

**BSBCRT201**

**DEVELOP  
AND APPLY  
THINKING AND  
PROBLEM  
SOLVING  
SKILLS**

# **BSBCRT201**

## **Develop and apply thinking and problem solving skills**

Release 1

## **Learner Guide**

Aspire Version 1.1



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## Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBCRT201 Develop and apply thinking and problem solving skills*, 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

This Learner Guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the Learner Guide you need to read, and which Practice Tasks and Learning Checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this Learner Guide are detailed in the following table.

Feature of the Learner Guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read each topic in this Learner Guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.</li> </ul>
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These highlight key learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.</li> </ul>
Practice Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practice Tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which Practice Tasks to complete.</li> </ul>
Summaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.</li> </ul>
Learning Checkpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a Learning Checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which Learning Checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.</li> </ul>

## Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table provides definitions for each foundation skill.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Oral communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses listening and questioning techniques to obtain specific information and confirm understanding</li> <li>• Provides relevant information in response to questions</li> </ul>
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interprets key information from simple texts</li> </ul>
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses accepted practices to discuss ideas with others</li> </ul>
Planning and organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans how information can be applied in timely and practical ways</li> </ul>

## What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1: Investigate problem-solving	1A Understand problem-solving	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Identify question types and questioning styles	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Collaborate on questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1D Identify challenges in questioning and problem solving techniques	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 2: Prepare and ask questions	2A Identify a workplace issue	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Structure and develop questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Ask prepared questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 3: Seek feedback on questions and problem solving	3A Document responses	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Seek feedback	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



## Topic 1 | Investigate problem solving

- 1A Understand problem solving
- 1B Identify question types and questioning styles
- 1C Collaborate on questions
- 1D Identify challenges in questioning and problem solving techniques

# 1A Understand problem solving

Problem-solving plays a key role in ensuring efficient business operations.

Problem-solving is the process of finding a solution to a problem. To solve a problem, you need to overcome the barrier that prevents the achievement of a goal.

Poor problem-solving can lead to business failure. This means that the ability to solve problems is an essential work skill.

## Common features of problems

Problems can be defined as any unwelcome or harmful matter that needs to be overcome.

Every problem has two common features:

<b>Goal</b>	The desired objective
<b>Barrier</b>	Whatever stands in the way of achieving the desired objective

Here are some examples of common everyday problems and their goals and barriers:

Problem	Goal	Barrier
The photocopier is broken.	To print a document	Nobody knows how to fix it.
The client has arrived early for their meeting.	To start the meeting earlier than expected	There are no available meeting rooms.
The report is overdue.	To complete the report	The information required to complete the report has been misplaced.
You are late for work.	To get to work as soon as possible	All the trains have been cancelled.
The client is waiting for you to clarify an issue.	To call your manager and get advice in order to clarify the issue	You are in an area with poor mobile phone reception.

## Problem-solving skills

Effective problem-solving requires a range of skills.

These skills include:

Creativity	Enables people to look at things from a unique perspective and identify new ways of solving problems
Teamwork	Enables people to work together to build upon their ideas and come up with joint solutions
Emotional intelligence	Enables people to see things from other people's perspective, which helps to ensure appropriate and effective solutions
Risk management	Enables people to assess the risks of different solutions and also the risks of <i>not</i> solving the problem
Decision making	Enables people to choose between possible solutions

## Techniques used for problem-solving

Solving problems effectively involves working through each stage in a process.

The problem-solving process can be represented as a number of stages or steps. Different problem solving techniques involve between four and ten steps. Here is an outline of a process involving six key stages:

1. Identify the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This stage involves acknowledging that there is a problem and identifying and defining the problem.</li> <li>Identifying and defining a problem can be difficult. What is the actual problem? Is this one problem or multiple problems?</li> <li>This stage is important for two reasons. Firstly, in order to communicate the problem to others, you need to understand what the problem is. Secondly, if a problem is incorrectly identified, there is a risk that the solution will be ineffective.</li> </ul>
2. Analyse the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This stage involves analysing the problem to determine the relevant goals and the barriers.</li> <li>This stage is especially important when addressing complex problems.</li> </ul>
3. Brainstorm solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This stage involves generating possible solutions to the problem, using the information gathered during the first two stages. Evaluating the value of each solution is not a key focus during this stage.</li> <li>This stage often involves a group of people, such as a brainstorming exercise. It is important to get the views of different people as each will have different expertise and views on potential solutions.</li> </ul>

4. Make a decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ This stage involves analysing each of the potential solutions identified in Stage 3 and selecting the best one.</li><li>▪ This stage is often the most difficult part of the problem-solving process. It requires decision making skills.</li></ul>
5. Implement the solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ This stage involves acting on the chosen course of action.</li><li>▪ Additional problems may arise during implementation, especially if the previous stages in the problem-solving process were not done correctly.</li></ul>
6. Monitor success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ This stage involves reviewing the outcomes of the problem-solving process and getting feedback on the success of the solution.</li></ul>

### Example

#### Problem solving in the workplace

Austin is a sales assistant at Beagle Gifts, a small homewares store. The store recently launched a website so customers can purchase goods online. However, online sales have been disappointing.

Austin is keen to learn more. He identifies the problem: customers are not buying Beagle Gifts' products online. He analyses the website traffic and realises that the website is difficult to navigate. Austin meets with his colleagues and discusses different solutions to make navigating the website easier. They brainstorm several ideas before deciding to update the functionality of the product search box. This change is then made to the website. Austin monitors the success of the solution, by analysing the sales figures and asking customers for feedback.

## Practice Task 1

### Question 1

What are the two common features of all problems?

## Question 2

---

Which of the following are key skills for problem solving? Select all that apply.

- Risk management
- Time management
- Creativity
- Written communication
- Teamwork

## Question 3

---

Which of the following statements regarding the problem-solving process are correct? Select all that apply.

- The identification stage involves acknowledging there is a problem.
- The 'brainstorming solutions stage includes selecting the best solution.
- The brainstorming solutions stage often involves working as a group.
- Analysing the problem is usually the most difficult stage of the process.
- Implementing the solution is the final stage of process.

# 1B Identify question types and questioning styles

Questions are a powerful tool in business: they encourage learning and innovation, facilitate the exchange of ideas and help to build rapport.

Questions are used in every stage of the problem-solving process because they help to develop an understanding of the features and impacts of a problem.

## Types of questions

Different types of questions should be used depending on the person you are talking to and the information you are trying to obtain.

The types of questions you ask also need to be appropriate to the culture and structure of your workplace. A range of different types of questions can be asked:

Type of question	Description	Example
Clarifying question	Should be used when an answer is unclear and more detail is required	'Are you saying that the old process was more efficient than the new process?'
Verifying question	Should be used when a respondent has not provided evidence to support a statement	'How do you know the old process was more efficient?'
Refocusing question	Should be used if the respondent has gone off-topic and usually involves restating the core question	'Can I bring you back to the key question: what process is the most efficient?'
Redirecting question	Should be used when different perspectives on a topic are required	'Is there another way of thinking about this process?'
Narrowing the focus question	Should be used to limit the scope of what is being discussed	'In relation to the specific process we have been talking about, what do you think could be improved?'

## Open- and closed-ended questions

Regardless of what type of question you ask, every question is either open or closed ended.

Open- and closed-ended questions are useful in different situations:

Type of question	Description	Examples
Open-ended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broaden discussion and encourage people to participate in a dialogue</li> <li>Useful for learning about people's attitudes, thoughts and feelings</li> <li>When compared to close-ended questions, open-ended questions require a more thoughtful response.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'What did you think of the health and safety training module?'</li> <li>'How do you think the efficiency of product delivery could be improved?'</li> <li>'What is the data telling us about this problem?'</li> </ul>
Closed-ended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require a specific and direct answer; such as yes, no or a predetermined option</li> <li>Useful for gathering information and clarifying situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Have you completed the training module on health and safety?'</li> <li>'Has the customer received the order?'</li> <li>'Would you prefer to attend a meeting in the morning or afternoon?'</li> </ul>

Open- and closed-ended questions have advantages and disadvantages:

Type of question	Pros	Cons
Open-ended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helpful for uncovering information and learning something new</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can leave too much 'wriggle room' for someone to dodge or lie by omission</li> </ul>
Closed-ended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Useful for clarification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can feel like an interrogation</li> <li>Can introduce bias</li> </ul>

## Styles of questioning

In addition to the types of questions you will ask, you need to identify an appropriate style of questioning.

The style you use will depend on factors such as the person you are talking to, the culture of the business and the type of information you seek.

Types of questioning styles include:

Style	Description	Examples
Funneling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involves asking a series of questions that either:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>begin with open-ended questions and progress to closed-ended questions; or</li> <li>begin with closed-ended questions and progress to open-ended questions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Question 1: 'Can you describe the problem?'</li> <li>Question 2: 'What were you doing when you noticed the problem?'</li> <li>Question 3: 'Was that the day or the night shift?'</li> </ul>
Structured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involves providing respondents with background information before the questions are asked.</li> <li>This style is useful when asking multiple questions. A respondent is less likely to be annoyed by multiple questions if they know in advance the reason why they are being asked</li> </ul>	<p><i>[Before the questions are asked]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Before we start, I just want to let you know that I'm going to ask a number of questions to learn about how this problem occurred.'</li> </ul>
Encouraging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involves encouraging respondents to participate in a discussion.</li> <li>This style is used in a group setting when some respondents are more engaged than others. The person asking questions may call upon the quieter members of the group to participate.</li> </ul>	<p><i>[During a focus group]</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'The people on this side of the room have been quiet during the discussion; is there anything you'd like to add?'</li> </ul>
Interrogatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involves asking a series of rapid, close-ended questions in a formal manner.</li> <li>This style can be perceived as hostile, and is not appropriate in most workplace settings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Question 1 'Have you identified the problem?'</li> <li>Question 2: 'Can the problem be fixed?'</li> <li>Question 3: 'Are you going to fix the problem?'</li> </ul>
Leading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involves directing respondents to a specific response.</li> <li>This style can limit people's ability to come up with their own solutions. Leading questions are generally closed-ended.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'The process works well, don't you think?'</li> <li>'So, you agree that this is the best option?'</li> </ul>

## Example

### Question types and questioning styles

Eddie works at a home appliance company. He has identified an issue with the way data relating to retailers is stored and is keen to ask some questions of his colleagues in order to solve the problem.

Eddie considers the different types of questions he could ask and the style of questioning he might use. He decides that most of his questions will be open-ended as he needs to get an in-depth understanding of the decisions around data storage. He also has multiple questions, and so decides that a structured approach would be helpful.

Eddie's company encourages respectful professional relationships, so Eddie knows he will need to avoid leading or interrogatory questioning styles.

## Practice Task 2

### Question 1

---

What type of question is designed to gain different perspectives on a topic?

- Clarifying questions
- Redirecting questions
- Verifying questions
- Narrowing the focus questions
- Refocusing questions

## Question 2

---

Draw a line to match each type of question on the left with the correct description:

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| » Narrowing the focus questions | » Used to get more detail about a respondent's thoughts and ideas.          |
| » Clarifying questions          | » Used to get different perspectives on a topic.                            |
| » Redirecting questions         | » Used to limit the scope of what is being discussed.                       |
| » Verifying questions           | » Used to gather evidence about why a respondent holds a particular belief. |

## Question 3

---

Which of the following are closed-ended questions? Select all that apply.

- 'Have you finished the project?'
- 'What are the problems with the website?'
- 'Would you prefer to go to the conference on Monday or Tuesday?'
- 'Did you enjoy the training session?'
- 'Do you think this issue could be resolved?'

# 1C Collaborate on questions

Collaborating on questions with colleagues can be used to solve problems.

Collaboration is an approach that involves people working together to accomplish common goals. Collaboration involves following a set of principles:

<b>Motivation</b>	Participants are driven to gain consensus.
<b>Participation</b>	Each person contributes to the activity.
<b>Mediation</b>	Participants negotiate and strive to find a 'middle point'.
<b>Cooperation</b>	Participants share information with each other.
<b>Reflection</b>	Participants think deeply and consider alternatives.
<b>Engagement</b>	Participants are actively involved, rather than taking a 'wait and see' approach.
<b>Accountability</b>	Participants feel a responsibility to each other and to the business.

## Collaborating on questions and questioning styles

Collaborating with your colleagues can help you identify what types of questions and what styles of questioning are appropriate in your workplace.

Collaborating will help you prepare and ask questions about problems you have identified – or are required to solve – within your workplace.

When you are collaborating on appropriate ways to ask questions in your workplace, here are some areas you could look at:

<b>Who to ask</b>	Discuss and identify the people within the workplace who would be open to answering questions on a specific topic.
<b>How to ask</b>	Discuss the best method of approaching people in order to ask questions. This could be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a request via email</li> <li>▪ a direct approach in a casual setting</li> <li>▪ going through an intermediary, such as an executive assistant.</li> </ul>
<b>What to ask</b>	Discuss the questions that would be appropriate for you to ask given your position and the organisational culture.
<b>What not to ask</b>	Discuss the types of questions or questioning styles that would not be appropriate in your workplace, or would not be appropriate when questioning a specific person (e.g. a senior executive).

## Example

### Collaborating on questions

Becca works as a marketing assistant at a medium-sized seafood packing and processing company. She has identified an issue relating to how the company runs their marketing campaigns. She would like to explore this issue but needs help from her colleagues to determine the types of questions she should ask and how to ask those questions.

Becca organises a meeting with several colleagues from the company. These colleagues have diverse roles and have a good understanding of the people and the business culture. Becca begins the session by describing the problem she has identified and then highlights that the goal of the meeting is to collaborate and identify:

- who she should ask
- how she should ask her questions
- what questions she should and shouldn't ask.

## Practice Task 3

### Question 1

---

What is collaboration? Select all that apply.

- An approach that involves people working together to accomplish a goal
- An approach that involves a person in a senior position giving instructions to people in more junior positions
- An approach that involves critiquing an individual's performance
- An approach that requires a group of people with similar expertise

## Question 2

---

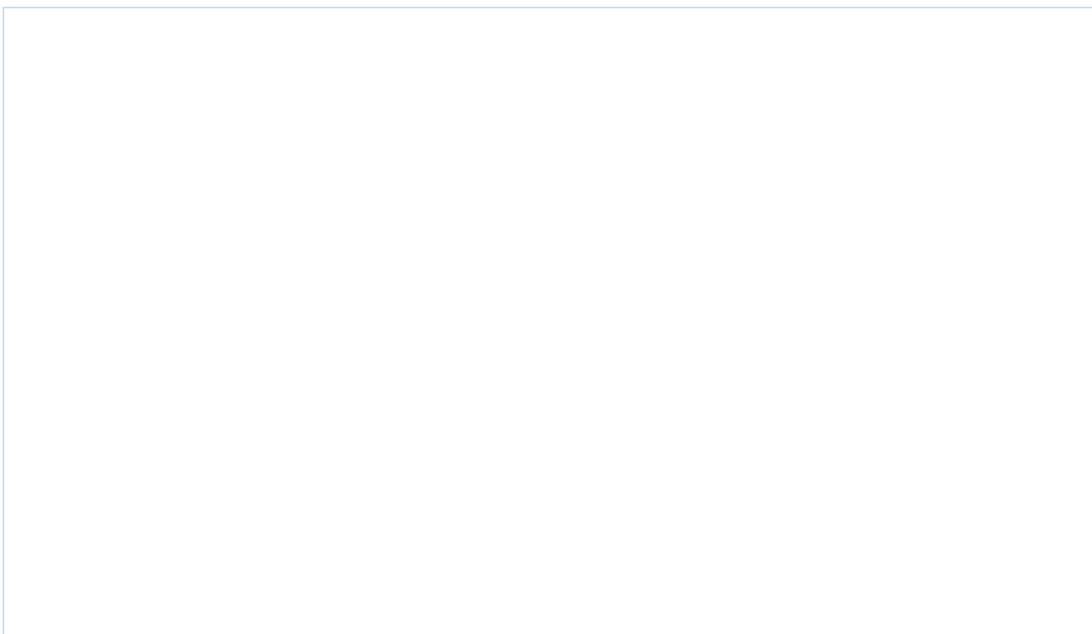
What are two principles of effective collaboration?



## Question 3

---

You need to ask people in your business questions in order to solve a problem. Before you do this, what are two details you would discuss with your colleagues?



# 1D Identify challenges in questioning and problem solving techniques

Critical thinking and problem-solving are not always easy, and there are several challenges you need to be aware of.

Critical thinking and problem-solving skills are highly desired by employers. Nobody is born with these skills and they can be learned. However, it is important to be aware of the challenges you may face when using critical thinking and problem-solving processes.

Critical thinking is a form of thinking that involves questioning, analysing and evaluating what we hear, read, say and write. When you engage in critical thinking you do not take things at face value.

Critical thinking is defined as follows:

<b>Analytical</b>	Critical thinking involves probing, questioning, testing and looking at things deeply.
<b>Judgemental</b>	Critical thinking involves a determination of whether ideas meet or do not meet criteria and predetermined standards.
<b>Selective</b>	Critical thinking involves narrowing down a list of ideas to identify the best ones.

## The importance of critical thinking

Critical thinking is the foundation of learning and personal development.

### Individuals

Critical thinking is the foundation of learning and personal development. The capacity to be open-minded and consider alternative arguments allows people to understand and accommodate new ideas and viewpoints.

Critical thinking helps people identify limitations, inconsistencies and omissions in the information they use to make decisions (e.g. news stories and advertisements). This helps them make good decisions that are in their best interests.

### Businesses

Critical thinking is a driver of effective decision making in companies. By considering alternative viewpoints, businesses can examine the impact of their decisions on their customers, employees and business partners. This can lead to potential benefits such as increased sales or employee satisfaction.

Offering an alternative or unpopular view is sometimes a necessary task during the critical thinking process. However, this can be difficult when a team is subject to 'groupthink'. Groupthink occurs when the desire for harmony in a team leads to ineffective decision-making.

## Community

The ability to think critically is at the heart of a functioning society. In order to function effectively, society relies upon citizens who can think critically about the issues that affect them, their family and the broader community.

Critical thinking is becoming increasingly important in the era of 'fake news'. Fake news has the potential to weaken civil society by spreading misinformation, unrest, mistrust and confusion. Questions to ask when deciding whether news is fake include:

- Who is the author or source of this news?
- Why are they communicating this?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What information is included?
- What information is omitted?

## The critical thinking process and challenges

Using a logical critical thinking process stops our mind from immediately jumping to conclusions.

The following critical thinking process has seven steps:

1. State the question	The question or problem should be clear and precise. Asking the question in several ways can help to clarify its meaning.
2. Gather information	Information should be based on data, facts, evidence and experiences.
3. Check assumptions	Identify your assumptions and think about how these are shaping your opinion on the question.
4. Consider different perspectives	Seek the views of other people regarding the question.
5. Interpret information	Your interpretation should be based the information you gathered, not on your own assumptions.
6. Develop solutions	Identify several solutions and then identify the best possible solution.
7. Test solutions	Test your chosen solution against identified criteria or best practice.

A list of challenges relating to critical thinking and problem-solving tasks are outlined below:

Tasks	Challenges
Identifying problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The problem may not be obvious.</li> <li>▪ It can be difficult to focus on the problem under time pressure.</li> </ul>
Gathering and analysing information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There may be too much (or not enough) information.</li> <li>▪ The information may not be easily accessible.</li> <li>▪ It may be difficult to determine which information is accurate or important.</li> </ul>
Challenging assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It can be difficult to realise what your own assumptions – what you believed to be a fact may be an assumption.</li> <li>▪ Questioning the opinions of senior colleagues can be challenging.</li> </ul>
Considering different perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It may be difficult to engage with people whose beliefs are very different to yours.</li> </ul>
Exploring and developing solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multiple people may have different ideas about the solution to a problem.</li> <li>▪ 'Groupthink' can limit people's ability to explore unusual solutions.</li> <li>▪ The desire to rush towards a solution can limit people's willingness to discuss the full range of solutions.</li> </ul>
Decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Making a decision can be challenging when a lot of people are involved.</li> <li>▪ The ability to make a collective decision may be affected by individual interests.</li> </ul>
Implementing solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Motivating people to implement a solution can be challenging, especially if they are resistant to change.</li> <li>▪ Momentum to implement the change can be lost within the team or the organisation, preventing the change from happening.</li> </ul>

## Example

### Identify challenges in critical thinking and problem-solving

Leo works as an analyst at a courier service. He has identified an issue with the way information is communicated across the different parts of the organisation. He is keen to explore solutions to the problem.

When Leo asks his colleagues questions about how to resolve the issue, he realises that there are two very different opinions. Some people think the problem can be solved through a short-term process involving changes to company procedures. Others think the answer is a long-term learning and development strategy.

There are different reasons driving these two options. A long-term learning and development strategy would cost the business more money than a change to company procedures. However, some staff believe that a short-term change to procedures will not bring about the desired effect.

Leo understands that these challenges are common to critical thinking and problem-solving processes – especially during the stages of developing solutions and decision making.

## Practice Task 4

### Question 1

---

What are the three essential characteristics of critical thinking?

## Question 2

---

Number the steps of the critical thinking process in order from 1 to 7:

- Develop solutions
- State the question
- Test solutions
- Interpret information
- Check assumptions
- Consider different perspectives
- Gather information

## Question 3

---

Why might it be difficult to explore and develop solutions during the critical thinking or problem-solving process? Select all that apply.

- Because multiple people may have different ideas about the solution to the problem.
- Because it's usually easy to identify the best solution without exploring it.
- Because the tendency towards 'groupthink' can make people unwilling to explore unusual or unexpected solutions.
- Because the desire to rush towards a solution can limit people's willingness to discuss the full range of solutions.
- Because most companies are not equipped to solve problems.

## Question 4

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Why is critical thinking important when analysing a business problem?



## Summary

- Every problem has two common features: a goal and a barrier.
- Problem solving is a skill that is essential to efficient business operations.
- Every question is either open- or closed-ended: closed-ended questions can typically be answered with 'yes' or 'no', whereas open-ended questions encourage people to participate in a dialogue.
- There are a range of different types of questions, such as clarifying, redirecting and supporting questions, each of which has a specific purpose.
- Questioning style refers to how questions are asked. Common styles of questioning include funneling, structured and encouraging.
- Collaborating with your colleagues is one approach you can use to determine what types of questions and what styles of questioning are appropriate in your workplace.
- Critical thinking is a form of thinking that involves questioning, analysing and evaluating what we hear, read, say and write.
- The critical thinking process involves seven key steps, starting with stating the question and ending with testing conclusions.
- Each step of the critical thinking and problem-solving process poses challenges.

## Learning Checkpoint 1

### Investigate problem solving

#### Part A

1. Why it is important to correctly define a problem at the beginning of the problem-solving process?

2. Number each step from 1 to 6 in the order you would follow to find a solution for a problem.

Analyse the problem

Brainstorm solutions

Make a decision

Identify the problem

Monitor success

Implement the solution

3. During the process of critical thinking, describe a difficulty that may arise when challenging assumptions.

4. Describe why critical thinking is important in business.

5. When would you use a verifying question? Select all that apply.

- To redirect a respondent who has gone off-topic.
- To provide a respondent with the opportunity to clarify a vague response.
- To limit the content of what is discussed.
- To give a respondent the opportunity to give evidence to support their beliefs.
- To seek different perspectives on the topic.

## Part B

### Case study

Melody is a client engagement officer at an equipment hire company. She has identified inefficiencies in how her team records and responds to client complaints. The template used to record complaints is not user-friendly and the method of storing information sometimes means complaints are not followed up.

1. Melody is collaborating with her colleagues about the questions she could ask about the problem, and the most appropriate questioning style.

Identify two common goals that Melody and her colleagues could work towards during this meeting.

2. Melody is asking a colleague, Isaac, about the processes used to record and respond to customer complaints.

Draw a line to match the type of question on the left with the question Melody asks on the right:

» Narrowing the focus question

» 'So, Isaac, what you're saying is not everyone understands how to use the new template?'

» Verifying question

» 'If we just concentrate on what we can do in the future – rather than what was done in the past – what actions will help us to ensure we follow up with customers who make complaints?'

» Refocusing question

» 'What makes you believe that the previous process for dealing with complaints was more efficient?'

» Clarifying question

» 'Just to bring you back to the key question: what do you think we could do to address the problem with recording customer complaints?'

3. Melody is talking to her boss about the responses she received to her questions.

'I have a few ideas about how to address this problem,' Melody's boss says, 'but I'm wondering if we will face challenges when we implement them. What do you think, Melody?'

What is one challenge Melody can tell her boss about the implementation stage of the problem-solving process?



## Topic 2 | Prepare and ask questions

- 2A Identify a workplace issue
- 2B Structure and develop questions
- 2C Ask prepared questions

## 2A Identify a workplace issue

Many companies are good at solving issues or problems, but struggle to correctly identify them. This is because people often want to get to solutions as fast as possible, which means they spend very little time trying to understand the issue.

Issues or problems in a business may be obvious, or they may be harder to identify. However, in any business there is always something that can be enhanced or improved upon.

The issue you decide to ask questions about must relate to your job role. That is, it must relate to an issue, process or procedure that you are directly affected by or involved with.

To identify and explore potential issues, follow these three steps:

<b>Make a list</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make a list of things that could be improved or enhanced in your workplace. Ask yourself: what would you like to change? What do you wish worked better?</li> <li>Don't focus on finding the 'big problem' or the root cause.</li> <li>Include issues you haven't considered because they are painful or embarrassing.</li> <li>List as many potential issues as possible.</li> </ul>
<b>Group the issues</b>	Group the issues according to themes such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>customers and clients</li> <li>policies and procedures</li> <li>technology and infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<b>Choose the most important issue</b>	Ask yourself: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which issue (or group of issues) feels most important?</li> <li>Which issue do you really want to address?</li> </ul>

Issues commonly experienced by businesses are identified below. The issues are organised into groups:

Groups	Issues
Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers are not buying products.</li> <li>Customers are not aware of products.</li> </ul>
Staff turnover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employees only stay for a short period of time.</li> <li>Frequent staff turnover is negatively affecting team morale.</li> </ul>

Groups	Issues
Quality and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Goods are consistently delivered to the wrong address.</li> <li>▪ There is not enough space to store products.</li> </ul>
Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customers don't understand a product.</li> <li>▪ Customers are dissatisfied with products.</li> <li>▪ Customers are dissatisfied with how a complaint has been handled.</li> </ul>
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Staff lack confidence using new technology.</li> <li>▪ New technologies do not function correctly.</li> </ul>
Management and leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Staff complain about a manager.</li> <li>▪ Teams are lacking motivation and direction.</li> </ul>

### Example

#### Identify a workplace issue

Abdo works as an IT assistant in a retail company. He works on a help desk, answering calls and emails from customers about IT issues.

Abdo identifies 16 issues relating to his job role. He organises the issues into three groups: customer expectations, managing demand and teamwork.

Among the issues relating to customer expectations, Abdo has identified an important issue. Every day, Abdo spends a lot of his time answering the same queries. Abdo decides that this will be the issue he asks questions about.

## Practice Task 5

### Question 1

What might happen if you rush to find a solution without properly understanding the problem?

## Question 2

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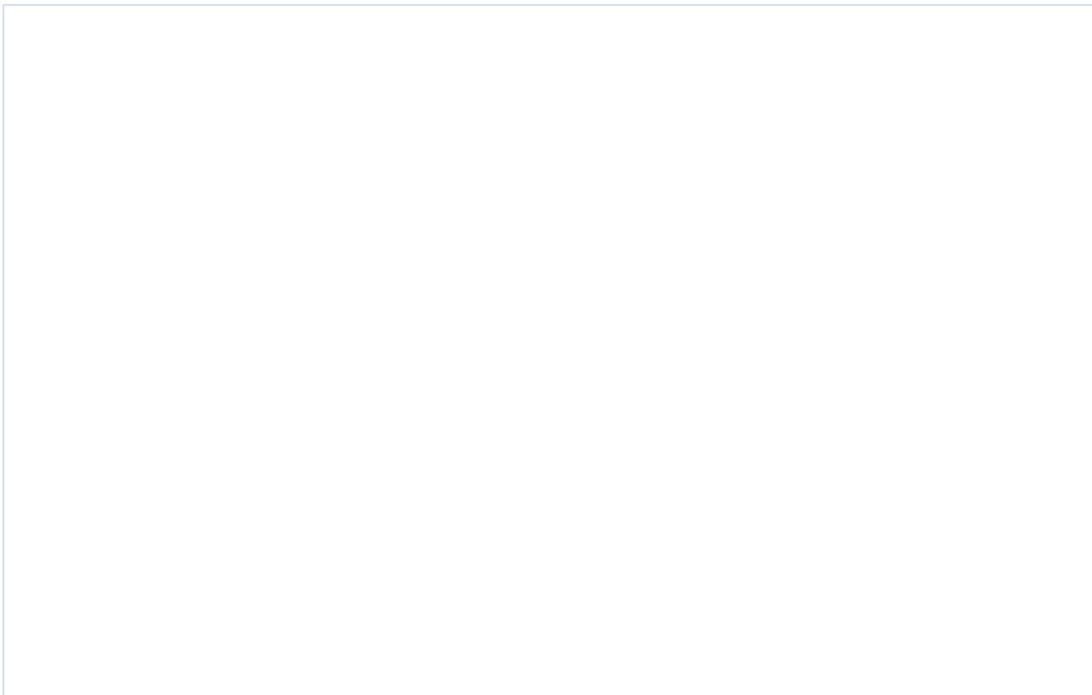
What are the three steps for identifying potential issues?



## Question 3

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What are three common issues for businesses?



## 2B Structure and develop questions

In order to develop the right solutions, you first must develop the right questions.

Spending time to structure and develop your questions helps to ensure that:

- you get the information you need
- the process of questioning is efficient (you are not wasting your colleagues' time)
- your questions are appropriate (aligning with the culture and expectations of your workplace).

### Structuring questions

The way you structure your questions will have an effect on the quality of the information you receive from your respondent.

When asking a list of questions, there are three basic structures you can use:

<b>Structured</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The person asking the questions has a set of pre-planned questions that are always asked in the same order.</li> <li>• The questions do not change, regardless of who the respondent is or how the respondent answers.</li> </ul>
<b>Semi-structured</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The person asking the questions has some pre-planned questions but can also ask additional questions that arise spontaneously during the conversation.</li> <li>• In a semi-structured format, not all pre-planned questions need to be asked of all participants – it depends on the respondent and how they answer.</li> </ul>
<b>Unstructured</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The person asking the questions has no pre-planned questions and all questions arise spontaneously during the conversation.</li> </ul>

Structured questioning is usually more appropriate for a workplace that has a formal culture. Semi-structured and unstructured questioning are more appropriate for workplaces with an informal culture.

There are many factors to consider when developing effective questions.

When developing a list of questions to ask in the workplace, it is a good idea to get assistance from a colleague, manager or supervisor. This will help to ensure the process of asking questions is effective, efficient and doesn't interfere with core business.

Factors to consider when developing your questions are listed below:

Factors	Considerations
Who should I ask?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider who has an in-depth understanding of the issue.</li> <li>Consider who is especially interested in the issue – they may be more willing to answer questions than someone who is less interested.</li> <li>Consider whether it would be appropriate to ask the person questions. In some organisations, asking the CEO questions may be encouraged, in others it may be inappropriate.</li> </ul>
How many questions should I ask?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the amount of time your colleagues have – take this into account when deciding how many questions to ask.</li> <li>Some people may have more time, in which case you can ask them more questions.</li> </ul>
What communication method will I use?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email may be more convenient than face-to-face or phone communication, especially if colleagues are located off-site.</li> <li>It is generally easier to develop a connection when asking someone questions face-to-face.</li> </ul>
What questioning style will I use?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A structured style may be appropriate if you have a lot of questions to ask.</li> <li>An encouraging style is usually helpful in a group setting, especially when some participants might be less willing to speak up than others.</li> </ul>
What order will I ask the questions in?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your questions should follow a logical order – otherwise they can sound abrupt.</li> <li>If you are trying to build a relationship with someone, it is better to begin with the least intrusive questions first and escalate slowly.</li> <li>If questions are being asked in the context of a difficult or tense encounter (for example, a person is reluctant to provide information) it is usually more effective to begin with the most intrusive questions first and de-escalate slowly.</li> </ul>

## Consolidating knowledge

Consolidating knowledge enables you gather multiple opinions on an issue from across the business.

People within a business have different opinions and experiences of the issues faced by the business. For example, employees who work with customers every day are likely to have a more in-depth understanding of customer frustrations than a manager who rarely interacts with customers. The IT department may have a unique understanding of how customer data is stored, whereas the marketing department may have a unique understanding of how customer data is used to increase sales.

When you are asking colleagues questions about an issue you have identified, you are seeking to consolidate the knowledge of multiple people within the business. This means gathering their diverse views and combining that knowledge to better understand the nature of a problem.

## Example

### Structure and develop questions

Julia is a Human Resources (HR) officer in a telecommunications company. She has identified a problem relating to HR documentation that she would like to explore further.

Working with her supervisor, Julia has developed a list of four questions she wants to ask, along with a list of five people she wants to question.

The five people Julia has chosen are from a diverse range of roles across the company. These five stakeholders have an extensive knowledge of the issues Julia wants to explore.

Julia is hoping that respondents can meet with her face-to-face, but her supervisor has suggested she offer them the option of providing responses via email because of time pressure.

## Practice Task 6

### Question 1

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Briefly describe the difference between a structured and semi-structured list of questions.

### Question 2

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Which of the following factors should you consider when developing questions? Select all that apply.

- What order should I ask the questions in?
- How can I avoid asking questions face-to-face?
- What questioning style will I use?
- How many questions should I ask?
- How can I force the CEO to answer my questions?

## 2C Ask prepared questions

Asking questions requires both preparation and communication skills.

There are many strategies for asking questions in a way that gets you the information you need while demonstrating respect for the respondent. Being well prepared and communicating effectively will increase the willingness of a respondent to provide you with information.

### Getting prepared

Before you approach your colleagues to ask them questions, you need to make sure you're prepared.

The following activities should be done before you meet with a colleague:

<b>Check the information isn't available elsewhere</b>	<p>You should be asking your colleagues to provide information that isn't already available elsewhere. Otherwise, it is a waste of the respondent's time and makes you look as if you are unprepared.</p> <p>Double-check that your questions can't easily be answered by referring to a website, a report or a manual.</p>
<b>Develop a template</b>	<p>Even if you are only asking a few questions, it is useful to prepare a template to record your colleagues' responses. A template enables you to record responses accurately and means you won't forget what respondents say.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The template should include:</li> <li>▪ the date the questions were asked</li> <li>▪ the name and/or role of the respondent</li> <li>▪ a list of the prepared questions with space for you to record responses</li> <li>▪ space for your own notes and comments.</li> </ul>
<b>Practise the questions</b>	<p>Practise asking your questions with a trusted colleague, friend or family member. Ask them to give you feedback on your tone, body language and active listening skills. Did they feel comfortable? Did they feel heard? Are you being too formal? Or not formal enough?</p>
<b>Test the equipment</b>	<p>If you are recording audio or video responses to your questions, make sure the equipment is working correctly. Equipment may include a voice recorder, video camera or your phone. You should first ask respondents' permission to record them.</p>
<b>Prepare your answers</b>	<p>Are you prepared to answer any questions the respondents ask you? What if they ask you how the information is going to be used? Or if they can get a copy of the document you are going to prepare?</p> <p>Identify the questions respondents are likely to ask and prepare answers for these.</p>

## Communicating effectively

Effective communication helps to ensure the process of asking questions is efficient and effective.

When asking questions, use the following communication strategies:

<b>Provide upfront information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin by telling the respondent why you're asking them questions.</li> <li>Inform them how many questions you have and how long the process is likely to take.</li> <li>Tell them how the information they give you is going to be used (e.g. will it just be used by you or will other people see it?).</li> </ul>
<b>Use silence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leave a pause between the answer and the next question. This gives the respondent time to gather their thoughts or expand upon their answer. This also gives you an opportunity to absorb what has just been said.</li> <li>Using silence involves more than just not talking. Make sure you maintain eye contact and use body language to show you are engaged in the conversation.</li> </ul>
<b>Get the tone right</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use a casual tone when asking questions, rather than a formal tone. A casual tone encourages people to be more forthcoming.</li> <li>Using a curious tone (rather than a critical tone) conveys a willingness to collaborate.</li> </ul>
<b>Be respectful of people's responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There may be situations where a colleague is unable to share information because of the requirements of their role.</li> <li>Be alert to respondents' body language. It may indicate they feel uncomfortable about a question you have asked.</li> </ul>
<b>Use open- and closed-ended questions strategically</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most of your questions should be open-ended but you may need to ask closed-ended questions to clarify something the respondent has said.</li> </ul>
<b>Be respectful of respondents' time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure you don't go overtime. If necessary, ask respondents if it is okay for you to follow up with them later if you have additional questions or if you need to clarify their comments</li> <li>Thank respondents for their time and make sure they know how to contact you if they have further comments they want to make.</li> </ul>

## Active listening

Active listening involves making a conscious effort to hear what another person is saying. When someone is actively listening, they are not distracted by what is going on around them.

Active listening is a critical skill when asking questions, because it:

- encourages the respondent to keep talking
- indicates that you are paying attention and interested in what they are saying
- establishes a relaxed tone.

Active listening involves five key strategies. Each strategy can be demonstrated using both verbal and non-verbal communication:

Strategy	How to demonstrate it.
<b>Pay attention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face the respondent.</li> <li>• Give the person your total attention.</li> <li>• Don't look at your phone or out the window.</li> </ul>
<b>Show you are listening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of your body language; crossed arms can be read as judgement.</li> <li>• Use brief verbal comments to encourage the person (e.g. 'Okay', 'I see', 'Yes, I understand what you're saying').</li> <li>• Use facial expressions to encourage the person, such as nodding and smiling.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect what the person has said by re-phrasing their answer.</li> <li>• Summarise the person's comments.</li> <li>• Ask relevant follow-up questions.</li> </ul>
<b>Respond appropriately</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not interrupt the person unnecessarily.</li> <li>• Respond openly and honestly.</li> <li>• Treat the other person respectfully.</li> </ul>
<b>Do not judge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate a non-judgemental attitude.</li> <li>• Avoid making assumptions.</li> <li>• Listen to the entire answer to your question before commenting.</li> </ul>

## Example

### Ask prepared questions

Tiago is a digital communications assistant at an equipment hire business. The business is looking to become more visible on social media. Tiago is asking three people a series of questions that he prepared with the help of his manager.

When asking his colleagues questions, Tiago is professional but friendly, as he knows that a casual tone will make respondents feel more comfortable. He demonstrates he is listening by facing the person he is questioning, nodding his head and making sure his body language is open and friendly.

As the respondents share information with Tiago, he records their responses in a notebook, taking care to not spend too much time looking at the page. Tiago thanks each respondent for their time when he has finished asking his questions.

## Practice Task 7

### Question 1

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What information is good to share with a respondent before you start asking them questions? Tick all that apply.

- How many questions you're going to ask
- Why you're asking them questions
- How long the process of asking questions is likely to take
- What responses you're hoping to get from them
- How the information they give you is going to be used

### Question 2

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What are two ways to effectively use silence when asking questions?

### Question 3

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What are two benefits of active listening?

### Summary

- Companies are generally better at solving issues and problems than identifying them.
- One way to identify issues is to make a list of all the things that could be improved and choose the most important issue.
- Issues commonly experienced by businesses include poor sales, customer issues and issues with management and leadership.
- The three basic structures used for questioning are: structured, semi-structured and unstructured.
- When developing a list of questions to ask, it is important to consider factors such as the method of communication, the most appropriate style of questioning and the order of the questions asked.
- Asking questions of colleagues with a variety of opinions and experiences provides an opportunity to consolidate knowledge across the business.
- Before asking colleagues questions it is important to be prepared; for example, by developing a template, practising your questions and testing any equipment.
- Effective communication strategies when asking questions include: using silence, using the right tone and using open- and closed-ended questions effectively.
- Active listening is a critical skill when asking questions in the workplace. It involves making a conscious effort to hear what the respondent is saying and ignoring distractions.

## Learning Checkpoint 2

### Prepare and ask questions

#### Part A

1. What are two questions you can ask yourself when exploring potential problems in the workplace?

2. When asking questions of a colleague, which actions will help you achieve the right tone? Select all that apply.

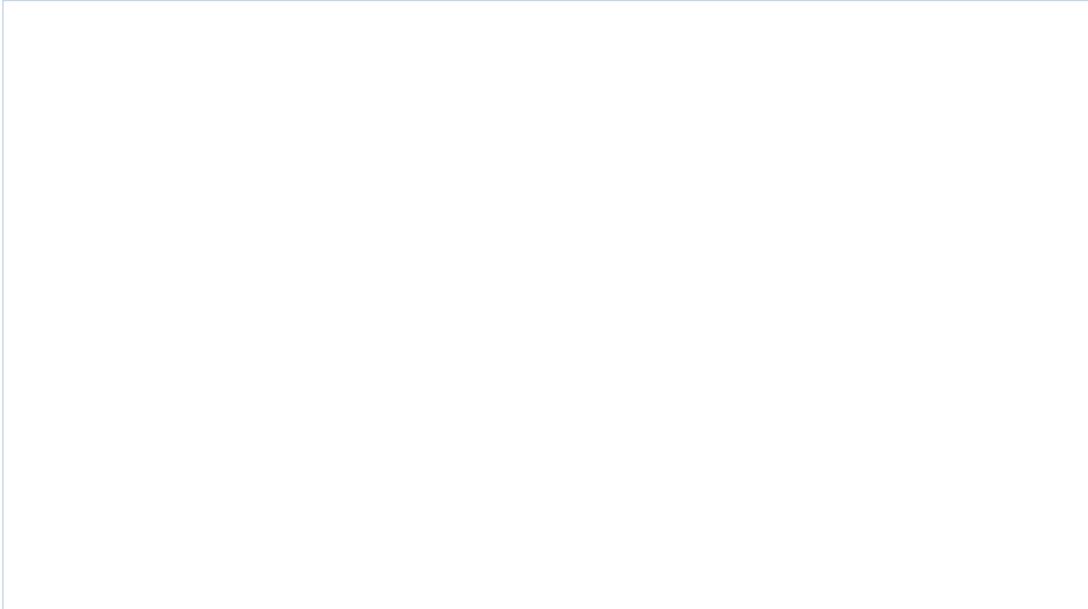
- Being casual rather than formal
- Using mostly closed-ended questions
- Avoiding sensitive issues
- Being curious rather than critical
- Creating an attitude of collaboration

#### Part B

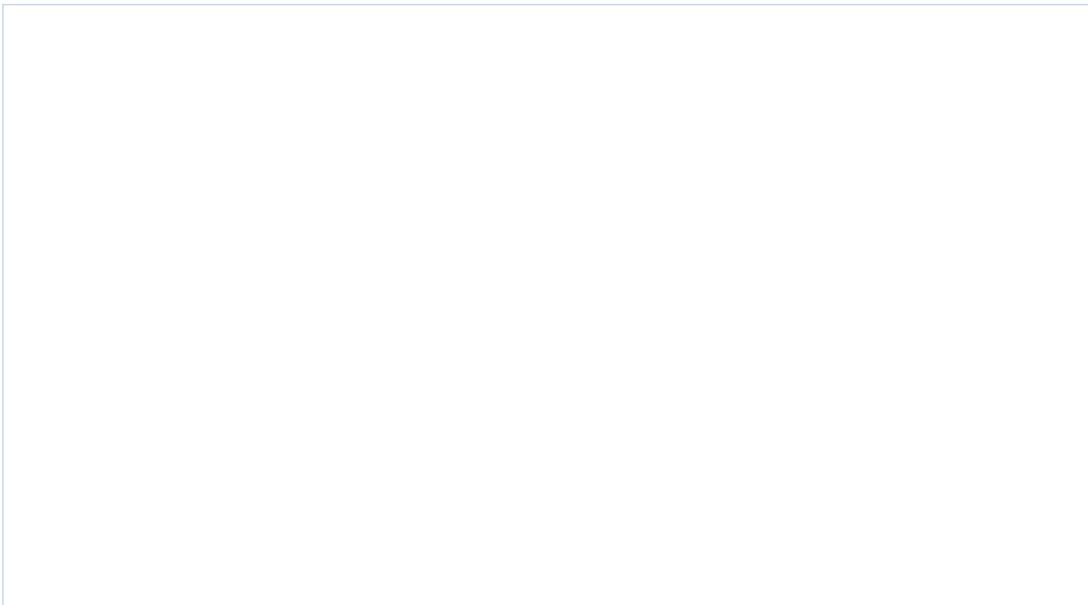
Jethro is an assistant at a company that refurbishes and sells vintage furniture. He has identified a problem with the way goods are loaded and unloaded at the warehouse. Jethro is developing a list of questions to ask his colleagues about the process for loading and unloading furniture.

1. What are three things that Jethro could ask his supervisor for assistance with when developing his questions?

2. What are two reasons why it would be important for Jethro to ask questions of colleagues working in different parts of the business?



3. What are three ways Jethro could prepare before meeting with his colleagues to ask questions?







## Topic 3 | Seek feedback on questions and problem solving

3A Document responses

3B Seek feedback

## 3A Document responses

Documenting responses to your questions ensures you will have an accurate record of the information you received.

The method you use to document responses to the questions you asked will depend upon your role and the culture and expectations of your workplace.

When documenting information at work it is important to pay attention to the principles of effective written communication. The document should be clear and concise.

### The importance of documentation

Documenting the responses to the questions you asked can benefit you, your colleagues and your organisation in many ways.

The documentation you create may be used to:

- make colleagues, such as managers, aware of a problem
- identify solutions to the problem
- make decisions and implement a course of action to resolve the problem.

When you document the responses you received, you are also helping to preserve your colleagues' knowledge, which may be useful for future employees who face similar issues in the future.

### How to document responses

Different ways to document responses include:

<b>Business report</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A structured document with headings that provides information for a specific audience and purpose.</li> <li>• Business reports usually include the following sections.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive summary</li> <li>- Body</li> <li>- Key findings</li> <li>- Conclusion</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Business reports often include tables and graphs.</li> </ul>
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<b>Memo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An internal document with minimal headings</li> <li>• Length of document can be a few paragraphs to five pages.</li> </ul>
<b>Form or template</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A pre-existing document developed by an organisation to record information.</li> <li>• May be available online through an internal staff website.</li> </ul>

## Written communication

The following principles of business writing are applicable to most organisations.

<b>Keep it brief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use short sentences.</li> <li>• Don't use unnecessary words (e.g. don't say 'the issue was carefully considered', just say 'the issue was considered').</li> </ul>
<b>Use simple, concrete language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't use long words when a shorter word can be used instead (e.g. 'use' instead of 'utilise').</li> <li>• Be precise – avoid vague terms such as 'the current circumstances'.</li> <li>• Use plain language.</li> </ul>
<b>Avoid jargon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid using jargon – that is, words or expressions that would not be familiar to people outside your organisation.</li> <li>• Jargon can prevent people from understanding information.</li> </ul>
<b>Use an active voice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using an 'active voice' means the subject of a sentence is <i>performing the action</i> (e.g. Jane chaired the meeting).</li> <li>• Using a 'passive voice' means the subject of a sentence <i>is acted upon</i> (e.g. the meeting was chaired by Jane).</li> <li>• Using the active voice is generally the best way to make information clear and easy to understand.</li> </ul>
<b>Use formatting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use headings, tables and bullet points so the document is easy to read.</li> </ul>

## Clarifying responses

As you create your document, you might identify gaps in the information you have compiled. For example, perhaps you forgot to ask a critical question of one of the respondents, or you didn't ask a follow-up question about an important point they made. In these cases, you may need to clarify the responses you received by asking respondents further questions.

If you do need to ask respondents to clarify their responses, you may need to revisit some of the suggestions in Topic 2 regarding asking questions. For example:

- Do you need to tell the respondent why you are asking a follow-up question?
- When asking the question, are you following the principles of active listening?
- After they answer the question, did you thank them?

## Apply problem-solving techniques

Apply the problem-solving process to a real workplace issue you identified earlier.

Document the steps you followed to explore the issue. There may be a break in time after you have made a decision and sought approval from your supervisor to implement it.

Monitoring the success of your solution may be immediately obvious; there may no longer be a WHS issue with the plants growing across the exit. Other solutions may take some time to take effect and for you to see any real change or improvement. Don't forget that not all of your solutions will be successful. Feedback from your colleagues and others will help you find another solution or you can refer back to Step 3 and choose another solution to investigate and trial.

Description of workplace issue:
1. Identify the problem
2. Analyse the problem
3. Brainstorm solutions
4. Make a decision
5. Implement the solution
6. Monitor success

## Example

### Document responses

Zoella is an advisor for a telecommunications company. She identified an issue with how jobs are prioritised in her team and has received responses to questions she asked colleagues about the problem.

Zoella's manager, Jin, asks her to document the responses she received in a business report. Jin wants to share the information with some of the other managers in the company.

During the process of drafting the business report, Zoella realises she didn't ask one of her respondents an important question. She emails the respondent and asks her if she would be able to answer an additional question. When she has the information she needs, Zoella completes a draft of the report and forwards it to Jin.

## Practice Task 8

### Question 1

Why is it important to document the responses to your questions? Select all that apply.

- The document could be used to identify solutions, make decisions and implement a course of action.
- The document proves the problem has been solved.
- The document could be used to make colleagues aware of a problem.
- The document will help to preserve institutional knowledge.
- The document demonstrates that you respect the respondents.

## Question 2

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What are two things you should avoid when writing a business document?

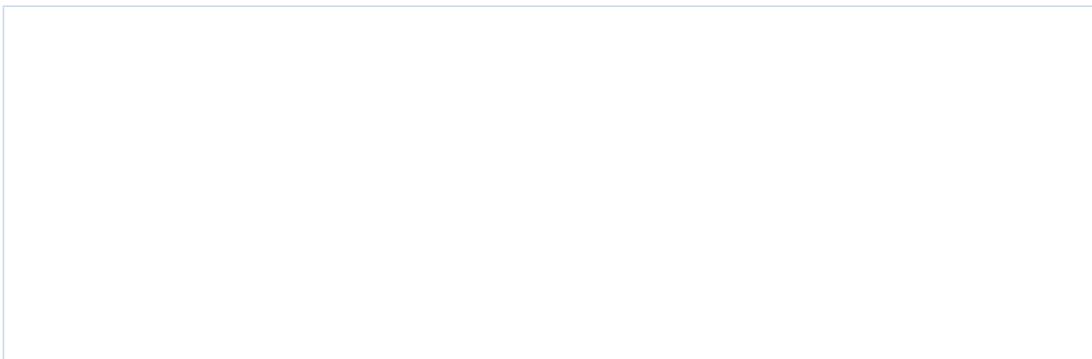


## Question 3

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Turn this passive statement into an active statement:

'The problem was identified by the sales manager, Collette.'



## 3B Seek feedback

Getting feedback on your questions – and the way you asked them – will help to build your confidence, identify areas for improvement and strengthen your relationships with colleagues.

Positive feedback helps to validate people and motivate them in their role and constructive feedback gives people something to work towards and helps them set goals. Giving and receiving feedback also provides people with opportunities to get to know their colleagues better.

### How to seek feedback

The quality of information you receive on your feedback will depend how you go about asking for it.

Tips for seeking feedback on your performance are provided below:

- Inform the person you would like their feedback.
- Be specific about what you want feedback on (e.g. 'Can I please get some feedback on those questions I asked you last week?')
- In some cases, the person may be able to provide feedback on the spot. In other cases, they may prefer to set up a time to meet with you.
- Ask open questions when seeking feedback. This will provide you with a more in-depth understanding of your performance.

Here are some examples of questions you could use when asking for feedback. Remember to ask open-ended questions, unless the situation calls for a more direct response. If the respondent does not provide a detailed answer, you may need to use a 'prompt'. A prompt may help the respondent to provide more relevant information:

Question	Prompts
What did you think about the questions I asked?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were the questions appropriate?</li> <li>• Were the questions clearly worded?</li> <li>• Were you the right person to answer these questions?</li> <li>• What did you think about the number of questions asked?</li> </ul>

Question	Prompts
What do you think about how I asked these questions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the method of communication appropriate?</li> <li>Did you feel comfortable during the process?</li> <li>Did you have enough time to consider and respond to each question?</li> <li>Did you feel that I was listening to you?</li> </ul>
Which areas do you think I could improve upon?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did my questions indicate a suitable level of preparation?</li> <li>Did my body language convey openness?</li> <li>Did I use the right tone?</li> </ul>

## Responding to feedback

When we get feedback from someone, we usually go through three stages: reaction, response and reflection.

Doing the following will help you to respond to feedback appropriately and effectively:

<b>Reaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be aware of how you are feeling and manage your emotional responses appropriately.</li> <li>Concentrate on listening to the feedback (rather than responding to it) and, if necessary, ask questions to clarify the other's person's view.</li> <li>You may want to take some time out before you respond to the feedback, rather than responding immediately. This is especially important if you have a strong emotional reaction to what you are hearing.</li> </ul>
<b>Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be honest with yourself about your performance.</li> <li>Be open-minded about what the other person has said.</li> <li>Ask for specific examples if you need help understanding the feedback. For example, 'What would have been a better way of asking that question?' or 'What do you think I should do differently next time?'</li> </ul>
<b>Reflection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thank the person for giving you feedback. Even if you don't agree with it, thank them for taking the time to give you the feedback and let them know that you appreciate it.</li> </ul>

Keep a record of the feedback you received and any improvements that have been suggested. These can be used to improve the way you approach problems at work. Some of the suggestions for improvement may require you to think about the way you do your work or the way you communicate and relate with the rest of the team.

## Example

### Seek feedback

Krish is a sales representative for a winery. He identified an issue with how his team managed enquiries from potential customers and asked his colleagues a series of questions about the issue.

Krish is seeking feedback on the questions he asked and his questioning style. He emails the four colleagues who answered his questions and lets them know he would like their feedback. When they respond, he sets up a time to meet with each of them. He drafts a list of three open-ended questions, with a few potential prompts for each.

One of Krish's colleagues tells him that his questions were pointless and the process took too long. Krish feels upset about the feedback but calmly asks some further questions to clarify his colleague's comments.

Because he is feeling strongly about his colleague's comments, Krish decides not to respond immediately. He thanks his colleague for the feedback.

## Practice Task 9

### Question 1

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What are the benefits of seeking feedback on your questions and questioning style? Select all that apply.

- It helps to build your confidence.
- It helps to demonstrate your commitment and ambition.
- It helps you build stronger relationships with your colleagues.
- It enhances your opportunity for promotion.
- It helps you to identify areas for improvement.

### Question 2

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Why is it best to ask open-ended questions when seeking feedback?

## Question 3

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What are three stages people usually go through when they receive feedback?

## Summary

- Documenting responses to questions can help make stakeholders aware of problems, identify solutions, make decisions about problems and preserve knowledge.
- Common methods used to document information in business include business reports, memos, forms and templates.
- General principles of business writing include keeping the message brief, using simple and concrete language and avoiding jargon.
- While documenting responses to questions, gaps in the information may be identified. In these cases, it may be necessary to clarify responses with respondents.
- After asking colleagues questions about a workplace problem, getting feedback on the questions and the questioning style will help to build confidence, identify areas for improvement and build stronger relationships with colleagues.
- When seeking feedback, it is usually best to use open-ended questions, and these may be supported by prompts.
- When receiving feedback, people typically go through three stages: reaction, response and reflection. Managing your emotional responses during each stage will help you respond appropriately to the feedback.

## Learning Checkpoint 3

### Seek feedback on questions and problem solving

#### Part A

1. Which of the following actions need to be considered when clarifying an answer from a respondent? Select all that apply.
  - Checking the answers provided by other respondents
  - Telling the respondent why you are asking a follow-up question
  - Following the principles of active listening
  - Thanking the respondent for clarifying their answer
  - Considering the format being used to document responses
2. What are three different types of document you might use to record your colleagues' responses to your questions?

## Part B

### Case study

Tahira is a marketing assistant at a company that provides ticketing services for sporting events.

Tahira has identified an issue with her team's approach to digital marketing strategies. She has asked her colleagues a series of questions about the issue. She is now writing up the process she followed and her findings. She will then give the document to her colleagues for their feedback.

1. Tahira has written up a draft document outlining the responses she received. She has asked you to review the draft.

One of the paragraphs in Tahira's report reads:

- 'The team carefully examined the target audiences and utilised a range of techniques to develop the strategy. Considering the current circumstances, the options for strategies were limited. The strategy was approved by the marketing manager, Romina.'

Based on the principles of good business writing, what are two ways Tahira can improve this paragraph?

2. Tahira is seeking feedback from her colleague Ernesto about the questions she had posed. She asks Ernesto: 'Can you tell me what you think about how I asked the questions?' Ernesto replies, 'I'm not sure what you mean.'

What are two prompts Tahira could use to get more information from Ernesto?