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# Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *TLIG2007 Work in a socially diverse environment*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au).

## How to work through this learner guide

Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which activities you need to complete. This learner guide will help you in your training.

Icon	Feature	How you can use each feature
	Learning content	Read each topic. Speak to your trainer if you need help.
	Activities	Activities give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which activities to complete.
	Video clips	Where you see a QR code, you can use a smartphone or tablet to access video clips about the content. For information about how to download an app that will read the QR code, or for more help, visit our website: <a href="http://www.aspirelr.com.au/help">www.aspirelr.com.au/help</a>
	Workplace examples	Workplace examples at the end of each topic show how your learning applies in practice.
	Summaries	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
	Words to remember	<p>As you read the learner guide, use the table at the back of the book to write down any words you need to remember.</p> <p>There is a space for you to write the word and a space for you to write down what the word means.</p> <p>You can also access a full glossary of terms via this QR code.</p>





## Topic 1 | What you need to know about cultural differences in the workplace

*Whatever industry you work in, you will interact with a wide range of people. Australian society is made up of diverse cultures, so it is important to be able to communicate effectively with people of all cultures.*

Be aware that effective communication includes using gestures, body language, signage, written information, facial expressions and listening. You can use some or all of these when communicating to ensure information is given and received effectively.

Laws in Australia determine that people from all cultures be treated equally and not be discriminated against. Workplaces must understand and make sure their employees treat others with respect. This includes work colleagues and also customers.

**In this topic  
you will learn  
about:**

1A Cultural awareness

1B Equality and anti-discrimination laws

1C Recognition of overseas customer groups

## Decision-making styles

Decision-making roles vary widely. The people of some cultures delegate tasks to others, while other people prefer to make decisions themselves. When decisions are made in a group, some cultures prefer majority rule, while others prefer getting everyone to agree to reach a decision. The people of some Indigenous cultures only make important decisions after discussing them with others in the clan, particularly elders.



Adapted from DuPrav and Axner, 'Working on Common Cross-cultural Communication Challenges': [www.pbs.org/ampu/crosscult.html](http://www.pbs.org/ampu/crosscult.html)

# Dealing with misunderstandings and problems

## *Resolving differences between people can be difficult.*

Dealing with misunderstandings and problems can be difficult if a lack of cultural awareness is part of the problem. To resolve a difference, you must first identify the cause of the problem, then find a solution that will satisfy everyone. You must be calm and patient, and act with sensitivity.

Here are some general guidelines to consider when resolving cultural differences.

### Don't stereotype or oversimplify

Don't stereotype or oversimplify your ideas about another person. Understand and appreciate that people are complex. Not all people are the same – similarities and differences are both important.

### Don't assume there is one right way

There is more than one right way to communicate. For example, think about your body language; what may be seen as friendly in one culture may mean anger or aggression in another.

### Don't assume other people are at fault

Search for ways to make communication work, rather than focusing on who is at fault for a misunderstanding or communication breakdown.

### Listen carefully and try to understand

Show you are listening carefully and are interested in what is being said. Don't interrupt, and ask questions to make sure you have understood what the other person is trying to say. Respect that some people may not want to communicate with you.

### Put yourself in the other person's shoes

When you put yourself in the other person's shoes, you need to put aside any judgment. It is likely that another person's ideas will be very different from your own.



## Activity 1

### Question 1

Which of the following are principles that underpin cultural awareness? Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Respect
- ☐ Excitement
- ☐ Tolerance
- ☐ Recognition
- ☐ Equality

### Question 2

Draw a line from the words on the left to match the definition on the right.

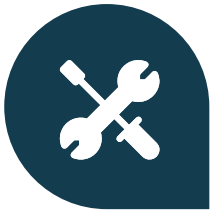
- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| * Being task-orientated      | * The way some words and phrases are used in different ways across cultures                               |
| * Nonverbal communication    | * Where people prefer to focus immediately on the task at hand and let relationships develop as they work |
| * Verbal communication style | * Facial expressions, gestures, seating arrangements and personal space                                   |

### Question 3

Circle the correct answer.

When someone is having trouble communicating with you, you should avoid interrupting and ask questions to clarify what the other person is trying to say.

- \* True
- \* False



*Read the following workplace example to see how the concepts you have learned are applied in a real-life situation.*

## Workplace example for Topic 1

Nick has worked in a book distribution warehouse for two years and has been happy at his workplace. He and his family moved to Australia from Italy 10 years ago and feel like they are fitting into the Australian lifestyle and culture well. Nick has a lot of people he is proud to call friends both inside and outside of work. He is proud of his Italian background and is well respected by everyone.

Another employee, Andreas, started with the same organisation just two weeks ago. Andreas is originally from Greece and works in the same team as Nick.

One day Nick notices a few of the other workers, giving Andreas a hard time. One person in particular is calling Andreas derogatory names and suggesting he go back to Greece. Nick witnesses this behaviour and asks what the problem is. The person, Kurt, says that Andreas can't understand him and that he is a danger to himself and others at the workplace. Kurt is an Indigenous Australian and sometimes has trouble understanding people who speak with a strong foreign accent.

Nick decides to organise a short workshop for everyone in his team so that they can refresh their understanding about cultural awareness in the workplace. He explains the principles that underpin cultural awareness including: understanding, respect, empathy, tolerance, recognition, acknowledgment, non-judgment and equality. He then explains the ways their organisation expects everyone to comply with EEO and anti-discrimination legislation laws. The session concludes with ways to get assistance if there are cultural misunderstandings.

After the workshop, Kurt approaches Nick and asks him for some guidance on how to understand and be understood by Andreas. Nick suggests that Kurt speaks a little slower, uses simple plain English words, and is careful about his pronunciation. Nick also says he can speak to Andreas about asking questions and paraphrasing what Kurt has said to ensure Andreas has understood correctly. Nick then reminds Kurt that it is against the law to discriminate against a person based on their culture, and also offers to help if there are any more communication issues.

After a few months of implementing these strategies, Kurt and Andreas find they have a lot in common and become good friends and colleagues.







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## Topic 2 | What you need to do to communicate and work effectively with others in the workplace

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*To work effectively with people from a range of backgrounds you need to be able to identify and understand the way their backgrounds influence how they communicate and interact with others.*

There is a range of factors that influence individual differences – cultural background and language skills are two of the most obvious. You need to consider and value these factors when communicating, and treat individuals with respect. Applying strategies for positive communication that adhere to organisation guidelines and protocols will help you do this.

In this topic you will learn how to:

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**2A** Read, understand and apply workplace information correctly

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**2B** Behave and communicate appropriately in the workplace

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**2C** Identify and address cross-cultural misunderstandings

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**2D** Complete workplace documentation

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### Strategies for overcoming language and communication barriers:

- Give simple directions and instructions. Avoid slang, jargon, abbreviations and technical terms.
- Answer inquiries or describe goods and services using simple language and plain English.
- Communicate with and greet listeners in a positive and pleasant tone.
- Provide work instructions, signage, policies and procedures and manuals in relevant languages to ensure all people are able to receive the same communications.
- Watch the listener's facial expression and body language to see if you are understood. If they frown, it may indicate that they do not understand. Try using simpler language.
- Give listeners time to interpret and understand what you have said. A pause between the end of your statement and the beginning of theirs may help their understanding.
- In telephone conversations, if you cannot understand what the person is asking, ask them if there is someone who can assist with interpreting.
- Make sure you know about translation and interpreting services available.

Watch this video [00m:48s] to learn about how to overcome language barriers with colleagues.



## Verbal communication

***When you communicate, your aim is to convey a specific message or meaning.***

The meaning exists in your mind and in the receiver's mind as language. The way we verbally communicate is influenced by our culture. To understand each other, you both need to understand similar meanings for words, face and body gestures, and tone of voice. Language can be like code: people attach meanings to words depending on their own perspective and experiences.

Without a level of awareness that words and actions mean different things in different cultures, we run the risk of offending or upsetting others. No one is expected to understand the specifics of cultures across the world, but we should be aware of people's reactions when we communicate, as this can signal us when their interpretation differs from what we had intended.

If the person has a disability, ensure that communications take this into consideration to minimise any difficulties. For example, if someone has a hearing impairment, make sure you speak to them face to face so they can read your lips and see your facial expressions and gestures clearly.



# Address misunderstandings or conflicts

*It is helpful to understand the basic communication etiquette or social rules that apply to other cultures to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts.*

Misunderstandings and conflicts may occur when a person directs inappropriate verbal or nonverbal behaviour towards another. Conflicts can arise between a customer and staff, staff members and/or customers.

Different situations require different considerations and responses. Understanding the relationships between those involved can help determine the required response.

Be aware of cultural and social differences when selecting the best strategy to resolve misunderstandings; otherwise the situation may be made worse.



## **Strategy for avoiding misunderstandings**

1

### **Remain calm**

Keep calm and respond in a logical, unemotional manner.

2

### **Tell the person their actions are upsetting**

Tell the instigator that their actions are upsetting to you and others. This ensures the message the instigator receives is that it is their behaviour that will not be tolerated – not them personally. This removes personal criticism to avoid aggressive responses.

3

### **If there is an apology**

Accept an apology if one is offered.

4

### **If there is no apology**

If no apology is offered, you may let it go – the first time may simply be unintentional. If you don't want to let it go, speak to your supervisor or manager about your concerns.

5

### **If the behaviour is repeated**

If the offensive behaviour happens again, action must be taken promptly. Speak to your supervisor or manager and follow workplace guidelines.



## Summary of Topic 2

1. Information about working in a socially diverse environment is obtained by reading, interpreting and applying instructions, legislation, procedures, information and signs.
2. Communicating and working effectively with others when working in a socially diverse environment requires that all employees observe workplace policies and procedures.
3. Adapting to cultural differences in the workplace may require modifying modes of behaviour and ways of interacting with others.
4. Behaving in a culturally appropriate way requires customers and colleagues from all cultural groups to be valued and treated with respect and sensitivity.
5. Cultural differences should be accommodated in both verbal and nonverbal communication.
6. It is important to report and rectify identified problems promptly in accordance with regulatory requirements and workplace procedures.
7. Where language barriers exist, efforts should be made to communicate through use of gestures or simple words in the other person's language.
8. Communication difficulties should be addressed with the appropriate people and assistance sought from the team leader/supervisor when required.
9. Documentation related to working in a socially diverse environment includes survey forms complaints forms, and information relating to unresolved issues.