

Healthcare

Getting to know your clients better

Content and alignment

This resource is aimed at tutors working with learners employed in the healthcare sector. To care for people, it is really important to know them as people and not just a collection of symptoms and problems. This teaching and learning sequence is suitable for use with all employees working in this sector but particularly for those who lack the confidence to interact with clients and engage in talk during care.

The content aligns with the [Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy](#). It is focused on the *Speak to Communicate* strand, in particular the *Using Strategies to Communicate* and the *Interactive Listening and Speaking* progressions. It also makes reference to [Teaching Adults to Listen and Speak to Communicate: Using the Learning Progressions](#).

Speak: Using Strategies to Communicate progression	Interactive Listening and Speaking progression
Most adults will be able to:	Most adults will be able to:
select and communicate information, ideas and thoughts, using appropriate words and phrases with some fluency on very familiar topics monitor and modify speech to improve the clarity and effectiveness of the communication.	respond to and use skills and appropriate language to manage simple interactions and negotiate meaning respond to and use some non-verbal methods to monitor the effectiveness of interactive communication have an awareness of the conventions for taking part in interactions in familiar social and cultural settings, for example, during telephone conversations.
select and communicate information, ideas and thoughts, using appropriate vocabulary, expressions and grammar fluently and coherently on less familiar topics use appropriate gestures, tone, pace and intonation to improve communication.	respond to and use more sophisticated skills and appropriate language to monitor and improve the effectiveness of interactions respond to and use variations in tone of voice, intonation and stress (for example, the stress placed on specific words or sentences) recognise and use the vocabulary and other language features that mark the register appropriate to the topic, audience and context.

Fig 1. Speak to Communicate Learning Progressions

Intent

The intent of this resource is to provide tutors with a teaching and learning sequence that helps learners develop skills and strategies to start a conversation and maintain it. The aim is for learners to develop their confidence in engaging in meaningful conversations with their clients and to apply the strategies acquired in engaging with people in their communities.

This resource is not designed to replace existing programme approaches, but to provide tutors with additional learning content.

Sequence

There are four parts to this sequence. Learners will:

1. try out some conversation starters
2. notice and analyse follow-up questions in use
3. practise asking follow-up questions
4. get to know a client better at work.

1. Try out conversation starters

Step one: Have learners break into groups and encourage them to talk about how they usually start conversations with people. If prompts are needed, the following questions may be useful:

- What do you say to a friend/client when you see them?
- What are some common topics that you can talk about with clients/ friends?

As they are talking, monitor the conversations, so that you can get an idea of some of the learners' ideas.

Step two: Get feedback about the topics from the groups to acknowledge the learners' contributions. Record these ideas on the board. Encourage further questions related to the topics on the board.

Step three: Cut up the [Healthcare: Conversation starters](#) cards. Give each learner one card. Ask learners to stand up, find a partner and use their conversation starter to start a conversation. As they are talking, monitor the conversations and notice any follow-up questions learners ask. Get learners to repeat the task with another learner.

Step four: As a way of getting feedback from this, you can ask, "Did anyone hear any really good stories?" or "What did you learn about your colleagues from that activity?" You could also ask if they could do the same thing with clients and ask them to look at all the conversation starters and choose the ones they would like to try.

Key learning point:

Having a few 'set' conversation starters is a great thing to have in your toolkit. It puts you in control of the conversation. You are the one asking the questions and leading the conversation.

2. Notice and analyse follow-up questions in use

Learners now get an opportunity to watch a short video clip of a residential carer talking with a client and observe some of the questioning techniques in use.

Step one: Tell the learners they will be watching a clip of a conversation between a client and a carer. Ask them to focus on the follow-up questions the carer uses. Play [Healthcare: Asking follow-up questions](#). Afterwards, ask learners what the topic of the conversation was.

Step two: Give learners a list of question types from the resource [Healthcare: Asking follow-up questions - worksheet](#) and discuss the 2 types of questions, closed questions and open questions. Go through the examples on the handout. You could ask learners about these question types:

When would you want to ask a yes/no question?

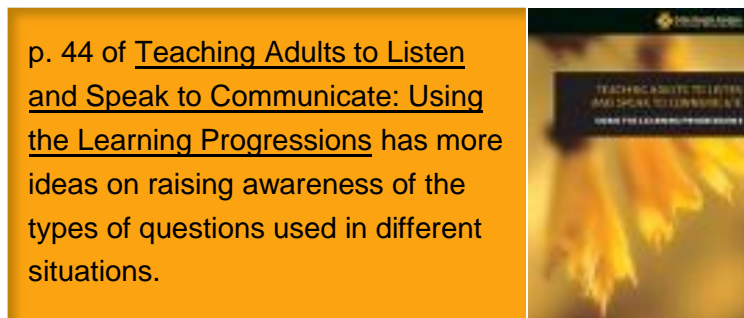
When would you want to ask a more open question?

The point is that it is about giving the other person choices in how to respond and the choice is about control. All the conversation starters used in the first part of this sequence were prompts: “Tell me ...” This is the most open way of starting a conversation because the other person can say anything!

Step three: Look at the example question words in the table on p. 3 of the handout. As the learners watch the clip again again, they tick the types of questions the carer uses. Afterwards, discuss the questions types they noticed.

Step four: Ask the learners to watch the clip for a third time and to write the questions they hear into the boxes on p. 3 of the handout:

[Healthcare: Asking follow-up questions - worksheet.](#)



3. Practise asking follow-up questions

The idea is to encourage learners to ask follow-up questions. Often when learners are talking to clients, their client may not say very much at first but with encouragement and a few prompts, they will expand a bit more. Remember, the conversation starters are only starters. It might be that learners use a starter about school or sports, but the resident starts telling them about their siblings. Of course this is fine.

Use the resource [Healthcare: Practising follow-up questions](#) with your learners. It guides learners through a discussion with a client about their first car. There are prompts on the slide. The following slide has a client’s reply. The key thing is that you allow time for learners to talk in pairs and try things out before revealing the next slide. For example, the second slide has a prompt when you open it. It says:

Start a conversation about the resident’s first car.

In the session, you now ask learners what they will say. They reply. Then you click the mouse to reveal the suggestion.

“Tell me about your first car.”

The practice task: Slide 23 has 3 conversation starters. For this activity you can divide your learners into pairs so that they can practise the conversations asking lots of follow-up questions.

During the task: Monitor and note down the different question types they use. Also give learners feedback on their body language and whether they look or sound interested in the other person.

After the task: Ask learners these questions about the activity:

- *What did you find out?*
- *How will this new information change your relationship with the other learner?*
- *What extra questions will you ask the next time you talk to the learner?*

Give feedback to the group commenting on voice tone. Did they ask effective follow-up questions? Did they respond to what the other person was saying?

4. **Get to know a client better at work**

The aim is for learners to put these skills into practice at work.

Step one: Tell learners that, before the next session with you, their task is to practise these skills with a client. They should choose a client they work with (preferably one they don't know very well) and find out about some of their memories. The aim is not to try to find out the client's life story but stories from their life that help them get to know the client. They should use a suitable conversation starter and then try and get the resident to elaborate by asking follow-up questions, as practised in this sequence.

Step two: Hand out [Healthcare: Reflection - worksheet](#) and talk through it. After learners have talked to their client, they should reflect on their conversation and make notes on this worksheet. Encourage them to bring the worksheet to your next session with them and they can tell each other who they talked to and how it went. They could write up some of the stories.

Key learning point:

Getting to know a client better at work by having conversations and asking questions will improve the care a client receives. It helps a carer get to know someone beyond a list of care items or health issues on a care plan.

Summary

The skills presented in this teaching and learning sequence are probably not new to the learners but they may not have reflected on them explicitly or transferred them into their work. They are also topics that learners can use in other areas of their lives, when talking to different people. The sequence aims to open up opportunities for learners to have more meaningful conversations and to build confidence by being the person who asks questions and is in control of conversations. There are four parts to the sequence in which learners:

1. Try out conversation starters
2. Notice and analyse follow-up questions in use
3. Practise follow-up questions
4. Get to know a client better at work

This sequence works well with these
resources:

[Healthcare: Conversation starters](#)

[Healthcare: Asking follow-up questions](#)

[Healthcare: Asking follow-up questions -
worksheet](#)

[Healthcare: Practising follow-up questions](#)

[Healthcare: Reflection - worksheet](#)