

Healthcare

Listening skills for meetings

Content and alignment

This teaching and learning sequence is designed for trainers working with healthcare staff in an elder care residential setting. It aims to build learners' listening skills in order for them to participate more effectively in workplace meetings.

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

	Listen: Language and Text Features progression	Listen: Comprehension progression	Listen: Listening Critically progression
	Most adults will be able to:	Most adults will be able to:	Most adults will be able to:
	understand spoken conversations and other simple spoken language that uses some complex structures understand spoken conversations and other simple spoken language even when the speakers pause, repeat themselves, or make false starts.	listen for the gist or for specific information in some connected discourse on familiar topics have an awareness of what to do and how to do it when comprehension breaks down use some comprehension strategies.	recognise the purposes and possible uses of different kinds of connected discourse have some awareness of their own purposes for listening.
		listen for the gist or for specific information in more complex discourse use a range of comprehension strategies use knowledge of what to do and how to do it when comprehension breaks down understand discourse on familiar topics.	think critically about the ideas and language as they listen, in order to understand, evaluate and respond appropriately and meet the listening purpose use strategies to compare and evaluate information and ideas.

Fig 1. Speak to Communicate Learning Progressions

Intent

The intent of this resource is to help trainers develop the speaking and listening skills of their learners so they can participate more fully in team meetings. The teaching and learning sequence focuses on handover meetings which are typically held at the beginning of each shift and are an important way of passing on information about clients from nurses to healthcare assistants and vice versa. The nurses usually lead the meeting, because they have updates from the previous shift. These meetings should be a two-way affair because healthcare assistants are closest to the client, and therefore are the people best placed to feed back information to nurses. However, in many situations, healthcare assistants do not speak up and contribute information or check information they have received. Helping learners understand their role in these meetings and building their confidence in listening and speaking skills are important steps in helping staff participate more fully in these meetings. Many of the themes in this teaching and learning sequence are applicable to other types of workplace meetings.

Sequence

There are five parts to this sequence. Learners will:

1. discuss roles and organisation of handover meetings
2. develop scan listening skills
3. develop intensive listening skills
4. clarify ways of checking meaning in a meeting
5. observe and evaluate meetings at work.

1. Discuss roles and organisation of handover meetings

The discussion questions in [Healthcare: Handover meetings discussion](#) can prompt discussion of the purpose and organisation of handover meetings and the roles of the participants. This will enhance learners' understanding of the need for a more active role as participants in these meetings.

Preparation: Divide learners into groups of 4. Hand out 1 set of the four question cards in the resource: [Healthcare: Handover meetings discussion](#) to each group. Each learner takes one of the cards, making sure they don't show each other their card.

Before: Tell learners you are going to be working on skills for meetings at work. Ask learners what kinds of meetings they have in their workplace (team meetings, union meetings, health and safety briefings etc.). Tell them you will focus specifically on handover meetings at the start of a shift.

Give learners 2 or 3 minutes to prepare their ideas. All they need to do is read the questions and think about the answers.

During: In their groups, learners take turns to introduce their questions and give their responses. Groups can then discuss each question together. Start with the person who has card number 1: Purpose of the meeting. The reason for organising the discussion in this way is that all learners contribute and the discussion is not dominated by one or two individuals.

As you are monitoring, focus on body language and facial expression, encourage learners to sit up and look interested in the discussion. Point out that when they want to make a point, they can lean forward to indicate this.

Afterwards: When everyone has had a chance to talk, have a brief feedback session. After getting people's ideas, focus on the implications for how you need to behave in this type of meeting.

These implications can include:

- Resident care is the focus of these meetings. The meetings are important because information is shared by all the people who care for residents. All care staff need to speak up and be active participants in the meeting. Often healthcare assistants are the people closest to residents and the ones who can pass on important information.
- It is important to check information that is passed on – i.e., interrupt the speaker respectfully and clarify what has been said. The RN may be leading the meeting, and may move quickly, but if they speak too fast or assume too much, you need to check.
- Sometimes you may need more information to understand an instruction. It is important to ask for this additional information.
- The organisation of the meeting is predictable, so you can use this to help you follow the meeting. Usually, the nurse discusses clients room by room. Be prepared with a list of the rooms and residents you can refer to.
- You should take notes you can refer back to later if there are details you need to remember (times, people, arrangements, appointments).

Discuss these implications with learners and explain that these learning sessions have been designed to help them develop these skills.

Key learning point:

By analysing the purpose and organisation of a meeting, and the roles of the participants, you can learn how to participate effectively.

Learners can apply this understanding to other types of meetings, so they can be more active participants.

2. Develop scan listening skills

Preparation: Prepare enough copies of the [Healthcare: Listening skills - worksheet](#) for each learner. Students will be watching the clip [Healthcare: Handover meeting](#).

Step 1: Explain you are going to be working on listening skills. Then give this scenario:

You are having friends over for a barbecue on Sunday afternoon and you are wondering what the weather will be like so you watch the weather forecast on the news. What listening skills do you use?

Get learners to discuss in pairs about how they would listen to the weather forecast. Their feedback to the whole group could include: listen for the place they live, listen for the day, listen intensively to the forecast.

Key learning point:

What learners are practising is scan listening. This means that you listen for all the clues that the information you need is coming up and then you can pay attention to that information. It is a useful strategy when information is presented to you in a predictable order.

Step 2: You can also ask them what clues they have to know when they are going to hear what they need. Responses could include:

- visual clues - the map, satellite images
- the structure / order - presenters tend to arrange their forecasts in the same order: regions South to North, and then major centres
- voice cues (e.g., “moving onto the North Island”)
- intonation (e.g., “and finally in Auckland” – the voice pitch can rise or drop when saying “finally”).

Step 3: Ask learners, “What helps you understand the actual forecast?”

Responses could include:

- visual cues - weather symbols on map; key words they hear (“scattered showers”)
- other emotional words (“unfortunately it’s not looking too good for people in the south”)
- intonation - positive sounding message or negative sounding message

Step 4: Ask learners how they can apply these skills to a handover meeting.

Responses could include:

- set order - room by room
- names of residents
- reasonably predictable updates - appointments, visits, info about food, health condition, special arrangements, activities
- intonation - to show when RN is moving on, and also to show emotion when the update is positive or not so positive

Ask learners about the difference between listening for information in a weather forecast and in a handover meeting. In a handover meeting you *can* interrupt and ask for clarification. You need to be constantly checking the information against what you know about the resident.

Before watching the clip: Tell learners they will now start to practise these skills. Hand out a copy of page 2 of [Healthcare: Listening skills - worksheet](#) to each learner. Tell learners they will watch a clip on a handover meeting. While they watch, they need to tick the names of the residents as they hear them. There is one blank on the grid next to Room 17. Explain that this is a room that is often used for **respite** care. Check that they understand this word by questioning learners:

- *If someone is here for respite care, are they here for a long time or just for a short visit? (For a short visit)*
- *Who normally looks after them? (Family or friend)*
- *What is the purpose of respite care? (To give the normal carer a break)*

Watch the clip [Healthcare: Handover meeting](#).

During watching: Check that learners are following the conversation and ticking the names as they listen.

After watching: Check the name of the person in Room 17. It is Michael O’Callaghan.

Ask learners if they noticed how the intonation of the nurse changes as she moves from resident to resident. Ask if they noticed her pausing between residents and if they heard any verbal cues (e.g., “Moving onto ...; or “Next, Mr ...”)

3. *Develop intensive listening skills*

Tell the learners that they are now going to focus on intensive listening skills. This means listening and understanding details. Learners will watch the clip [Healthcare: Handover meeting](#) for a second time.

Before watching: Assign each learner two of the residents discussed in the clip. These are the residents they are caring for. As they watch, they should make notes of the update about their residents in the table on their worksheet: [Healthcare: Listening skills - worksheet](#)

Say “We’re going to use Peter in Room 12 as an example.”

- 1: Play the clip from the start to before the nurse moves to Wilma Sullivan. Learners make notes about Peter.
- 2: Learners compare notes about Peter.
- 3: Show learners your notes:

Room	Name	Update
12	Peter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTI • On A/Bs • Push fluids & monitor intake • Dr @ 9

Encourage learners to just write down key words, use bullet points and abbreviations. Reassure them that the notes are for them and they do not have to hand their notes in to be checked.

While watching: Remind learners to just focus on their two residents and just record key information. If necessary, play the clip again so they can add more detail.

After watching: Learners talk in their groups about the updates they've heard for the different residents. Check understanding: "These are your residents. What do you need to do differently for them today?"

Note: There is an answer key for the note-taking task on p. 3 of

[Healthcare: Listening skills - worksheet](#)

pp. 30 and 31 of [Teaching Adults to Listen and Speak to Communicate: Using the Learning Progressions](#) has suggestions about how to help learners listen for details in specific situations.



4. Clarify ways of checking information in a meeting

This matching activity aims to raise learners' awareness of different ways to check meaning.

Before: Prepare enough copies of the worksheet [Healthcare: Ways of checking meaning](#) for each learner.

During: Learners cut up the cards and match each strategy with an example.

After: Check answers (1b; 2a; 3d; 4c). Ask learners which of the ways of checking information they saw in the clip. If you have time, you could watch the clip again to check this.

Key learning point:

Knowing a variety of checking questions gives learners confidence to ask questions when they don't understand. This has an immediate impact on client care and will also save time in clearing up misunderstandings.

Below are some examples from the clip:

1. Repeat the same information back: “So she should just keep using her old one?”
2. Ask for repetition: “Oh sorry. Can I just check the time? What time did you say?”
3. Say it back in your own words: “OK. So we need to get her showered and to reception at 10.”
4. Ask for more information: “Okay, but what about sweeteners? Can he still have his Milo?”

To check information politely, you can point out that often we stage things as outlined in the example below, so that the speaker understands why they are being interrupted:

Sorry, can I just check – what time did you say?



Sorry = interruption – a polite way to take the turn from the person who is speaking (also: *Excuse me*)



Can I just check = signal that you need to check something



What time did you say? = Checking question

Extension: As a follow-up activity, learners can pair up. 1 person takes on the role of the RN and the other the role of a carer. The RN gives an update about a resident to the carer. The carer chooses one of the strategies from [Healthcare: Ways of checking meaning](#) to check information or ask for more explanation. Afterwards, get feedback on how politely this was done.

5. Observe and evaluate meetings at work

The following sequence is best structured over two sessions, with a gap of about a week between sessions.

When working with learners who have literacy and numeracy learning needs, it is helpful to give them an opportunity to transfer their learning to the workplace, if possible, and then provide an opportunity for them to reflect on what they have noticed and put into practice. This helps them evaluate their own handover meetings and improve them in the light of what they have learnt.

Set up: Go over the teaching and learning sequence so far to summarise the work you have been doing. You could say:

So, we have analysed roles in these handover meetings and looked at the need for carers to be more active participants. We've looked at the organisation of the meetings and how this

can help with scan listening and we've worked on intensive listening skills to hear, understand, clarify and note updates about residents.

Next, show the resource [Healthcare: Handover meetings action plan](#) and explain the tasks to learners. Learners need to participate in a handover meeting, then talk about it with another learner. They make an action plan to record two strategies they will try out.

Reflection: After learners have had time to attend meetings in their workplace, get them back together. Ask learners to record their thoughts about the meeting in the box provided on p. 3 of the handout [Healthcare: Handover meetings action plan](#). Then discuss with learners the outcome of their action plan.

You could use these questions to guide the discussion:

1. What problems did you notice?
2. What did you try to do about these?
3. What difference has it made?
4. What's the next thing to work on to improve these meetings?

Summary

Handover meetings are important in a residential care setting, both to ensure continuity of care for residents and for effective team coordination. This teaching and learning sequence aims to reinforce the need for carers to be active participants in meetings, to focus on understanding the updates, and check information when necessary. The same skills are applicable in other types of team meetings in a healthcare setting. There are five parts to the sequence in which learners:

1. discuss roles and organisation of handover meetings
2. develop scan listening skills
3. develop intensive listening skills
4. clarify ways of checking meaning in a meeting
5. observe and evaluate meetings at work

This sequence works well with the following

resources: [Healthcare: Handover meetings discussion](#)

[Healthcare: Handover meeting](#)

[Healthcare: Listening skills - worksheet](#)

[Healthcare: Ways of checking meaning](#)

[Healthcare: Handover meetings action plan](#)