3 Check that learners are clear about the procedure by encouraging them to ask questions for clarification – for example, ‘So we need to draw an arrow every time someone speaks?’
- 4 After the activity has taken place you and the learner(s) will need to interpret the talk map. The following questions can act as prompts in the discussion:
 - Which people spoke the most?
 - Which people spoke the least? Was there anyone who did not speak at all? If so, why do you think this was?
 - Did the patterns of interaction change during the discussion? For example, did the discussion develop into a dialogue between two people? Alternatively, did the discussion flow around the group more freely as it went on?
 - What was the flavour of the group? Did it feel democratic, with everyone involved? Or did one or two people dominate?
 - How did individuals contribute? Short and to the point? Long-winded and irrelevant?
 - What roles did individuals play? For example, did they try to involve others? Did they try to move the discussion on? Did they try to find solutions to problems?
- 5 Discuss whether there are any implications for the learner’s own contribution to group discussions.

Note Individuals may be willing to share the talk map with the group they observed, and this may help them to interact better. However, the learner would need to be very confident to do this, and the group would need to be open to the idea.

‘Let me begin by saying... and that concludes’

Purpose

This triads or small group activity aims to increase learners’ confidence in taking part in discussions. It will help learners to identify and then practise using the right words and approaches to begin, sustain, move on and end a discussion.

Preparation and resources

Prepare a selection of discussion topics or ask learners for ideas: this can be as simple as where they’d like to go on holiday, a current topic in the news or something related to their sector (see previous activities in this section for suggestions).

If you are in a position to use a radio or video clip, select a radio or TV report or discussion which demonstrates the use of opening, sustaining, moving on and closing phrases.

- Radio shows might include Radio 4’s ‘Start the Week’ on Mondays at 9 am and ‘Excess Baggage’ on Saturdays at 10 am.
- TV reports might be any news broadcast with a live interview, such as ‘Newsnight’ at 10.30 pm any weekday on BBC2.

Instructions

- 1 Start by playing the clip if you have one, or by getting the group to throw in the stock phrases they hear on the TV and radio which open, sustain, move on or close a discussion. Here are some examples.

Opening	Sustaining	Moving on	Closing
Welcome	To continue	And now	And finally
Let me begin	Another idea to add	Next	In conclusion
By way of introduction	I’d also suggest	I’ll hand you over to	Next time
Let’s start with	Moreover	Another topic	As we have seen
First of all	In addition	Coming up	
	As well		

- 2 Once they have the list, split the group into threes or small groups and give them one of the discussion topics you have prepared.
- Ask them to discuss the topic for 5–10 minutes and see how many of the listed phrases they can use. They get a point for each phrase used.
 - If they are in threes, they can take it in turns to monitor each other and keep score.
 - This can be turned into a competition between groups or teams.



Moving a discussion forward

We have already looked at the roles that people can adopt during discussions and it is usually the chairperson's role to move on a discussion. Irrespective of the role a learner has in a team or group discussion, knowing how to progress the flow of a discussion effectively is still a useful skill.

Clear focus

Starting with a clear focus for a discussion is important, as is everyone's clarity about the topic. It is better to start with a specific purpose than to have just a general chat. For example, discussing suggestions for improvements to the stock control system could elicit some positive contributions whereas a general chat about 'the stock room' will probably result in general moans.

Managing time

Backing up the specific purpose with a timed agenda and a clear aim that actions should result from the discussion can also help to keep the group focused. Alternatively, if a learner wishes to be more assertive, they can remind the group of the time available and that there are other matters to discuss.

Materials

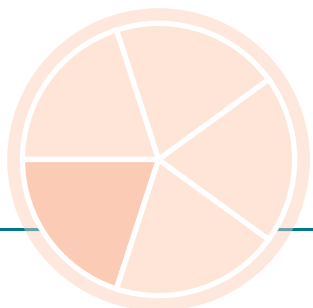
Giving out relevant materials or handouts at appropriate points during the discussion can illustrate key points and also maintain participants' interest in the topic.

Question and recap

The discussion should be kept on track by encouraging contributors to make relevant points. They should be encouraged to show the connection between their suggestion and the topic. Asking questions for clarification can help to do this. In addition, regular summing up of the main points can help to remind the group where they have got to and deter any duplication or vagueness.

A range of views

A range of viewpoints contributes to a lively discussion and encouraging quieter participants to join in or make contributions is useful. This can also deter more confident speakers from dominating the discussion. The pace of discussion need not be hurried, however, and allowing silence and thinking time can also be productive in ensuring a wide-ranging review of the topic.



Closing down

A topic of discussion can be closed down effectively by saying, for example, ‘*So, what have we agreed to do on that topic then?*’ or ‘*What shall we record in the action points for the meeting?*’ On occasions where agreement cannot be reached in a meeting, it is sometimes necessary to resolve this another time – again, an action to be recorded.

Encouraging contributions

As well as giving learners confidence in finding their *own* voice it is important to give them skills to involve others in discussion. Ways in which they could do this include:

- using inclusive phrases – for example, ‘*What do you think about that?*’
- asking open questions of other group members
- making eye contact with others
- allowing a pause or silence after their contribution to give others a chance to respond.

Move it on!

Purpose

This activity looks at different techniques to move on a discussion. It will help learners to contribute to discussions and to recognise how a discussion can be moved forward to a conclusion.

Preparation and resources

Write a selection of discussion topics on cards or ask learners to suggest subjects. These can be about everyday current events or relate to learners' employment sectors, to encourage them to talk about something in which they have an interest.

Copy the 'Move it on!' recording sheet for the observer in each group.

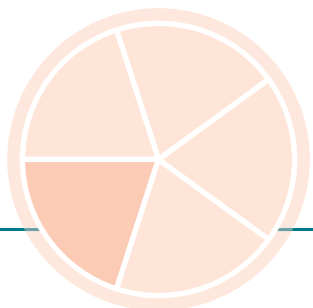
You could provide a small prize for the group with the most points.

Instructions

- 1 Split the learners into small groups and ask them to choose a discussion topic from the selection.
- 2 Ask one person to be the observer and make a note of:
 - how many times each individual makes a contribution
 - how many times an individual helps to move on the discussion
 - how many times an individual helps to include someone else
 - key points the group makes.
- 3 Give them 15 minutes to do this and explain that points (and prizes) will be awarded.
- 4 At the end of the time ask for feedback, focusing on how they moved on the discussion and included others. Award a point for:
 - each contribution made by a learner
 - each time an individual helped move on the discussion
 - each time someone else was included
 - each key point raised by the group.

The team with the most points wins.

Note A follow-up activity might involve working with learners to compile a checklist of tips and techniques for moving on a discussion which they can use when in meetings.



Move it on!

Discussion topic: _____

Names of group members	How many contributions?	How often moves discussion on?	How often includes someone?

Key points made by the group:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Talking to a group

Introduction

This section aims to improve learners' confidence in talking to a group. It gives guidance and tools to help them to plan and give a short talk or presentation. It will help you to encourage your learners to build their skills and confidence step by step with plenty of opportunities to practise.

The section deals with the main things you need to cover to ensure that learners have fully mastered the skills involved in talking to a group:

- **planning a talk**
 - **having a clear structure**
 - **using visual aids**
 - **rehearsing a talk**
 - **giving a talk.**
-

Learners often need support and practice in how to give a talk or presentation for a range of reasons. For instance:

- they may find it hard to organise and structure material
- they may be nervous.

Many of the strategies for helping learners with discussions are also useful in developing their presentation skills.

- Being aware of the situation is as important for talks and presentations as it is for discussions. When preparing, learners will need to be aware of:
 - the audience and level of formality of the talk or presentation
 - the main purpose of the talk or presentation.
- Focusing on what they will say becomes even more important for a talk or presentation.
- Choosing appropriate language and speaking clearly will be essential.

Being clear about the audience is important; learners will need to be able to judge:

- who their audience will be – for example, what interests them
- what the audience may already know about the topic
- what language will be appropriate and, in particular, which technical terms the audience will understand.

Building confidence

It is very important to build up confidence in moving towards the final talk or presentation. This build-up takes place ideally over a period of time, to allow learners within the group to become more familiar with each other. This promotes trust and allows learners to be more relaxed.

Confidence also grows in line with the amount of preparation. Although they may be nervous, the more a learner has thought through, planned and practised their talk, the more confident they are about it.

Structuring a talk or presentation

A talk or presentation must have a clear structure, usually beginning with an introduction and ending with a summary of the main points. Once a learner has a clear idea of how to structure a talk and has identified its main sections, planning the content will be much easier.

- Encourage them to develop good note-making skills.
- Ask them to think about other things that they plan – a day at work, for example – and how they use structuring skills in this.
- Give them chances to practise structuring and organising material under headings.

Rehearsing

Confidence comes with practice, and it is important to try out your talk – to check how it flows, whether it fits the time available, and whether the delivery is trouble-free. Constructive feedback can be very useful here (see Teaching points below).

Using visual aids

It is often good practice to use visual aids as part of a talk or presentation. You can help learners by discussing:

- the range of visual aids available – including handouts, flipcharts, slides, objects and even computer-based presentations
- what makes for effective visual aids – for example, the number of words on a slide and clear labels on diagrams.

Teaching points

Presenting to a group frightens most people. It is a difficult and stressful experience that you are aiming to make easier and less stressful.

So, first, ask them to discuss (perhaps in small groups) how they feel about having to stand up in front of other people and give a talk. People's responses are generally not about why it is hard, but limited to statements like *'I couldn't do that'* or *'I'd rather die.'*

Share something of yourself – you are in front of this group and they don't make it hard for you. So build on that and confirm that it does get easier with practice. Success breeds success.

This section will help you to take your learners through the main stages needed to prepare a short talk or presentation. It is best to start with simple, non-threatening activities which do not involve a lot of preparation to get learners used to talking in front of others before moving on to preparing for and giving a talk.

The 'Just a minute' activity gets people talking to a group without realising that they are. Because it's fun, learners don't register what they have done, quite naturally and enjoyably, until it's over. So this first activity is simply a confidence-builder.

The next activity – 'It's so easy!' – asks learners to talk for only 1 or 2 minutes on a familiar subject without the need for any visual aids. It provides an opportunity for them to use simple planning techniques of cue cards and mind maps. The aim is purely to get the learner used to standing and speaking, with cue cards as a safety net.

'Planning the talk or presentation' provides a detailed checklist of what they will need in their plan. It is followed by a practice session or 'dry run' of their talk. This is an essential stage because we are aiming for 'mastery' of the skills involved in giving a talk or presentation and this cannot be guaranteed by doing it just once.

You will need to discuss with learners appropriate ways of giving feedback to each other that is not damaging. They may be called upon to do this during practice sessions.

Add to that the information on visual aids and the learners then prepare for the final activity, which is the full (assessed) 4-minute talk or 10-minute presentation, including an image or a visual aid.

Just a minute

Purpose

Going straight in to a talk or presentation can be daunting, so it can help learners if you start with a short, fun activity that gets them talking in front of others.

Learners practise talking to a group using the well-known game which requires participants to speak on a given topic for 1 minute without repeating themselves, hesitating or going off the point.

Preparation and resources

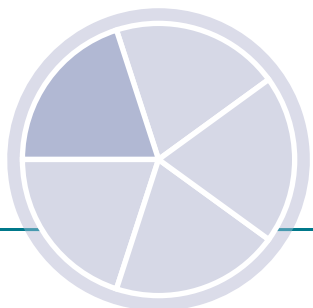
Write down a list of topics that all the participants will know quite a lot about – for example, holidays, pets, ‘my grandma’, mobile phones.

You will need a timer such as a watch, stopwatch or mobile phone.

Sit four players on chairs in a semicircle facing you (chairperson).

Instructions

- 1 Appoint yourself chairperson and explain the rules.
- 2 Give the first speaker a topic which they must try to speak on for 60 seconds. They must not:
 - repeat any words or phrases (except those in the title they’re given)
 - hesitate for too long (you’ll need to use your judgement here)
 - deviate from the topic they’re given.
- 3 If they want to challenge the speaker and claim that they repeated a word or phrase, paused for too long or went off the point, the other players can interrupt by shouting ‘repetition’, ‘hesitation’ or ‘deviation’ and raising their hand.
- 4 The chairperson needs to make a note of how much time has gone when the challenge is made.
- 5 If the chairperson decides that the challenge is justified, the challenger scores a point and takes over the subject for however long is left from the original 60 seconds.
- 6 If the challenge is not valid, the speaker keeps the subject, gets a point and carries on for whatever time is left, or until another challenge.
- 7 Whoever is speaking at the end of the minute is the winner of that round and gets an extra point.



Mind maps and cue cards

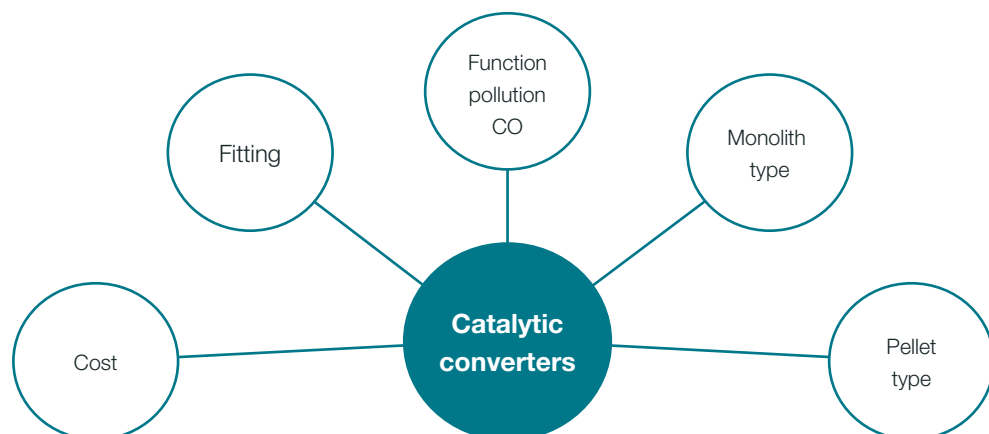
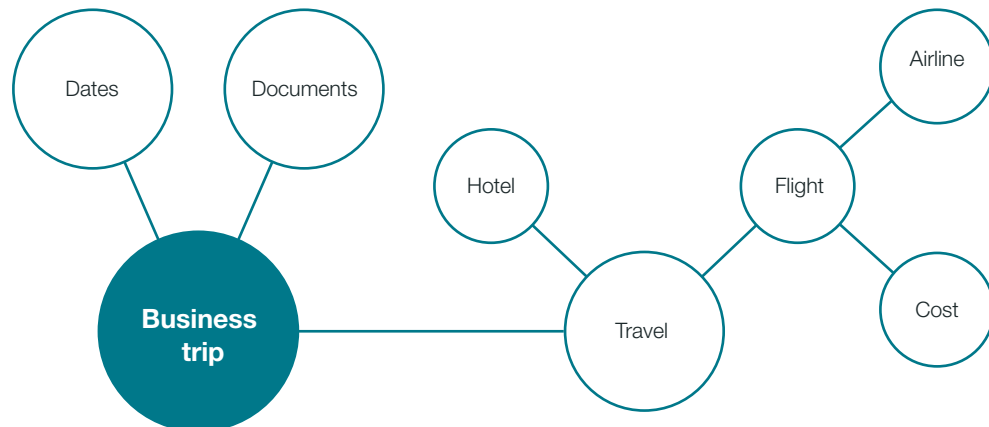
The first stage of planning a talk or presentation is to identify the main points or sections of the talk. Learners can benefit from practising these for a very short session, before going on to create their detailed plan for their final talk or presentation.

Mind maps

Mind maps are a good way of identifying three to five main points for the talk. They help people to avoid writing a long list of content and, because they are visual, they give an instant and clear picture of what the talk will cover.

To create a mind map, write the topic in the centre of the page and then draw lines to join it to the main points. Further lines and detail can be added later.

Below are two examples that show how a mind map can be laid out. In the first one, an admin apprentice has started to plan a talk about organising a business trip; in the second example, a motor vehicle apprentice is going to talk about catalytic converters.



Using cue cards

Explain the benefits of cue cards. They:

- avoid long sentences in notes
- just remind you of key words or phrases
- are easy to hold
- avoid distracting the audience with large pieces of paper.

Get learners to practise writing out their own cue cards following these guidelines.

- 1** Use cards about the size of a business card (or a filing card, at the most).
- 2** Use only four lines to a card – one key word or short phrase to a line which jogs your memory about what else to say about it.
- 3** Write in large letters, so that you can read it at a glance.
- 4** Use key words (usually in capital letters) and short phrases.
- 5** Headings on your cards will help you tell the listeners when you are moving on to a new piece of information.
- 6** Underline headings and number the points.
- 7** Make sure that they're in the right order, so that they give you a sort of autocue.
- 8** Number your cards in case you drop them – or, better still, link them together on a ring or a short piece of string.
- 9** Don't worry about having to glance down – it always adds just the right pause and tells your listeners that you're moving on to a new piece of information.
- 10** Make sure that you have a clear introduction – in 30 seconds tell them what your headlines are going to be.
- 11** At the end, remind them what your headlines were and finish on a high note: don't say: '*...and that's it.*' Finish with something upbeat and positive like: '*So the main thing is, you now know your customer will be happy.*'

Writing cue cards checklist

- Use cards the size of a business or filing card
- Write one key word or short phrase for the main heading
- Use only four lines to a card about what else to say about it
- Underline headings and number the points
- Write in large letters or capitals
- Make sure they're in the right order, so they give you a sort of autocue
- Number your cards or link them on a ring or piece of string
- Don't worry about having to glance down
- Make sure that you have a clear introduction
- At the end, remind them of your headlines and finish on a high note

It's so easy!

Purpose

In this activity learners practise talking to a group about a vocational subject for 1–2 minutes. This allows them to talk about a familiar subject, which does not need research, and to use mind mapping and cue cards to help their planning and delivery.

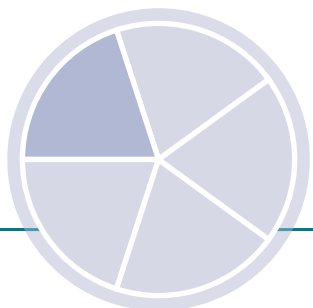
Preparation and resources

Prepare a list of easy topics relevant to the learners' sector which they already know well – for example, how to dispose of used engine oil safely, giving an older person a cup of tea, reading a story to children, receiving a visitor at work or washing a client's hair.

Instructions

- 1 Ask the learners to choose a topic or suggest one themselves – it is important that it is one they are already familiar with.
- 2 Ask learners to use mind mapping to identify three to five main points.
- 3 Give learners sufficient time to plan what they would like to say and to write some cue cards.
- 4 Give each learner 2 minutes to describe their subject. Learners should ask the group if they have any questions for them at the end.
- 5 Encourage positive feedback from the group about each speaker and help each learner to make a list of areas for practice, such as avoid mumbling, keep to the point, face the audience.

This activity could form the basis for the short talk that learners are required to give for level 2 communication if the talk is expanded to 4 minutes.



Planning a talk or presentation

Structuring and planning a talk or presentation is no different from planning anything else. Breaking the overall task down into manageable steps makes the task less daunting. This is the list of steps:

- identify a topic or subject
- think about the audience
- set aims
- research the topic
- structure the material
- gather visual aids/props
- prepare the room and equipment.

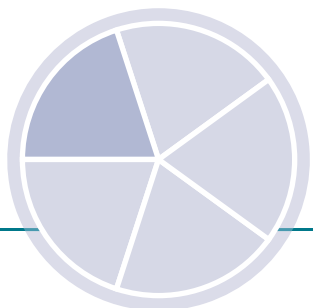
You may like to use sector-related magazines or publications to help learners find ideas for a topic.

Purpose and audience

There are two important preliminary steps to carry out before planning what to say and how to say it.

- **Work out the purpose of the presentation or talk**, because the purpose affects the content, the shape and the style. Is it to:
 - inform (give information)
 - persuade (get others to accept an argument)
 - make a case (explain options and implications)?
- **Find out about the audience**, because this affects the way the material is presented, the content detail and the level of the language (whether members of the audience all understand certain technical terms and jargon). So to plan the right level, style and shape of a presentation or talk, find out:
 - how many people will be there
 - who they are – for example, whether you already know them, what interests them, why they are coming
 - what they already know about the topic.

Once the subject, purpose and audience for the talk are clear, learners need to spend time researching it and making notes – they may like to use a mind map or index cards for this. Learners can collect information quickly and easily from textbooks, trade journals, catalogues and the internet. The latter is a good source of pictures or illustrations.



Structuring a talk or presentation

Once a learner has a clear idea of the overall structure of a talk and has identified its main sections, planning the content is much easier.

Any talk or presentation has a clear structure, a straightforward set of three stages:

- an introduction
- the body of the talk or presentation
- an ending, with a summary of the main points.

Now that the learners have gathered some information on their subject, they may need some help to organise it into a logical order and write brief notes on each item.

Sector-specific examples

The Key Skills Support Programme website contains 'How to' worksheets which include examples of plans for a short talk for a wide range of sectors. Details of other useful resources are given on page 265.

Planning the talk or presentation

Purpose

In this activity learners create a detailed plan of the talk or presentation in order to practise it. This is a flexible activity that learners can either take away and work on individually, or share with a partner or in a small group.

Preparation and resources

Learners should have already identified the topic of their talk or presentation and started to research the content.

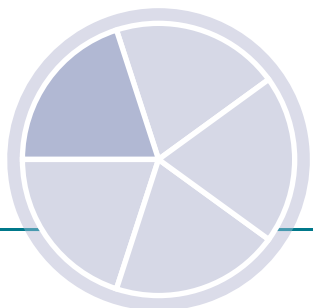
You will need a copy of the 'Planning checklist' for each learner and some blank cards to use as cue cards.

Instructions

- 1 The first stage is to produce the outline plan that will answer the questions on the checklist.
- 2 Give learners the checklist, and talk through the key points, so that everyone is clear.
- 3 The learners then plan the talk, using the checklist.
- 4 They feed back on their outline plan before they move on to continue their research and prepare their subject.
- 5 They plan the content of their talk in more detail, writing cue cards and including any visual aids they will use, so that they can use it for the rehearsal session.

I use a storyboard or a sheet of A3 paper with some of my learners to help them plan the main sections and sequence of their talk.

Teacher in land-based college



Planning checklist

- What is the subject of your talk?
- What are you trying to achieve?
- How much time do you have?
- Where will you give your talk?
- Who is going to listen to the talk?
- Where will you get your information?
- How will you organise the information?
- What sort of language is appropriate?
- Do you need to use any pictures, charts or diagrams?
- What equipment will you need?
- Do you need to provide handouts or any other supporting material?

Storyboard

FRAME 1

Presentation title
and speaker's name

FRAME 2

Key point 1

-
-
-

FRAME 3

Key point 2

-
-
-

FRAME 4

Key point 3

-
-
-

FRAME 5

Key point 4

-
-
-

FRAME 6

Key point 5

-
-
-

FRAME 7

Conclusion and summary



Using visual aids

Images and visual aids can make a real contribution to a talk, but only if they are relevant and used with confidence. Learners will need help to identify the difference between selecting just any image and choosing one that illustrates their talk appropriately. You can do this by going through journals, magazines or trade articles and asking learners to match an image to a given topic.

Encourage learners to think about the range of possible images, visual aids and presentation media, and the ways they can be used. Point out that they don't have to be electronic. A well-chosen picture or item to show to people can do a huge amount to add interest and life to a presentation.

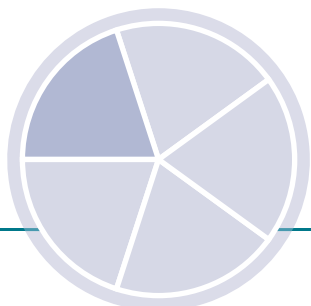
Some visual aids lend themselves more naturally to some sectors and activities. For example:

- display tables work well in a nursery or school
- actual tools for topics like motor vehicle or carpentry are generally better than pictures
- flowcharts are relevant to many administration processes
- photographs can be a powerful way to bring issues like health and safety to life.

With your learners go over the range of possible images and other visual aids, and discuss the different ways they could be presented.

Important! Learners will need to be careful to avoid images that are discriminatory or in any other way inappropriate.

Images	Visual aids	Presentation options	
Photographs	Model	Whiteboard, blackboard or flipchart	
Diagrams	Physical object (equipment, tools, book)	Overhead projector (OHP)	
Charts		PowerPoint presentation	
Graphs		Video	
Sketches		Wall display	
Flowcharts		Table display	
Paintings			



Helpful hints

Once learners have selected their chosen type of image or visual aid and method of presentation, encourage them to think about the best way of incorporating this into their talk. Here are some helpful hints.

- Use a whiteboard, blackboard or flipchart for simple diagrams/sketches/ key words only.
- Avoid talking to the board rather than to the audience.
- Position an OHP so that everyone can see the screen.
- Avoid talking to the OHP screen; point to the OHT, not the screen.
- Switch off the OHP when you are not using it.
- Set up and test PowerPoint presentations and other computer-based software before the talk.
- Try to keep to the rule of no more than 20 words per slide, and make sure that it can be read easily from the back of the room by using large type and clear fonts.
- Ensure that displays, photographs and physical objects are large enough for the audience to see; if they will need particular seating arrangements, make sure this is planned in advance.
- Avoid handing out photographs, etc. during the talk as it distracts attention.
- Give out handouts of statistical data (tables, graphs, bar charts, etc.) before the talk starts.

Encourage learners to practise producing OHTs on paper before they commit them to acetate and to try out PowerPoint slides beforehand. Similarly, they may need to practise writing on a white/blackboard or flipchart without turning their back to the audience.

To help them get started, an individual task – which they can do in their own time and on which they report back – could be to give learners a topic for a talk and ask them to find two appropriate images and say how they would present them.

Practising the talk or presentation

Before learners practise their talk or presentation, spend a little time going over some key tips and try out as many of the techniques as you can.

Body language

Stand up straight, head up, look towards the back of the room to project the voice, make eye contact with the audience, adopt a relaxed but confident stance, avoid crossing arms and legs, use gestures and posture to emphasise points, face the audience not the screen or chart, smile.

Appearance

A clean, tidy personal appearance will boost a learner's confidence; appropriate clothing for the talk is also important, but a business suit is not required.

Voice

Speak slowly and avoid rushing your words, speak clearly, use a lively tone of voice, loud enough for everyone to hear.

Language

This must be right for the subject and audience, avoid informalities, avoid jargon, keep it simple, signpost the main points of your talk: *'I am now going to move on to...'*, *'I'm going to cover the following topics...'*.

Visual aids

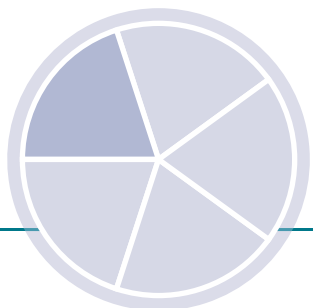
Use them to add interest and at appropriate times during the talk but avoid over-use and distracting the audience.

Handouts

These can provide useful information for the audience – do not give them out at the same time as you are starting your talk or the audience will be looking at the paper and not at you!

Structure

The structure should be clear to the audience. Remember to have a beginning, a middle and an end; follow the 'speaker's code': *say what you are going to say... say it... say what you've just said*. If you are going to invite the audience to ask questions, remember to tell them when they can do so – it is a good idea to keep questions until the end to avoid interruptions.



Allow plenty of time for practice – it is a crucial stage in building confidence and ensuring mastery of the skills. You may also need to talk to learners about how to give constructive feedback – for example, making specific comments with examples, commenting on the positive, avoiding personal remarks or criticising the individual.

Rehearsing the talk or presentation

Purpose

This activity gives learners the chance to practise talking to a group and reflect on their performance. This will help build their confidence and will allow them to identify any changes they might need to make for the final talk or presentation.

Preparation and resources

Learners have done all the preparation – considering the practicalities, structuring the talk, researching the subject and producing cue cards.

Learners will need their plan and any cue cards or visual aids they plan to use.

Check what learners will require – you may need a flipchart or projector. You will also need copies of the ‘How did I do?’ self-rating checklist for learners to complete afterwards.

Instructions

- 1 Ask the learners to give their talk or presentation. If the group is large, you may ask them to do this to a smaller sub-group.
- 2 Stress that this is a rehearsal so they should not worry if it isn't perfect. By way of preparation, go over the self-rating checklist with them as a reminder of the key things they need to remember. Explain that they may need to time themselves. You should also time their talk.
- 3 After the talk:
 - give the learner your personal feedback, and/or
 - invite constructive feedback from the group (depending on the confidence of the group members, and whether they have previously discussed appropriate ways of doing this).
- 4 Make sure that the learner completes their checklist and agrees what they did well and what they need to work on. The learner could draw a vertical line of their ratings to give a visual ‘profile’ of how they did.
- 5 Ask the learner to reflect on whether they need to change their talk, in terms of either the content or their delivery.
- 6 Brief learners on what is required in the final talk or presentation.

I invite other people to come into the rehearsal so that some of the audience are unfamiliar to the ‘presenter’.

Key skills tutor

How did I do?

1 = I really need to work on this

2 = OK, but I need to improve

3 = Pretty good

4 = I did this really well

Did I...	Rating	Notes/comments
Choose a subject that would interest my audience?	1 2 3 4	Try to pick a topic that is relevant and will give new information
Begin in a way that interested and engaged them?	1 2 3 4	Get the attention of your audience from the start, think of how to engage their interest and make an impact – your first sentence sets the tone. Look at them, speak clearly and don't mumble
Make sure that it was the right length?	1 2 3 4	Inexperienced presenters often try to say too much rather than too little. Practise your talk/presentation and time yourself
Have a logical structure?	1 2 3 4	Divide your talk/presentation into three or four main sections, with a number of points for each
Tell them clearly at the beginning what my talk/presentation was about?	1 2 3 4	Explain at the start what you will be covering – perhaps by using a slide of main points or topics
Speak at the right pace?	1 2 3 4	If you're nervous, you may tend to rush and gabble. But don't go too slowly or you'll bore them. Practise with a tape recorder to see how you sound
Use an appropriate tone of voice?	1 2 3 4	Try to sound lively, confident and friendly – if you don't seem interested in what you're talking about, then they won't be!
Use my notes and prompts well?	1 2 3 4	Don't read your talk/presentation from pages of notes. Use cards or a single sheet with large print. Well-prepared slides can act as your notes and prompts
Take care about how I looked and presented myself?	1 2 3 4	Stand up straight and look directly at your audience. Wear clothes that you feel comfortable in but are smart. Smile!
Use visual images or aids to add interest?	1 2 3 4	Give your audience something to look at. Slides or PowerPoint can help reinforce your main points – keep them brief, use diagrams or pictures where possible and don't use too many. A 'prop' can also gain attention
End with a summary of the main points?	1 2 3 4	Don't suddenly say 'Well, that's it then.' Make sure that your audience leaves with a clear overview of what your talk was about
Encourage questions and discussion about the talk/presentation?	1 2 3 4	Don't just ask 'Any questions?' – people may not say anything. Avoid 'closed' questions where they can just say 'Yes' or 'No'. Ask some specific questions to help the audience get started. Answer questions briefly – don't feel you have to go on and on in case no one else asks anything

Giving the talk or presentation

Purpose

Learners present either a 4-minute talk or a formal presentation of 10 minutes to a group, followed by feedback, which may be used for formal assessment.

Preparation and resources

Learners have already prepared and rehearsed their talk, and made any necessary changes as a result of feedback.

Check in advance any resources they will need – for example, projector, flipchart, white/blackboard, display table. If the talk is for assessment, you may need to arrange for it to be recorded on video – particularly if it is given at the workplace and you cannot be present.

If the talk or presentation is being given in front of a group in an off-job session, you will need a feedback sheet for each person.

Instructions

Your learners are now ready to present their full talk, complete with images or visual aids.

- 1 Remind them of the tips for confident speaking and presentations.
- 2 Explain the feedback sheet and give out copies to each member of the audience (if appropriate).
- 3 Each group member completes the feedback sheet for each presenter.
- 4 The presenter reviews the feedback at the end of the session.
- 5 Learners still requiring more confidence and practice may need you to filter the feedback.

I add an extra column to the feedback sheet for specific examples for assessment evidence.

Key skills assessor

I tell my learners that they can release tension by tightening then relaxing their muscles and taking deep breaths.

Key skills coordinator



Feedback sheet

Name of presenter: Date:

Spoke clearly in a way that suited the purpose, subject and situation

Clarity	clear	fair	mumbled
Volume	loud	good	too quiet
Tone of voice	lively	fair	dull/read from notes
Pace/speed	too fast	fair	too slow
Subject	relevant	fair	irrelevant
Language	appropriate	fair	inappropriate

Subject

Kept to point	yes	partly	no
----------------------	-----	--------	----

Structured talk to help listeners follow what was said

Explained aims of talk	clear	fair	unclear
Introduced sections	clear	fair	unclear
Summarised main points at end	good	fair	needs improvement
Eye contact	good	fair	needs improvement
Listened to others	good	fair	needs improvement
Answered questions	good	fair	needs improvement
Conclusion	good	fair	needs improvement

Used appropriate images or props to support main points

Used images well	yes	partly	no
-------------------------	-----	--------	----

Length

Kept to length	yes	partly	no
-----------------------	-----	--------	----

General comments

Getting more from the toolkit

Introduction

In your role as a teacher or tutor for key skills or Skills for Life you will need high-level skills in oral communication. In fact, oral communication is probably one of your strengths or you wouldn't be in the job!

However, we can all improve the way in which we speak and listen, and hopefully you will already have gained a greater insight into this complex set of skills from the main sections of the toolkit. This section provides further opportunities for you to increase your knowledge and develop your practice.

There are some aspects of oral communication that are of particular importance to teachers, tutors and trainers and this section looks at how you can make the most of your own speaking and listening skills in your teaching.

The section includes:

- **guidance on giving feedback sensitively to learners on their speaking and listening skills**
 - **guidance on how your own body language can have a powerful influence on learners**
 - **guidance on taking into account cultural differences and the needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities**
 - **an article describing research into how a group of numeracy teachers reflected on how they spoke and listened to learners. It is included because the findings are relevant to all teaching practice – not just numeracy teachers**
 - **an opportunity to reflect on what you have gained from the toolkit and how it has, or will, influence your practice. This can form part of your CPD portfolio**
 - **a list of all the toolkit resources with a brief description of each activity**
 - **a list of other resources and materials that may be useful for teaching speaking and listening.**
-

Giving feedback

Giving feedback to individuals about their speaking and listening skills must be handled sensitively. It is important to do this in a way that does not undermine a person's confidence or self-esteem – a learner may be perfectly happy about how they are communicating and so might feel unfairly criticised.

You need to strike a balance between positive and supportive comments while ensuring that your learners develop a clear idea of both their existing skills and those they could improve.

Because speaking and listening is more than a set of skills – it is about how we relate to others – you may find that some learners feel challenged when they become aware of how their behaviour impacts on other people.

Think carefully about the type of feedback you will give to people in a group, and what feedback is better given on a one-to-one basis. Whatever the context, there are some guidelines which apply to all feedback.

- Give feedback on the behaviour, not the person.
- Focus on the positive – and be careful when you say 'but' as the learner may only hear criticism.
- Make sure that feedback is constructive and gives the learner ideas for what they can do next.
- Take into account the individual's level of confidence when giving feedback.
- Don't overwhelm a learner with too much feedback – be selective.
- Give time for the learner to assimilate the feedback and ask questions.
- Show empathy, warmth, respect and genuine care when giving feedback.

More than words

We have highlighted the importance of non-verbal communication (NVC) a number of times in the toolkit. However, your own body language will have a powerful influence on how your learners respond to your teaching.

As with other aspects of speaking and listening, we may not be conscious of our own behaviour when it comes to non-verbal communication. Here's what one Skills for Life teacher found:

I was coming back to the room after lunch and saw one of my learners waving her arms around and gesticulating wildly. Others were watching and laughing. When I came in through the door everything went quiet. I said, 'What's up?', and they all looked a bit sheepish. It turned out that she was imitating me. It didn't upset me because it was done affectionately, but it did make me think about whether I used my arms too much and if that was distracting from my teaching.

There is an element of 'performance' in teaching so it is likely that you will be making good use of non-verbal communication without really thinking about it. However, the approach taken in the toolkit is to make learners aware of subtle aspects of speaking and listening. You will have been giving your learners feedback on their skills, so now it's your turn!

Ask your learners to observe the use you make of NVC in a teaching session and to comment on how they think it affects them – they will enjoy this! Make it light-hearted so they feel able to be open and honest with you. Alternatively, you could ask a colleague to observe you and give you feedback.

You could also self-review by asking yourself some specific questions such as:

- Do I make eye contact equally with all my learners?
- Do I stand with an open posture to show I am approachable?
- When I work with individuals, do I use positive body language, such as leaning towards them?
- Do I nod my head or use other gestures to give encouragement?

Sometimes NVC can unintentionally indicate a correct or wrong answer to a question, as in the example below which comes from *How Children Fail* by John Holt (1982). A teacher was observed conducting a lesson where the class were getting nearly all the answers right when one pupil said:

'Miss, you shouldn't point to the answer each time.' The teacher was surprised and asked what she meant. The child said, 'Well, you don't exactly point, but you kind of stand next to the answer.'

Individual learner needs

The majority of your learners should be able to take part in the activities in the toolkit with little or no difficulty. However, some will have specific needs when it comes to developing their speaking and listening skills. These are some examples.

- A literal interpretation of language is common with learners with language impairment associated with autistic spectrum disorders.
- A 'domination' of conversation and group discussion, often in the form of asking a large number of questions, can occur with learners with delayed auditory memory or poor attention.
- Partially sighted learners may be unable to see non-verbal signals or be able to use eye contact to show they are listening.
- Some learners with autistic spectrum disorders or mental health problems may find non-verbal communication and eye contact particularly difficult.
- Learners with learning difficulties or disabilities may be insensitive or hypersensitive to tone of voice.
- You should be aware of cultural issues such as eye contact in non-verbal communication.
- Learners with bad previous experiences of oral communication – perhaps with peers or officials – may take time to build up their trust and may be uncomfortable with personal disclosure.

Keying practitioners into speaking and listening

This article presents findings on Talking Up Numeracy, an action research project, funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Skills for Life Strategy Unit, as part of Maths4Life. Talking Up Numeracy was led by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) and here, Caroline Hudson, the lead researcher, reports on the main findings.

The project focused on the speaking and listening skills of eight numeracy practitioners working with offenders. The findings are relevant to other practitioners, whether teaching or supporting learning in key skills in application of number or communication, or in other subjects, and whether working with offenders or other groups of learners, such as apprentices, 14–19 learners and older employees in the workplace.

Background

To date, there has been less focus on speaking and listening in research, policy and practice in the learning and skills than in the school sector (Hudson 2006). However, whatever the sector or subject, practitioners' speaking and listening skills are important in maximising benefits from learning.

In Talking Up Numeracy eight numeracy practitioners used a reflective practice approach to examine and develop their speaking and listening skills in motivating offenders in custody and on probation supervision to take up numeracy provision. The eight practitioners identified nine different aspects of speaking and listening which they considered were important in their work. These were:

- asking questions (initial and follow-up)
- enabling potential learners to ask questions
- explaining
- checking understandings
- giving choices
- listening
- use of non-verbal communication, in conjunction with speaking and listening
- links between practitioners' thinking, and speaking and listening
- use of technical language.

The practitioners each selected two or three aspects of speaking and listening to focus on during the project. Between the practitioners, all aspects of speaking and listening were covered. The practitioners developed their skills in the identified area through:

- using a reflective log, to collect evidence on their use of speaking and listening in selected sessions with learners
- discussion with peers in project seminars
- working one to one with a project researcher.

Practitioner reflective log

Findings on three strands of the practitioner reflective log are presented.

Asking questions

Research evidence suggests that there is a range of issues with many practitioners' use of questions. For example, practitioners do not tend to ask many follow-up questions after an initial question (Mercer 2003); practitioners tend to ask more questions than learners (Alexander 2003, Mercer 2003); most questions are closed, not open (Galton 2003, Alexander 2003); and the length of time practitioners wait after asking a question tends to be very short (usually less than 5 seconds), so that learners do not have time to think and to respond (Edwards 2003).

In Talking Up Numeracy, where appropriate, practitioners tried to ask a series of follow-up questions after an initial question:

I did more supplementary questions than I probably would have done before. I would probably have said before, 'Why was it easy?' but then...I probed a bit further. 'What exactly about it was easy?' In fact, if I hadn't kept doing that, we [the practitioner and the offender] wouldn't have realised. I had to explain to him [the offender] what I meant by decimals clearly. There was a muddle in his mind about what decimals are. If I hadn't pushed it, we couldn't have clarified that.

In this example, through asking follow-up questions, the practitioner realised that the learner was confused about decimals. This helped to clarify to the practitioner what the learner needed support with.

Practitioners also tried to increase the length of time they waited after asking a question, to give the learner a chance to think through his/her response. Practitioners described learning to handle the silence in between asking a question and waiting for the learners to respond as 'painful'. However, practitioners noted that, after a pause, some learners were able to give an answer.

Listening

Increasing wait time was part of a focus on improving listening skills. Through listening to transcripts of their numeracy sessions, some practitioners became aware that they sometimes talked too much in the sessions. As a result, some practitioners tried to curb their impulse to do the talking for learners:

It is a two-way process, but I sometimes get carried away with my own voice, which you have to watch as a teacher, as you have to stop and give the student a chance to feed back to you... The only thing I was aware of was the not talking too much, because if I am talking I can't listen. If I am talking, they can't speak and it is quite easy to do. Somebody starts [to answer] a question and you think, 'Oh, I know where I'm going. I'll chip in here!' You really have to watch this with students because it is not fair. They need to express themselves.

Practitioners pooled the strategies – verbal and non-verbal – they had developed to show that they were listening to learners. Some were explicit with learners about wanting to hear what learners had to say:

I let them know they have a voice and that it is an interaction and I'm not just preaching at them. I want to hear what they have to say.

Some used verbal cues such as 'Yes', 'Right', 'Absolutely' and 'I know what you mean' to signal that they were listening. Some paraphrased what learners had said. The researcher observed how one practitioner was skilled in listening to multiple audiences:

She [the practitioner] gave the impression that she was listening all the time. Even when she was with one student, she was aware of what the others were doing and she responded to them immediately. When sitting with [an offender] she showed she was listening by sitting close and looking at him, both as an inclusive gesture and to check he was listening and understanding... She [was] particularly still and attentive when he was talking positively about himself.

Context

Evidence from Talking Up Numeracy indicated that the practitioners' use of speaking and listening was shaped by their judgements about context. Context consists of different factors, including those which are:

- **environment related** – the physical surroundings, the degree of privacy, whether the environment is crowded or spacious, etc.
- **learner related** – the learner's personality, mood, learning history, etc.
- **practitioner related** – degree of professional experience, personality, etc.
- **learning related** – what the purpose of the session is, whether the session is group or one to one, etc.

Practitioners often have to make very rapid judgements about what the different aspects of context are, how they interact with each other, and what the implications of context are for practitioners' use of speaking and listening. These practitioners felt that, while motivations to take up learning are often complex, what practitioners said in early sessions with learners could be 'make or break' in terms of influencing learners' decisions about whether to start numeracy classes. The following comment suggests that this could create pressure for practitioners:

If you make a mistake now and get off on the wrong foot, you have to run like hell to catch up at the end, don't you? I do feel that all the time when I am talking to new people, trying to engage at some level.

Learners' views

As part of Talking Up Numeracy, learners were interviewed about their views on speaking and listening and on numeracy. Some learners were aware of practitioners' speaking and listening skills. Some could identify different aspects of speaking and listening, as this comment illustrates:

The language [the practitioner had just used to explain about numeracy classes] is pretty easy to understand, not too technical, no jargon, and it wasn't too long or too short, but to the point, and giving the information that you needed.

In this learner's view, clarity and simplicity of language, appropriateness of length and relevance of context were important aspects of speaking and listening.

She [the practitioner] was really encouraging. She made me feel as if I wanted to better myself and I've never felt like that before. I can do and there's more to life than drugs. I just, since talking, I feel like I can do whatever with myself...She makes you want to learn. She's just convincing in her words and how she is.

Comments such as this illustrated how they appreciated it when practitioners used language which encouraged them. This learner's remark shows that, in her view, the practitioner's words have had a positive impact on her and have increased her motivation to learn.

Maths teachers talk like psychiatrists. Some psychiatrists talk to you in a load of medical sentences you don't understand and you get others that talk to you in a way you do understand.

Offender in custody

This learner's comment underlines that some practitioners are skilled in tailoring how they talk about mathematics to their audience. It is perhaps unsurprising that many learners can find mathematical terminology such as probability, odds, ratio and fractions complex and potentially overwhelming. Knowing when to use mathematical terminology the learner is familiar with, when to challenge

the learner by introducing new terminology and how to enable learners to use mathematical terminology themselves in what they say and write is often not straightforward for practitioners.

Taking things forward: reflective practice and speaking and listening

Overall, these eight practitioners thought that reflecting on their use of speaking and listening through Talking Up Numeracy had enabled their practice to develop. As one practitioner said:

One thing I hadn't done before the pathfinder is sit down and think about what I actually do...Reflecting has...changed the way I actually approach the appointments and people in general. It has made me more aware of how I present myself, how I sit and how I've listened as well...It's given me the opportunity to consider what I do and try different things rather than sticking to the same thing.

While it is atypical for practitioners to have access to project seminars and researcher support, many practitioners are skilled in using albeit often brief opportunities to think about their practice. The findings from Talking Up Numeracy suggest that there is scope for all key skills/Skills for Life practitioners to reflect on their use of speaking and listening, to maximise learning in work-related contexts.

Critical reflection

The research highlights a number of ways in which the practitioners involved changed how they spoke and listened to learners. These included:

- using improved listening skills
- waiting longer for learners to answer questions
- asking supplementary questions.

To what extent do you recognise these issues as relevant to your own work?

Could you use these approaches in your own teaching?

Have you considered seeking learners' views on your own use of speaking and listening in your teaching?

Continuing professional development

The Institute for Learning has been given responsibility for awarding Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status for teachers in post-compulsory education and training. This includes a requirement for all teachers to be engaged in continuing professional development (CPD). Underpinning the Institute's model for professional development is the process of reflective practice.

The Institute is keen to emphasise that CPD is more than attending training courses. It involves reading, keeping up to date through industrial visits or practice, and other forms of learning. Your work on this toolkit could provide evidence of CPD activity – especially if it informs or influences your practice – and you should include it in your CPD record. You may also consider keeping a reflective diary of your teaching of speaking and listening.

Take some time to reflect on what you have learnt from this toolkit and what you have done, or intend to do, as a result.

Date and how you accessed and used the speaking and listening toolkit	What you think you have learnt	What actions you have taken or plan to take as a result

Toolkit resources

Activities

The chart below gives a section-by-section list of all the activities in the toolkit, with a brief description of each one.

Activity title	Page	Description
Identifying learners' skills		
Self-assessment card sort	21	Learners sort cards which relate to speaking and listening skills according to their level of confidence
The speaking and listening circle	27	A visual tool to use as the basis for discussion about learners' speaking and listening skills
Sensitivity to others		
Consequences	37	Scenario-based activity to raise awareness of what might happen if empathy and respect are not shown
Respect?	39	A questionnaire to help learners recognise the importance of valuing people and treating them with respect
What's my response?	43	Role play activity to help learners practise empathetic responses to situations
Empathy, sympathy or apathy?	49	Multiple-choice quiz in which learners identify the difference between empathy, sympathy and apathy
Speaking with individuals		
Telephone conversations	57	Pairs exercise focusing on speaking clearly and choosing language to suit purpose and audience
Who do you talk to at work?	59	Learners draw a spider diagram identifying who they talk to at work and what they talk about
Giving information	63	Practice in giving information to others
Adapting your style to give information	67	An activity to raise awareness of how we adapt the way we speak for different people
Receiving visitors	69	Learners draw up a checklist of good practice for receiving visitors at work
Dealing with customers	73	Preparation for responding to customer enquiries
Responding to customer enquiries	75	Role-play activity in which learners practise responding to customer enquiries and evaluate their performance
Preparing to talk with your manager	79	An activity to help learners plan for important one-to-one meetings
Meanings of non-verbal communication	85	Card matching exercise with examples of non-verbal communication and possible meanings

Activity title	Page	Description
What am I really saying?	87	Three short exercises to help learners interpret non-verbal messages from gestures, posture and facial expressions
Soap opera	91	Learners identify examples of non-verbal communication in a soap episode
How assertive are you?	99	Questionnaire where learners identify their response to given situations
Dealing with a customer complaint	105	Practice in handling a complaint and reducing conflict
An open and shut case	111	Learners convert closed questions to open ones
Pairs interviews	113	Pairs exercise to find out as much as possible about a partner using open questioning
Mock interview	117	Role play and observation to build confidence in job interviews
How Socrates did it	121	A group activity in which learners have to find out about a topic from the teacher only by asking questions
Using 'markers' in speech	127	Learners are introduced to the 'top 40' written and spoken words and the words and phrases used to mark boundaries in speech
Using transcripts	129	Learners examine a transcript of an everyday conversation

Listening

Object exchange	133	Icebreaker which shows how we can lose track of simple information when there are distractions
Listen and learn	135	Learners keep a log of when they had to listen at work and what they learnt
Effective listening at work	141	An activity to increase awareness of active listening in which learners agree principles for one-to-one and group listening at work
Listening trios	143	Groups of three take the roles of speaker, listener and observer to identify good listening skills
Listening questions	145	An activity on using questions for clarification, understanding and to support the speaker
Listen to the radio	147	Learners listen to a radio programme to identify the main points and the 'triggers' for active listening
Taking instructions	151	An activity to help learners practise listening attentively to instructions and check they have understood
Take a message	159	An activity to improve message-taking techniques in which learners keep a record of messages they take at work
Observing a team briefing	163	An activity to help learners listen for and identify the main points of a discussion
Reflective listening	169	Practice in listening closely to an individual without interrupting

Activity title	Page	Description
Speaking in a group		
Human bingo	175	Icebreaker where learners find out information about other members of their group
One piece at a time	177	An activity where learners put together a jigsaw puzzle in a group without using words or non-verbal communication
Adapting style to audience	179	A group activity where learners consider how we change our style of language to suit the audience
Preparing to take part in a meeting at work	185	An activity to help learners prepare for a meeting using a prompt sheet
Jargon busters	189	Learners log jargon, abbreviations and technical terms used at work and their meanings
A house built from jargon	193	Based on the traditional game of 'hangman', learners have to suggest letters and guess a jargon word or phrase
Starting a discussion	197	A simple activity to help learners to put forward their point of view in a discussion
Setting the ground rules for discussion	201	Learners draw up a list of the ground rules for effective discussions
Using a talk map	209	Learners draw a talk map to show roles and contributions to a group discussion
'Let me begin by saying...and that concludes'	211	An activity to help learners recognise the right words and approaches to begin, sustain, move on and end a discussion
Move it on!	215	Learners practise techniques to help move a discussion forward to a conclusion

Talking to a group

Just a minute	223	A fun activity to get learners talking in front of others. Based on the radio programme 'Just a minute'
It's so easy!	229	Learners practise using a mind map and cue cards to talk about a vocational subject for 1-2 minutes
Planning the talk or presentation	233	Learners create a detailed plan for a talk or presentation
Rehearsing the talk or presentation	243	Learners practise their talk or presentation and reflect on their performance
Giving the talk or presentation	247	Learners give a 4-minute talk or 10-minute presentation to a group, followed by feedback

Guidance

The list below gives you a quick reference to all the guidance topics in the toolkit.

Guidance title	Page
Sensitivity to others	
The role of empathy and respect	33
Speaking with individuals	
Language style	65
Representing the organisation	71
Non-verbal communication	81
Assertiveness	95
Dealing with conflict	103
Asking questions	107
Job interviews	115
Speaking 'sloppily' is essential to good communication (<i>Research summary</i>)	123
Listening	
Active listening	139
Taking messages	155
Speaking in a group	
Planning contributions to meetings	183
Different approaches to discussion	195
Agreeing ground rules	199
Helping learners to be effective in discussion	203
Moving a discussion forward	213
Talking to a group	
Mind maps and cue cards	225
Planning a talk or presentation	231
Using visual aids	239
Practising the talk or presentation	241

Other useful resources

Generic guidance on teaching speaking and listening

From the Key Skills Support Programme (KSSP)

Supporting communication: Guide to good practice

Practical advice and guidance on how to develop a range of communication and literacy skills, including speaking and listening.

Supporting problem solving, Supporting improving own learning and performance, Supporting working with others

The 'Practical strategies' sections of these good practice guides introduce a range of ways in which skills can be developed. Many encourage the development of speaking and listening skills such as active listening skills, brainstorming, mind maps and reflection.

Key-line module Developing learners' communication and literacy skills

Key-line is an online resource offering self-study CPD modules for practitioners and managers to use to develop their professional skills. This module includes a section on speaking and listening.

Teaching and learning Communication

From the schools and college arm of the KSSP, this provides practical advice, teaching ideas and guidance for teachers who deliver or assess key skills.

Speaking and listening: finding the level

A DVD and accompanying booklet providing examples of learners' work that meets the assessment criteria for discussions, talks and presentations for communication levels 1–3. It includes commentaries by teachers and awarding body moderators. The examples are from schools and college environments.

For further information about these publications and how to order them, please go to www.keyskillssupport.net

From the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

Teaching speaking and listening DVD-ROM (ref: 00025-2007DVD-EN)

This DVD is aimed at providing English teachers in secondary schools with an engaging self-study resource to support more effective teaching of speaking and listening. It identifies key issues of speaking and listening, offers practical advice and is supported by video examples of classroom practice and other resources.

Adult Literacy Core Curriculum (ref: A1041)

The core curricula clarify the skills, knowledge and understanding that learners need in order to reach the Skills for Life national standards. They support teachers and contain lots of useful **sample activities** that are relevant to both key skills and Skills for Life.

Access for All (ref: A1211)

This provides guidance for making the curricula more accessible to learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. In the section on speaking and listening there are suggestions for teaching approaches and alternative strategies which could be used with these learners.

Developing Speaking and Listening Skills: A support pack for staff working with offenders (ref: S&L/PACK01)

This pack considers the key issues in the development of speaking and listening skills for staff and offenders. There are five modules:

- Questioning and checking understanding
- Non-verbal communication
- Active listening
- Managing group discussions
- Using technical language.

All of these can be ordered from dfes@prolog.com or 0845 602 2260.

Literacy across the curriculum

This is a staff training pack developed for the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. Section 7, '**The management of group talk**', and Section 8, '**Listening**', contain useful guidance for all teachers of speaking and listening.

Print versions are no longer available but the pack can be downloaded from www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3/repub/lit_xc

Teaching and learning resources

Key Skills Support Programme

Teaching and learning packs

These materials can be used with learners to develop their key skills in ways that are directly relevant to specific occupations. They promote active learning and many of the resources can be used to develop speaking and listening skills.

The packs include workbooks, worksheets and assignments. Some also include games that promote group work and discussion. There are teaching and learning packs for the following occupations:

- Care
- Child care
- Hairdressing
- Hospitality and catering
- Motor vehicle sector
- Retail
- Travel

- Wood occupations
- Administration (level 1)
- Retail (level 1).

How to... worksheets

There are 20 worksheets for communication at level 2, contextualised to a range of sectors. Those relevant to speaking and listening are:

- Choose the right tone and style
- Listen actively
- Give a short talk
- Structure information
- Write notes
- Use mind maps.

There are also level 1 communication worksheets for the administration and retail sectors.

Further information is in the listing of resources by sector/programme area below.

KeySkills4U website

This website covers learning, testing and applying key skills in Application of Number, Communication and ICT at levels 1 and 2. Under 'Check your skills and learn' there is a section devoted to developing speaking and listening skills.

Further information, as before, is on www.keyskillssupport.net

Standards Unit (now QIA) materials

All these materials promote active learning. They motivate learners through hands-on activities and promote group work and discussion to encourage understanding and active learning.

Many of the materials can be effectively used to develop speaking and listening skills. Tutors are encouraged to adapt the materials and activities to suit their learners.

Materials have been developed for the following subjects:

- Adult Learning
- Business Education
- Construction
- E2E
- Engineering
- Health and Social Care
- ICT
- Land-based Studies

- Mathematics
- Modern Foreign Languages
- Science.

Every LSC-funded provider is entitled to one free copy.

For more information, go to www.subjectlearningcoach.net or contact the Subject Learning Coaches Helpline on 0207 297 9281. The website also gives contact details for Regional Programme Managers who will have the latest information.

DfES: Skills for Life

Materials for embedded learning

These materials have been produced as part of the *Skills for Life* strategy. They use a range of media to provide a way for learners to develop subject/vocational skills and literacy, language and numeracy skills simultaneously. In the 'Introduction and curriculum coverage' section at the front of each pack the resources are mapped to key skills and Skills for Life.

The materials can be used to develop speaking and listening skills in a variety of ways:

- The paper-based learning materials can be adapted by teachers.
- The pack contains audio clips which learners can listen to, discuss and then answer questions.
- The CD-ROM contains interactive practice materials. Learners can choose to develop their speaking and listening skills using modules such as *Showing you are listening*, *Speaking clearly and appropriately* and *Listening carefully*. Tasks are marked and feedback is given.

There are materials for the following areas:

Vocational

Catering	Painting operations
Cleaning	Production line manufacturing
Construction	Retail
Early years	Social care
Hairdressing	Transport
Horticulture	Trowel occupations
Hospitality	Warehousing

Employability

Entry to Employment	Health and safety
First aid	ICT
Food hygiene	Skills for construction

Community settings

Community skills	Family life
Family health	Sports leadership

You can download materials from www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/embeddedlearning or order from DfES publications on 0845 60 222 60. The website also includes a search facility so that you can search using the words 'speaking' or 'listening'.

BBC Skillswise

Skillswise is an interactive online adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL resource from the BBC for teachers and learners. Speaking and listening resources include:

- **factsheets** that give hints and tips to help improve listening skills
- **Listening for specific information:** an activity where learners listen to messages on an answer machine
- **In the news:** an area of the site that might help learners improve their listening skills. Each of the news stories in this section has an audio reading and there is a whole section devoted to quizzes based on news audio and video stories
- **Casualty challenge game** in which learners follow instructions to get a new job on the 'Casualty' team.

www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise

Learndirect (University for Industry)

A Way with Words is an interactive series of courses (from Entry 1 to level 2) that helps learners develop their communication skills (including speaking and listening). It uses everyday situations through games, puzzles and exercises. Learndirect provides flexible online/on-screen learning.

www.learndirect.co.uk

A–Z of resources by sector/programme area

Business and administration

Key skills in administration: level 1 (KSSP)

This pack includes booklets on *Receiving visitors* and *Greeting visitors*.

How to... worksheets for administration (level 1) (KSSP)

'Contribute to a discussion', 'Listen actively', 'Use mind maps', 'Structure information'.

How to... worksheets for administration (level 2) (KSSP)

'Choose the right tone and style', 'Listen actively', 'Give a short talk', 'Structure information', 'Write notes', 'Use mind maps'.

Business materials (Standards Unit (QIA))

The pack includes:

- **card activity** to analyse telephone skills

- **role play activities** demonstrating good and poor telephone conversations
- **Balance sheet bingo:** in pairs learners listen to definitions, discuss them and match them to their bingo cards
- **customer service role play activity** between an irate customer and an efficient customer service assistant
- **safety signs board activity**
- **Key words in organisation structures card activity:** each word has to be matched to its correct meaning.

Child care

Teaching and learning pack for child care (KSSP)

The pack includes workbooks on *Meetings* and *Working with colleagues*.

How to... worksheets for child care (KSSP)

'Choose the right tone and style', 'Listen actively', 'Give a short talk', 'Structure information', 'Write notes', 'Use mind maps'.

Materials for embedded learning: Early years (ref: embedded/EY)

Cleaning

Materials for embedded learning: Cleaning (ref: embedded/CL)

Construction

Teaching and learning pack for wood occupations (KSSP)

The pack includes:

- **workbooks:** *Checking off a delivery*, *Site meetings*, *Taking and making phone calls*
- **Name that tool card game.**

How to... worksheets for wood occupations (KSSP)

'Choose the right tone and style', 'Listen actively', 'Give a short talk', 'Structure information', 'Write notes', 'Use mind maps'.

Construction (Standards Unit (QIA))

This includes:

- **board activity** on safety signs: learners discuss the signs and agree where each one goes
- **card sort activities** on preventing accidents and common abbreviations, words and meanings
- **interactive safety quiz on CD** using images and written questions
- **Be a safe learner video** to watch, listen and answer questions.

Materials for embedded learning: Skills for construction (ref: embedded/CO)

Materials for embedded learning: Trowel occupations (ref: embedded/TR)

Engineering

Engineering (Standards Unit (QIA))

How to... worksheets for engineering (KSSP)

'Choose the right tone and style', 'Listen actively', 'Give a short talk', 'Structure information', 'Write notes', 'Use mind maps'.

Entry to Employment (E2E)

Improving Initial Assessment of personal and social skills in E2E

(Standards Unit (QIA))

These resources help tutors carry out assessments while, at the same time, providing learning opportunities for their learners. The resources encourage learners to engage in talks and discussions, and include:

- **card sort activities:** 'How do you feel today?', 'Quick fire' and 'What's my line?', 'Why are we all here?' and 'What happened next?' In these activities, cards, which contain pictures, statements and questions, are used to engage learners in discussions about their hopes and expectations
- **skills checklists and posters:** these encourage reflection and discussion.

E2E Motivational dialogue resources (Standards Unit (QIA))

Motivational dialogue is a learner-centred approach to influencing a young person's motivation to change behaviours that stand in the way of their progress. There are a number of resources and activities which tutors can use to encourage learners to think, talk, discuss and reflect on their behaviour. The pack includes:

- **Wheel of change board activity** that helps learners understand where they are on their own change journey. It encourages them to talk about their feelings and how they can move forward
- **What's important to me? card activity:** value rating cards contain statements and images. Learners sort and select cards and talk about why the situations are important to them
- **Losses and gains analysis activity** that helps learners explore and discuss their feelings about change and the pros and cons of decisions they need to make
- **scaling tool activity** that can be used with learners who have difficulty expressing their thoughts and feelings in words. Using a board and magnetic pieces, they give a rating to how they feel about an issue and how this could change.

Materials for embedded learning: Entry to Employment (ref: embedded/EE)

Hairdressing

Teaching and learning pack for hairdressing (KSSP)

The pack includes workbooks entitled *Client consultation*, *Communicating with colleagues* and *Improve client service*.

How to... worksheets for hairdressing (KSSP)

'Choose the right tone and style', 'Listen actively', 'Give a short talk', 'Structure information', 'Write notes', 'Use mind maps'.

Materials for embedded learning: Hairdressing (ref: embedded/HA)

Health and social care

Teaching and learning pack for care (KSSP)

This pack includes:

- **workbooks:** *Meetings*, *Communication differences*, *Diet and culture*, *Working with colleagues*, *Talking with clients*
- **problem solving board game.**

How to... worksheets for care (KSSP)

'Choose the right tone and style', 'Listen actively', 'Give a short talk', 'Structure information', 'Write notes', 'Use mind maps'.

Health and social care (Standards Unit (QIA))

These resources focus on observations, confidentiality, health and safety, key skills and Skills for Life. They include:

- **videos** on health and safety and confidentiality which can be used to generate discussion and consolidate learning
- **card activities** which promote discussion about good and poor practice
- **Confidentiality game:** contains questions which teams of learners ask each other. They have to speak clearly to make sure that members of the other team understand the question correctly. They then have to listen to the answer and check it against the correct answer on the sheet.
- **activity** matching safety signs to plans of a nursery and care home. Learners can discuss this activity in a group.

Materials for embedded learning: Social care (ref: embedded/SC)

Hospitality and catering

Teaching and learning pack for hospitality and catering (KSSP)

This pack includes *Customer complaints* and *Team talks* workbooks.

How to... worksheets for hospitality and catering (KSSP)

'Choose the right tone and style', 'Listen actively', 'Give a short talk', 'Structure information', 'Write notes', 'Use mind maps'.

Materials for embedded learning: Catering (ref: embedded/CA)

Materials for embedded learning: Food hygiene (ref: embedded/FO)

Materials for embedded learning: Hospitality (ref: embedded/HOS)

Land-based industries

Materials for embedded learning: Horticulture (ref: embedded/HO)

Soil works (Standards Unit (QIA))

This includes:

- **Soils card game** to help learners understand the main components of soil
- **Thrive!** a group board game where learners choose appropriate plants for specific soils.

Animal transport (Standards Unit (QIA))

This includes a board game on the laws covering transport of animals.

Individual learner management (Standards Unit (QIA))

This includes guidance and activities to help both teachers and learners to get the most from progress reviews.

Mathematics

Mathematics (Standards Unit (QIA))

The whole pack encourages teaching approaches that involve discussion and small group work.

Motor vehicle engineering

Teaching and learning pack for motor vehicle (KSSP)

The pack includes:

- **five magazines** containing activities which promote discussion and talks
- **card game** for groups based on tools and equipment used in motor vehicle engineering
- **skillsheets:** 'Customer satisfaction', 'Communicating with colleagues'.

How to... worksheets for the motor vehicle sector (KSSP)

'Choose the right tone and style', 'Listen actively', 'Give a short talk', 'Structure information', 'Write notes', 'Use mind maps'.

Painting and decorating

Materials for embedded learning: Painting operations (ref: embedded/PA)

Production line manufacturing

Materials for embedded learning: Production line manufacturing

(ref: embedded/PL)

Retail

Key skills in the retail sector: level 1 (KSSP)

This pack includes a booklet on *Dealing with customers*.

Teaching and learning pack for retail (KSSP)

The pack includes workbooks on *Approaching the customer*, *Closing the sale*, *Communicating with colleagues*, *Features and benefits*, *Handling customer service problems*, *Identifying customer needs* and *Message handling*.

How to... worksheets for retail (level 1) (KSSP)

'Contribute to a discussion', 'Listen actively', 'Use mind maps', 'Structure information'.

How to... worksheets for retail (level 2) (KSSP)

'Choose the right tone and style', 'Listen actively', 'Give a short talk', 'Structure information', 'Write notes', 'Use mind maps'.

Materials for embedded learning: Retail (ref: embedded/RE)

Sport and recreation

How to... worksheets for sport and recreation (KSSP)

'Choose the right tone and style', 'Listen actively', 'Give a short talk', 'Structure information', 'Write notes', 'Use mind maps'.

Materials for embedded learning: Sports leadership (ref: embedded/SL)

Transport

Materials for embedded learning: Transport (ref: embedded/TA)

Travel

Teaching and learning pack for travel (KSSP)

This pack includes workbooks on *Communicating with colleagues*, *Customer complaints*, *Approaching the customer*, *Message handling*, *Closing the sale*, *Features and benefits*, *Finding out about clients*, *Identifying customer needs* and *Researching holiday destinations*.

How to... worksheets for travel (KSSP)

'Choose the right tone and style', 'Listen actively', 'Give a short talk', 'Structure information', 'Write notes', 'Use mind maps'.

Warehousing

Materials for embedded learning: Warehousing (ref: embedded/WA)