

Collaborate

Communicate and work collaboratively in a Stage 3 BCATS project.





Table of contents

Section		Page
i	Introduction and Outcome	4
1	Why do I have to learn about communication (again)?	6
2	Good communication	8
3	Communicating to collaborate	9
4	Verbal communication	10
5	Listening	11
6	Using silence as a tool	12
7	Asking questions	13
8	Having difficult conversations	21
9	Reading	24
10	Written communication	25

Introduction

This handbook provides advice and suggestions to help you develop your communication and collaboration skills while doing your Building, Construction, and Allied Trades Skills (BCATS) project. It focuses on those that will be most relevant in your first couple of years after school and provides suggestions for how you can practice them as you undertake your project.

You are welcome to ask people and search the internet for more information and techniques.

A successful BCATS student...

Knows:

- The right tools to use for a job
- The standard that is expected for a finished job
- The questions to ask to inform a job
- When to ask questions and when to give advice
- The skills needed to complete a Level 3 BCATS Project

Does:

- Turn up on time everyday
- Follow instructions
- Follow Health and Safety procedures and show 'due care'
- Their work in a timely manner and to a high standard

Is:

- Honest and trustworthy
- A good timekeeper
- A team player
- Willing to learn
- Hardworking
- An outstanding representative of the school
- A confident communicator

Communicate and work collaboratively in a Stage 3 BCATS project

Evidence requirements

1.1	The parties involved in the Stage 3 BCATS project are described in terms of their roles and relationships.
1.2	Information relating to the BCATS project is received and passed on clearly, accurately and in accordance with workplace practice.
1.3	Information is exchanged that is relevant to the situation, occasion and the relationship between the participants.
1.4	Questions are used to obtain and clarify information from other parties when needed.
1.5	Communication style that contributes to an effective team environment is demonstrated.
1.6	Negotiation techniques are used when necessary to ensure the Stage 3 BCATS project is undertaken successfully.

Assessment evidence and judgement

Assessment that you have achieved this unit standard must be supported by evidence collected as your Stage 3 BCATS project progresses. You will need to keep any written communication and complete your work diary.

You will need to pay special attention to showing you:

- understand the roles of, and relationships between, everyone involved in the project
- take information presented and share relevant details with the right people in the right way
- use correct questioning techniques to achieve desired outcomes
- use negotiation techniques effectively.

Your teacher (and if you're on work placements, employer) will also need to provide evidence they have observed you communicating and collaborating. They may also record notes about evidence you give them in conversations.

You will need to communicate and work with a range of people ('parties') involved in the BCATS project. Depending on your project, this could be teachers, classmates, clients, employers, suppliers, other trades, community groups, and others.

You can gain this standard while working on a team project or on an individual project.

Why do I have to learn about communication (again)?

Achieving this unit standard 29680, "**Communicate and work collaboratively in a Stage 3 BCATS**" project is a way to show future employers that you can communicate and work with others in a BCATS environment.

Teamwork, and the ability to understand and be responsive to the needs of others, are essential to any of the building, construction, and allied trades.

Jobs within the building and construction industry are often high pressure. There are almost always large amounts of money at stake, tight timeframes, and lots of different people involved.

Being a good communicator will help your work run smoothly. It will help you to understand a brief or a job spec, plan your work, and keep it on track. This will reduce mistakes, improve output, and not waste time or money.

Being able to ask the right questions, listen to people, express yourself clearly, and keep good records of your work are skills that are highly sought after by employers.

Good communication is the basis of good collaboration and can be just as important to a successful project as the time you spend on the tools. Being able to communicate well also helps you to resolve any conflicts or problems at school or on your work placements.

A successful Level 3 BCATS student will be able to agree with most, if not all, of the following statements from the 'Employability Skills Framework for Students'. This Framework summarises the skills employers particularly want to see in job applicants and new employees.

1. Positive attitude

- a) I am positive and have a "can do" attitude.
- b) I am optimistic, honest and show respect.
- c) I am happy, friendly and enthusiastic.
- d) I am motivated to work hard towards goals.

2. Communication

- a) I understand, and reflect on, the way I communicate and how it affects others.
- b) I ask questions when unsure or unclear.
- c) I understand how employees, employers and customers communicate.
- d) I speak, listen and share ideas appropriately.

3.	<p>Team work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) I work well with others to complete tasks and meet goals. b) I contribute to developing new ideas or approaches. c) I work well with others of different genders, cultures or beliefs. d) I recognise the authority of supervisors and managers, and follow directions.
4.	<p>Self-management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) I arrive at work on time, with appropriate clothing and equipment to complete a work day. b) I understand, and reflect on, my own words, actions and behaviour, and how these affect others. c) I show commitment and responsibility. d) I am dependable, follow instructions and complete assigned tasks. e) I am responsible for my own health and wellbeing, and follow health and safety guidelines in the workplace.
5.	<p>Willingness to learn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) I am willing to learn new tasks, skills and information. b) I am curious and enthusiastic about the job, organisation and industry. c) I look for opportunities to work more effectively to make the business better. d) I accept advice and learn from feedback.
6.	<p>Thinking skills (problem solving and decision making)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) I identify and assess options before making a decision. b) I recognise problems and use initiative to find solutions. c) I think about consequences before I act. d) I recognise when I need to seek advice.
7.	<p>Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) I adapt and am flexible in new and changing situations. b) I handle challenges and setbacks and do not give up. c) I am able to seek support and help when needed. d) I recognise and accept mistakes made and learn from them.

Good communication

Becoming and being a good communicator has a lot to do with how you choose to present yourself and how you manage your own thoughts and feelings.

A good communicator needs:

1.	Self awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Be aware of your own emotions and how they affect your thoughts and behaviour→ Know your strengths and the value you can add to a situation→ Know your weaknesses and act when you need help and support→ Have self-confidence but don't be arrogant.
2.	Self-management <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Manage your own feelings and behaviours→ Manage your emotions in healthy ways→ Take initiative→ Follow through on things you have said you will do→ Be adaptable to changing circumstances
3.	Social awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Understand the emotions, needs, and concerns of other people→ Watch for people's responses→ Make people feel comfortable→ Recognise the dynamics in a group or organisation and understand your role within it→ Try to see things from other people's point of view
4.	Relationship management <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Develop and maintain good relationships→ Be aware of the example you are setting for others→ Be a team player→ Positively manage conflict

You won't always know exactly how to behave in every situation. However, you are setting the tone for a successful working relationship if you behave in a way that you consider to be polite and respectful.

Communicating to collaborate

Good communication skills are the key to building - and contributing to - an effective team.

The way people communicate with each other has a direct impact on the way they work together (collaborate). Even though it's the leaders in a group or organisation who usually set the tone and pathways for communication, the way each member of a group communicates can affect how the team works together.

Team building

In group situations, getting everyone involved is the key to creating a positive environment, one where everyone feels listened to and valued.

When people feel left out of a group or like they're not being heard and valued, they can 'switch off' or disengage from a group or activity.

If this happens, the person who 'switches off' will miss out on the discussion or the information being shared. This can be critical (or even life threatening) when instructions are involved.

Being part of a good team

- All team members take responsibility for their actions and contributions
- All team members are 'on the same page' and put the project's success at the centre of all decisions
- All team members listen without judgement
- All team members feel safe
- All team members feel comfortable to ask questions and offer their ideas

Vocabulary

Any industry has its own 'language' that uses words unfamiliar to those not working in that industry. The building and construction industry has literally thousands of words never or rarely used by others. To complicate things, there are many tools, equipment, machinery, and materials that have different names in different countries.

It is important to have a working knowledge of the vocabulary associated with your chosen industry and know the proper names of all the tools, processes, methods and techniques that are used in your work. This will help avoid miscommunication and therefore also help with collaboration.

Verbal communication

Verbal, or oral, communication is talking with people to share information and ideas. This includes asking questions, giving directions, coordinating jobs, and explaining something.

Good verbal communication requires skills in:

- Listening
- Using silence
- Asking questions
- Adapting according to different situations, such as meetings
- Negotiation, including having difficult conversations.

Like any skill, practice and experience improves verbal communication. We would expect a 30 year old to have better communication skills than an 18 year old, just as we'd expect a teenager to be a much better communicator than a 6 year old.

This section of the Handbook provides reminders and techniques to practice. It focusses on those that will be most relevant in your first couple of years after school and provides suggestions of how you can practice them as you undertake your project.



Listening

Listening is a learned skill - hearing is not the same as listening!

Being able to listen effectively will help you to follow instructions or directions and make connections. This will ultimately improve the quality of any work you produce.

Listening to others allows you to benefit from other people's knowledge and expertise and to be sure of the project's goals and each step to achieving them.

A good way to improve listening skills is to practice a technique called 'active' listening. Active listening depends on you putting your own feelings about a person or a subject to the side so it's really effective in both and in building relationships and resolving conflict.

Active listening gets you, as a listener, to focus on what is being said and then paraphrase (say in your own words) what you have understood so that you can be sure you are on the right track and the person who is speaking can be sure you have 'got it'.

An example of active listening

A co-worker, teacher or employer might say:

"(your name), can you please go to the van, grab my cell phone and call the office. Tell Laura that we'll be on our way to Mungavin Street in 20 minutes"

Using the skill of active listening, you would reply something like:

"Sure, get your phone from the van and tell Laura that we'll be heading to Mungavin Street in 20?"

Wait to make sure they confirm, and then go and do the task you've been asked to complete.

Using silence as a tool

Silence can be a really powerful tool when you're communicating, especially when you're asking questions.

Using silence isn't the same as 'opting out' or not contributing to a conversation. You should always speak up when you're asked, ask the questions you need to ask and contribute to a group. However, filling up every gap in the conversation with banter can be a real barrier to learning and relationship building.

Silence – or pauses – can:

- emphasise the point you're making
- give people time to let information 'sink in'
- give people a chance to organise their thoughts before they answer.

When you use silence, it's easier for you and the people around you to listen and to concentrate.

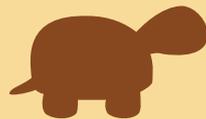
How does silence work?

An effective silence (or pause) is about 3 seconds. That doesn't sound like long until you try it!

Pauses work in three ways:

- a pause before a question shows that what you're going to ask is important and requires attention from the listener
- a pause directly after a question is a really effective way to check understanding – it leaves space for the listener to respond and gives them a chance to seek clarification
- pausing again after an initial response encourages the listener to continue talking and give you more information.

Silence gives you the opportunity to:



Slow down



Process



Think

Asking questions

Asking questions is a big part of how humans learn. Most of us have been asking 'why' since we learned to talk.

'Why' questions help us make sense of the world around us and help us to learn more effectively and at a faster rate. There's even research that shows that the more intelligent you are, the more curious you are, and the more questions you ask. Targeted, constructive questions are key to learning.

Asking questions is the best way to get information about a person, a project, a product or an event and it's definitely one of the best ways to learn new skills.

However, how a question is asked influences learning and relationships.

There's a big difference between:



and



"what's the point of this?"

"when will I ever need to know this?"

"why do I have to do this?"

"what can I do to help?"

"where did you learn how to do that?"

"what comes next?"

Some things to think about before you ask a question.**Is this the right time to ask a question?**

- Is the person you're asking in the middle of an explanation or discussion? If so, it might be best to hold your question because the answer might be in the next part of the explanation.
- Is the person you're asking in a bad mood or in the middle of a difficult, time sensitive or complex task? They may not be able to concentrate on your question. It might be best to let them know you have a question that can wait until they have time, or to ask someone else.
- Is the person you're asking in front of a student, client or other tradesperson or teacher? If the question might cause problems, it might be best to wait until you're on your own with them.

Are you asking the right person or group of people?

- Is the person you're asking the one with the most knowledge on the subject?
- Does the person you're asking have the authority to make a decision or judgement?

What type of question is best?

- Is this the time for a closed question? For example: "is this the hammer you wanted?", "what kind of coffee do you want?"
- Is an open question a better choice? For example: "what makes someone a good apprentice?", or "what sorts of things should I talk about with the supplier?"

What sort of response do you hope to get?

- Do you want an instruction or clarification? Ask a closed question and rephrase it if you don't get the information you need.
- Do you want advice? Ask an open-ended question at a time and place that gives them the time to answer and you time to listen to the answer.
- Do you want a favour or need help? Ask someone who has the time, skills and authority to do what you need, take your time and be polite.
- Do you need information for a project or task? Prepare your questions so that you can be sure you'll get all the information you need.

Closed and open questions

Closed and open questions are used for different reasons. As a rule of thumb, closed questions require an answer and open questions start a conversation.

Closed Questions

Closed questions are questions that can either be answered by a single word or a short phrase. Closed questions:

- give you facts
- are quick to answer
- give the questioner control of the conversation.

People use closed questions to:

- get specific information
- get an answer quickly
- get clarification
- limit talk time
- lead the conversation.

You might know them as yes/no questions but a lot of the time closed questions can't be answered with just a 'yes or a 'no'.

Open Questions

Although any question can receive a long answer, open questions deliberately seek longer answers, and are the opposite of closed questions.

Open questions:

- ask the person being questioned to **think or reflect**
- ask for opinions and feelings
- give the person being questioned control of the conversation.

People use open questions to:

- start a conversation
- build relationships
- get open and honest feedback
- encourage sharing – skills, information, ideas, concerns
- create a positive learning environment
- find out what makes people 'tick' – what's important to them.

Asking questions

Closed versus open questions

Closed question	Open question
Is your project finished?	What does your project involve?
Do you take the bus to school?	How do you get to school?
What is your favourite song right now?	What kinds of music are you in to?
Do you like our school?	Why is our school great?



Different questioning styles for different situations

Why different questioning techniques matter

Some people are confident and happy in a large group – they love speaking up in front of people, confidently share their thoughts and can ask questions easily.

Some people are confident and happy in a small group or with trusted friends – they don't like speaking up in front of people and find it hard to share their thoughts or ask questions in a large group.

All want to be heard and valued, have valuable ideas to share, and have questions to ask and answers to offer.

Questions in a large group

When you ask questions in a large group setting, remember that people need to feel safe to answer them properly. There are some things you can do to support this, whether you are leading the group or participating in it.

- Make sure only one person speaks at a time. This ensures everyone's opinion is listened to and valued.
- Make sure everyone has the opportunity to respond. This might mean sitting in silence for a while so people build up the courage to speak.
- Ask people direct questions. Some people are very uncomfortable with attention focused on them, so tread carefully.
- Give people a chance to provide responses afterwards. This gives those who don't want to talk in front of others the opportunity to contribute.

Questions in smaller groups

When you ask questions in smaller groups or in a one-to-one situation, there is usually more opportunity for discussion. It is important to remember the purpose of questions; that you are asking for input, not trying to make everyone think like you.

- Give people the time and space to reply. It takes some people longer to say what they think.
- Validate people's responses. Even a simple "thanks, I hadn't thought of that", can be enough.
- Be polite and make sure that things don't get personal – not liking someone's idea doesn't mean that you don't like the person who said it!

Communicating in meetings

In the building and construction industry, almost all trades start their day with 'toolbox' meetings. This is where objectives for the day are discussed, the status of any hazards updated, issues raised and resolved, and tasks allocated.



Meetings don't always have to be around a conference table in an office.

They can be formal, where important decisions are made and formally recorded. Or they can be informal, where day to day matters are discussed.

Meetings usually fall into one of the following types:

- Status update – letting people know what's happening on the project
- Information sharing – where speakers share information on a topic
- Decision making – where a group discuss and decide what to do next
- Problem solving – the group might need to identify a problem and possible solution
- Innovation – a brainstorming session where the group works together to think outside the box
- Combination meetings – where you do all or a few of the above.

Whether formal or informal, brainstorming or problem solving, you will have been attending meetings throughout your time at school.

Understanding how meetings work is a useful skill to have once you enter the workforce.

General rules for any meetings

There are rules that apply to all meetings, regardless of whether it's a toolbox meeting or a formal meeting with clients.

1. Be on time
2. Turn off your phone – or at least put it on silent
3. If you don't already know people, introduce yourself – a handshake is always a good start
4. Let people speak and listen to what they have to say.
5. When you do speak, keep to the topic, speak clearly, and be aware of your role and your audience.
 - If you are going along to a meeting to observe or support your colleague or boss, you won't need to speak much and you should wait to be asked to offer an opinion.
 - If meeting with people who need your support and advice (such as students you're mentoring), offer it and provide them with options and the benefit of your knowledge and experience.
6. Be respectful – use people's names. If in doubt, ask how people would like to be addressed (what they would like to be called)
7. Look at people when you are speaking to them but don't automatically expect eye contact in return – in some cultures looking people directly in the eye is considered impolite
8. It's ok to eat or drink the tea, coffee, water and snacks that are provided (and provide them for your guests if you are hosting the meeting) – but don't bring food into a meeting unless you have been specifically told to
9. Dress for the meeting you are going to – will you need your PPE? Will you need to be smartly dressed? Will you need to be wearing your uniform or name badge?
10. Always come to a meeting prepared – have everything you need.

Using communication skills for successful negotiation

No matter how well you get along with your team, your classmates, your teacher or your employer, there will be times when you will have different opinions about how things should be done.

If you're trying to reach a compromise or decision, it's best to use the skill of negotiation.

What is negotiation?

Negotiation is basically a very effective way of reaching a compromise or agreement without getting angry or arguing.

Most people starting off in a disagreement want the best outcome for themselves (or their organisation or group).

It's hard to be objective and fair when you feel strongly about something but being able to see things from other people's perspective is the key to being able to reach a compromise and move forward.

Different kinds of negotiations are used in different settings. On the extreme end of the scale are hostage or armed offender negotiations. At the other end are the kinds of negotiations parents and their children have about homework or washing dishes, or that involve negotiating with your mates about what to do after school.

It's unlikely that you'll need the sort of negotiation skills used by the NZ Police. However, general negotiation skills can be learned and applied across a wide range of situations and activities.

The negotiation process

Effective negotiation is a process. Sometimes, if you've already established a really solid team dynamic, you'll work through this process without even knowing you've done it. Sometimes, especially with more difficult negotiations, you will need to work through each step in a structured way.

In the classroom

6 steps for negotiation

1. Preparation – take time to get your facts together so you can make a case for your point of view
2. Discussion – use your group discussion skills (both speaking clearly and active listening) to make sure everyone has a chance to speak and 'be heard'
3. Clarification of goals – be really clear about what the 'end goal' is and keep coming back to that if people get off topic
4. Negotiate towards a Win-Win outcome – can you include some of each person's ideas or thoughts?
5. Agreement – write down what was agreed and get everyone to either verbally accept the decision or 'sign off' on it – it's even OK to have people state that this isn't the outcome they had hoped for but they agree to go with the majority decision
6. Implementation of a course of action – make a plan to reach your goal and move forward

Having difficult conversations

No matter how confident, competent and charismatic you are, there'll be times when issues arise, conflicts develop, mistakes are made, or things just all go wrong.

Resolving problems often means having difficult conversations and these require solid communication skills and lots of practice. Your negotiating skills will help you – having to talk with someone about something you'd strongly prefer to avoid requires consideration of their perspective and a focus on mutual goals.

No one likes fronting up when things go wrong or letting people down. However, the truth is, once you're in the workplace, you'll be dealing with lots of different people, in many different situations, and there's no way to avoid issues altogether.

Whether you're speaking with your boss, your co-workers, suppliers, other tradespeople or a client; dealing with issues at work is often not a matter of **what** you're saying but how you're saying it.

What kinds of conversations can be difficult?

There are lots of situations that can lead to difficult conversations. They might happen when:

- you're late for work
- you need time off
- you've broken something belonging to the company
- you've broken something belonging to a client
- you've broken something belonging to another contractor
- you've hurt someone
- you're unhappy at work
- you're behind in your bookwork
- you're unhappy at home.

What to do when you're faced with a difficult conversation

There's no one 'right way', when it comes to difficult conversations but there are some general 'rules of thumb' that you can follow.

If you're late for work

If being late is a one off, then a genuine apology will probably be enough. If you're late a lot, then you need to make more changes to correct the reasons for it.

Time is money in business and, if you're late to work, you're costing your employer. If you want to be taken seriously, get to bed early enough, set your alarm, get organised and get to work on time.

But, from time to time, things outside of your control (such as a car crash, a flood, a flat battery) will make you late for work.

If this happens:

- call your boss as soon as you safely can – don't wait to get to work to let them know what is going on
- make the call yourself – always! – don't get your mum to call no matter how much you want her to!
- call, don't text – you can't be sure someone has seen a text, if you talk to your boss you'll know they've got the message
- be prepared to be told off – even just a little bit – and take a telling off without trying to defend yourself or blame anyone (or anything) else
- apologise for being late – regardless of the reason, your lateness is costing the business money, it's an inconvenience and you should take responsibility for that
- let your boss know when you will be at work
- make every effort to get into work as quickly as possible.

If you've broken something belonging to the school/company

Obviously, a lot of accidents can be avoided by following health and safety policies, procedures and practices, by only using equipment in the way it was intended, and by exercising some common sense.

But, accidents happen and it's likely that you'll break something belonging to your company or colleague at some stage.

When and if it happens front up straight away and tell the owner in person. It will be worse for everyone if they find out from someone else.

Remember to turn the equipment off straight away or take the tool (depending on what you've broken) out of rotation before anyone else tries to use it – broken equipment can be really dangerous. A damaged tool or broken equipment is more than an inconvenience, it's a hazard.

If you've broken something belonging to a client or another contractor

This is a really hard one! Whether it's a window or something treasured, breaking something that belongs to a client can be really scary.

But again, at some point in your career you may have to 'fess up' to breaking something belonging to a client.

When and if it happens:

- front up straight away and tell your boss in person – if your boss isn't on site you'll need to call them and ask them what you should do next
- your boss will have insurance that covers everyone in your company but they will have to make a call around whether or not they make a claim and how the claim and the excess will impact the business. Whatever happens, the breakage will cost your company money and stress but honesty is **always** the best policy.

If you're completing your Level 3 BCATS Project entirely at your school, use these techniques when you're speaking with your teachers and classmates – it's good practice for when you enter the workplace.

Reading

Reading for work purposes is not like reading for pleasure. Workplace reading is the ability to get the information you need from a written document.

This might be a plan, a text, an email, a memo or note, a sign, an order form, a quote, a job spec, product instructions, health and safety documents or manual, or workplace policy.

You use reading skills to make sense of text from lots of different sources, so that you can figure out what you need to know, to get the job done.

To have good workplace reading skills, you don't need to be a fantastic reader you just need to practice good reading habits.

Scanning

You scan a document when you are looking for a specific piece of information.

You do this every day when you are reading a take-away menu, finding the relevant section in a resource like this one, checking the weather or looking to see what is playing at the movies. When you scan, you need to be clear about what information you are looking for so you can stop reading when you have found out what you need to know.

Skimming

Skimming is a bit like scanning. It's another quick type of reading but unlike scanning when you are looking for a specific piece of information or an answer to a question, skim reading is about figuring out the main points of a bigger section of text. Skim reading is useful if you want to get the 'gist' of a document or to get a feel for it.

Reading for detail

Reading for detail is the reading strategy that is used most often. We read for detail when we need to get a full understanding of a document or piece of text.

It's a slower reading process that requires you to start at the beginning of a piece of text and read it all the way to the end. Reading for detail is useful for reading product specifications or instructions, reading compliance documents or contracts, or reading a job spec or brief.

Written communication

Having good written communication skills for work doesn't mean being able to write the next, great New Zealand novel.

However, between emails, texts, Facebook and website enquiries, most people who work in any kind of business write something on a daily basis.

It's important to remember that writing to someone is not the same as talking with them, because they can't see your face, hear your tone, or get a sense of your mood through your body language.

What you write can sometimes be misconstrued (taken the wrong way), and an email or text that you wrote and sent off without a second thought can be read very differently to how you intended it to be.

Remember that what you write, and the way you write, affects how people see you and how you come across.

Written communication might mean messaging a classmate, writing a note or memo for your teacher, boss or supervisor, responding to an email request or writing a list for a supplier. Whatever you are writing and whoever you are writing for, there are some things you need to remember.

Who will be reading it?

Internal communication

Writing to people who work in your school or organisation:

- **If you are writing to another student or a workmate** you can use informal language, 'text speak' or colloquialisms but remember that you are trying to present yourself in the best light possible - don't swear or use offensive, racist or sexist language and don't complain about your teacher, your boss, other students or workmates, or your client.
- **If you are writing to your teacher or boss**, be respectful and polite - no matter how well you know each other or get on.

External communication

Writing to suppliers, clients, industry professionals and other people who aren't from your school or from your organisation:

- If you are writing to a supplier, a client or an end user of your product remember that you are the 'face' of your school or business - be polite, use whole sentences (no text speak or acronyms (LOL, FOTFL, SMH, FOMO)) and if you're not the world's best speller, get someone to check your email or text before you send it.
- If you are writing to another tradesperson or other business professional be very clear and to the point. Remember that everyone's time is valuable.

What do you want to communicate?

Are you replying to a question or request?

Keep the question or request in front of you so that you can see what you need to answer.

Work your way through the inquiry from beginning to end, answering each point in order.

If you need to, check with someone more senior or experienced, to make sure that you can do what has been asked.

Are you asking a question?

Be clear about what you want – include product codes or descriptions where you need to.

Make sure you are writing to the right person – it sometimes pays to ring and get contact details first.

Are you making a statement?

Is it something you should be saying? Ask your teacher or boss.

Make sure you follow any school or company procedures.

Are you writing a report or filling in a form?

Read each section carefully so you know what to include.

Ask for support if you don't know what to write or how to write it.

