



Developing communication skills for placement

Communicating effectively on placement can be challenging for students and requires commitment and clear strategies. Development will not just happen, so it requires an active learning process. It is important to remember that placement is a learning experience so you are not expected to be perfect at this stage.

What will be expected during placement?

As you participate and learn about placement activities, you will be expected to:

- engage with your facilitator by actively listening and asking questions or seeking clarification when needed
- continue to develop your discipline-specific vocabulary
- demonstrate independence in improving your ability to communicate

Preparing to achieve these expectations begins *before* your first placement and requires a systematic and strategic plan to ensure you continually develop.

What does successful communication on placement involve?

You will be required to interact with patients or clients, as well as your facilitators and colleagues. Successful communication is the combination of many elements including;

- words, terminology and phrases
- tone of voice
- body language and facial expressions

How can I develop my communication skills?

Developing your communication skills is a long term investment, so use these stages to ensure you get the most out of your practical experiences and exposure to real world situations while on placement.

Before placement - Be aware of the environment that you will be working in and use your workshop notes and any class notes or information you have learnt so far to prepare *before* you start day 1.

During placement - The end of each day is an important time to review what you have learnt and most importantly, to prepare any questions you may have for things you are unclear about.

After placement - Reflect on all of the communicative elements of your placement in order to evaluate the success of your communication strategies.



	<i>Before placement</i>	<i>During placement</i>	<i>After placement</i>
Vocabulary	Organise a list of technical words as well as patient or <i>everyday</i> words. Think of the situations where you may use these words and say them aloud .	Add any words that you have learnt to your vocabulary list and practise speaking them aloud . Ask colleagues for feedback.	Update your vocabulary list and ensure you have both technical and 'patient speak' versions. Include pronunciation notes if needed.
Scenarios	Imagine scenarios you may be involved in and prepare a range of phrases that can be used to communicate what you will need to express.	Remember & record any situations that were confusing or difficult and prepare questions for your colleagues or facilitator to help you understand what was being communicated	Be clear about which situations were the most difficult for you and try to pinpoint the reason i.e. <i>was it because you didn't understand the words or the speaker spoke too fast etc.</i>
Phrases	Prepare a range of questions to seek clarification from your facilitator. Instead of 'Can you please repeat', think in terms of <i>clarifying</i> e.g. 'Do you mean I need to...?'	Remember & record the successful interactions to use again and for any difficulties with expression, find a way to say what you mean and practise it aloud for the next time.	Record any Australian phrases or cultural norms of the environment in preparation for your next placement.
Pronunciation	Be aware of any pronunciation issues you have and either practise to improve or find alternative vocabulary with the same meaning.	Recall any words you spoke that were not understood and practise (using a spoken dictionary) or find alternative words.	Decide if the words that were difficult to pronounce can be replaced or seek assistance to find out which sounds need to be improved.

Other tips

- Practise speaking at every opportunity with anyone you can. Keep in mind your purpose is just to practise conversation skills.
- Practise sustaining conversations. Use lots of 'hmm...', 'really ...', 'ok ...' and head nods to indicate your interest.
- Practise speaking aloud and saying the phrases to train your mouth and voice.