

Speaking and listening skills

Top 10 speaking and listening skills at work

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

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

What good speakers and listeners do

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

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

A good speaker...

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

And a good listener...

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