

Improving your communication skills: A planning tool

Work through the checklist below by considering each question to help build up a plan of what you need to do to improve your communication skills

1	Audience	2	Yourself	3	What are the implications?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does the audience know about the topic we are going to discuss? What's important to the audience (expectations, values)? What variety of English are they using? What are their interactional goals (e.g. focus on the task, enhancing / maintaining / challenging rapport)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do I feel about this interaction (emotions, expectations)? What are my values, expectations and interactional goals? What variety of English am I using? How do I expect myself to communicate (e.g. based on prior experiences, language skills etc.)? How might I be perceived? What are my preconceptions about the audience and might they need adapting? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What 'script' is the interaction likely to be following? What strategies can I expect others to use (e.g. word choice, pauses, overlaps, general style)? What possible language 'issues' (e.g. accents etc.) need to be considered? What possible sources of misunderstanding (content, intent) need to be considered? 		
	Information, support, practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use reliable informants Find information about the other speakers or audience members, as well as about other relevant contextual factors (warning: published information can be biased / stereotype-based) Record a practice conversation and reflect on how it went Get feedback from friends, colleagues and mentors 	4 Plan: I need to.....			
		<i>For example....</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give regular listener and feedback signals - Use jargon the audience understands - Adapt the way I speak to their level of proficiency/understanding - Be ready to clarify meaning if I can't follow - Use strategies that show I understand their position - Think of ways in which I can get my emotions under control again, if necessary 	<i>For example....</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rehearse in advance, and then use, appropriate context-specific and goal-appropriate strategies (e.g. to display leadership, to be diplomatic etc.) 		
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