



ARKS KEYS TO COMMUNICATION

SPEAKING

INTRODUCTION

Speech is one of the most important forms of communication, with success dependent, not only on what you say, but on how you say it. In this chapter you are asked to consider a wide range of circumstances in which speaking plays an important part. These include relaxed situations, when you find it easy to talk and also some more difficult situations, when it is sometimes hard to know what to say. Your choice of words, tone of voice and manner of speaking all have an impact on how a conversation or dialogue will progress.

Speaking is a vital part in everyday communications. The activities in this chapter highlight a range of familiar situations asking you to consider ways of expressing yourself effectively to achieve the responses you would like.

For many people, speaking in public can be a nerve-wracking experience, whether it is to a large formal audience or to a small group of people they know well. The activities here will help to develop your confidence, get you used to the sound of your own voice and take you through the process of preparing a more formal talk stage by stage.

SPEAKING



In this section you can:

- think about how to speak in different situations and to different people
- practise starting conversations
- practise speaking when it is difficult to know what to say



Activity 1

Think about what you did last week and the different types of conversations you had. Make a note of them in the table below, saying whom you spoke to and what it was about.

Here are some examples to get you started:

People	Situations
my boss	I was late for work this morning
a customer	asked for a discount on a purchase
a neighbour	her dog bit my cat
a colleague	in a canteen, about last night's football match
my child's teacher	child needs help with maths
a colleague	taking over my work while I'm on holiday
my tutor	I can't attend next week's class



Activity

Activity 2

This grid can help you to categorise your conversations, helping you to make note of which ones are easy/difficult and which are voluntary/essential. Thinking about conversations in this way may help you to recognise some of the different ways that you speak to suit different situations.

Using the conversations that you listed in *Activity 1*, fill in the grid.

	EASY	DIFFICULT
VOLUNTARY	<p>A:</p> <p>a colleague in the canteen</p>	<p>B:</p> <p>my neighbour about her dog biting my cat</p>
COMPULSORY	<p>C:</p> <p>a customer asking for a discount</p>	<p>D:</p> <p>explaining to my boss why I was late for work this morning</p>

Activity 3



Think about the conversations that people often find difficult (band D in the grid). There are several ways of expressing your feelings:

- **the language you use**
- **the intonation of your voice**
- **your body language**

Example:

Imagine you work in an office with about 5 colleagues; you are not the youngest or oldest and you are not the most junior or senior member of staff.

The window is open, it is getting cold, you find the draught unbearable and you want to shut the window.

The chart on the next page suggests six different ways of asking someone to shut the window. Read them and think about the different responses they might receive.

- **Which ones do you think would be the most effective?**
- **What undesirable effects could some have?**
- **Does it make a difference who you are speaking to?**
- **Would you use different phrases with different people?**

What you say	Who you say it to	Response
I don't understand how can you work in this cold!	colleague sitting	I like the fresh air. (you haven't made it clear enough to your colleague what you want)
Why don't you ever close the window?		
Hey, shut that bloody window!		
Would you please be so kind as to shut the window. I'm afraid of catching a cold.		
Do you mind if I shut the window? It's rather cold in here.		
It's quite draughty in here, don't you think?		

- Complete the table by choosing different colleagues to make your remarks to and imagine their responses.
- If you can, discuss your results with colleagues and discover how many different responses you found.
- Can you think of any other phrases that would suit this situation? What impact would they have?

Now try some of these situations and think about how you would talk to each person.

1. You've borrowed a saw and the handle has come off. What do you say when you return it to:
 - a) your neighbour
 - b) your colleague
 - c) your son-in-law
 - d) your boss

2. You are going to a football match. How do you tell:
 - a) your wife (on Saturday afternoon and her mother is coming to visit)
 - b) your father (who will want to come with you)
 - c) your boss (you'll need a day off)

3. You are pregnant. Depending on your circumstances, how do you break the news to:
 - a) your boyfriend of 17
 - b) your parents
 - c) your husband
 - d) your 17 year old daughter

If you are working in a group, try to work through some of these situations together.

What you say and how you phrase it depend on a lot of things: the person you are speaking to, your relationship with that person, the situation etc.



Activity 4

Now think of some situations when speaking is voluntary but difficult, (square B on the grid).

Here are some examples of situations where you might want to start a conversation but are unsure how to go about it. Choose one that you would like to try. Or choose a difficult situation from your own life.

1. You are at a party at your boss's house and his wife is sitting next to you.
2. You are sitting in a dentist's waiting room with three other patients.
3. There is a beautiful girl sitting opposite you on a long train journey.
4. You are watching your child's football match with some other parents that you don't know.
5. You join colleagues for a coffee break on your first day at work.



Discussion

If you are working in a group, discuss how you would deal with these different situations and then try acting some of them out.

Why start a conversation, why wait?

Waiting is safe. You wouldn't make yourself look ridiculous, but there could be an awkward silence and you could miss out on possible contacts or friendships.

On the other hand there are some situations when it is not appropriate to start a conversation, for example, when a colleague is concentrating on his work or two people are having an argument.

Can you think of any other situations when it is best not to talk?



What do you think?

However, if the circumstances are right, pluck up the courage and start talking.

Practice Activities:

1. Four people are sitting in a cafe. It's early in the morning and everybody is tired. One by one they start to talk to each other. How can they start the conversation?
2. Two colleagues are sitting in the canteen discussing something. A third colleague joins them but she doesn't know what they are talking about. How can she try to join the conversation?
3. While waiting for a bus, you overhear two people talking about a concert they have been to. You have tickets for the same concert at the weekend and would like to find out if they had enjoyed it. What do you say?

How does the language you use differ in these different situations? Can you think of particular phrases that you would use in one context but not in another?



Activity 5

When speaking is difficult and essential

(square D on the grid)

Here are some examples of situations when speaking may be difficult but is essential (you have to speak). Choose one that you would find difficult but would like to try, or choose a difficult situation in your own life.

1. You are asked to work overtime nearly every evening but feel that once or twice a week is enough.
2. Your child is being bullied at school and you want to talk to the teacher about it.
3. Your last pay cheque is wrong as they forgot to include your overtime.
4. You want to change shifts with a colleague because:
 - you have tickets for a football match.
 - your mother is seriously ill.
5. You have been asked to be best man at a friend's wedding but now you can't go.
6. Your partner wants to go to Spain on holiday but you want to go to Scotland.

Which people do you find most difficult to talk to?

Why is that?

Checklist

- think about exactly what you want to say and prepare yourself
- choose the right moment
- say to the person that you want to talk
- ask if he/she has time to talk
- say exactly and clearly what you want to say
- listen to their response
- try to come to an agreement



What you
have learned

Evaluation Questions

How did you get on in the different speaking situations?

What differences did you notice in the **language** used in different situations?

What difference does **tone, volume and emphasis** make to what is being said?

When you watch other people talking, what effect does their **body language** have?

Give yourself some homework! Think of a situation where you would like to speak out. Imagine how the dialogue might go and practise it with a friend. Try it out in real life. Good luck!

"LUCKY DIP" SPEECHES

In this section you can:

- practise speaking to an audience
- learn how to plan a short talk



Do you sometimes have to speak to a group of people (committees, at an interview)?

Have you ever been asked your opinion on a subject?

Have you ever wanted to give your opinion on an issue?

Where might you want to speak?

Tick any situations below that apply to you, and add any others that you might find yourself in.

- Your children's school
- The doctors' surgery
- A community meeting about local traffic congestion
- At work about the duty-rota
- A trade union meeting
- At home about the household bills
- The sports club
- In the pub
- In your study group



In all these cases it would be useful to be prepared.



Activity 1

Warming Up

(This is also a good exercise for new groups getting to know each other).

Bring something from home with you to the group meeting. Choose something you can say quite a lot about, something you are attached to or that you think that the group would be interested in. For example, a photograph of your pets, a special football shirt, a favourite book, a souvenir from a holiday, something you made yourself, anything that you would like to talk about.

Everyone in the group takes it in turn to show their item and talk about it. Try to talk for at least 2 or 3 minutes.

Checklist of what to include in your talk:

- why you brought it
- what it means to you
- where you got it
- where you keep it at home
- what other people think about it
- any (funny) stories about it

The rest of the group can listen and ask questions.

Activity 2

On *page 23* is a list of topics for your group to talk about. You can either each take a turn to choose a subject, or you can photocopy the page, cut out the different subjects and place them in a paper bag. Everyone in the group then picks out a topic.

Aim to talk about it for about 3 minutes.

Take 10 minutes to prepare your talk, make a few notes and think about the order in which you want to say things. Everyone in the group has to speak. Draw cards for the order of speakers. The group should listen but not comment.

After every speech the listeners may write down some questions or remarks for discussion later.

Commentary round

After all speakers have had a go, you can comment on the speeches. First the speakers are asked to comment on their experience, then the listeners.

The comments should be more about the style and delivery of the speech than about the contents.

You could talk about the topics in a second round if you like.



Discussion



What you have learned

Here are some questions to use in your discussions on the impact of the speeches.

Questions for speakers	Questions for listeners
How did you feel doing this activity?	Was the talk interesting? Did you listen?
Would you do it differently if you were to do it again?	Did the speaker look at you? Did the speaker speak freely, or did he/she read from a paper?
Did you make use of any notes that you made?	Did you understand the point the speaker was trying to make?
How was your audience? Did they help you/ did they frighten you?	Did the speaker seem nervous?
Did you get your point across? Why? Why not?	

**My favourite
actor/actress**

**How I will live
in the year 2010**

**My favourite place
at home**

**What I hate
most**

When I'm free I ...

**How to
cook a ...**

**What makes a man
a good husband**

**What makes a
woman a good
wife**

**My favourite TV
programme**

My ideal job

My last holidays

If I had £10,000

**The person I most
admire**

**Where I want to
travel**



What do you think?

Evaluation Questions

What do you find most difficult about giving a short talk?

What can you try to make it easier?

"SPILT MILK"

In this section you can:

- think about the different ways that you express yourself, to suit different situations
- think about the reactions of others when you speak
- notice how other people deal with awkward situations and how they talk their way out of them

Imagine yourself in the following situation in a supermarket and think carefully about how you would speak and act towards the different people involved. Discuss your responses with a friend and see how your ideas differ.

While shopping you accidentally drop a large carton of milk which bursts dramatically on the floor. Who will you need to speak to? What will you say? Would you be angry, apologetic, upset, guilty, embarrassed, frightened about what will happen? What tone of voice should you use?

What would you say?

Would you find an assistant and explain what happened and apologise? Would you move on quickly and hope that nobody saw you? Or would you argue that the milk shelves were stacked badly?



While the assistant fetches a mop and bucket, someone you know passes the scene and makes a comment about how clumsy some people are. How would you respond? What tone of voice would you use now?

What would you say?

How you respond will depend, partly on how well you know the person making the comment, and your own personality. You could make a joke of the situation to keep the atmosphere light-hearted or you may feel angry or embarrassed at someone speaking to you in this way.

Finally, think about how you might tell your family or friends about the incident some time later. What would you say now? What tone of voice would you use?

What would you say?

When you are deliberately telling a story against yourself you want your audience to laugh. You may exaggerate a little and select which details you tell them to ensure that the story is amusing. Your explanation of the event this time is probably quite different from the one you gave the shop assistant.

Have you ever been in a similar situation? If so, what did you say and what response did you get? Were you happy with the way you handled the situation?

Write about your experience here:



What do you think?

The "spilt milk" activity demonstrates that the language you use and your tone of voice change to suit different circumstances. Being aware of how you can use these language forms to work for you, and recognising them in others, will help you to become a more effective communicator.



What you
have learned

Evaluation Questions

Have you learned anything about the way you speak to other people from this activity?

What kind of response do you find useful when you are in an awkward situation?

Look out for how other people respond in different situations and how effectively they communicate with the people involved. What advice would you give them about what to say?

NEGOTIATIONS

In this section you can:

- learn to recognise situations where you have to negotiate
- discover that negotiation is a process that you work through
- learn useful phrases to make your negotiations effective
- practise negotiating



Everyone uses some form of negotiation in their lives. Very often you are not aware of it and you do it automatically. You probably have to negotiate something every day, for instance, if you have to decide who will do the shopping, arrange the household, organise the family holiday, or who will drive the car.

Can you think of any situations in your life when you have to negotiate with other people? Write them here:



In a negotiation, the people involved are trying to achieve different outcomes, i.e. they each want to get their own way. You may want someone to do something that he/she doesn't want to do. Meanwhile, that person may expect things from you that you don't want to do.

There are two ways of resolving this situation:

- you can fight or push until you get your own way
- you can negotiate and try to reach a solution that suits both of you

This second solution implies some "give and take" on both sides.



Activity 1

Look at this problem and think about how it could be resolved.

Next Monday, Peter wants to take the day off. The weather forecast is good and he wants to spend a long weekend at the beach with his girl friend who he doesn't see as much as he would like as they live in different cities. It's two years since they first met and he has rented a lovely cottage to celebrate. Peter knows that it is very busy at work just now, with an order to get out by Tuesday and that nobody can be spared but he really would like to have this special weekend as he is also worried about how little he sees of his girlfriend.



What do you think?

What do you think Peter should do? Write your ideas here.

What are the main factors to consider in trying to solve Peter's problem?

- Is it only Peter's problem?
- He wants the day off but he is very late in asking.
- Employees have the right to take holidays, but they are very busy just now and Peter really can't be spared.
- He is a good and highly qualified worker. It's the boss's problem as well.

By identifying the main factors in the problem, you can then decide whether or not it is possible to negotiate a solution that will suit both sides, in this case both Peter and his boss.

Phase One: what is the problem?

The first step is to decide exactly what the issues are. In this example, Peter and his boss want different things; Peter wants a day off and his boss wants him to work.

Phase Two: are there grounds for negotiation?

For negotiations to be successful, it is important that the problem affects both parties involved, i.e. they both have something to win or lose. This means that they both have something to bargain with.

Before they can start negotiating, Peter and his boss have to decide what is important to them.

Peter	Peter's boss
Beautiful weather	Important order
Cottage is already booked	Must be finished this week
Worked hard over the last few weeks	Everyone is working hard
No holiday for a long time	Peter is very late with his request

Now you are ready for the third phase of the process:

- think about possible solutions in advance
- think of possible proposals for your opponent
- it is important to decide before the discussion how far you are prepared to go to accommodate other people. What is your bottom line?

Phase Three: explain your point of view clearly.

This is your opportunity to express your priorities and the way you see the issues, as Peter and his boss have listed in the table above. There are different strategies that you can use to put your point of view. For more information on these, look at **“Strategies in Negotiations”** in this chapter.

Now you are ready for the real negotiation. Once you have presented your case you may want to suggest some possible solutions. When Peter and his boss exchange views, they have to choose which points they want to make and at what stage in the negotiation they make them. They have to try to convince each other and then reach an agreement.

Phase Four: finding a solution

Here are some possible solutions to Peter’s problem. Perhaps you can think of some others to add?

Peter	Peter’s boss
<p>Work longer hours for the rest of the week</p> <p>Ask colleagues to help</p> <p>Resign</p>	<p>Job must be done, doesn’t matter by whom</p> <p>Colleagues can take over some work but it must not interfere with their work</p>

In this phase it is important how you discuss and negotiate. You can play it hard, by threatening to leave or firing the employee, but it is better to come to an agreement that suits everyone.

Which solution would you choose for Peter?



What do you think?

Phase Five: the agreement

The best solution is when both parties believe that they got what they wanted. This is known as a win-win situation, where everyone is happy with the outcome and feel that they have gained something from the negotiation. For example, if Peter works overtime on Thursday and Friday, to complete his share of the workload, then his boss can still meet the deadline and Peter can have his romantic weekend.

Remember that if no one is prepared to be flexible, then a solution will never be reached. However sometimes you may feel very strongly about a subject and decide that a compromise is not possible and sometimes you may find yourself negotiating with others who are not prepared to change.

Can you think of examples in your own life when you have found it impossible to negotiate? Why was this?



What do you think?



Activity 2

The example of Peter showed you the path of a negotiation process. Here are some more situations you could use for practise. You could also choose a situation of your own that you wrote about at the beginning of this section.

- Choose a partner you can practise with. If it is the first time, follow Phases 1 - 5 closely.
- Discuss how you got on.
- Try role-playing some of these situations, taking turns at acting out the roles and observing and then discussing how you got on afterwards.

Remember: Phase One: what exactly is the problem?

Phase Two: are there grounds for negotiation?

Phase Three: explain your point of view clearly

Phase Four: the discussion

Phase Five: the agreement

Situation 1

Your daughter is 15 years old. On Saturday night she wants to go to a local club. You want her to come home at 12 o' clock but she says she doesn't want to be tied to such a ridiculous time as her friends are all staying out much later. Work at this problem in pairs and then exchange your ideas in the group.

Situation 2

You are committee members of a football club. There is some money left at the end of the season from a sponsor and there is some left from a Summer Fair. What do you spend the money on? The showers have to be repaired as they only have cold water and the first team needs new strips. Both purchases are necessary, but there is only enough money for one. How do you decide?

Situation 3

There are problems at work. Management want to smarten up the company's image and would like all employees to wear jackets or suits to work rather than casual clothes. The employees feel strongly that their dress has nothing to do with their ability to do their job. How can they reach a compromise?

Situation 4

Students have a small coffee area where they can make coffee and tea at breaks. The same group of people always seem to be the ones left to buy the fresh milk and other supplies and there are always dirty cups left lying around. How can they resolve the situation?

Negotiating Exercise: Who Gets the Heart?



Discussion

Imagine you are a member of a heart transplant team at a large city hospital. You have six patients who all desperately need a transplant if they are to have any chance of survival. They are all critically ill and could die at any time.

You receive news that the heart of a 16-year-old boy, killed in a road accident, has become available for transplant. The team must decide quickly which of your patients should receive the heart, before it starts to deteriorate.

The age and sex of the patient doesn't need to be the same as the donor. The young boy's heart could be successfully transplanted to an elderly woman.

Discuss the situation of each patient and their entitlement to the heart.

Try ranking the patients in order from 1-6, with one being your first choice to receive the heart and six being your last choice. Listen to the different points of view of people in the group.

Can your group reach an agreement, or come to a consensus on who should receive the heart?

The Patients:

Ali Mahood, 57 gas engineer. His 47-year-old wife is a housewife and they have five children.

Susan Potter, 33, social worker. She is planning to get married next year to her school teacher fiancé.

Paul McLeod, 26, unemployed since leaving school due to poor health. He lives with his parents and spends his time sketching cartoons of TV characters.

George Little, 45, accountant. He is married with two children who go to private school. His wife Jennifer is a part owner of a dress shop.

Jackie Day, 28, waitress, but previously trained as a nurse. She lives with her five-year-old son, Gavin.

Jamie Stewart, 12, eldest of four children, a keen footballer until he became ill.

Evaluation Questions

How can you decide if a situation is suitable for negotiation?



What you
have learned

What problems have you experienced when negotiating?

Are there any ideas in this section that might help you?
Which methods would you like to try, and when would you use them?

NEGOTIATION STRATEGIES AND TACTICS



In this section you will discover:

- different strategies and tactics used in negotiations
- how to recognise (and oppose) different strategies and tactics
- how to use this knowledge in your everyday life

(Before starting this section, read **Negotiation** in this chapter)

How can you influence a conversation in which negotiation is involved?

Think of any tactics you might use and write them here:



What do you think?

Here are some different methods for you to consider

1. Ask for more than you really expect.

This is a very popular tactic. For example, a mother wants her daughter to tidy her room. She knows that her daughter hates to do it, so she asks her to **tidy and clean** the room. The daughter now has the opportunity to “negotiate”. She says “yes” to the tidying up but “no” to the cleaning. Both parties believe that they got what they wanted: a Win-Win situation.

Have you ever tried this tactic, or can you think of a situation where it might work in your life?

Could you use this tactic at a committee meeting or at work? Think of a situation where you could try this approach.

2. Walk away

This term speaks for itself. Perhaps you have used it already. People use it a lot when buying and selling, especially at market stalls, second hand shops, etc. Here's how it works: you have to make sure that the seller knows that you are really interested in purchasing what he has to offer. Ask about the price and then offer a much lower one. The seller reacts but does not accept the lower price. You increase your bid, but the seller still does not react. Now walk away and pretend not to be interested any more. You might watch the salesman from a distance, then come back later and try it again.



Have you ever tried this type of negotiation? When might you use it?

3. Lobby

Lobbying is when you try to influence decisions being made by other people. Arrange to meet some decision-makers before their meeting to put forward your point of view and ask them for their support. Although they still make the final decision, your lobbying may persuade them to see things from your point of view.

Here is an example:

An outdoor skating-club wants the lake to be dredged because it is filled with reeds. This means that the ice is not safe to use.

A member of the skating club committee talks to a councillor before the council meeting to try to convince him of how important it is for the lake to be dredged.

Who could you lobby to support a cause that is important to you?

4. "Salami" tactic

This type of negotiation works well, especially when you have a lot of requests. Salami is a sausage that you cut into slices before you eat it. In this type of negotiation, you try to get what you want by gaining a small slice at a time, one after the other.

Here is an example:

Jack wants to buy a car. He found a fine second hand Citroen he would like, with a lot of useful accessories (wheel rims, mud flaps, radio, extra speakers). The dealer wants £6000. Jack wants to get it for £4500 including all the accessories.

The negotiation starts by the dealer asking for £6000 (more than he really expects). Jack offers £3500. After some bargaining they end up at £4500. Then Jack asks first for the wheel rims, then the mud flaps and then the radio. The dealer objects every time, but after some haggling, he agrees. When they go inside to make up the bill Jack demands the speakers as well. The dealer refuses. But when Jack threatens to call the deal off, the dealer agrees at last because he doesn't want to lose the customer and he is glad to have sold the car.

Can you think of a situation where you could use this tactic?



What do you think?

5. Surprise

Do people ever take you by surprise? Has someone ever asked you a question or demanded something from you and you find yourself agreeing without really wanting to, simply because they have caught you unaware? Have you ever bought something from a salesman at your door or on the telephone that you might not have bought if you had longer to think about it?

When has this happened to you? How did you feel?

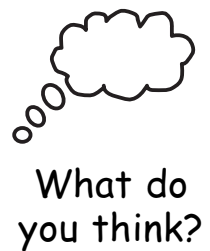
What could you have done to prevent the surprise?

(If you can't think of anything, look at the different **phases of negotiation**)

6. Delay

This is the opposite of surprise. When you are in the middle of a negotiation and you don't like what is being suggested, you could try to delay it. For example, you could ask for more details, or further calculations, in the hope of delaying any final decision. By doing this, you may be able to give yourself more time to argue your case, or you may be able to prevent any action being taken at all. Some people manage to delay decisions effectively with comments like, "I'll ring you later", "I'll get back to you about that", "I don't seem to have my diary just now."

Can you think of an occasion when you have used a delaying tactic? Be honest! How did you get on?



Reminder:

- Negotiation is when you try to reach an agreement, with at least one other person. If no one else is prepared to negotiate, then you are at a deadlock.
- Being able to recognise possible tactics can help you to develop a negotiating strategy. This could protect you from doing things that you don't want to do.



Activity

Think of an example for each type of tactic and act it out with a partner. When you have finished, discuss how effective you think each tactic would be.



Ask for more than you really expect	
Walk away	
Lobby	
"Salami" tactic	
Surprise	
Delay	

Evaluation Questions

Would you use any of the tactics mentioned above? Which ones do you like best?



What you have learned

Are all the strategies honest, or could some be manipulative? What do you think?

Which of the strategies mentioned in this activity would you like to try out for yourself and why?

PLANNING AN INFORMATIVE TALK

Have you ever had to prepare a talk and present it to a group of people? This can be an important way of communicating information and can occur in different aspects of your life.

Have you ever had to do any of the following?

- Report back to a committee or community organisation you are involved in?
- Explain a new procedure at work to colleagues?
- Demonstrate a new product in the course of your work (e.g. photocopier)?
- Give a short presentation at a job interview?
- Speak to a group of people about your hobby?
- Speak to a group about an experience you have had?
- Report back to your learning group on a project you have been involved in?
- Speak to your child's teacher about the subjects he/she wants to study?



When have you had to speak to a group of people? How did you get on?

- Are you nervous about speaking in public?
- Do you worry about what to say and how to say it?

Giving a talk, even to a small audience, can be a nerve-racking experience. Most people feel nervous, even experienced speakers. In the same way that you can plan written work to be clearly understood, you can also plan a talk. When giving a talk you not only have to think about what you are going to say, but also how you can present it in an interesting way to your audience. Being prepared is the best way to reduce nerves.



What do you think?

Before you start to plan, first ask yourself three questions about the nature of your talk.

1. Who is your audience?

2. What is the setting?

3. What is the purpose of your talk?

1. **Who is your audience?** Will you be speaking to a general interest group or will they know quite a lot about the subject already? This is an important point, as it will indicate the level of your talk. If you are talking to people who already have an interest in the subject, you won't need to spend much time on background information, but move directly on to the key points that you want to make.

2. **What is the setting?** Will you be talking to a large or small group, in a formal or informal setting? The situation will help to set the tone of your talk. If you are talking to a small, informal group, you want to appear relaxed. You may choose to remain seated, include one or two stories to illustrate your point and even include a few jokes.

3. **What is the purpose of your talk?** Is it to inform or to report back on an experience you have had? Is it to stimulate discussion or to introduce a new topic to your audience? Is it to entertain? Knowing the purpose of your talk will help you to decide on the type of information to include.

Example:

Your child suffers from asthma and you are an active member of a local Asthma Support Group. You are asked to speak to the group about a new treatment your child has received.

This audience will most likely already know a great deal about asthma, so won't need much background information on the illness, only some details about you and your child's experiences. They will have come to hear you talk about the new treatment, to hear of its success, to find out if it will suit their needs or to add to their knowledge of the illness.

Now think how different your talk would have to be if you were speaking to a parents' group in your community centre.

Some of your audience may have no experience of asthma or not really know what it is. Your talk on this occasion would have to be more general, with some background information about the illness and what it is like to bring up an asthmatic child. In this case your purpose would be more of awareness raising than giving detailed information of your child's latest treatment.

In both these examples the setting would probably be informal. However, if the setting were to change to a local health board, or council, to whom you had applied for a grant, what difference would it make?

Planning a talk can be similar to gathering information for an essay or a report and the layout follows a similar pattern.

- **introduction**
- **development of the subject**
- **conclusions**

However, to be effective, a talk requires some different emphasis, as you do not want to sound as if you are simply reading a text.

You may find this plan useful in preparing a talk.

Introduction. Tell your audience the purpose of your talk. Give a little background information and your interest in it - how much will depend on your audience. Outline three or four main points that you want to make. It is important that you identify these to give your talk some structure. You might like to emphasise your main points by writing them on a board or flip chart, or put slides on an overhead projector. Keep it simple so that you do not confuse your audience.

When you start talking, you want to make sure that you get everyone's attention. Starting with a surprise, a challenge, a funny story or a question, are all possible ways to get people interested in what you have to say.

Development. Take your main points one at a time, explaining them clearly and giving examples. Repeating your list of main points, or drawing attention to your list, reminds people of where your discussion is heading. As you move from one point to another be sure to link them in to your overall theme. Avoid too much detail as your audience will not be able to take it all in. Keep your eye on the time. You don't want to talk for too long.

Conclusions. Don't just stop suddenly when you have made all your main points but plan carefully how you will finish. Be sure to end on a strong note. Summarise the main points again; link your subject to other wider issues or make some general conclusions from the information you have presented. Aim to leave your audience thinking about what you have said and stimulated by it.

Questions. Encourage people to ask questions. As well as providing your audience with more information, they can also give you an idea of how well your talk has been received.



Activity

Prepare a 3 minute informative talk.

Choose a subject you know well. It can be a hobby, such as fishing, cycling, sport, gardening, cooking, collecting, films; a job you have done; the town you live in; an organisation you are involved in; an experience you have had. Choose any subject that you know well, so that at this stage, you already have something to talk about.

Write the subject of your talk here.

Decide who you are talking to - remember it is important to know your audience and how much they know about your subject.

What is the purpose of your talk - to entertain, to inform, a bit of both?



Activity
continued

Why did you choose this subject? Give some background information explaining your interest.

The information you have gathered so far will help you to introduce your subject to your audience, stating what you are going to talk about and why.

Now list three or four main points that you would like to make in your talk.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____



Activity
continued

Take each point in turn and write down an example or some additional information to back it up.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

Now write a concluding comment, which sums up what you want to say in your talk.

By completing each section of this activity, you have made a detailed plan for a talk. Now think about how you would actually say each part. If you don't feel too self-conscious, try practising your talk in front of a mirror.

Tips on Giving a Talk



Activity

Fear: Expect to feel nervous. It's quite natural to feel anxious the first time you stand up in front of a room full of people. Be well prepared. Know your subject, know what your audience is expecting and practise so that it becomes familiar.

Notes: You will usually need notes to remind you of the main points you want to make and to help you to keep to your plan (**See Taking Notes in Keys to Learning**).

Never read directly from your notes: You won't have the same impact on your audience and you won't be aware of their responses. Notes can be headings, key words or a diagram, just enough to jog your memory on the next point that you want to make.

Be yourself: Try to be natural, using your own accent and manner of speaking. What usually work best are enthusiasm and sincerity.

Visual aids: If you want to show something to your audience, make sure that it is big enough for everyone to see. Black/white board, flip chart, photographs or an overhead projector can all be useful. Check that you have everything you need (pens, chalk, slides, etc.) before you start your talk.

Key points: Draw attention to important points using visual aids or repetition.

Be brief: Speak clearly and simply, people can easily become bored.

Keep to the point: Try not to drift off the subject.

Discussion and question: Decide beforehand if you want your audience to ask questions while you are talking or to save questions for the end. If you want discussion and active listening, try to encourage your audience.

Enthusiasm: Choose a topic that excites you. Enthusiasm can be infectious.



Activity
continued

Stance: If you are speaking to a large audience, it is easier for everyone to see and hear you if you stand. In a smaller, informal setting it may be more comfortable for you to sit. It is however important that people can see and hear you. Decide before you start to speak which will be suitable. If there are other speakers find out what they will be doing. Whether standing or sitting, think about the way you present yourself. Face your audience and keep your head up so that everyone can hear you. (See **Presenting self** section in this pack for more information on body language).

Eye contact: Even if you are feeling nervous, it is important to make some eye contact with your audience. Try not to focus on one person, or in one direction only, as this may make the rest of the audience feel left out. While you are speaking, try to look around the room, making everyone feel included. Looking at the audience will also help you to gauge their response.

Voice: Try listening to your own voice. Do you speak clearly? Will everyone be able to hear you? Is your voice interesting to listen to? Do you speak quickly when you are nervous? Practising your talk will help and can give you confidence.

Practice: The first time that you do anything, you are likely to be nervous because you don't know what to expect. With experience your confidence will grow, as you learn how to respond to an audience, how long to talk for, what information to include and how to present yourself effectively.

Evaluation Questions

Answer these questions after you have given a talk to help you assess how it went. If you can, discuss your answers with a colleague or a friend and see what you can learn from each other's experiences for the next time you have to talk.



**What you
have learned**

How did you feel while you were giving your talk and how did you feel once you finished?

Did your notes help you while you were talking?

Did you manage to get your message across? Was your talk pitched at the right level?

How did your audience respond to your talk?

If you were asked to speak again, would you change anything? Why, or why not?