

# How to

## ...contribute to a discussion

Discussions happen all the time at work. They include:

- talking with your supervisor about a particular job
- discussing your work with a colleague
- talking to your trainer
- being involved in team meetings.



### Being prepared

You are likely to find discussions easier if you know what you might need to say and are well prepared.

#### Try this!

Next time you meet your trainer or supervisor, ask yourself:

- What might I need to say?
- What questions might they ask me?
- Do I know the answers?
- Do I need to find out more?



### How formal will the discussion be?

Chats with a workmate or friend tend to be informal. Discussions with your manager, work team or customer may be more formal.

#### Try this!

Which of these statements would be OK in a formal discussion?

1. 'Come off it, mate.'
2. 'I'll talk to the catering manager tomorrow.'
3. 'Oh \*\*\*\*, we're wasting loads on meals.'
4. 'We had 10 per cent wastage on paperwork last week.'
5. 'Please could you put that another way.'
6. 'I didn't understand a word you said.'

In a formal discussion:

- you may need to dress smartly
- you will need to be polite and business-like
- you avoid slang and swear words
- you avoid nicknames
- there are rules or an agenda
- you may be involved in only one part of the agenda.

## When to speak

It can be hard to know when to say your piece. Here are some good times:

- when someone asks you to speak
- when someone else introduces the topic
- when what you have to say is relevant.

Avoid speaking when:

- someone else is talking
- what you have to say is not relevant to the topic.



## How much to say

You need to say enough so that other people understand what you are saying. So:

- don't assume people know as much as you
- speak loudly enough for everyone to hear, but don't shout
- say words clearly - avoid mumbling
- avoid using jargon that other people don't know.

## It's not just what you say...

Think about your body language, too.

### Try this!

Use this checklist in your next discussion:

- Look at the person or people you are talking to - you will come over as more confident.
- Smile when appropriate - it can help you relax.
- Avoid fidgeting or fiddling with a pen or your fingers - this can look nervous.
- Remember that you have every right to speak - other people will value your contribution.

