



Introduction to workplace communication

A combined training and assessment resource for:

Unit Standard 9677 v7 Participate in a group/team  
which has an objective(s)

Unit Standard 1277 v4 Communicate information in a  
specified workplace

Training and Assessment Resource

NCES Level 2

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# Training Assessment Resource

## Introduction

This Training Assessment Resource (TAR) introduces you to Unit Standard 9677, v7 and Unit Standard 1277, v4. Both unit standards are related to interpersonal communication within the workplace.

### Purpose

People who obtain credit for unit standard 9677, v7 are able to participate in a group/team working toward achievement of objective(s) and in group/team function.

People who obtain credit for unit standard 1277, v4 are able to give information to clients in a specified workplace; record and convey information in a specified workplace; and respond to an inquiry in a specified workplace.

### Working through this training and assessment resource

This resource has two sections, one for each unit standard. As you progress through each section you will have a number of self-development questionnaires to complete. Before commencing, consider the following suggestions:

- > Focus on one section at a time
- > Read all of the section before attempting the self development questionnaires
- > Gather sample documents that are used in your company

Be methodical in completing your work. When you are ready to be assessed, contact your trainee coordinator or assessor.

# US 9677 v7 - Participate in a group/team which has an objective

# 1. Communicating with Your Team



Section 1 is about working in teams. The electricity supply industry relies on consistent team performance to achieve high levels of safety and job competency.

You can make a difference to the team performance in your workplace. Think about how you listen and communicate with others. Share ideas and information and help your team move ahead.

## 1.1 Sharing ideas and information at work (refers to Element 1, 9677 v7)

When participating in a group and working in a team, the sharing of ideas by group and team members is critical to success. You may be a specialist in the team. Contributing your specialised knowledge will help the team towards satisfactory completion of the job.



### Activity

How do you share ideas and information at work? Think about last week.

Write down what you consider your role in the group/team to be.

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Write down any new ideas you shared with people at work.

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Write down any new information you received. How did you share this with other team members? If you didn't share the information with others, why not?

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### Activity

Your task for this week is to remember all the ideas you have shared, and the information you have received and passed on.

Write these down in the space below.

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### Why is it important to share ideas at work?

Studies have shown that money alone is rarely a reason people choose to stay in a job. Instead, people want to feel valued. They want to belong, to know that their work and their ideas matter. They want a range of challenges and the ability to make decisions. They want to feel that they can share their ideas with company decision-makers.

Sharing ideas and making sure new information is passed on at work can help you feel you are making a difference in your workplace. For instance, you may be able to find and adopt new ideas that become crucial to the success of your company.

Knowing that you make a difference is likely to make you feel more positive about your job and the electrical supply industry as a whole. Being known as a person who makes a difference in the electrical supply industry can lead to new opportunities opening up for you.

Sharing ideas and information at work takes place on all different levels, between a worker and a workgroup, between workgroups, between departments, between business units, and between companies.

One of the ways you can extend and grow the ideas you give to your company is by making sure you take an interest in new training that is offered to you. Training may be offered in a variety of ways:

- > A workmate offers to show you how to operate a new piece of equipment
- > Your manager teams you up with an expert to guide you through a new procedure
- > You are offered a place on a training course away from the workplace

Adding to this, it is important you learn to use the technology available in your workplace. Competent use of mobile telephones, pagers and computers, including hand-held and laptop computers, makes it easy to share and search for new ideas.



### Activity

What structures do you have in your workplace for sharing knowledge and ideas?

Example: The electrical supply industry uses tailgate meetings to share information and knowledge between workers. A tailgate meeting occurs before a job starts so that workers can share the information and knowledge they need.

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### Activity

Idea sharing scenarios

Using the situations below, write down how you would try to share the ideas and information in your workplace.

You talked to a friend on the weekend who mentioned there may be a great opportunity for your company to make some more money by taking on different kind of work. What information would you need to get from your friend in order for you to pass it on in a useful way?

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Another friend, who also works in the electrical supply industry, is using some new safety gear that will stop problems your team (in your company) is having. Who would you talk to about this? What might you suggest?

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Your workmates are not happy about a safety issue that exists in the workplace, but no one has spoken to the supervisor. Who would you tell? How would you explain it?

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In a tailgate meeting the team is trying to work out the best way to complete a job. You have an idea about how to get the job done more quickly and easily. How would you speak about this in the meeting and explain your idea?

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## 1.2. Respectful communication at work (refers to Elements 2/2.1 & 2.2, 9677 v7)

Your workplace and training provider will have communication protocols and codes of conduct you are expected to adhere to in order to maintain a respectful, pleasant and productive working environment. Some basic guidelines for talking to and sharing conversations with people at work are set out below.

Avoid rudeness and be courteous and polite. Being respectful in what you say and how you say it not only creates an enjoyable working environment but will improve your chances of getting ahead in the industry. When you talk to others in a respectful way it is more likely that they, in turn, will treat you with respect. They will be more prepared to listen to you when you have valuable ideas and information to share. Respectful communication can dramatically improve your working environment and relationships with other people.

### Stay positive

Stay away from negative conversation and never tell rumours or point out major faults in others. These actions build mistrust and are generally unpleasant.

If you feel the conversation is going sour, switch the tone as soon as possible. Close the negative topic and ask a question to move the conversation in another direction.

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While swearing is sometimes used in workplaces as a tool to release personal frustrations, be aware that this type of aggressive language can make working conditions difficult. In most workplaces, swearing invites disciplinary action.

### Take turns when speaking

Respect that others have valuable thoughts, knowledge and ideas to share. Give them time to speak. Don't talk too loudly or for too long, these actions might make you seem self centred.

### I need to say it NOW!

We very often interrupt when we decide we have important information to share. We become impatient and think that if we do not share this information right now, the idea will be lost forever. It's as if the idea will disappear, never to be had again. If that's the case, was it really such a good idea in the first place?

### Interrupting others is not good manners

Interrupting others is an all-too-common occurrence at work. When you think you know the answer, or are convinced that you can offer an immediate solution (and the other person continues to 'drone on and on'), interrupting serves as a great way to get your point across, right?

Of course not, because here's what happens when you interrupt. At the same time that you begin to speak about your ideas, the other person is left feeling like their thoughts and ideas are less important or even worthless. Continual interruptions are disrespectful to the individual and will not build a good team feeling.

Communication experts believe that in a typical conversation the average person listens only a few seconds before they start thinking about what they will say next. While we are listening to a conversation, we are often beginning to think about our own response. Much like an actor practicing for delivering his or her lines on the big stage, we rehearse what we'll say. We go over and over it in our mind and miss out on really understanding what the other person is saying.

The average interruption costs anywhere between 10-20 minutes of someone else's precious time; this is the time it takes for a person to get back on track with what they were originally thinking or doing.

### So how can we stop interrupting?

Real communication and understanding happens when we stop focussing so much on our own needs and perspectives and start focusing on what others need from us.

Try not to interrupt people in the middle of a story. If you must interrupt, always excuse yourself and try to get back to what the other person was saying as soon as possible. This shows people that you value their ideas and company.

### Be thoughtful when you speak

#### Is it what you want to say?

You need to think on your feet in all situations but often you do have the opportunity to prepare. Make sure that you prepare as fully as possible – know your subject.

- > Decide what outcomes you want
- > Think about what is appropriate, based on the situation and the people you are with
- > Establish key points with a clear and logical structure to your conversation
- > Select relevant details to back up what you are talking about.

#### How do you want to 'come across' to people?

- > Project yourself – make your audience feel that you are communicating with them
- > Use your body and face to help people understand what you are saying
- > Think about the gestures you are using. Are they appropriate? Too much, or too little?
- > Think about your posture, how you are standing.

#### Watch your team members' non verbal communications.

What do their faces, gestures and body language 'say'? Think about the various expressions of body language outlined below and what they might mean.

- > Are they smiling, frowning, surprised or uncertain?
- > Is there a good amount of eye contact, or are their eyes narrowed - or wide?
- > Are their eyebrows raised - or turned down?
- > Mouth – are lips pursed, upturned or down-turned?
- > Head – is it nodding, shaking, inclined, cradled in hands?
- > Arms – are they drawn in, spread wide, folded/tucked up, lolling?
- > Hands – are they in pockets, in a praying position, touching mouth or face?
- > Fingers – are they laced together, on lips, pointing fingers, counting, running through hair, stroking chin, rubbing together, tapping/drumming?
- > Legs and feet – are they crossed, stretched out, swinging, kicking, tapping?

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### Be aware of non-verbal signals when in an unfamiliar situation

In certain situations, such as when you are working with people from a culture different to your own, or when you attend a lunch with the boss, there might be a special non verbal code you need to know. Certain signals can be misconstrued or misinterpreted. What is acceptable in certain situations might not be acceptable in others. We are not always aware of our non-verbal communication signals and these can be misread by those listening to or watching us. Be respectful and sensible when in a situation that is unfamiliar to you.

- > Be aware of cultural conventions
- > Be sensitive and alert in an unfamiliar situation

### Be a good listener

To achieve good communication you need to be a skilled listener. We all know people who will not stop talking, but they are talking at you rather than to you.

Be an active listener. Concentrate on what the speaker is saying and not on what you are going to say next. Allow the person who is speaking to complete their conversation and make sure you acknowledge their contribution before you speak. Be considerate and allow people to put their point of view across. Remember, successful communicators seek first to understand and then to be understood.

Ask yourself: How well do I listen to others? How often am I not listening, but planning what I want to say? How often do I let my mind wander? What will I do to practice improving my listening skills?

### General behaviours to avoid

- > Showing off
- > Monopolising conversation
- > Using irritating mannerisms or gestures
- > Interrupting
- > Showing boredom or impatience
- > Losing your composure/control
- > Fidgeting or fiddling
- > Looking bored or impatient
- > Daydreaming – being caught out
- > Going over the top - keep the right balance

### 1.3 Delegation = Being responsible at work (refers to Element 2/2.3, 9677 v7)

#### What is the purpose of delegation?

The objective of delegation is to get the job done by someone else. To enable someone else to do the job for you, you must ensure that:

- > they know what you expect
- > they have the authority to achieve it
- > they know how to do it.

#### Why is it good practice to delegate?

Listed below are some of the thoughts a manager may have when they delegate to you:

"Once people have learned how to work with me, they can take responsibility for jobs I do not have time to do."

"I can develop people to look after routine tasks that are not cost-effective for me to carry out".

"It transfers work to people whose skills in a particular area are better than mine, saving time."

"Transfer of responsibility develops my staff, and can increase their enjoyment of their jobs".

#### Why do people not delegate?

Despite the many advantages of delegation, some managers do not delegate. Taking one example, it is common for people who are newly promoted to managerial positions to have difficulty delegating. Often they will have been promoted because they were good at what they were doing. This brings the temptation to continue trying to do their previous job, rather than developing their new team members to do the job well.

Other reasons for not delegating can include:

#### Lack of time

Delegating jobs does take time. In the early stages of taking over a job it takes time to train people to take over tasks. While it may be quicker for your manager to do the job themselves, in the long term it does not achieve a competent workforce.

#### Fear of mistakes

Some managers do not realise that at times they have to let people make mistakes and then help them to correct their mistakes. Most people will, with time, learn to do jobs properly.

### Fear of becoming invisible

Your manager might feel that if the team is running smoothly, with all routine work effectively delegated, it could look like they have nothing to do. What they need to realise is that they will now have the time to think, plan and improve operations.

### A belief that staff 'are not up to the job'

Capable people will often under-perform if they are bored. People who are not performing to expectation will not improve unless they are trained or given opportunities. Delegation can bring out the best in most people.

### You have been delegated a task, what now?

If a manager delegates a responsibility to you, here are eight points to consider that will enable you to feel satisfied that you have contributed well to your team:

1. Remember - you have been chosen for this job based on one of two reasons:
  - a. You are the best qualified and can deliver the best results
  - b. You will benefit from the learning experience of taking on this job. Think of this as a good chance to show your skills, or get better at your job.
2. If you feel the person is not telling you everything you need to know, or keeping you in the dark for some reason, ASK for more information. Don't be afraid to ask as the results of not asking are worse. Use questions like:
  - a. "OK, from what you have told me I will be required to carry out the job in this way. But can you tell me more about this part as I haven't quite understood fully how to do it"
  - b. "I understand this part now but I would like to be shown more about this particular part before I do it".
3. Remember it's a win-win for everyone. You are helping them out, and they are helping you to get better at your job by giving you a chance to demonstrate your knowledge and skills. By helping your manager out you are seen as a reliable employee who is helpful and willing to be part of the team. They will remember this.
4. At times your manager may give you complete ownership for completing the task. This means that if you think the task isn't going well, or you don't want to do it anymore you cannot just leave it. Being a good team player means making sure that everyone is happy, and just leaving the task will mean others will be affected. Take this opportunity seriously and do a good job. If you don't understand what you are to do, some suggestions are given in Point 2 above.

5. Stick to deadlines. If your boss wants it done in the next 30 minutes, and you know you can do this, then make sure it happens. If you know you cannot achieve this, as you have other things to do, or there is not enough time, tell your manager so they are not disappointed. Again, being a good team player means making sure that everyone is happy. Not finishing the task in the time you said you would means you could hold up the whole team.
6. Don't worry if your supervisor checks in on you. They are probably not checking because they don't think you can do the job properly. Think of your supervisor like a coach in a team, helping you out if you need it. They will be checking in to see if you are still ok with doing the job, and will be there to help you if you have any problems.
7. If you think you can no longer do the task don't just leave it there for someone to pick up after you. Talk to your manager about what you will need to finish the task. You may need a more experienced person to watch you, you may need more time, or tools, or something else. You will earn your managers respect by offering solutions to any problems and not giving up.
8. Take the credit if you do a job well. You deserve it!



#### Activity

Scenario one: Your manager asks you to make sure the floor is clear and all work areas are tidy in order to prevent injury. A workmate asks you to watch him do a task and you decide to do this instead. You do tidy up the area around you but you don't think it's important to do the entire work area. Another workmate comes in half an hour later and trips over on some tools that have been left out.

What went wrong?

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Using the eight points listed previously, what would you do differently from the start?

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Scenario two: Your manager asks you to inspect the trade tools used at work to identify any loose, damaged, or missing parts before they are used on a new job. You only inspect the tools that you can see around you. You haven't realised that there are some tools in storage. Your manager uses one of those tools (from storage) and finds it is faulty. The faulty tool stops the work progressing and time is lost.

What went wrong?

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Using the 8 points listed previously, what would you do differently from the start?

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Scenario three: Your manager asks you to inspect the trade tools used at work to identify any loose, damaged, or missing parts before they are used on a new job. You inspect all the tools, and you find some equipment parts are defective. You thought he was only interested in you checking, so you tell him they have all been checked, and you do not label any defective tools that you found. The manager goes to use these tools and the defective ones do not work. This means money is lost on the job.

What went wrong?

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Using the eight points listed previously, what would you do differently from the start?

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Scenario four: Your team leader asks you to make sure that the group's Personal Protection Equipment is up to standard and that there is not any wear and tear that needs fixing. You go and check, but you forget to check the eye protection, and you also don't record any details of the check on the forms because you didn't think you had to.

What went wrong?

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Using the eight points listed previously, what would you do differently from the start?

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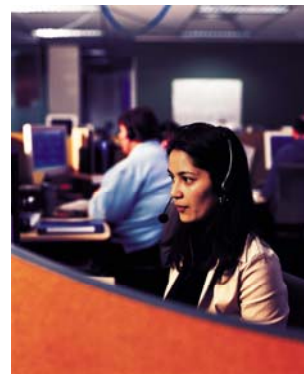
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# US 1277 v4 - Communicate Information in a Specified Workplace

## 2. Communicating with Clients



### 2.1 Who do you need to communicate with?

Those you come into contact with through work may be people you know well and work with, or they may be strangers, who have never come into contact with you or your company before. As well as communicating with your work mates, managers and supervisors to exchange information, services or products, you interact with customers

Every company has its own written policies and procedures on how information is to be communicated to customers or clients – whether internal customers (people in the same company) or external customers (buyers and suppliers). There is usually a preferred way of behaving or treating your colleagues, customers must be spoken to in a certain way, and inquiries may have an expected timeframe for response.

Companies also have their own documentation to support these interactions. While information is often given verbally it is also tracked through more tangible means such as records, check sheets, letters, timesheets, personnel records, emails, faxes etc. Verbal exchange is followed up by more formal, written means to ensure the correct outcome and accountability.



#### Activity

(Use a separate piece of paper to record your responses)

What type of information is communicated within your workplace?	What are your company rules or guidelines around how this information must be communicated?

## 2.2 Using the telephone

The telephone is an important link between a company and its customers. Unfortunately, our telephone manner sometimes lets us, and the company, down.

Research identifies that 11% of people really dislike using the telephone. People can't see who they are talking to, there are awkward silences when both people are thinking, and it's harder to describe something the other person can't see. This often translates into a poor telephone technique – we just want to get off the telephone!



### Activity

(Use a separate piece of paper to record your responses)

How important is the telephone to the company you are working for?

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Who are the main users of the telephone in your company?

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How much customer contact or new business happens via the telephone?

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What type of transactions take place over the telephone?

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### Answering techniques

What does it mean to have a good or poor telephone manner?

The following exercise looks at the difference between good and poor telephone answering techniques. To answer the following questions, think about times when you have heard a colleague at work on the telephone.



#### Activity

Describe two calls that you have recently heard and observed. Explain what it was about the person's telephone technique that made it good or indicated that it needed improving. What did you observe or hear that highlighted this to you?

Poor telephone technique:

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Good telephone technique:

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How would you currently rate your own telephone manner?

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## Some simple things that you can do to enhance your telephone skills

### Put a smile in your voice and speak clearly

- > Smile! This comes across in your voice and customers like to hear someone happy in their job.
- > Speak slowly and clearly without food, lollies or gum in your mouth.
- > Do not slur or mumble your words. Speak with confidence so that the person on the line gets the feeling that you know what you are doing.
- > Avoid shouting too! While some people mumble, others shout so loudly that you wonder why they bothered to use the telephone in the first place!
- > Pitch your voice slightly louder than conversational. Imagine talking to someone in a busy restaurant.

### Overcome invisibility

Your and your customer may know each other. However, you won't know what mood each other is in at the time of the call. Did they call when you had a queue of customers with you? Were you just about to close the "deal of the century" when the telephone rang? Is it cold in your workplace, making you feel grumpy? Remember to put a smile in your voice and speak clearly

If you know your customer it might be appropriate to engage in some small talk: ask them how they are, how business is or whatever else you think is relevant.

If you do not know the person telephoning, you can put them at ease simply by answering the telephone with the name of your company and your name. This reassures the customer that they have called the correct place and that there is a "real person" on the line. Ask them for their name so that you can personalise your comments to them.

### Be organised

- > In general, what do your customers call about?
- > Do you need a price list handy to the telephone?
- > If you often need to refer the call on have you got an internal telephone directory handy?
- > Do you need to ask your customers questions to find out what they need? Have a form available to remind yourself of the information you need to find out.
- > Have writing materials available for when you are required to take a message.

Your poor organisation can leave the impression that your company is poorly organised. This impression is reinforced if you have to telephone back for more information or the message you pass on is poorly relayed because you could not find a pen and paper.

### I'll ring you back!

Don't be afraid to tell someone that you will call them back if they have telephoned at an inconvenient time. Take their number and then remember to do what you said you would – call them back.

Remember: Customers telephone because they need to speak to someone or have a need for your product. Your job is to help them get what they want as quickly as possible.



### Activity

Think about the following issues:

What is your company policy when dealing with fellow employees or customers over the telephone and passing on messages?

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What is the worst experience you have had as a person phoning a company?

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What can you learn from that experience?

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What actions can you take to improve telephone communication flow with your fellow employees or customers?

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### Tips on good telephone etiquette

#### Learn how to operate every feature of the telephone

- > By understanding what the telephone can do you will have more confidence when using it
- > Work out functions such as hold, transfer, redial, mute etc. Remember that these functions are there to help you.

#### Check your attitude before you pick up the telephone. Will your attitude be a help or hindrance in responding to the call?

Your attitude determines how professional and successful you will be when using the telephone. Remember that you are representing the company every time you use it.

#### Be prepared

- > Always make sure that you have pen and paper handy before you answer the telephone. This enables you to jot down details during the conversation. These will aid your active listening during the call and you can use the notes as a reference after the call.
- > Position your telephone on the desk so that you can hold the telephone and take notes at the same time - for example if you are right handed put the telephone on the left hand side of the desk so that your right hand is free.
- > Make yourself familiar with the information you need to have handy such as internal telephone directories, information about the company and its staff, etc.

#### Incoming calls

- > All incoming calls need to be answered in a timely manner. Leaving the telephone ringing indefinitely is a way to make the customer think that the company doesn't care about their call.
- > SMILE
- > Identify yourself
- > Be as helpful as you can.

#### Identify the caller and the purpose of the call

- > It is vital to understand who you are speaking with and it's equally important to know and understand who they wish to speak with or what it is that they require. By gathering this information you will be able to deal appropriately with the call.

### Leaving the line

- > If you are not able to help with a query or need to find out more information, give the person some options. You can do this by asking them if they “are happy to hold?” or asking “shall I call you back with the information?”
- > Remember that if you do put your customer on hold it is common courtesy to check to see if they are still happy to hold (if its taking some time to find the information) and to thank the caller for waiting once you return to the line.

### Use appropriate language

- > Do not use slang or company jargon, as your caller will not know what you are talking about
- > Remember your manners and handle yourself in a professional business-like way at all times. Never swear.
- > Never make negative remarks about callers even if you have the person on hold. This is unprofessional and with today’s modern technology our telephones have highly sensitive microphones in them - you could be caught out!

### Answering telephone calls

Every company will have a slightly different way of answering the telephone. It is important to know how your company expects its callers and customers to be addressed. Following below are some basic guidelines:

Step	Script
The greeting	“Good morning/good afternoon”
Identification	“The Electricity Company (or a department name)”
Introduction	“James speaking” or “ This is James” or “ You are speaking with James”
Offer to help	How may I help you?



### Activity

Write down a suitable way to answer your main company telephone line and that of your department.

Step	Script
The greeting	
Identification	
Introduction	
Offer to help	

### Referring calls

- > It is important to know how to transfer calls in order to pass them on to the correct person. As a caller there is nothing worse than waiting to be transferred to the person you want to speak to and being mucked around or cut off. Time is precious and people do not want to waste their time ringing back because you do not know how to transfer a call.
- > Depending on whom the caller is and who the caller wants to speak to, you may need to advise the staff member of the caller's identity. This generally is an aspect of the call transfer policy of the company or organisation.
- > Practising to transfer with a work colleague is a good way to build your confidence and understand how the process works before you have a customer on the line.

### Taking a message

- > It is vital to get correct details from the caller when you answer the telephone as this saves confusion later on. The spelling of people's names and that of their company are very important. If you are taking a message make sure that you get these basic details – name of the company, telephone number, a good time to ring back, the reason for calling, who they were wanting and the time that they called.
- > Most companies today have telephone message pads handy or some type of prewritten form that can be used to prompt you to collect this information. However if this is not the case, you will need to write a clear note to pass on instead.
- > Some companies use a telephone message email system where the details are typed and emailed to the person concerned instead of being written and passed on. In this instance the same details will need to be taken from the caller.

### Outgoing calls

- > When making a call to another business it is proper etiquette to give your name, and the name of the company that you work for. The person at the other end of the phone should not need to pry it out of you. As when taking calls you need to make sure you speak slowly and clearly.
- > If you get the wrong number do not just hang up. Apologise to the person first. This is common courtesy toward the person answering the call and is good professional practice. Most telephones today have caller ID so the person you called will know your telephone number.

### Voice mail

- > When leaving a telephone message remember to keep it short and simple.
- > Always state your name, company, telephone number and the reason for calling. Do not mutter and mumble and use up someone's time leaving a long message.
- > If you leave a message with a person, instead of on an answering service, you can ask that person to repeat your message back to you. In this way you make sure that the message has been heard and understood correctly.