BCATS
BUILDING, CONSTRUCTION AND ALLIED TRADES SKILLS

Communication

Learning resource

This resource provides guidance for the following BCATS skill standards:

Level 1 – 40548
Use trade language to progress a BCATS project or related tasks

Level 2 – 40557
Interpret and use trade information to progress a BCATS project

Level 3 – 40573
Respond to the BCATS environment to work with others

BCITO
He Hunga Hanga Mātou
building people

Contents

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Introduction

In a construction workplace, you need to be able to communicate with different people to get the job done. Poor communication can lead to mistakes and a dangerous workplace.

This guide is all about communicating when you are working on your Building, Construction, and Allied Trades Skills (BCATS) project. You'll learn:

- what information is available to help with your project
- who you might need to work with to complete your project
- how to work with other people
- how to use and respond to feedback.

Communication tips

- **Clarity and thoughtfulness**
  Organise your ideas before speaking or writing.
  Use precise language to help avoid misunderstandings.

- **Empathy and respect**
  Effective communication means listening to others and considering how they feel. This builds trust and strengthens team relationships.

- **Action and follow-through**
  Communication is not just about words, it's also about what you do next. Follow through on commitments and check in after conversations to show that you're engaged.

There are a few things to think about before you get started.

- ☑ Do you understand your project instructions or brief?

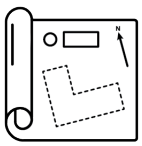
- ☑ Are you confident you can do it?

- ☑ Who do you need to work with?

Project information

In the BCATS context, project information includes instructions about what the project is, how it is to be done, and what materials are needed.

The information can come in different forms.



Drawn
Detailed plans, drawings and elevations, quick sketches, or diagrams.

Written
Handwritten, typed, emailed instructions, cutting lists.

Spoken
Face-to-face or phone conversations.

If you have any questions about your instructions, ask your teacher and take notes so you remember what they said.

Project instructions

For Level 1 BCATS, you will be given project instructions. This might include:

- materials and measurements
- project tasks
- methods and procedures
- finishes to be applied.

Over the page is an example of project instructions for garden stools. These might look different to other project instructions you've seen.

Other project instructions, like the bathroom cabinet, might include extra information like:

- sketches and drawings
- timelines and deadlines
- safety requirements (including PPE).

You can use the project instructions to check the quality of the project as you're working on it and fix anything as you need to. You can also keep track of tasks that have been assigned to team members and when they were completed.

Project brief

For Level 2 and 3 BCATS, you will receive a project brief. This will include less information than the project instructions. Depending on the skill standards you are working on, the project brief might include:

- basic overview of project requirements
- considerations for project materials
- sketches and drawings etc.

Manuals and manufacturer's instructions

In a workshop, standard operating procedures (SOPs) and safety data sheets (SDSs) are an important source of information.

- **SOPs -** explain the correct steps to follow when using equipment like a drill press, or nail gun, so learners know how to use them safely and accurately.
- **SDSs -** give important information about products such as adhesives, paints, stains, and manufactured boards, including what protective gear to wear and what to do if there is a spill or accident.

Your teacher will be able to help you find other documents and information to help with your project and stay safe while you're working on it.

To make one stool

- 2.4m macrocarpa sleeper 200mm x 50mm (dressed, if possible)
- 1.8m macrocarpa 100mm x 25mm (dressed, if possible)
- 8 x 100mm landscaping screws or bugles
- 16 x 75mm stainless steel screws or decking screws
- Your choice of Resene finishes

Tools

- Sander and sandpaper
- Measure tape and pencil
- Sliding square
- Mitre saw or hand saw
- Exterior wood glue and clamps
- Drill or impact driver
- Bugle drill bit, square head or torx head drill bit to suit your 75mm screws
- 8mm drill bit and 4mm drill bit
- Paintbrushes

Cut List

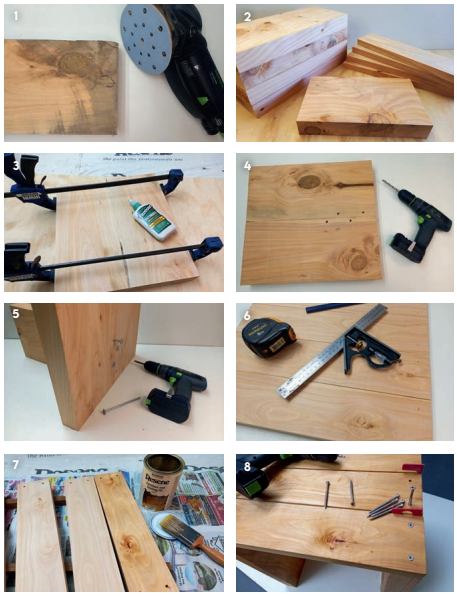
- 4 x 200mm x 50mm at 430mm
- 4 x 100mm x 25mm at 450mm
- 1 x 200mm x 50mm at 350mm

Cost $40 for timber and fixings This excludes Resene products. I used Resene Exterior Furniture and Decking Oil.

Step 1
Using the sander, sand the timber to a smoother finish, or your local timberyard may be able to supply dressed timber. Another option is to leave it rough sawn for a more rustic look.

Step 2
Measure your timbers and mark up. Cut your timbers to size using a drop saw or hand saw.

Step 3
To make the legs, glue two of the 200mm x 50mm timbers together, and wait to dry.



Step 4
When the legs are ready, measure 40mm down and 120mm down from the centre and 15mm in, and on the side 80mm and 160mm down. Pre-drill using the 8mm drill bit.

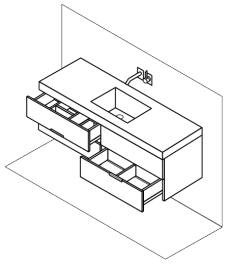
Step 5
Put your leg timbers upside down on a level surface and place the centre piece in the middle, and bugle into place. This will give you the basic frame of the legs.

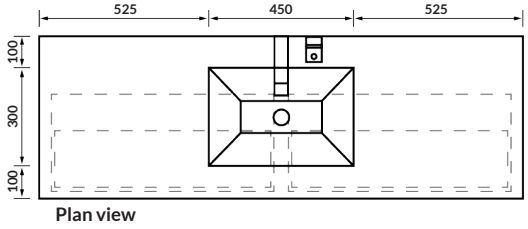
Step 6
With the 100mm x 25mm timbers, measure 25mm in from each end and mark up on each corner. Pre-drill with the 4mm drill bit.

Step 7
Finish with your choice of Resene products. I wanted a natural look and to enhance the macrocarpa timber, so used Resene's Exterior Furniture and Decking Oil. Wait for it to dry.

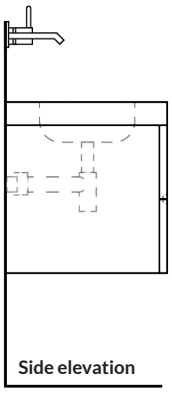
Step 8
Fix the 100mm x 25mm timbers to the top of the frame using your decking or stainless steel screws. I used some plastic spacers to get the slats even. Your stools are ready to use. ■

Jane Horne and partner Simon Bartholomew design and develop projects from their studio (plainandsimple.co.nz) in Christchurch, managing projects throughout the South Island.

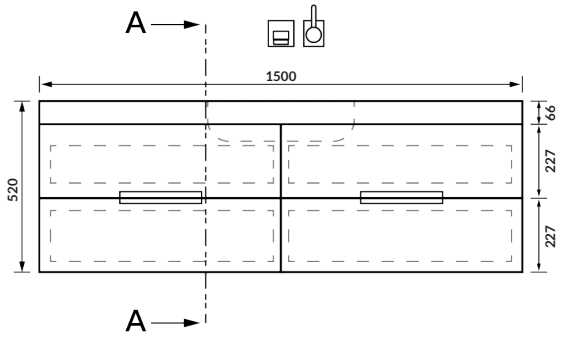




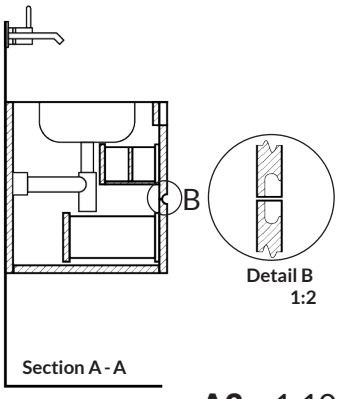
Plan view



Side elevation



Front elevation



Detail B
1:2

Section A - A

A3 - 1:10

Client name:	Date:	BATHROOM VANITY UNIT	WOODCRAFT JOINERY
Address:			

"Construction speak"

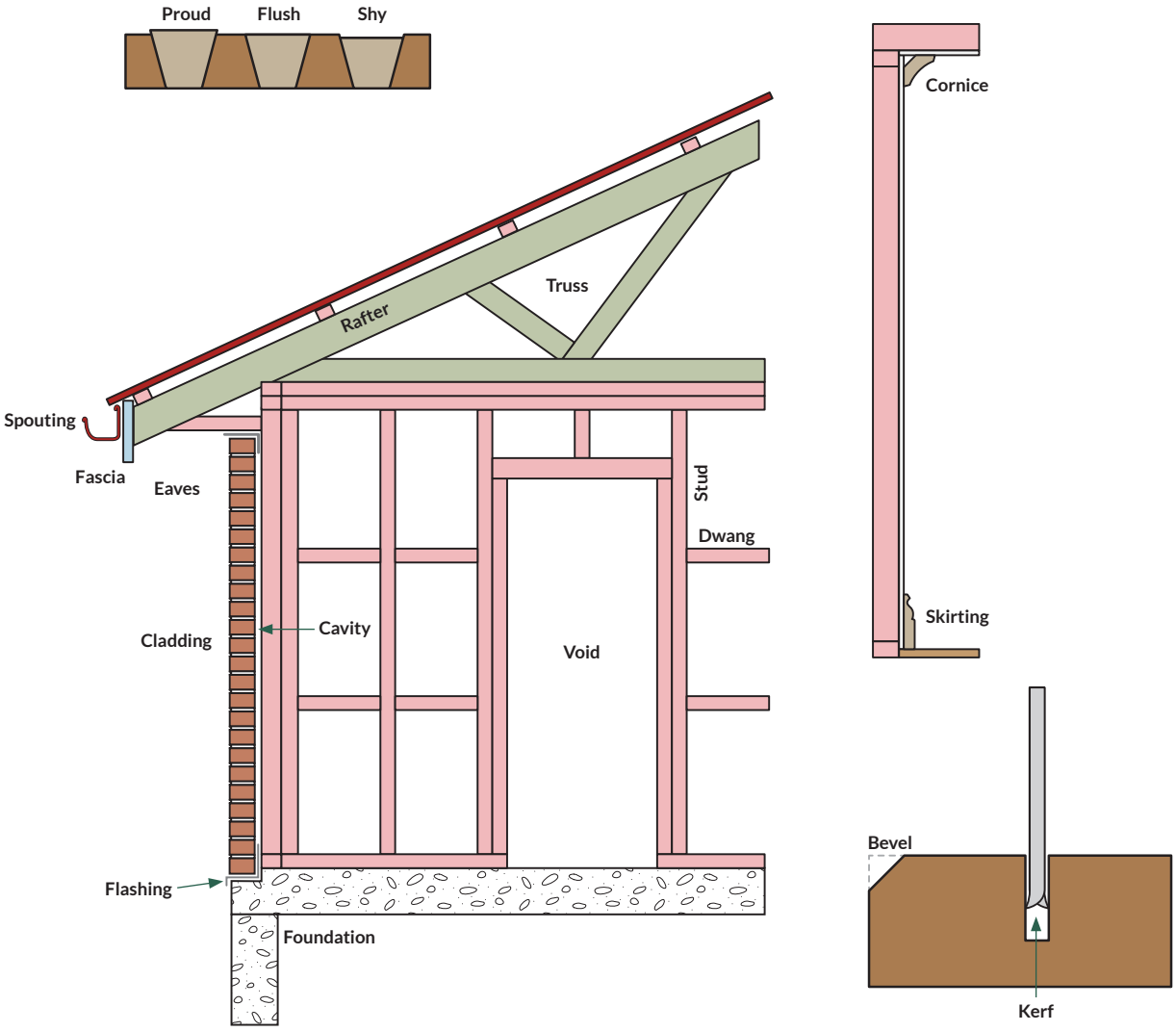
When you are looking at your project instructions/brief, you might see some words you're not familiar with.

Sometimes the words used in construction workplaces have different meanings when they're used in everyday life.

For example, when a builder describes something as 'flush', they mean two surfaces that meet with no gaps or bumps. Other people might know 'flush' as when someone's face goes red.

There are also a lot of abbreviations used in construction workplaces. For example, 100mm x 50mm Rad, SG8, H1.2 makes sense to a carpenter but not to someone who has never worked with timber.

Have a look at the glossary of common construction terms on the next page for examples of what you might hear or see.



Glossary of common construction terms

Term	Meaning
Batch	Amount of concrete or mortar mixed at one time.
Bevel	Angled cut made along the edge of a board.
Cavity	Space between a layer of masonry (stone or brick) and wall framing. It allows for drainage.
Cladding	Material used on the outside of a building to make it weather resistant.
Check out	Use a chisel to cut away timber to make a recess for a joint.
Cornice	Strip of material used to cover up the join between a wall and ceiling.
Course	Horizontal layer or bricks, stones, or blocks.
Creep	Slow movement of a material when it is under stress.
Dwang	Horizontal piece of timber used between studs.
Eaves	Lower part of a roof that sticks out beyond the face of a wall.
Elevation	The front, rear, or side view of a project as seen in the working drawings.
Fascia	Board at the lower part of a roof that is used to attach spouting.
Face	Surface of finished timber that will be most visible.
Flashing	Material (often galvanised steel) used in a building to prevent moisture where different components meet.
Flush	When two adjoining surfaces line up with no gaps or bumps.
Foundation	The base of a building (e.g. piles, footing) that spreads the load from the building to the ground.
In situ	Building components that are assembled in their permanent place (rather than being assembled before they are installed).
Jamb	Vertical side of a door or window frame.
Kerf	Width of material removed by a saw blade during cutting.
Plumb	Vertical.
Proud	When one component sticks out above another it is referred to as 'proud'.
Rafter	Sloped beam that forms part of the framing for a roof.
Shy	When one component sits below another it is referred to as 'shy'.
Skew	At an angle.
Skirting	Strip of material used to cover up the join between a wall and floor.
Spouting	Gutter for draining water off a roof.
Stopping	Filling marks or dents in surfaces to be painted (e.g. nail holes, cracks).
Stud	Vertical timber component that forms part of a wall.
Truss	Timber or steel framing that forms a triangle shape for strength.
Void	Space left in a wall or floor for a window, door, or stairs.

Before you need to communicate with someone in your workplace, be sure that:

- ☑ you have a clear message 
- ☑ you are using respectful language 
- ☑ if you need help with something, give a realistic timeframe 

Working with other people

For your first BCATS project, you will probably only need to communicate with your teacher and classmates. If you go on to work on projects at higher levels, you might also need to communicate with clients, business owners, supervisors, and other tradespeople or suppliers.

It's a good idea to think about your communication style for each individual/group.

Communicating with:	
Workmates / classmates	You can use informal language, 'text speak', and slang. Try not to swear and never use offensive language.
Teachers or employers	Be respectful and polite, no matter how well you know each other or get on.
Clients	Be polite and use whole sentences.
Suppliers	Be clear and to the point.

Communication methods

There are a lot of different communication methods you can use for different situations. Below are some you might use in your work.

Oral communication

Speaking

Did you think through what you were going to say before you said it?
Have you paused to give the listener time to think?
Have you checked their understanding?

Listening

Focus on what is being said — pick out the most important points.
What have you learnt from listening to others?

Asking questions

Check that everyone understands each other.
'Why' and 'how' questions can help to improve understanding.

Email

Before sending an email, it is important to check:

- your questions or information request is clear
- the words are spelt correctly.

The email below is polite, professional, and clear about what the sender wants the person receiving it to know and do.

To: joebloggs@schoolmail.edu.nz

Subject: Status of timber order

Kia ora Tutor,

I have written up the order of materials for the project.
Please can we make a time to check that I have the right measurements?

I can meet you on Thursday the 29th. Please let me know a good time.

Ngā mihi,
Student

Subject line:

Should be clear and brief, so the receiver knows the purpose of the email.

Body of the email:

Should include the main information being communicated or the question being asked.

- Use a greeting such as 'Hi' or 'Kia ora'.
- The first sentence should include the question or main point.
- Keep it brief.

Other communication

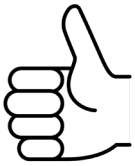
About 60% of communication is through cues such as facial expressions, appearance, and body language.

Appearance

A person who is clean and tidily dressed will give a positive impression to others.

Body language

A person who smiles, communicates with their hands, and holds good eye contact tends to come across as confident and relaxed.



Hand signals

In construction workplaces, hand signals are often used when passing on information. However, all people involved in the conversation need to understand what they mean.

Activity

Think about your communication style.
What might you be telling or showing others when you are not speaking?

Reading the room

Here are some examples of changing the way you communicate for different needs and situations.

- **Noisy workplace** – the BCATS workplace can be noisy, so you might need to use hand signals, written instructions, or other ways to communicate. Moving to a quieter area can also make it easier to pass on a message.
- **Replying to a request** – keep the request in front of you so you can see what you need to respond to. Work your way from beginning to end, answering each point in order.
- **Asking a question** – be clear about what you want to ask. If you're emailing it, make sure you are sending it to the right person.

Activity

Think about a time when you changed the way you communicated so someone could understand you better.

Managing workplace relationships

In a good BCATS workplace, everyone works together. Everyone has a part to play. Here are some important things that help to build workplace relationships.

Respect

- **Listen carefully.** The construction trades rely on clear, direct communication so jobs are completed safely and in good time.
- **Speak up.** Don't shy away from asking questions or having your say but always be respectful of others' opinions.

Build trust

- **Be dependable.** Turning up on time and showing you are committed will show you are trustworthy.
- **Be honest.** Whether it's following safety rules or owning up to a mistake, honesty goes a long way.

Handle conflict

- **Stay calm.** In fast-paced workplaces, arguments can happen. Keep your emotions in check and stay as calm as possible.
- **Focus on solutions.** Concentrate on resolving issues rather than laying blame.

Build connections

- **Be a team player.** Construction work is not often done alone. Show you value the team's success as much as your own.

Learn from your leaders

- **Pay attention.** Many experienced workers enjoy teaching younger people. Show appreciation for their knowledge as it can lead to great mentorship opportunities.

Considering culture

The construction workplace will include people from many different cultural backgrounds. Here are some things for you to consider.

Acknowledge cultural values

- **Whanaungatanga (relationships).** Māori and Pasifika cultures often place a strong emphasis on community. Building genuine relationships with team members creates trust and mutual respect.
- **Manaakitanga (hospitality and care).** Show kindness, respect, and support for others. This could be as simple as checking in if someone looks like they're having a bad day.

Recognise tikanga (customs) and protocols

- Take the time to learn about tikanga Māori, such as proper ways to greet and enter spaces.
- Be mindful of tapu (sacred) practices, especially when dealing with the whenua (land). This holds deep cultural and spiritual significance to Māori.

Activity

What other cultures are there in your workplace?
What values are important in those cultures?

Toolbox meetings

Almost all construction workplaces start their day with a 'toolbox' meeting (just like when the teacher starts the lesson – they give an outline of the tasks that need to be done and how they need to be done).

These meetings encourage whanaungatanga (good relationships) – a chance for everyone to share information and ideas.

You can expect the following to be talked about at a toolbox meeting.

- Goals for the day.
- Activities to be completed, and who they've been allocated to.
- Status of workplace hazards (and any new ones).
- Issues that have been raised and resolved.

Group work

When you are working as part of a project team, there might be times when you take on the role of the leader to support others or solve a problem.

Below are some of the roles within a BCATS workplace.

Project manager

The project manager oversees the entire project. They plan the project tasks and manage them until they're finished.

They allocate resources such as materials, tools, and who is going to do what. They then communicate this to all team members.

Site supervisor

The site supervisor runs daily activities in the workplace.

They make sure the workplace is safe, and the quality of work meets project standards.

Apprentice/learner

The apprentice/learner develops their skills and knowledge under the supervision of more experienced workers.

They help with jobs and learn trade skills while completing their apprenticeship.

Client/stakeholder

The client/stakeholder provides project requirements and expectations.

They offer feedback to make sure it will meet their needs.

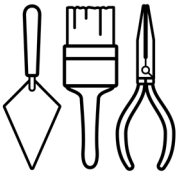
They approve the key stages of the project and the outcome.

Health and safety officer

The health and safety officer manages safety information and inspections.

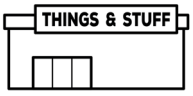
They train team members in safety and report accidents and near-misses.

They make sure the workplace complies with health and safety rules.



Other trades

Other trades are brought in to complete their work so larger projects can be finished.



Suppliers

Suppliers provide materials and equipment for the project.


Contribute ideas and be open to the ideas of others
Share resources and problems
Support other team members
Give feedback and be open to receiving it
Be mature in your approach to conflict
Take ownership of your tasks
GROUP COMMUNICATION

Problem-solving

Problem-solving is identifying issues and finding solutions to them during a project.

Team members should be able to work together to solve problems. Any conversations that helped to solve problems should be documented.

Problem-solving steps

1. The first step is to identify the problem and clearly communicate it to others in the team.
2. As a team, come up with possible solutions and discuss the positives and negatives of each solution.
3. Choose a solution that everyone agrees with.
4. Apply the solution and assign responsibilities to team members.
5. Monitor progress of the solution.

Examples of problems and solutions

Poor use of materials, tools, and equipment

- Before starting the project, plan when materials, tools, and equipment might be needed.

Delays or bad time management

- Develop a timeline with reviews built in to check progress.

Poor quality work

- Schedule regular quality checks to make sure project outcomes are met.

Communication breakdown

- From the start of the project, create clear communication channels.
- Discuss any issues at toolbox meetings.

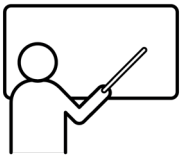
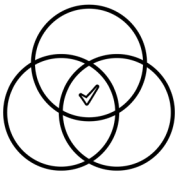
Negotiation

Respectful negotiation is where everyone involved in a discussion reaches an agreement while maintaining respect for each other. This is achieved by:

- listening carefully
- expressing your thoughts calmly
- summarising to show understanding
- finding a fair solution to the problem.

Interrupting others, getting angry, becoming emotional, and making personal attacks is not respectful negotiation.

How to plan respectful negotiation

 Prepare	Understand your goals	Be clear about what you want to achieve from the negotiation.
	Do your research	Gather all the information you need to understand the needs and interests of others.
	Plan your approach	Develop a plan for how you will present your thoughts.
 Open the dialogue	Establish rapport	Begin with a friendly attitude to make the conversation positive.
	State your intentions	Clearly explain the purpose of the negotiation and what you hope to achieve.
 Listen actively	Pay attention	Listen carefully to others' thoughts without interrupting.
	Show understanding	Acknowledge their concerns and show that you understand their thinking.
 Present your case	Be clear and concise	Present your points simply and clearly.
	Use evidence	Support your arguments with facts, data, and examples.
 Explore options	Brainstorm solutions	Work together to come up with possible solutions.
	Evaluate the options	Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each option and how they align with everyone's interests.
 Find common ground	Identify shared interests	Focus on areas where all parties have common goals.
	Compromise	Be willing to find a middle ground that satisfies the needs of everyone involved.

Feedback

Feedback is information given to someone about their work. It can be written, spoken, or shown through practical demonstrations.

Feedback helps with understanding:

- what you are doing well
- anything that needs improvement.

Receiving feedback

Always look closely at any feedback you receive and think about the points raised.

The feedback you receive should be:

Positive

- Praise for things that have been done or gone well.

(e.g. 'Well done for finishing the task to a good standard and a day earlier than expected.')

Constructive

- Suggestions or advice on how to improve. It should be sensitive to the needs of the person receiving it.

(e.g. 'If you hold the tool like this, it will be easier to use.')

Reflective

- It might include questions that encourage reflection on what has been learned.

(e.g. 'What would you do differently next time to anticipate challenges earlier in the process?')

Responding to feedback

Once you have reviewed the feedback, identify any areas for improvement. You can then use it to make changes to the project.

Here is an example.

Feedback

My teacher said I should do a second check of my measurements to make sure they are correct.

Your response

I checked and found out one measurement was slightly out. I corrected it.

How did you feel about the feedback

I was annoyed at first because I was sure I was right. My teacher didn't tell me it was wrong, she just suggested I check it. This made me second guess my measurements and check them, so I found out I'd made a mistake. I need to learn to accept help when it's offered. I'm glad I checked.

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