

## Supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation

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This exercise provides a template for students to prepare and present a post-placement talk focusing on speaking and listening skills.

## **Developing speaking and listening skills on work experience**

It has been well documented that employers value speaking and listening skills in their employees. In the report *Time Well Spent*<sup>1</sup> the CBI identified communication and literacy as one of the seven key employability skills. However, other than in English lessons, we believed that opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills are not being exploited. This is particularly the case with work-related activities, such as work experience.

In order to test our understanding, we decided to do some structured research. In 2013, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded Education for Employability to carry out this research. We identified 12 schools in Bristol and Bath, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire and Tyneside to carry out fieldwork. We interviewed work experience co-ordinators and English teachers in each school and held focus groups with 59 Year 11 students and 14 Year 12 students who had recently undertaken a work placement. In addition, ten employers were interviewed.

Desk research to supplement this information included gathering evidence from 22 schools and three Education Business Partnerships (EBPs). We also looked at a wide range of publications, guidance documents and research reports to find out what guidance, if any, was in existence. Finally, we used social networking media to gather the views and experiences of career and work-related professionals.

All of the teachers interviewed felt that there were excellent opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills through work experience but that they were underutilised. They were keen to make more of work experience, as the 'real life' context would be motivating and help students see the relevance of the experience to their future lives. Teachers were attracted to the idea of using materials that link speaking and listening skills to the preparation and debriefing for work experience, particularly through English lessons. Most teachers felt it would be good to have some connection made between English and work experience.

The employers we interviewed felt that many students experienced difficulties with speaking and listening on work experience. They suggested that a key factor was confidence and a few felt that young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds experienced more difficulty.

Many of the students we spoke to said that they did not find particular difficulty with speaking and listening on work experience, which appeared to be at odds with what their teachers and employers had said. However, when we probed more deeply, some said they had found themselves in speaking situations that they did not know how to handle, particularly in less formal situations with other workers, speaking on the telephone, or being able to ask questions when they did not understand technical terms or what they were expected to do.

## **Materials**

In response to these findings, we developed a set of classroom materials and a briefing sheet for employers. We sent the materials to a large number of teachers and employers and some Education Business Partnerships (EBPs). In addition some schools trialled them with students during their work experience and sent out the employer guidance sheet to employers hosting placements. Feedback we received helped us to decide on modifications and we now have the final set of materials for you to use as part of your work experience programmes. A list of the full set of what is available is included in the folder.

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<sup>1</sup> *Time Well Spent: embedding employability in work experience*, Confederation of British Industry, 2007

### **Using the materials**

We are delighted to offer you the materials free of charge, thanks to funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. We are aware that time in school for the preparation and debriefing can be in short supply, so each of the materials can be used as a stand-alone activity and there is no expectation to use everything. You may, however, find it useful to begin with the self-assessment activity. This will not only help to raise students' awareness of what is meant by speaking and listening skills, but will help them to identify their own strengths and where they need to improve and provide a base-line against which their improvement can be measured.

You may want to use the activities in English lessons, as part of your PSHE programme or wherever in the curriculum you usually help to prepare students for work experience.

We would also urge you to give your employers the briefing sheet, so that they can incorporate some of the activities that should specifically help students on work experience to improve their skills.

### **About Education for Employability C.I.C.**

Education for Employability is a community interest company set up to support the employability of young people in the UK. We work with businesses, schools, colleges and other organisations to enhance the opportunities for young people to develop their employability and prepare them for a fulfilling adult life in which they make a positive contribution to their communities.

A key aim of the business is to contribute towards raising the aspirations and improving the social mobility of young people. The employability of young people is critical to the ability of individuals to get and progress in work and to the country's economic competitiveness. In addition to gaining good qualifications it is essential that all young people develop the knowledge, skills and attitude to work that employers require. School/college leavers, entering a tough labour market, need a strong base of literacy, numeracy and IT skills. They also need the broad set of employability skills necessary for all jobs, including team working, problem solving, communication, business and customer awareness and self-management.

Education for Employability works with schools, colleges, businesses and other organisations to:

- develop materials and resources, including case studies and good practice guides, business games and simulations
- undertake research and evaluations, including:
  - helping businesses evaluate their engagement with education providers, including activities aimed at developing young people's employability
  - school and college strategies for employer engagement, careers education, work-related learning, enterprise and vocational education.
- project manage programmes on behalf businesses and education providers
- provide professional development solutions, supporting the needs of business people, school and college leaders, careers and work-related learning co-ordinators, subject teachers and tutors.

### **About NETCO**

NETCO Management Services provides support, advice and guidance on a wide range of subjects including Corporate Social Responsibility, Education Business Links, Education and Business management and Entrepreneurial skills development. NETCO was commissioned to provide formal evaluative feedback from young people, schools and business.

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## Developing speaking and listening skills on work experience: employers guidance

Work experience provides young people with real experiences of the workplace and the opportunity to test their motivation for a particular career. It also provides a rich opportunity to practise and develop employability skills, including those of speaking and listening. As an employer, you have a vital role in helping young people to learn the importance of these skills by providing opportunities for them to practise and develop them as part of their work experience programme.

This guidance aims to help you plan work experience in ways that support students to develop their speaking and listening skills. Careful planning can maximise students' learning and ensure they develop these key communication skills.

### Preparing for the placement

Ensure that everyone who will work with any student knows that development of speaking and listening skills is one reason why the placement is taking place. It is important that both managers and supervisors know about the skills and are able to show how they are important at work. Consider tasks you can set that will enable the student to practise speaking and listening. The student's teacher or local work experience organiser can provide advice.

Examples of tasks offering speaking and listening skills' development include:

- having an induction and being asked to say what they've understood
- listening to instructions from a supervisor
- talking on the telephone and taking messages
- asking questions and listening to a co-worker or manager
- attending meetings
- taking part in a team discussion
- listening and talking to customers or clients
- interviewing workers
- making a presentation to an individual or group
- talking one-to-one with a work colleague
- work shadowing an employee
- discussing the day's work with co-worker or supervisor

### During the placement

In addition to providing tasks, you can encourage managers and supervisors to **ask questions** that encourage the student to speak and help to maximise their learning on the placement. By asking the right questions, you can help them *reflect, understand* and *apply* their learning.

### Reflection

Helping students to reflect on their experiences at work involves asking them to describe what happened. Here are some examples:

- What did you do today?
- What skills did you practise today?
- Who did you speak to today?
- When did you have to listen carefully to instructions?
- Describe your induction to the workplace.
- What do you find most interesting/useful/important/boring/difficult about being here?
- Who did you enjoy working with?
- What were the highs and lows of your placement?
- What key incidents happened during your time here?
- Give me a list of any health and safety signs you've seen?
- How did you get on with your work colleagues?  
How did the reality match your expectations?

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### ***Understanding***

Questions that help students understand what they have learned include asking them to analyse, interpret and explain their experiences.

Here are some examples:

- What did you learn about working in the kind of work environment you experienced here?
- What did you learn about health and safety?
- What did you conclude about your readiness to join the workforce?
- Which personal skills or qualities do you need to work here?
- What did you learn about the importance of listening skills?
- What did your supervisor and work colleagues try to put across to you?
- What have you learnt about being a good team player at work?
- What makes a good employee and a good employer?
- What did you learn about how to talk to customers?
- What makes for good technique when talking on the telephone?

### ***Applying***

You can help students to apply what they've learnt while they are on the placement. For example, if a student has an opportunity to speak to a customer at reception, they can reflect on that experience, consider how they can improve the way they spoke and apply that learning with another customer. It is also helpful for students to consider how they might apply their learning in the future in education and work.

Questions that help students think how they might apply what they've learnt on work experience include:

- What will you do differently the next time you are listening to instructions?
- What are you going to do to further develop your communication skills?
- How are you going to try to change as a result of your work experience?
- What would you include in a do's and don'ts checklist for students going on work experience?

### ***After the placement***

Students really value the input of employers, both during a work placement and also afterwards. There are several ways in which you may be able to help students after their placement. For example, you could attend the school or college and help with a debriefing session, in which you explain the importance of speaking and listening skills at work. You may offer to be in the audience at school when students speak about their work placements. You may also be able to run a training workshop on speaking and listening skills, or take part in mock interviews.

## Skills Self-assessment

### Description

Students complete a self-assessment exercise of their speaking and listening skills. The exercise is based on a set of cards on which there are statements relating to the skills involved in speaking and listening.

### Learning objectives

- To increase students' knowledge of speaking and listening skills
- To raise awareness of the range of skills involved in speaking and listening.
- To help students identify their existing strengths and weaknesses in terms of speaking and listening skills and the areas they wish to develop on work experience.

### Resources required

Set of speaking and listening skills cards for each group, or individual.

One *Always*, *Sometimes* and *Hardly Ever* cards for each group, or individual.

*Speaking and listening skills self-assessment record* for each student.

### Procedure

Explain why good speaking and listening skills are highly valued by employers. Employers want employees who can speak clearly and listen carefully to what others say.

Ask students to think of some examples of when they might need to use speaking and listening skills in the workplace. Class discussion might focus on:

- getting your views across to the supervisor/other workers
- speaking to customers/clients to find out what they want
- getting relevant information from customers or suppliers
- listening to instructions
- asking questions to confirm your understanding
- contributing to meetings.

The following exercise can be completed in pairs, small groups or individually.

Explain that they are going to work on a card sort activity to identify which particular speaking and listening skills they are good at and which they need to develop.

They should start by locating the *Always*, *Sometimes* and *Hardly Ever* cards and place them face up on the desk. Then shuffle the other cards and place them face down on the desk.

Tell them to turn over the top card and, if operating as a group, discuss what is meant by the statement. Then they need to decide whether this is something they always, sometimes or hardly ever do and place under the relevant heading card. They do this for all of the cards, building up the three piles.

Students should then record their answers on the *Speaking and listening self-assessment record*.

For each skill that they record as *Sometimes* or *Hardly Ever* they should think about what might help them move to the *Always* column.

Discuss with the class examples of things that they might do during their work placement to help develop the skills.

Students should keep the record sheet with their work experience preparation material and review it after their placement.

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## Speaking and listening cards

1. I speak clearly so that others can understand what I say	6. I stick to the point when I am speaking	11. I can follow verbal instructions	16. I can summarise a discussion	21. I adjust how I speak according to the situation
2. I feel confident talking to a new person	7. I ask other people to repeat things that I haven't understood	12. I remember verbal messages and pass them on accurately	17. People say I am a good listener	22. I notice how people react when I am speaking
3. I give information in a logical order	8. I choose words that my listeners will understand	13. I can judge the right time to say something in a meeting	18. An audience can hear clearly what I am saying	23. I know when to smile during conversations

## Speaking and listening cards

4. I know when and how to interrupt people	9. I take my turn in a conversation or discussion	14. I can pick out the main points of a conversation	19. I am confident when speaking to a group of people	24. I show that I understand how other people feel
5. I am comfortable speaking on the phone to new people	10. I get my views across in a group discussion or meetings	15. I listen carefully to other people	20. I can plan a talk or presentation	25. I can make eye contact with people I am speaking to
<b>Always</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Hardly Ever</b>		

## Self-assessment record

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Speaking		Always	Sometimes	Never
1	I speak clearly so that others can understand what I say			
2	I feel confident talking to a new person			
3	I give information in a logical order			
4	I know when and how to interrupt people			
5	I am comfortable speaking on the phone to new people			
6	I stick to the point when I am speaking			
7	I ask other people to repeat things that I haven't understood			
8	I choose words that my listeners will understand			
9	I take my turn in a conversation or discussion			
10	I get my views across in group discussions or meetings			
Listening		Always	Sometimes	Never
11	I can follow verbal instructions			
12	I remember verbal messages and pass them on accurately			
13	I can judge the right time to say something in a meeting			
14	I can pick out the main points of a conversation			
15	I listen carefully to other people			
16	I can summarise a discussion			
17	People say I am a good listener			

## Self-assessment record

Presenting		Always	Sometimes	Never
18	An audience can hear clearly what I am saying			
19	I am confident when speaking to a group of people			
20	I can plan a talk or presentation			
Other		Always	Sometimes	Never
21	I adjust how I speak according to the situation			
22	I notice how people react when I am speaking			
23	I know when to smile during conversations			
24	I show that I understand how other people feel			
25	I can make eye contact with people I am speaking to			



## Telephone calls

### Description

It is not unusual for students to be nervous about making a telephone call to make arrangements for a work experience placement. This activity helps prepare and increase their confidence to make this first important call to their placement provider.

### Learning objectives

- To prepare to make a first telephone call to introduce themselves and arrange their placement.
- To develop confidence in speaking.

### Resources required

One *Placement Information* card per student, to contain only the name of the company, a contact name and telephone number. These will need to be prepared in advance, using your own database of work placement providers.

One *Telephone script* sheet for each student.

### Procedure

Ask the students why it would be a good idea to telephone their placement company before their work placement. They should identify the need:

- to introduce themselves to their placement supervisor
- to ask for information about the company, what tasks they will be doing on the placement and to confirm some practical arrangements (e.g. clothing, start and finish times)
- to answer questions from their placement supervisor, which might include what the student wants from the placement.

Ask them to describe what speaking and listening skills they will use in this type of telephone conversation. They should identify: speaking confidently, audibly and effectively, using Standard English, asking questions to clarify.

Explain that they should not worry if they are a little nervous. This telephone call will probably be the first time they have spoken to anyone from the company. They should recognise that most people, whatever their age, feel nervous when making this sort of call.

Tell them that preparation is important. Before the telephone call, they should write down as much as they can about the company, or organisation. Ask them where they might find out such information. They should also prepare by:

- knowing they have got the correct telephone number
- being sure of the name of the person they need to speak to
- deciding what message they will leave if he/she is not available when they first phone.

Explain that they should also prepare a list of questions they want to ask about their placement. Ask for ideas of suitable questions. Examples include:

- What sort of work will I be doing on my placement?
- Where is the company located?
- What hours will I be required to work?
- What are the lunch arrangements?
- Who do I report to when I arrive?
- Is there a uniform or a dress code?

Say they should plan answers to questions they might be asked about themselves during the telephone conversation. Examples of questions are:

- Is this your first work experience placement?
- Why are you interested in this placement?
- What skills are you particularly interested in developing?
- What do you plan to do when you leave school or college?
- What do you like doing in your free time?

Finally, explain that it is helpful to make clear notes during the phone call, as this prevents them forgetting important information.

### *Practise phone calls*

Distribute the *Placement information* cards and *Telephone script* to everyone and divide the students into pairs.

Allow time for them to find out information about their company/organisation and write some questions. This could be done at home or the week before the lesson.

Working in pairs, sitting back to back, each student takes turns to be the caller. The call starts with the introduction on the *Telephone script*

After they have finished their call they should ask their partner to provide feedback.

When everyone has had an opportunity to be the caller, discuss how it went and repeat some of the tips for a successful call.

The exercise can be repeated to improve and gain more confidence.

## Telephone script

**Operator:** Good morning.... (insert name of company).... How can I help you?

**Student:** Good morning. Can I speak to Mrs Rita Shah please?

**Operator:** Can I ask what it is about?

**Student:** Yes, I have been offered a work experience placement by your company and I was told by my teacher that I should phone Mrs Shah to introduce myself.

**Operator:** Thank you. Please hold the line.

**Mrs Shah:** Good morning, Rita Shah. How can I help you?

**Student:** Oh good morning, Mrs Shah. My name is ..... (full name) ..... and I go to ..... (name of school/college) ..... I have a work experience placement at your company starting next month and was told to call you to introduce myself.

**Mrs Shah:** That is excellent. Yes, I can see from my list that you are due to start in three weeks. So, why don't you tell me something about yourself and then I will answer any questions you might have about the placement.

### **Active listening**

It can be upsetting and frustrating if you feel you have something important to say, but no one listens to you properly. 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.

#### ***How can you show that you are listening actively?***

- Sit where you can be seen without the person having to turn 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 so that you can easily be heard without having to raise your voice, but avoid being too close and invading the other person's personal space.
- Set aside what you are doing in order to concentrate on the speaker, giving the speaker your full attention.
- Make eye contact with the speaker from time to time, but do not stare at them so intently that they begin to feel uncomfortable.
- Only interrupt to check your understanding from time to time. Say, 'So you mean...?'
- Nod your head and accept what they say. Use expressions like 'I see', 'Yes' and 'Mmm'.
- Use 'open' body language, such as leaning forward, facial expressions and gestures that show you are actively listening and interested.
- At the end of a point, or during pauses you can 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.

#### ***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.

## Listening at work

### Description

When they are on work experience, students will need to listen carefully to instructions from their supervisor or work colleagues. These exercises help them understand how to give and receive instructions and to practise active listening.

### Learning objectives

- To learn about the importance of listening carefully at work, especially when being given instructions.
- To understand how to give and receive verbal instructions.

### Resources required

Paper, if using the *Listen and hear* exercise.

### Procedure : Icebreakers

The following exercises can be used as ice breakers to introduce the topic.

- *Chinese Whispers*
  - Get students to stand in a line and whisper two different messages, one starting at one end of the line and one starting at the other. When the messages have been passed to the final person ask the final recipients what message they received. Then ask the original recipients if they can remember the first message they received.
- *Bus driver*
  - Tell the group that you will be asking questions on what they are about to hear and that they can take notes if they wish.
  - Start by saying “You are the bus driver and at stop no 1, seven people got on the bus. One of them was wearing a red hat. At stop 2, four people got on and one got off. At stop 3, two people got on, one person was carrying a bag and the person with the red hat got off. At stop 4, a bus inspector got on the bus and a woman and child got on. At stop 5, the bus inspector got off and two people got on.”
  - When you have finished you ask the question: “What is the bus driver’s age?” The majority of students will not have heard the opening line: "You are the bus driver".
- *Careful listening*
  - Ask students any of the following to highlight the importance of listening carefully.
  - Is there any law against a man marrying his widow’s sister? Answer – no he’s dead.
  - Some months have 30 days; some months have 31 – how many have 28? Answer – all of them.
  - If you had only one match and entered a dark room where there was an oil lamp, oil heater and wood stove, which would you light first? Answer – the match.
  - According to International law if an aeroplane should crash on the exact border between two neighbouring countries, in which country would the survivors be buried? Answer – you don’t bury survivors.
- *Listen and hear*
  - Give each student one sheet of paper and give the following directions, pausing after each instruction to give them time to comply. Complete the activity yourself using your own sheet of paper.
  - Pick up your sheet of paper and hold it in front of you. Close your eyes and listen carefully to my directions. The rules are: (1) no peeking and (2) no questions.
  - The first thing I want you to do is to fold your sheet of paper in half.

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- Now, tear off the upper right hand corner.
- Fold the paper in half again and tear off the upper left hand corner of the sheet.
- Fold it in half again.
- Now tear off the lower right-hand corner of the sheet.
- Now, open your eyes and unfold your paper. If I did a good job of communicating and you did a good job of listening, all of our sheets should look exactly the same!
- Hold your sheet up for everyone to see. Ask participants to compare their sheets. Ask why no one's paper matched yours exactly? Their answers may include: "You didn't let us ask any questions!" or "The way you gave us directions wasn't clear!"
- This exercise highlights the importance of asking questions to check understanding when listening to instructions.

### ***Listening at work***

Discuss the situations in which a student may need to listen to instructions at work, such as:

- induction briefing – e.g. about health and safety procedures
- explanation of work tasks
- taking messages from customers or colleagues
- in team meetings where key facts and decisions are discussed
- listening and observing colleagues to learn new skills or techniques
- dealing with customers or service users

Ask students for recent examples of instructions they have been given and discuss how successful these were. This enables you to draw out all of the areas that prevent people from actively listening and then what they can do to ensure they are actively listening when taking instructions.

Some issues that prevent people from understanding the information might include:

- the environment (noise levels, interruptions, stressful conditions)
- the relationship between the people giving and receiving instructions
- the quality of the instructions
- whether listeners asked questions and how they felt about this
- whether listeners made any notes
- whether there was anything listeners didn't understand.

At this point, get students to practise giving and receiving instructions, with you or with each other, for example: how to get to the bus stop, how to knot a tie, how to install some software on a computer.

Ask students to think of a time when they felt they weren't listened to (e.g. at school, in the family, with friends, shopping). Either in pairs, or in a whole group, ask the students to identify what the other people in the stories did that demonstrated non-listening and what impact this had on themselves as the speaker (e.g. they felt devalued, angry, upset, hurt).

Discuss the following tips for being a good listener at work:

- Show you are listening by making sound prompts ('Mmm', 'I see', 'Yes') and by your body language (nodding, facial expression, eye contact).
- Show you understand by reflecting back what the person said, either in the person's own words or by paraphrasing. ('So, you said I need to go to room H213...')
- Ask questions to check your understanding ('So you would like me to ask the supervisor for information on prices?' or 'You'd like me to file them in a new folder, using my name?') and dig further for clarification. ('Could you explain that more fully?' or 'Could you give me an example?')

- Know what type of question to ask – when to ask a closed question (‘How much does it sell for?’) or an open question (‘So, what happened?’) Concentrate and cut out distractions to be able to focus on the person speaking.
- Summarise the points that influence the effectiveness of instructions including:
- the person giving the instructions – e.g. how clear they are
- the person receiving the instructions – e.g. how well they listen
- the environment – for example, noise levels.

### *After the placement*

After the students have been on work placement, ask them to give examples of when they had to listen to instructions. Ask them to comment on how easy it was to listen to and respond to the instructions.



## Listening to people at work

### Description

This activity helps students identify the main points when listening to people, using the context of career-related films. They view clips showing people talking about their work, followed by discussion on the skills of active listening.

### Learning objectives

- To help students recognise the times when we listen more actively.
- To understand what can get in the way of listening.

### Resources required

Choose one or more career-related films for students to watch. You could choose films from company websites or from organisations like icould <http://icould.com/> and Careersbox <http://www.careersbox.co.uk/>. Choose a mixture of films, including some that you expect would interest your group as well as some that wouldn't.

Copies of the *Active listening* sheet.

### Procedure

Introduce the activity by discussing the importance of listening skills at work (e.g. we learn and find out much of what we know about our jobs from listening). Ask the students to think about when they listen at school/college (e.g. receiving instructions from a teacher, chats with other students).

Explain that they are going to watch a short film (or films) and as they listen to what's being said they should note down 3 to 4 short points, which they think are the most important messages. You might give them headings such as: the career route, who supported or influenced them, where they want to be in the future, what skills are needed, or what does the job involve.

When they have finished watching, use the following as discussion questions:

- Did they capture the main points? Do students' lists differ? How?
- Did they find themselves drifting as they were viewing? What were the reasons for this? (e.g. lapses in their own concentration, boring subject, speaker's tone of voice, appearance, mannerisms, the graphics on the films were distracting, background noise in the classroom.)
- Would it have been easier if the people had been in the room?
- How does our attention come and go while listening?
- What are the things that can get in the way of listening?
- Is it easier to listen at particular times of day or in specific situations?
- Were they more attentive if the job was of interest to them?

Explain that, on work experience, they will find themselves in situations when they have to concentrate on what people are saying to them. Ask students to think of examples of who might speak to them during their placement (e.g. a manager, co-worker or a customer) and why (e.g. giving instructions, explaining procedures, requesting information). Discuss the potential difficulties of listening to people at work and what they might do to overcome these.

Use the *Active listening* sheet to summarise the key points about listening skills.

## Meetings with your supervisor or manager

### Description

This activity stresses the importance of preparing for face-to-face meetings in the workplace, in particular when talking to placement managers and supervisors.

### Learning objectives

- To know how to prepare for meetings with placement managers.
- To understand that meetings can be formal and informal.

### Resources required

*Too much information!* sheet for each student.

### Procedure

Ask the students to list different reasons why they might need to have a meeting with their placement manager or supervisor. Examples could include:

- to discuss their progress during a placement
- to be given specific information about a particular task that they have been asked to undertake
- to report or discuss a problem that may have arisen.

Explain that there will be a time limit given to meetings. Managers and supervisors are busy people. So, when they have a meeting with them, it is important that they are able to summarise and select information that is relevant.

Distribute copies of the *Too much information!* sheet. Read through the script from a meeting between a placement student and their manager.

The task for the students is to rewrite the script so that it includes only the relevant information that the manager needs to hear.

When they have completed the task, ask a few students to read out their new version of the script taking.

As an additional activity, you can ask students to develop and practise some other meeting scenarios, such as:

- You need to ask for a day off because of an important family event.
- You have an important question to ask your manager and you see him/her in the corridor with other members of staff. How do you open the conversation?
- You want to know if you will be having a review meeting at the end of your placement and who will be present.

## **Too Much Information!**

Manager: “So tell me what happened last week. I believe you showed real initiative with a customer when there was a problem.”

Student: “Yes, I was really pleased with the way things went. It was last Tuesday,...or was it Wednesday? No, it was Tuesday because that is when I had to go back to college after work. This woman came into the salon. She was in a terrible state. She had lost her mobile sometime during her visit with us. She started to cry and I was the only one at the reception desk. So I asked her to sit down and got her a drink of water. Then I asked her where she had been sitting and whether she had used her mobile while she was here. She said she was in a hurry as her children would be home from school. So I left her and went to where she said she had been sitting at the end of her appointment. I looked all around but couldn't see anything. Then I had a great idea and I rummaged around in the waste paper basket beside the chair – and there it was – her mobile. I went back to her with her phone and she was so happy. She gave me £5 tip for being so helpful.”

## **Giving information**

### **Description**

This exercise involves students passing on and receiving verbal information. It will help improve their confidence while on their work placement.

### **Learning objectives**

- To practise giving a range of types of information.
- To improve students' self-confidence in preparation for situations they may face on their work placement.

### **Resources required**

Scenarios printed on paper.

### **Procedure**

Write some information-giving scenarios on paper. You might use the examples below as a starting point:

- Describe to a friend how to get from school to your home
- Describe what you thought about a recent film you have seen
- Summarise what happened at a recent sports or music event you went to.
- Explain how you did your latest assignment to your teacher
- Apologise to your form tutor for being late for registration
- Tell a work colleague about how to set up a piece of equipment
- Explain to a customer how to fill out an order form

Divide the group into pairs and give a scenario to each person.

Explain that they are going to take it in turns to give each other information relating to their scenario. One person will be the speaker and the other will be the listener.

Explain that, before they start, they should:

- think through what they want to say, making sure they get the information in a logical order and do not forget anything
- write down the key points in order

Remind them that, when giving the information, they should speak clearly, thinking about their language, tone and speed of speaking.

When one person has finished, the other member of the pair should give feedback:

- How clear was the information? Was anything missed out? What did they think about the language used? Was the tone and speed appropriate?

The roles are then reversed, with the other member of the pair taking on the role of speaker.

Discuss the lessons learned as a whole group.

## People we talk to at work

### Description

Many students on work experience feel shy and unsure of how to speak to other people. This activity helps students to think about the range of people they may meet and have to speak to during their work placement and gives them some practice to help increase their confidence.

### Learning objectives

- To increase students' awareness of the range of people they may meet at work
- To help them to think about what they might say in different situations
- To help them understand the need to change the way they speak to different people
- To improve their confidence to deal with a range of different situations.

### Resources required

Copies of the diagram *Who do you talk to at work?* for each group.

### Procedure

Arrange the students in small groups and give each group a copy of the *Who do you talk to at work?* diagram. Explain that the diagram summarises the different groups of people they might come across during their work placement. Discuss the sort of things they might speak to them about.

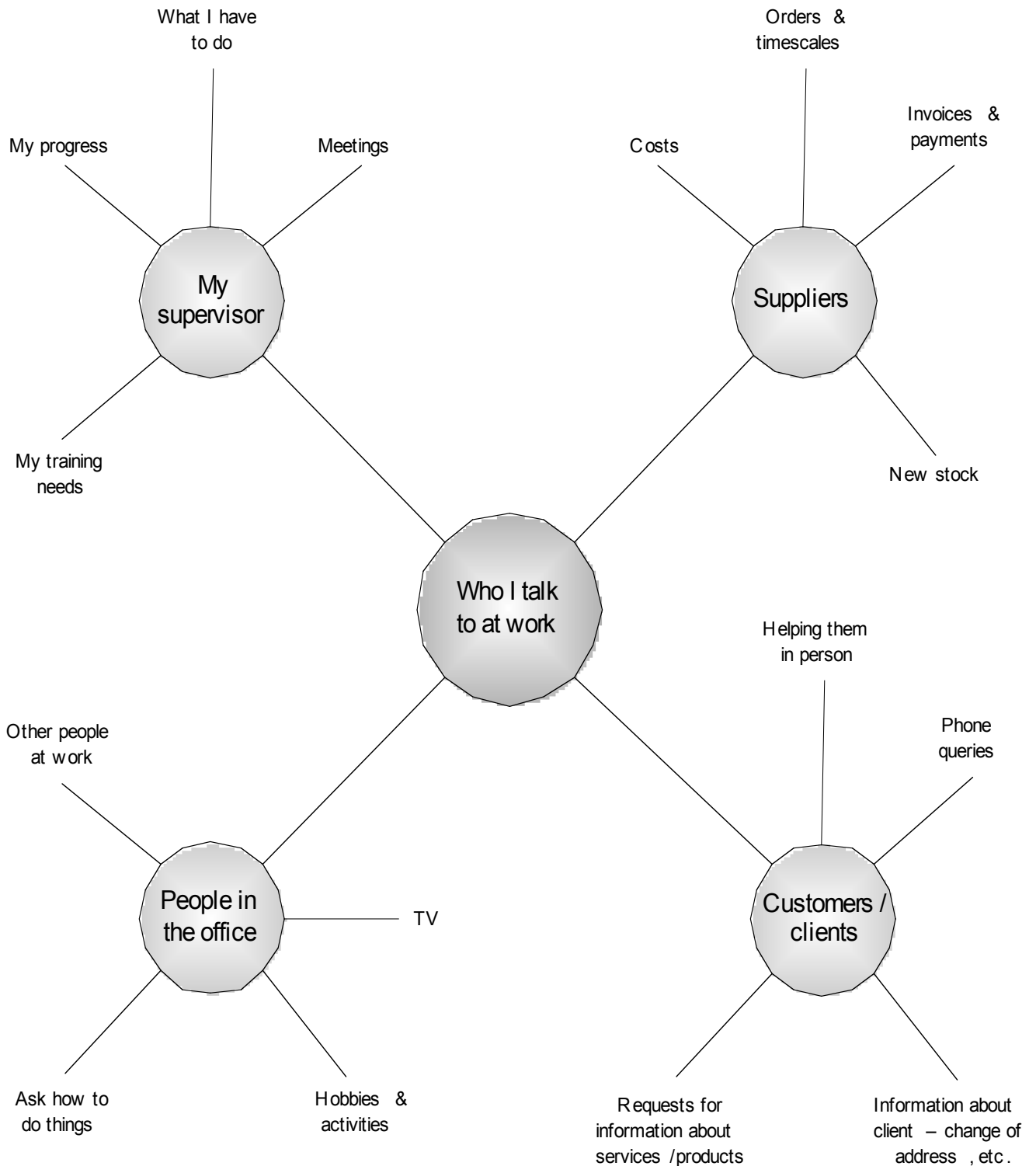
Ask the students to draw their own diagram of people they currently meet, such as other students, teachers, employer, family members, neighbours, members of the public, shop keepers, doctor. For a number of different persons/groups they should summarise the sort of things they talk about.

Ask students whether they speak in the same way to all of the people, or do they change their language, tone and body language.

Look again at the *Who do you talk to at work?* sheet and discuss how they might speak differently at work, depending on who it is they're addressing, for example:

- the sort of words they might use with each one
- the tone would they use with each one (e.g. chatty, serious, nervous, professional, jokey)
- how quickly they would speak
- how their body language might change
- what they might do to improve their confidence in talking to people at work.

## Who do you talk to at work?



## Dealing with visitors

### Description

During the placement students may be required to deal with visitors face-to-face. These could be customers and clients who have come to attend meetings, buy products, or services.

This role play exercise helps students to practise how to listen and speak to visitors.

### Learning objectives

- To know how to speak and listen to visitors in the workplace.
- To understand that a range of communication skills affect how they will appear to visitors on placement.

### Resources required

*Communicating skills: tone and body language* sheet.

Scenarios for students' role-plays.

### Procedure

Ask the students to identify different reasons why customers and clients visit business premises. Examples they should identify include:

- to buy products or receive services – e.g. shops, cinemas, theatres, hotels, garages, train stations, doctors, hospital, dentists
- to attend meetings or carry out business transactions such as selling products and services.

Explain that, when they are dealing with a customer or client while on work experience placement, it is important to remember that they are representing the company. Visitors will form an impression of the company from the way they look, speak and listen to them.

Discuss whether good speaking and listening skills just involve the words you speak and hear. Ask the students to identify what other communication skills are important when speaking and listening. They should identify that:

- visitors will expect to be spoken to clearly and in a polite friendly manner
- the person the visitor is meeting shows an interest in them by adopting a positive tone of voice, using appropriate body language and facial expressions
- visitors want to be dealt with promptly and efficiently
- the visitor will be listened to politely to establish his or her needs

Ask for a volunteer to play the part of the shop assistant in a gift shop. He or she is asked to demonstrate poor use of tone, body language and facial expressions. Ask for another volunteer to play the role of customer, or take on this role yourself.

- A customer enters a shop to buy a birthday present and asks you for suggestions as to what might be suitable.

When the role-play has ended, go through the *Communicating skills: tone and body language* sheet and discuss the key points.



Provide an opportunity for all students to practise their skills, using one of the following scenarios, or write ones of your own. Ask the students to work in pairs and say they should seek to demonstrate good skills.

**1. The bakery and the long queue**

You are serving the lunchtime customers. There is a long queue. One customer asks for a tuna sandwich on brown bread. You have sold out of these, so you suggest alternatives. Help the customer but be aware there are other people waiting.

**2. The car repair centre and the nervous customer**

You are helping on the reception desk at the repair centre. A young man brings his car in for a service and MOT. He is nervous as he doesn't know much about cars. Reassure him and make him feel at ease.

**3. The manager in a hurry**

A senior manager from another site of your company arrives ten minutes late and is in a hurry to get to a meeting. You have been told to welcome the manager, ask him/her to sign in the necessary details in the visitors' book, issue a security badge, show where the cloakrooms are then walk your visitor to the meeting room. Deal calmly and efficiently with the visitor even if they try to rush you, but make sure you do all you have been asked to do.

**4. Charity shop**

A customer has bought a second hand book from the charity shop the other day and has complained that pages are missing. Meanwhile the phone rings. What do you do?

## Communication skills: tone and body language

### What is a good and bad tone?

People respond instinctively to voice tone; either positively or negatively. A friendly and interested voice tells people that they can rely on you and that you want to help them. This will usually involve speaking clearly and with confidence. The opposite to a friendly voice could include shouting, whispering, speaking too quickly, mumbling, sounding bored, rushed or worst of all, saying nothing.

### What is good and bad body language?

Good body language means:

- giving your visitor your full attention
- making eye contact
- not interrupting until they have finished speaking or explaining what they want, nodding, smiling and giving some positive encouragement (e.g. "Uh huh", "Mm").

### Poor body language means:

- giving your visitor only some of your attention because you are disinterested or not confident
- making little or no eye contact with the visitor,
- not smiling
- carrying on doing something else
- standing with your arms folded
- making no encouraging comments.

### What is important about facial expressions?

Think about different parts of your face and how important they are. The face gives so many clues about how confident you are when speaking and listening.

Eyes – when you look directly into the eyes of your visitor it shows that you are interested and paying attention. However, if you stare too closely the visitor could feel quite uncomfortable. Looking away frequently can indicate that you are distracted by other things, nervous or bored.

Mouth – smiling needs to be genuine and natural but don't feel you have to be smiling all the time. Don't speak with your mouth hidden by your hand or bite your lips which show that you are worried or nervous.

## Scenes at work

### Description

This is an activity used as part of debriefing students after their work placement. Students work in groups to develop and present a short scene based on an incident from their work placement. Incidents are chosen to reflect the importance of good speaking or listening skills.

### Learning objectives

- To help students reflect on their work experience.
- To develop oral and teamwork skills.

### Resources required

Work experience diaries (if used, to remind students of what happened).  
Scenes at work script template.

### Procedure

Arrange students in small groups. Explain that their task is to develop a short script (2-3 minutes), using ideas drawn from their work placement, which they (or selected groups) will perform to the rest of the class. Scripts should demonstrate the importance of speaking and listening skills in the workplace.

Explain that scenes can focus on incidents that really happened and accurately reflect what they experienced. Alternatively, the scenes can be created using their imagination about what could happen at their place of work.

Ask students to discuss amongst themselves possible incidents from their experience and choose one to develop into a script. Distribute copies of the script template for groups to use.

When the groups have completed the task, ask some or all of them to perform their scenes.

Discuss the key points about speaking and listening skills that were highlighted in their performances. Could anything have been done to improve the outcome?

## Scenes at work script template

Description of setting

Characters' names

Description of incident

Script

## Quick drama tasks

### Description

Here are some ideas for short drama activities, which can be used as preparation for work placements, or to help students' reflect on their experience as part of debriefing sessions.

### Learning objectives

- To develop confidence in speaking skills.
- To support creativity in drama.

### Resources required

Scenarios for role-plays.

### Procedure : *Scenarios*

Choose one or more of the following scenarios in which there is a conflict or difficulty that needs resolving. Ask for volunteers to take on the roles, or ask students to work in pairs.

1. A customer in a restaurant has been waiting for over 20 minutes and still hasn't received their meal.
  - The customer is really cross because a woman at the next table placed her order after you and she has already been served.
  - The waiter knows that the restaurant is very busy and the kitchen is not coping well.
2. Two decorators are standing outside a house where they are painting the outside woodwork.
  - Decorator 1 has been painting the upstairs window frames all morning, standing on the scaffolding. It is lunchtime and decorator 1 asks decorator 2 to finish the job.
  - Decorator 2: doesn't like heights but is too embarrassed to say. What can decorator 2 say so that he or she doesn't get found out or should the decorator just own up?
3. A young employee goes to the manager's office to ask for more money
  - The young employee has been working part-time here for over a year and really thinks they deserve to earn a bit more.
  - The manager knows that the employee is one of the organisation's best workers, but head office has said no wage increases until they say so.
4. A furniture showroom is closing in 10 minutes. There is only one customer in the store
  - The customer has seen a sofa they like but it is a bit dearer than they wanted to pay, so the customer is pondering what to do.
  - The salesperson wants to close the shop on time but hasn't sold enough furniture this month and so needs to sell the customer an expensive sofa

## **Vox pop attitudes to work experience**

### ***Vox Pop***

Vox pop (voice of the people) is a presenting style commonly used in news and current affairs programmes. Members of the public are given a short interview on a topic currently in the news. Once edited the programme shows only a few sentences from each person interviewed, so that a number of different viewpoints are given.

Working in small groups, ask the students to respond in characters of their own choice to statements about young people and work experience: The responses should reflect a range of different attitudes to the topic.

Examples of topics:

- All young people should do work experience.
- Young people don't know how to speak or listen properly.
- I wouldn't employ anyone under the age of 20 – they don't know how to treat customers.

Any views of particular interest can be developed further by asking more questions and opening up a discussion for the whole class.

Vox pop can provide opportunities for the development of character work as well as communication skills.

## Post-placement talk

### Description

This exercise provides a template for students to prepare and present a post-placement talk focusing on speaking and listening skills. The exercise could take place in English lessons, in support of the Spoken Language component in GCSE, or as part of a post-placement debriefing lesson in careers.

### Learning objectives

- To understand the importance of speaking and listening in the work place; to reflect on how they used and developed their own speaking and listening skills whilst on placement.

### Resources required

- Copies of *Speaking and listening at work: my experience* template for each student.

### Procedure

As a class ask the students to list the different opportunities on work placement that they had to use their speaking and listening skills.

They should identify and give examples from some of the following:

- face to face conversations with customers, clients, colleagues and managers in a variety of formal and informal situations
- make and receive telephone calls
- listen to and/or contribute to meetings.

Distribute the *Speaking and listening at work: my experience* template and ask students to prepare a short talk. You may wish to ask them to practise their talk to a parent, guardian or friend as part of a homework task.

After they have completed their preparation work, some or the entire group should present their talk to you, or to an audience (e.g. employers, governors) and receive suitable feedback.

The talks can be assessed for the Spoken Language component of GCSE English, where students are required to:

- Present and listen to information and ideas, selecting and organising information effectively and persuasively
- Listen and respond appropriately to questions and feedback
- Express ideas using Standard English when appropriate.

Students could use the context of speaking and listening at work as the context for a written piece of work.



### **Speaking and listening at work: my experience**

Prepare and present a talk on your speaking and listening experiences on work placement. Develop the content of your talk using the following headings and ideas:

#### **Placement company**

Where did you have your placement? Why did you choose this placement? What does the company do?

#### **Using your speaking and listening skills at work**

Describe how you used your speaking and listening skills before the placement started – e.g. at a pre-placement interview, or if you made a phone call to the company to confirm arrangements.

Describe at least two examples when you had to demonstrate your speaking skills while you were on your placement.

Describe at least two examples when you had to demonstrate your listening skills while you were on your placement.

Describe what you found easy and what you found difficult and why. What would you do differently in the future? What were you most pleased about and why?

#### **Lessons learned**

What have you learned about your speaking and listening skills and their importance in the workplace? Give three reasons why good speaking and listening skills are important in the workplace.

If you had a review meeting with your manager at work, what comments did you receive about your speaking and listening skills? What advice did you receive on how you could develop or improve your skills?

What did you find easy or difficult about speaking and listening at work?

Would you do anything differently in future?

How can you improve, or develop your speaking and listening skills in the future?