

# How to

## ...give a short talk

The thought of having to give a short talk may make you feel nervous, but if you are properly prepared, you'll be fine. As with all communication, you need to think first about:

- **purpose:** Are you clear about what you have to do? Make sure that what you include is relevant to your topic, and think about which ideas are most important, and why.
- **audience:** Who will be listening to your talk? What's their relationship to you? What's their understanding of your subject? What style of language should you use?

### 1 Make a plan

Plan what you are going to do, and when. If you break the preparation down into logical steps as shown on the left, the task will seem less daunting. Here's an example of a plan for a talk on 'Handling customer complaints'.

Get clear guidance on your subject

Who is the audience?

Set aims

Research subject

Structure the material

Visual aids/props

Rehearse

Evaluate

Prepare room and equipment

Give the talk

#### HANDLING CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

Thursday Check with Lisa the scope of the talk. How long? Which areas should be covered? Make notes

Friday Use internet to find info/diagrams/pics Book room and overhead projector

Monday Use coursework textbook and journals. Speak to colleagues for examples/stories

Tuesday Prepare photocopies of handouts that must be used and overhead slides

Think about questions to ask group and what questions they might ask me

PRACTISE, PRACTISE, PRACTISE!

Ask Claire to listen to me practise and fill in feedback sheet

Thursday Get to room early to check equipment. Give presentation

Fill in self-evaluation sheet

Get Claire to fill in feedback sheet

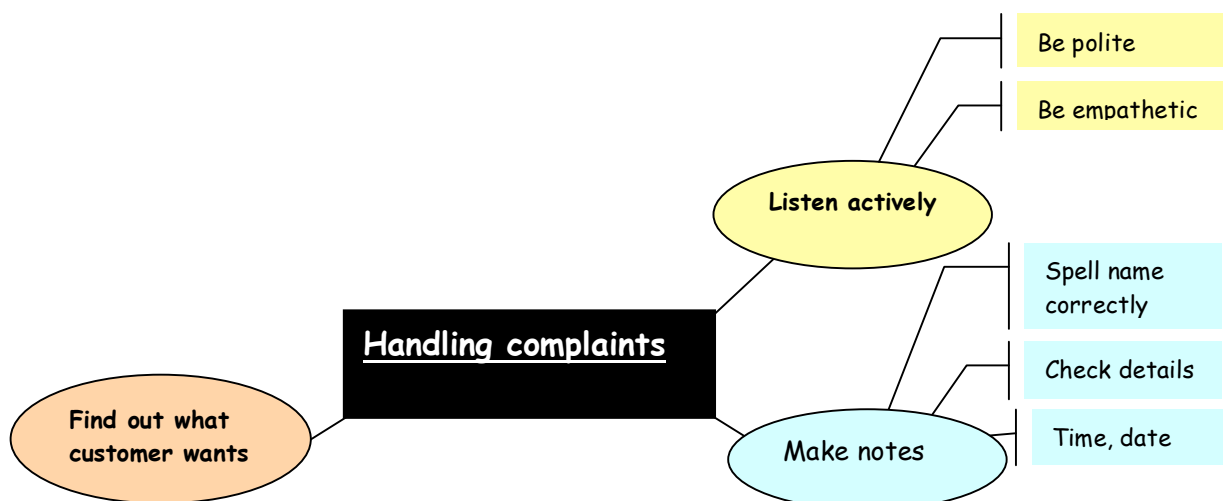
## Try this!

As part of your preparation for giving a short talk, see whether you can answer all these questions?

- What's the subject of your talk?
- What are you trying to achieve?
- Who is going to listen to the talk?
- What sort of language is appropriate?
- Where will you get your information?
- How will you organise the information?
- Do you need to use any pictures, charts or diagrams?
- What room and equipment will you need?
- Do you need to provide handouts or any other supporting material?
- How much time do you have?

## 2 Research your subject

Having got yourself organised, you'll need to do your research and make some notes. You may wish to use a mind map to generate some ideas to start with.



First, collect the information that's easy and quick to find. Your textbook, professional magazines and the internet will usually be the best sources. Asking your colleagues and trainer is also sensible.

The internet is a good source for up-to-date information, even though it can be difficult and time-consuming to find it at first. You'll find useful information at [www.instituteofcustomerservice.com](http://www.instituteofcustomerservice.com)

Don't forget to find pictures or illustrations to support your talk. Try the internet: enter your search criteria (customer service) and select 'web images' on the browser.

### 3 Structure the material

Once you've gathered your information, organise it into logical order and write brief notes on each item.

When making notes to support your talk, don't write in sentences on a big piece of paper, or you may end up reading from the page. This will be dull for your audience. It's more helpful to prepare some cards with key words and phrases on them, so that you can glance down at them for prompts, while looking at your audience most of the time. This will make your talk sound much more natural and interesting.

- 1 Use KEY WORDS and short phrases.
- 2 Underline headings and number the points.
- 3 Number your cards in case you drop them!
- 4 Make sure that you have a clear introduction.
- 5 Headings on your cards will help you tell the listeners when you are moving on to a new piece of information.
- 6 Organise pictures and slides.
- 7 Have a good phrase with which to end your talk. Don't say '...and that's it.' That is not a good conclusion. End with an interesting point, such as: 'At the end of the day you know that the customer will be satisfied.'

#### Try this!

Write three different concluding sentences that you could use for a short talk on 'Ways to handle a complaint effectively'.

- 1
- 2
- 3

#### HANDLING CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

1

##### **Rule One:**

- 1 Listen with understanding and sympathy
  - a) diffuses anger, and
  - b) demonstrates your concern.
- 2 Tell the customer something such as 'I'm sorry you have been inconvenienced. Tell me what happened so that I can help you.'

##### **Rule Two:**

- 1 Never blame or make excuses.
- 2 Do whatever you can to solve the problem as quickly as possible.

2

##### **Rule Three:**

- 1 Paraphrase and make notes on what the customer tells you.
  - a) 'Let me make sure I understand: you were promised delivery on the 10th and you did not receive the product until the 1st of the following month. Is that correct?'

3

##### **Rule Four:**

- 1 Find out what the customer wants:
  - a) a refund
  - b) credit
  - c) discount
  - d) a replacement?

4

## 4 Practise and evaluate

Practise giving your talk. Fill in a self-evaluation sheet like the one below; try to be honest. Ask a friend to listen to you practise, and fill in a feedback sheet to help you see what works and what you need to improve.

### Sample self-evaluation/feedback sheet

<b>Spoke clearly in a way that suited the purpose, subject and situation</b>	Clarity	clear	fair	mumbled
	Volume	loud	good	too quiet
	Tone of voice	lively	fair	dull/read from notes
	Pace/speed	too fast	fair	too slow
	Subject	relevant	fair	irrelevant
	Language	appropriate	fair	inappropriate
<b>Kept to the subject</b>	Kept to point	yes	partly	no
<b>Structured talk to help listeners follow what was said</b>	Explained aims of talk	clear	fair	unclear
	Introduced sections	clear	fair	unclear
	Summarised main points at end	good	fair	needs improvement
	Eye contact	good	fair	needs improvement
	Listened to others	good	fair	needs improvement
	Answered questions	good	fair	needs improvement
	Conclusion	good	fair	needs improvement
<b>Used appropriate images or props to support main points</b>	Used images well	yes	partly	no
<b>Talk appropriate length?</b>	Kept to length	yes	partly	no
<b>General comments</b>				

Now you're ready to give your talk. Good luck!