

# COMMON GROUND

## ENGLISH IN THE WORKPLACE



**NorQuest** COLLEGE | CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE IN  
**INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION**

## FACILITATOR'S MANUAL

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## *The Centre for Excellence in Intercultural Education*

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*Excellence through innovative intercultural solutions*

### **Our mission**

The NorQuest College Centre for Excellence in Intercultural Education transforms communities and organizations through customized, innovative and practical intercultural training grounded in evidence-based research. We achieve this by building strong collaborative partnerships with our clients and stakeholders.

### **Our vision**

We are regionally and nationally recognized as a leader in integrated intercultural solutions for the community and the workplace.

### **Our values**

Our values guide the development and growth of the Centre and align closely with the business model principles of NorQuest College.

#### *Leading*

We are responsive to emerging trends and current realities, and generate fresh approaches and opportunities for our clients and stakeholders.

#### *Transformative*

Our innovative approach integrates intercultural and language training to build community and organizational capacity through changed behaviour and expanded world views.

#### *Practical*

We generate realistic solutions and perspectives that improve the effectiveness and quality of our clients' professional and social lives.

#### *Evidence-based*

Our approach produces outcomes through the integration of applied research and customized training.

#### *Sustainable*

We offer solutions that last by building community and corporate capacity.

#### *Collaborative*

Solutions are meaningful to our clients and stakeholders, and appropriate to their specific situations.



# INTRODUCTION TO FACILITATING AN EWP

Welcome to teaching an English in the Workplace (EWP) program!

You have volunteered, been asked or hired to train foreign-born newcomers to the company. No doubt this appears to be a daunting task; however, you have been selected for a reason. You are the right person to teach the curriculum and create a learning atmosphere for your newcomers!

Okay, you may be thinking... so now what?

## *The Facilitator's Role*

English in the Workplace (EWP) is a dynamic form of language instruction. It requires instructors to capture and maintain learner attention to produce results in a much shorter period of time than regular ESL courses. This training is, by nature, highly contextualized, customized and workplace driven in order to meet the needs of the employees and the client organization.

Consequently, an instructor succeeds when he/she is able to prioritize the most important learning outcomes and tries to achieve them. He/she also needs to display adaptability, flexibility, discretion, and empathy while teaching and working with the organization. These criteria

are certainly common to most teaching but the workplace context also requires cultural awareness, more one-on-one personalized coaching and the ability to brush off criticism.

Don't take things personally; learn to recognize when you don't have learner/client "buy in" and investigate why. And remember, having extensive experience with people from other cultures is not essential. Most newcomers have very little experience with Canadians.

The important thing is to find similarities without minimizing differences; learning about where each comes from and learning to adapt without losing cultural and language identities.

## About the Program

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The *Common Ground—English in the Workplace Training Manual* is designed with the objective of providing experienced as well as first-time English in the Workplace (EWP) facilitators a ready-to-use curriculum and training guide that introduces workers from outside Canada to concepts of safety, pronunciation clarity, cultural awareness and other essential workplace skills.

*Common Ground* is not meant to be an all-encompassing resource, but rather is built to be flexible—a resource that can be adapted to multiple industries in Alberta. You are encouraged to add company-specific information so that the EWP program best meets your company’s and employees’ needs.

The curriculum does not follow any particular order. Units in each module may be skipped depending on the needs of the learners in your class. You may find selecting units from different modules to be more beneficial and provide a greater learning experience. For example, although not found in the same module, the teaching of multi-syllable words may combine well with the instruction of direct vs. indirect communication.

*Common Ground* focuses on improving English language competency and learner confidence to improve communication at the workplace. The information is generic, focusing on language skills that are used in every workplace in Alberta. The learners in your class will develop skills that will aid them in interacting effectively with coworkers. Through the use of classroom activities, learners will practice key concepts in order to participate effectively at the worksite, make decisions and solve problems. Understanding instructions and directions, and sharing ideas and concerns are vital contributions to the worksite. Employees with a greater grasp of the English language will be able to represent the company more competently.

Use the materials provided in the *Common Ground—English in the Workplace Training Manual* as a foundation to build a program that will be unique to your business, a program that will help the company engage and retain workers. *Common Ground* modules allow for a wide range of language competency levels and different learning styles, and the activities have been used successfully in a variety of workplace training contexts. Class interaction is vital, so pick and choose activities that will allow you to create this environment and adapt the activities to suit your teaching style.

*Common Ground* can be delivered for any number of hours the company can provide; however, the program was designed with a 30- to 40-hour delivery in mind. As you read the modules and the suggested activities you will see there is more material provided in *Common Ground* than can be taught in 30 to 40 hours.



## Using this Resource

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An English in the Workplace program allows for key content specific to the company to be taught in a safe environment. The classroom time is organized to meet the needs of the learner and the company. Other strengths of an EWP program include:

- higher productivity
- creation of a positive work environment
- fewer absences
- fewer accidents
- ease of scheduling
- greater ability to cross train
- authenticity of content

It is essential to assess the learners you will be instructing and, from that assessment, adapt the content to meet their needs. It is important to start your class where your learners are. Sample assessments are provided in the Assessment section of the accompanying *Common Ground – A How-To Guide for Employers*. You will use these to assess the needs and interests of the learners and, from this, select the topics you will teach.

The *Common Ground Training Manual* has been separated into sections that will provide necessary background information to both experienced and non-experienced English in the Workplace facilitators, including:

- advice on how to teach an EWP class
- how to be sensitive to students' cultural backgrounds
- Canadian Language Benchmarks
- ten modules which include background information and activity suggestions in the instruction of safety, clarity of pronunciation, intercultural awareness, idioms, and conversation "how-to's."
- idiom illustrations: specific workplace vocabulary for the manufacturing, food service, food processing, and hospitality and tourism industries
- a list of additional resources
- glossary of terms



## Establishing a welcoming atmosphere

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Whether you are an experienced facilitator or new to the field of teaching, you will be experimenting with different styles and ways to communicate with your learners (employees) at the worksite. There is a lot to remember (and do) as the facilitator of the class; however, there are certain constants to remember when teaching *Common Ground* at the worksite.

### 1. Learner-Centred Classroom

The goal of teaching English in the Workplace is to create a learning environment that encourages employees to speak out loud and practice their learning in a safe environment. The classroom tasks you give will allow the learners to engage mentally, socially and emotionally with Canadian and non-Canadian co-workers. The purpose of the classroom is to take what is being taught and transfer that knowledge back to the worksite. Learners need to leave impressed with themselves and what they have accomplished in their learning, not with how much the teacher knows!

### 2. Teaching has a Purpose

The company you work for has invested time, money and energy into the *Common Ground* project. There are specific outcomes the company has identified that need to be met. When creating lessons for the week, set clear goals and make the commitment to achieve them. EWP class has to be a place where the employee can:

- be purpose-driven
- learn workplace vocabulary
- learn language around procedures
- follow directions
- ask for clarification
- do the most that can be done in a limited time

### 3. Experiment with Different Styles of Teaching

Whether or not you are an experienced instructor, you will be attempting new teaching techniques that will take you out of your comfort zone. Embrace this; it will allow you to learn about yourself and how

you communicate with others as a facilitator in the classroom. Varying the way lessons are taught will allow you to connect with all the learners in your class. People like to learn through three different ways: seeing, listening and doing.

Included in the training manual are a number of different ways to teach a single topic. Remember that your learners come from different cultures, different age groups and different levels of education. All of these factors will affect how a person learns.

### 4. Be Flexible

You will quickly learn that the lesson plan you laboured over will never go exactly as planned. There is great comfort in knowing that! Being prepared for your class is job number one, but remember that lesson plans are made to be modified "on the fly." Learners in your class may ask a question or answer one of yours in a way that you did not expect. Follow these strands and see where they take you.

### 5. Just Be You

Many second-language learners come from a culture where the teacher is seen as the one with all the knowledge. The teacher's words are the truth and the student would not think otherwise. What they essentially want is *you!* A "you" who is aware of culture and the advancements/limitations culture brings to everyday life. The learners are looking for someone they can trust with their confusion and feel comfortable with when they express themselves. Building trust and respect with your learners is essential for fostering long-term success. Be honest with your learners and share your experiences with them.

### 6. See the Bigger Picture

The teaching of *Common Ground* lasts for a brief period of time. What is taught in the class is to be used not only at work, but in everyday life. This is a long-term commitment made by the learner to improve their standing in Alberta. In every class you will not only give key elements of information but provide long-term motivation. Help your learners and their co-workers become inspired and motivated to keep learning long after the course is over.



## Teaching your first class

The first class or few classes you teach will allow time for you to create classroom routines. Clarify the routines you wish to have followed. They may include any of the following or you can add to this list to fit your own teaching style.

- 1. The parking lot routine:** Sometimes there will be questions asked, information wanted or challenges that arise in the class that you may not be able to answer at that time. Establish the idea that topics will be "parked" until there is an opportunity to bring them up again in conversation or until an answer is found.
- 2. Breaks, food and personal needs:** Learners should adhere to scheduled break times in the class. Any food and beverage in the classroom will need to follow company rules. If the class is to take place during lunchtime, you will need to establish how much time the learners have to prepare their food. If personal breaks are allowed, it is expected that learners do not disturb the class.
- 3. Use visuals:** Visuals support critical information given in the class. Posters, whiteboards, overheads, PowerPoint presentations, authentic materials and

other visuals will help support visual learners. Colour carries meaning, so using colour-coded information is an excellent strategy.

- 4. Working in pairs and small groups:** Within all modules of *Common Ground* are opportunities for learners to work with each other. Many learners will want to always work with the same partner as they become comfortable together. But it is important for the learners to work with everyone. Learning to work with unfamiliar people or people from another cultural group is important for personal growth as well as for building trust within the classroom. It is important to discuss the need to abide by common rules of respectful behaviour in order to minimize misunderstandings.

When it comes to working in pairs or in discussion, it is important for everyone to participate. Assign roles as follows:

- the **timekeeper** will keep the conversation on track and within the time limit
- the **reporter** will report to the rest of the class what was discussed in the group
- the **recorder** will write down the most important information from the conversation

### Self Reflection: What do I need to do for the first class?

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## Top 10 Tips for Teaching ESL Learners

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We tend to forget that newcomers often haven't had the same exposure to English as we've had. Some may have had their schooling in English, while some others are learning English formally, for the first time. Here are some tips to help in communicating with ESL learners:

1. Give learners time to practice. Practicing or using new knowledge or skills is essential. Your objectives should be based on what you want the learner to be able to do by the end of the class.
2. Simplify sentence structures and repeat sentences before trying to rephrase. Quickly rephrasing sentences confuses a learner. Short, affirmative sentences (no negatives) are easiest for new learners of English to understand.
3. Set expectations and give explanations that are very clear and complete. Don't expect ESL learners to "pick up on" assumptions, unstated premises, or subtle nuances of meaning.
4. Balance activities between new and familiar material. For example, avoid asking learners to use both new vocabulary and a new grammatical structure in a role-playing activity for example.
5. Avoid asking the question, "Do you understand?" Many ESL learners will nod "yes" even if they're completely lost with what you're saying. This is often an attempt to save face. You may walk away from the conversation thinking everything is fine, when in reality the learner did not understand your statement at all.
6. In many cultures a student who asks many questions is considered a "problem." The facilitator must build trust and display patience. Check for understanding by asking learners to paraphrase or write questions they have in groups. They may also use role play, demonstrate their learning, or explain their answer.
7. Keep "teacher talk" simple and clear. Use pictures, gestures, demonstrations, and facial expressions to reinforce messages whenever possible. Use print letters, with space between letters and words, and don't overload the blackboard with too much or disorganized text. Use authentic material as props whenever possible. Avoid lecturing. After about 10 minutes of teacher talk, learners stop absorbing new information.
8. Use a mixture of teaching approaches, including: role-plays, discussion groups, and questionnaires. Don't be afraid to ask for feedback (both oral and written) — you will learn a lot from the responses.
9. Demonstrate tasks before asking learners to do them. Learners need to become familiar with vocabulary, conversational patterns, grammar structures, and even activity "rules" before reproducing them.
10. Repeat and review. Build sequence, structure, and support in learning activities. Reuse vocabulary and ideas from earlier in the *Common Ground* course. It may be redundant for you, but redundancy helps the learner practice using learned vocabulary or skills in new situations.

### Additional Note:

#### Don't worry if learners seem unresponsive at first.

Canadians are generally used to meetings and classes with plenty of interaction and dialogue. It's rewarding to lead conversations in which everyone is involved; however, learners from other countries have been trained to be silent listeners and memorizers. It can be confusing as a facilitator to stand in front of blank faces, but expecting it can help reduce the shock. Introduce new concepts such as discussion and role-play into the class gradually. As trust grows between you and the learners, the more interaction will occur both in and out of the classroom.

## What is essential to practice as an EWP facilitator?

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This manual provides an exhaustive list of answers to common questions. You may feel pressure to demonstrate every trait listed. Do not feel that way! If you use the following pieces of advice and demonstrate this in the classroom, you will find great success in your facilitation.

- Know your lesson before entering the class.
- Determine your main outcome and centre your class around it; return to it repeatedly during the class.
- Find the connections between culture-specific issues by being culturally curious.
- Understand how important it is to follow CLB levels (Canadian Language Benchmarks). Often you are training multiple CLB levels at once. Meet your main outcomes as best you can within the tight timeframes you have.
- Remember EWP is different from regular ESL. It is more customized, focused, targeted, relevant, applicable and practical. It demands much more investment from the learner, facilitator, and organization than just learning a language.
- Change the activities regularly (the typical attention span is 20 minutes).
- Be consistent in all you do and portray.
- Establish clear expectations for participants. Maintain classroom routines.
- Balance respecting learner individuality with group needs. Develop consensual classroom guidelines of respect and engagement.
- Remember that you don't know everything and you don't have to. If you don't know something use "I'm not sure, let me look into that and get back to you," then move on. Later, find out the answer and address it in class. If it's not directly related to your teaching, challenge your learners to find the answer.
- Write on the board a lot. Never have a blank board. Most people are visual learners.
- Make the learners face each other for language classes and group work.
- Use a U-shape desk arrangement for a language class. The focus of the learners needs to be each other, not you.

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### Self Reflection: What is important for me to practice when I step inside the classroom?

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## Canadian Language Benchmarks

Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) show us what people can do in English in daily communication. The Canadian standard is used to "describe a person's ability to use the English language to accomplish a set of tasks" (page IX, Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000). The Benchmarks are broken into 12 levels of English in each of the four strands of language; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Learners are usually at different CLB levels in different strands (e.g. a learner could be CLB 4 in Listening, 3 in Speaking and 5 in Reading and Writing.)

The learner taking the *Common Ground* course will have a wide range of English competency. Some learners will have recently arrived in Alberta to work as temporary foreign workers with little English ability, while some may have learned English as a first language in their school system in their native country. Some learners may lack literacy skills in their first language, let alone in English. Canadian Language Benchmarks are national. This means that the skills displayed by the learner in Barrhead, Alberta, are assessed by the same standards as the skills displayed by the learner in Hamilton, ON.

### Common Ground CLB level

The practice worksheets in *Common Ground* that the learners will receive have been designed with a Canadian Language Benchmark 4 in mind. With workers born outside of Canada able to take this course, the designers of this program found that writing the learner pages at

a CLB 4 would be most effective for the facilitator of the class. Not all employees will be at the CLB 4 level; however, suggestions are given later as to how you can adapt the materials for different literacy levels.

To be considered at a CLB level 4, the learner must, at a minimum, be able to:

- take part in simple conversations related to everyday routines, using adequate vocabulary
- communicate basic needs and simple descriptions
- use simple "who, what, where, when" questions to get routine and personal information, and respond to familiar questions
- show some control of basic grammatical structures; use correct present, past and future tenses with common verbs
- use some connectors such as "and," "but," "first," "next"

## Canadian Language Benchmark Checklists

The Canadian Language Benchmark checklists are an excellent resource for your employees (and you) to check their language learning progress. Posters containing this information and further information on CLB levels can be found under CLB "Can Do" checklists on the Publications page at [www.language.ca](http://www.language.ca).







# BRIDGING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Do you find some accents difficult to understand? Do you feel that others have difficulty understanding you?

Communication is a two-way process that involves both speaker and listener equally. Through this *Common Ground* course, you will develop the skills to speak with second language learners and contrast a mainstream Canadian style of communication with other communication styles, and learn how to offer and ask for clarification, despite language barriers.

Take the following quiz to learn more about language and culture.

## *Language and Cultural Awareness Quiz*

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Determine the best answer for each question.

1. In 2006, how many languages (not including dialects) were there in the world?  
a. 2000                      b. 3500                      c. 5000                      d. 7000
2. What first language has the most speakers?  
a. Hindi                      b. Mandarin                      c. English                      d. Spanish
3. Which country has the most languages?  
a. China                      b. Philippines                      c. Papua New Guinea                      d. India
4. Linguists predict that by 2099 more than  
a. One third of the world's languages will be extinct  
b. One half of the world's languages will be extinct  
c. One quarter of the world's languages will be extinct
5. Which four countries have almost all post-secondary education in English?  
a. India                      b. Pakistan                      c. Germany                      d. Philippines                      e. Kenya
6. The best age range to learn a new language is:  
a. 2 to 7                      b. 7 to 11                      c. 12 to 19                      d. None of the above

*The art and skill of creating curiosity depends on the trainer's ability to think like a learner.*

1. d (approx 6,912), 2. b (873 million Mandarin speakers — English has 340 million), 3. c (820 languages), 4. b  
5. a, b, d, e: India, Pakistan, Philippines, Kenya, 6. d

### Answers



## Understanding Culture

### “ CULTURE AS AN ONION ”

- Hofstede, 1991



When you look at an onion you will notice many different layers. Culture is similar in that values and behaviours also have many different layers as well. Think of culture as having four layers, wrapped over each other like an onion:

**The inner layer** represents cultural identity.

**The second layer** includes race, gender, ethnicity, social class, sexuality, age, mental and physical ability, all of which have components that are integral to a person's life.

**The third layer** represents communication, motivation, perceptions, attitudes, and personality.

**The fourth layer** represents occupation/career, religion, education, citizenship, language, political ideology, urban/rural, immigrant status and age at immigration, and membership in a majority/minority group.

Cultural identities impact how we behave and how we evaluate others' behaviours. It is important for you as the facilitator to reflect upon your own situation and ask yourself "What is culture?"

Suggested reflection questions include:

1. Where did you learn the rules about gender and family roles?
2. How do the rules you learned collide (or not) with Canadian mainstream ideas about a particular matter?

3. Which parts of your cultural identity are you most comfortable with?
4. Which parts of your cultural identity do you struggle with?
5. Which of the identity markers do you consider to be the most important (as mentioned in the cultural onion)? Why?

### “ CULTURE IS LIKE AN ICEBERG ”

- Storti, C., Bennhold-Samaan, L.,  
and U.S. Peace Corps, 1997

“ CULTURE IS LIKE AN ICEBERG: THE DEEPER LAYERS (E.G. TRADITIONS, BELIEFS AND VALUES) ARE HIDDEN FROM OUR VIEW; USUALLY WE SEE AND HEAR ONLY THE UPPERMOST LAYER OF CULTURAL ARTIFACTS (E.G. FASHION, TRENDS, POPULAR MUSIC) AND SOME VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL SYMBOLS. ”

- Ting-Toomey



The true size of an iceberg is difficult to see. Part of the iceberg is above the waterline and yet a larger, invisible portion of iceberg is below the water. Culture is very similar to an iceberg.

1. What aspects of a person's culture are visible to all?

*Facial expressions, paintings, holiday customs, religious rituals, eating habits, food, styles of dress, and music.*

2. What aspects of a person's culture are not visible (below the waterline)?

*Rules of social etiquette, concept of leadership, importance of time, values, nature of friendship, understanding the natural world, concept of self, concept of personal space, and beliefs about child-rearing.*

The behaviours found at the surface are influenced by the values and assumptions found beneath the surface, which are emotional and cognitive. The values beneath the waterline influence the learners' identities and the way they will interpret their environment.

A helpful theoretical framework for understanding and working with intercultural sensitivity is the **Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)**. Milton Bennet (1986, 1993) developed the DMIS and states that "... the core of this sensitivity is an ability to understand subtle differences between cultures. It is an indication of increased cognitive sophistication, a deeper ability to discriminate; therefore, it is considered a more interculturally developed, or sensitive perspective" (Mahon, 2006, p. 392).

According to **DMIS** there are three ethnocentric stages:

**Denial** – an inability to make distinctions and/or disinterest

**Defense** – polarized "us" vs. "them"

**Minimization** – differences are recognized but, in the end, it is believed that people are all the same.

When learners in your classroom are in the stages of denial and defence it will be important to use activities that focus on similarities rather than differences. It is important to build connection in a positive light. It is from this connection that the learners can then begin to talk about ways in which they are different. It is important to always stress the similarities because "differences" can be perceived as being a threat.

When learners are at the minimization stage, their tasks need to focus on how cultures differ. Participants should be able to discuss how their culture influences incidents. An ability to identify culture-based behaviour, values, norms and attitudes is essential.

According to **DMIS** there are also three ethnorelative stages:

**Acceptance** – one's culture is understood as one of many valid cultures

**Adaptation** – individuals are able to behave accordingly in situations where other norms and values are needed

**Integration** – an individual is able to identify, and move with knowledge in multiple cultures

## Stages of Cultural Transition

The following chart shows the stages of adjustment a newcomer to Alberta will experience. Settlement, adaptation and integration are stages the newcomer will need support with at home and in the workplace.

		In the Workplace	Characteristics of Support Role in the Workplace
<b>Settlement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic needs</li> <li>• Loss of support</li> <li>• Financial issues</li> <li>• Pre-migration issues</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Banking</li> <li>• Orientation</li> <li>• Don't know who to trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entry orientation</li> <li>• Basic needs</li> <li>• Company policy, procedures, etc.</li> <li>• Logistical details</li> <li>• Local resources</li> <li>• Forming relationships</li> <li>• Developing trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Go-to person (buddy system)</li> <li>• Opportunities to ask questions</li> <li>• Weekly group session leader</li> <li>• Anticipate questions, needs</li> <li>• Introduce yourself when someone new comes into the organization</li> <li>• Be welcoming and ask people about themselves</li> <li>• Offer to share your knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>Adaptation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family role changes</li> <li>• Spousal role changes</li> <li>• Parenting</li> <li>• Shift in gender roles</li> <li>• Unmet expectations</li> <li>• New career training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural orientation/training</li> <li>• Unwritten rules: meetings, teamwork, presentations, etc.</li> <li>• Language and communication skill polishing</li> <li>• Building relationships</li> <li>• Self-awareness and organizational/corporate culture awareness</li> <li>• Practicing adaptive behaviours with feedback and support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coach</li> <li>• Group Coach</li> <li>• Identifying/recognizing cultural aspects of communication</li> <li>• Team leader adapting meeting process and expectations to help newcomer learn the unwritten rules</li> <li>• Adapting to take language into consideration</li> <li>• Supporting language development</li> </ul>
<b>Integration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in all aspects of life</li> <li>• Political</li> <li>• Social</li> <li>• Parent/school</li> <li>• Career advancement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career development and learning plans</li> <li>• Development opportunities</li> <li>• Succession planning</li> <li>• Leadership development</li> <li>• Potential as a cultural liaison</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentor</li> <li>• Group mentoring</li> <li>• Awareness of degree of inclusively in workplace</li> </ul>

The goal of teaching intercultural awareness is to get learners talking and feeling comfortable in a number of situations. The learners will begin by making cultural comparisons and sharing information about their own culture. Through conversations and role plays, the learners will not only be practicing the clarity of their pronunciation, but will also become more proficient in the cultural context in which English is used. Through more practice, the learners' self confidence and ability to communicate with the Canadian-born employee improves.

Learners may originate from countries that are not very multicultural and they may never have had to consider other people's world views or develop intercultural skills. It is important to not only share the Canadian cultural views, but also to allow time for the learners to share their own cultural views. This will foster lively discussion.

The information shared in the class may even be new to you, the facilitator. It is important that the learners avoid passing judgment on the merits of one culture over another, and that the facilitator do the same. Every culture must be accepted for its uniqueness.

Kolb (1984) created a learning preference model that helps facilitators in identifying what learners need in order to improve. The four quadrants of the Kolb Cycle include:

Kolb	Learner will . . .	Facilitator will . . .	Strategies
Concrete Experience	use their personal experience to discuss culture	model empathy for the learner	small group discussion images film
Reflective Observation	think about their personal experience living in Alberta	be clear with instructions patient with responses	in-class discussion checklists question & answer
Active Experimentation	practice their new intercultural skills and behaviours at the worksite and in the community	show enthusiasm with students with any changes or discoveries made	daily interaction with others
Abstract Conceptualization	connect with what they have learned in class display this behavior everyday at the worksite and community	support the learner on changes that have been made.	checklists witnesses

**If you want to understand Canadian culture and talk about it with the learners, try the following "mirror analogy."**

First, think of three cultures you are familiar with. For example, you might think of people from China, Russia, or Cuba. All three countries have had communist societies, yet each is very different culturally. Imagine you are going to be hiring workers from those countries (who speak English) to work in your organization. What concerns might you have that are tendencies in people from these countries? For example, Russians can tend to be quite black and white, and very frank when they speak. Chinese people don't always mean what they say and say what they mean. Cubans tend to use high levels of self-disclosure about themselves and their families.

Why do certain concerns arise about particular cultures? Concerns about other cultures are like mirrors. The things we are uncomfortable with are more often clues to our own core values. For example, mainstream Canadians can tend to focus on building consensus before disagreeing directly (unlike Russians who value higher levels of directness). Canadians often use disclaimers like, "I could be wrong, but..." whereas Chinese people may defer to a supervisor instead of openly disagreeing. You may even want to try this "mirror analogy" with your learners.

Be careful to speak in terms of cultural tendencies, not stereotypes. A stereotype is usually a negative trait that we believe everyone in a specific culture has: laziness, rudeness, dishonesty, and so on. Stereotypes are not true. They are the negative ideas we have about other groups of people because we misunderstand them. For example: "Disabled people are not good workers." This is not true. Disabled people can be hardworking and contribute equally to the economy of their cities.

Stereotypes always hurt people, their workplaces, their economies and their societies. Thinking of traits as tendencies can stop us from stereotyping. A tendency becomes a stereotype when we don't allow people the chance to explain their beliefs. The reason for intercultural training is not to change the participants' culture, but to help them work better in Canada's multi-cultural workplaces.

As you teach, there are many aspects to consider in building an atmosphere of learning. It is essential to show a genuine interest in the people you work with. You will need to secure the trust of the learners so they will feel comfortable with the learning process.



## How do I communicate with second-language Learners?

Communicating with ESL learners may be difficult for a variety of reasons: pronunciation clarity, cultural differences or a lack of "rules" for how to handle a situation. Here are some points to keep in mind when you are communicating with the learners in your class.

### Your content

- Use markers like "First... Next ... Finally..."
- Be clear, concise and specific.
- Give expectations, reasons and consequences.
- Give exact dates, measurements and numbers.
- Know what you want learners to do/learn.
- Use plain language.
- Use common points of reference and descriptive words.
- Avoid questions with "yes" or "no" answers.
- Avoid asking "Do you understand?" but, rather, "What are your next steps?" or "What are you going to do first?"
- Be linear. Write down and organize your thoughts beforehand.
- Tell them why they need to learn this vocabulary or a certain structure. What is it used for in the workplace? In the community?

### Your communication style

- Use gestures.
- Use repetition.
- Avoid complex humour, especially sarcasm.
- Adjust your speaking speed to the level of your learners.
- Use pauses strategically so that listeners can process what you have said.
- Supplement your words with visuals, pictures on a whiteboard, a handout, etc.

### Your follow through

- Ask for email updates from supervisors, tutors, and coaches
- Create mini-deadlines with specific outcomes.
- Use visuals whenever possible (e.g., a quick drawing in their journal).

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### Self Reflection: What can I do to improve my communication skills with a second language learner?

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## How do I build a sense of security in the classroom?

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**“** WHEN YOU LISTEN TO SOMEONE ELSE, WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, WHAT THEY SAY BECOMES A PART OF YOU... THE COMMON POOL IS CREATED, WHERE PEOPLE BEGIN SUSPENDING THEIR OWN OPINIONS AND LISTENING TO OTHER PEOPLE’S... AT SOME POINT PEOPLE RECOGNIZE THAT THE COMMON POOL IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THEIR SEPARATE POOLS. - David Brown **”**

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Building a sense of security in the classroom is vital for success. You may be the facilitator of the class; however, you may also be the employees’ direct supervisor or HR manager. The learners in your class may not feel comfortable openly engaging in dialogue for fear that what they say may affect their job. Instilling a sense of security in the classroom will encourage learners to open up and participate.

- Follow through on actions.
- Develop a sense that "we are all in this together."
- Show acceptance and respect.
- Create "connectedness."
- Create a community.
- Listen effectively; respond with understanding.
- Don’t make assumptions.
- Make time for discussion.
- Respect each others’ personal rights.
- Don’t wait for things to get better on their own.

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### Self Reflection: How can I ensure a sense of security exists in the classroom?

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## *How do I build trust?*

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- Greet learners individually and personally.
- Let them know they are important and being listened to.
- Ask "personal" questions that are related to them.
- Validate them and their experience.
- Use positive, intentional body language and positioning.
- Show them your commonalities and don't minimize the differences. They are both real and relevant.
- Share relevant parts of your personal journey.

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### **Self Reflection: How can I build trust with these employees in particular?**

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## *How do I show I have an interest?*

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The world views held by the learners in your class may be very different from yours, but their views are based on perceptions which are their "realities." Their reality determines how they feel, think and behave. Allowing classroom time for the learner to express who they are creates buy-in. Showing an interest in their views and cultural norms engages the learner and validates their culture and upbringing.

- Show genuine curiosity.
- Use open-ended questions.
- Display willingness to understand others.
- Don't patronize. To patronize implies that you are superior to them. To be treated as inferior will be viewed by members of any cultural group as disrespectful.
- Don't assume similarity. Don't assume that people either ought to be like you or want to be like you.

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### **Self Reflection: In what ways can I demonstrate I have an interest in the learner's well being?**

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## What personal factors influence ESL learning?

People taking the *Common Ground* course will have a wide range of backgrounds, skills, needs and interests. Factors that may impact the learners in your company include:

### Limited Time to Study

- Newcomers struggle to make a living and end up working a lot of hours.
- Immediate family responsibilities, plus responsibilities in their native countries, can take away important language learning time.

### Power – Load = Margin

This formula may explain why many adult newcomers learn English at different speeds and why you may need to make adjustments in your support.

- Power = total energy
- Load = energy used for daily survival
- Margin = what is left and can be applied to other activities including learning

### Previous Experience with Education

Some newcomers may arrive with post-graduate degrees, while others may be unable to read and write in their own language.

### Psychological Needs

- A shift in family dynamics can be quite stressful for the newcomer if that person comes from a culture that places a high value on family.
- A man may feel a great amount of stress taking care of his family, as well as learning new skills and language on the job.
- A woman's role changes when she finds work outside the home.
- Children adapt more quickly to the new surroundings and act as translators or cultural brokers for their elders.
- Stress and trauma experienced as a newcomer may manifest in symptoms that affect the workplace.

### Life Experience

- Sharing experiences and examples makes the class practical to the newcomer and relevant for daily living in Alberta.
- Instructional content must include life-coping skills and stimulate motivation of the adult learners.

### Motivation

- Newcomers attend class at some personal or financial sacrifice.
- Absences are often due to family obligations rather than lack of motivation.
- Self-Concept
- Many adult learners are afraid to return to school.
- Undereducated adults are convinced that they will not learn or are too old to learn.

**Self Reflection: What can I do to help lessen the pressure faced by the employees entering my classroom?**

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## *Creating culturally appropriate space for clarification and correction*

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Talking about our country and our culture is easy. Having the students talk about their experiences validates their past and allows them to gain trust with you. When a student talks about his/her past, you may find that other students (or even you) strongly disagree with a viewpoint the person has. As a facilitator you must reserve judgment and seek clarification or correction if something spoken was unclear. Some suggestions include:

- providing a "safe" place to talk so that employees don't lose face
- being careful about mixing genders

## *Avoiding assumptions and stereotypes*

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As a facilitator you must be careful not to reinforce stereotypes. Imagine how you would feel if, after discussing your life in Canada, others continue to insist that you live in an igloo and hunt for polar bears?

*Remember to:*

- Show empathy, interest in others, caring, personal awareness, sensitivity and understanding.
- Display "cognitive" empathy. Knowledge of a person's culture, or "where the person is coming from," is extremely important.
- Be careful when talking about cultural characteristics — generalizations will never represent every person from that culture.
- Increase your knowledge of a culture's beliefs and values and the meanings attached to them.
- Remember that "no two individuals are alike." Therefore, cultural generalizations are statements of likelihood, not certainty.
- Newcomers are often afraid or hesitant to ask questions or request clarifications. They may come from cultures where this is unacceptable or just doesn't happen. In many cultures, indirect communication is normal and direct communication may be considered rude and "risky business." A person could "lose face" by being too direct, and speaking up could be politically and personally dangerous in some cultures.

Generally:

- Canadians believe that "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." (Directness is valued.)
- Japanese believe that "the nail that sticks out gets hammered in." (Indirectness is valued.)
- Chinese believe that "the bird that sticks his head out gets shot." (Indirectness is valued.)

The following are the nine intercultural elements that may be taught in the *Common Ground* course.

1. What is culture?
2. What is culture shock?
3. The concept of time
4. Understanding small talk
5. Direct vs. indirect communication
6. Unwritten rules of behaviour
7. Possible conflict in communication
8. Hierarchy
9. Working as part of a multicultural team



# TEACHING STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

## *Creating a Unit Plan*

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As a facilitator of an English in the Workplace Program you will need to design a plan that will meet the needs of all your learners. This task may be difficult if you have a wide range of language levels in the classroom. There will never be a class in which all learners are at exactly the same speaking, listening, reading and writing level.

In your class you may also have learners who are set on learning in only one way. Perhaps they believe the only way to learn English is through teaching grammar and any suggestion of other activities leads to a hand being raised and the comment, "Teacher – the activity was fun but now it is time to learn more grammar!"

All experienced ESL teachers have encountered this. The EWP classroom is not the place to extensively cover grammar rules. An EWP class is focused on oral communication and how cultures can improve their interaction with each other. But when you create your lesson plans, try to keep all learners in mind – even the one who wants more grammar work.

The learners in your class will have differing levels of education from their native countries and this will mean you likely have to experiment with different teaching styles in order to accommodate those differences. One of the goals of the *Common Ground* course is to give the learners strategies that they can draw upon in their quest to become lifelong learners. You may have to spend classroom time teaching the learners how to learn in a classroom environment. Time may be spent on strategies such as questioning techniques, organizational skills, tactics for reading and checking for understanding and clarification.

## *What is a Unit Plan?*

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A unit plan is the framework for what you will teach over the whole course. This may be a week or a couple of months. A unit plan will allow you to cover the competencies the learner is required to have to develop their English language skills.

- In order to create a useful unit plan you will need to answer the following questions:
  - What are the needs and the interests of your learners and the company?
  - Is it most important to focus on safety? Pronunciation clarity? Cultural awareness? Idioms? Conversation how-tos?
  - What should the learners have accomplished by the end of the Common Ground instruction?
  - How much time is allotted to teach the course?
- The next step is to decide which aspects of the module topics will be taught. There is a lot of material included in the 10 modules and not all information can be taught during the timeframe given to you. The skills taught should flow from week to week.
- What classroom activities will allow the learners to practice their language skills?
  - What are the most important topics to focus on in the classroom? Which topics can be taught in the other learning settings?
  - Do I need to focus on certain elements of communication more than others? For example: Is it more important for the company and the learner to focus on speed than it is to focus on stop consonants?
  - Time is limited. Plan to get the most benefit from the classes. Don't get hung up on the small stuff.

## Lesson Planning

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A lesson plan allows for the instruction of individual lessons. The ten modules in *Common Ground* are an excellent start to the concepts to be discussed during the class. As well, numerous activities have been suggested for use when discussing the topic at hand. To customize an EWP program to your company, design your lessons for the betterment of the worker at the company. What is it that he or she needs to learn or demonstrate in order to achieve success?

There are two key elements needed in all lesson planning.

1. **Language Strands:** Units should include instruction and practice that incorporates the four strands of language (speaking, listening, reading and writing). However, not all lessons must include all four strands. You may find one lesson focused on speaking and writing, for example, whereas another lesson focuses on listening and reading.
2. **Multi-Level Classes:** Accommodating learners with a range of language levels can be difficult. Suggestions for adapting class materials for students with different CLB levels are provided on page 46 - 47. Remember that you can design activities at different levels of language development yet still cover the same competency you are looking for. Perhaps in your class you will have activities for the introductory learner, the learner in the middle who will receive a more structured practice in class, and for the learner who is at an independent level. Your expectation of each learner's performance growth should be based on his/her level or Canadian Language Benchmark level.

It is important to remember that you do not have to follow the modules in the order they are presented. Not all teachers are the same and there is flexibility in the elements of each of the modules. Take ideas from many different modules if you feel that is important for your workplace. Remember that the goal is for your company to create its own company-specific EWP program — one that is boosted by the elements contained within this document.

A sample lesson plan is located on the following page. It is but one of many ways in which a lesson can be designed for the class. Use the information given in the sample as an idea of what should be included when you create your own lesson page. A blank lesson plan page has been provided for you.



# TOPIC:

Date: *September 14*

Length: *9:00 am to 10:30 am*

Materials needed:

- *flip chart*
- *markers*
- *handouts*
- *pencils*

Objectives:

*The learner will be able to...*

Step by Step Procedure:

1. (10 min.) *LACE UP*  
*Begin the class with the employees in the "lace up." Have the students ask/answer the question "what did you do this weekend?"*
2. (20 to 30 min.) *BINGO - VOCABULARY REVIEW*  
*Hand out "bingo card" with the vocabulary words from last week. The employee will listen to the definition and then properly identify the vocabulary word.*
3. (5 min.) *VOCABULARY REVIEW*  
*Review the proper pronunciation of last week's vocabulary. Remind them not to drop the final consonant.*
4. (30 min.) *IDIOMS*  
*Write the idiom on the board. Ask the employees if they have heard the idiom before. Write the idiom in a sentence. Ask if the students if they know the definition. Write definition on flip chart.*
5. (10 min.) *LACE UP*  
*Finish class with the "lace up." The students will ask/answer the question "what are you going to practice this week?"*

Key Vocabulary:

*Bake*  
*Change*  
*Drink*  
*Grime*  
*Mop*  
*Small*  
*Tea*  
*Bar*  
*Cheque*  
*Pen*  
*Soup*  
*Tip*  
*Mix*  
*Grill*

Key Concepts:

*Idioms*  
*- Be on the Ball*  
*- Rushed off our feet*  
*- Pick up the pace*

Comments/Assessments:

- *Hashim looks to Asye for help. He knows the answer but he looks to her for comfort.*
- *They had a lot of fun with the bingo game. We could have done that the entire class. It was difficult for them to move onto the rest of the activities.*

**TOPIC:**

Date:

Length:

Materials needed:

Objectives:

Step by Step Procedure:

Key Vocabulary:

Key Concepts:

Comments/Assessments:



## Using the modules

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Module One is used as an introduction – a way for you to be introduced to your students in a classroom environment. If you are the employees’ supervisor or work with the learners on the company floor, this module will help you with your transition from supervisor to facilitator.

Module One does not follow the same sequence as you will find in Modules Two through Ten. Module One will give information on icebreakers and how to set up classroom rules and expectations.

Modules Two through Ten follow the same sequence and layout. Every module will cover the following topics in order:

1. Safety
2. Pronunciation Clarity
3. Intercultural Awareness
4. Idioms
5. Conversation Management

Every topic has two pages: the left-hand page is for the facilitator – giving background information, tips, and activity suggestions; the right-hand page is for the learner. Use the facilitator page to reinforce your knowledge of the topic and to help you facilitate the conversations you will be having with your learners. The learner handout has been written at a CLB 4. As not all of the students will be at this level, you will need to modify their learning and your expectations. Suggestions for adapting to different CLB levels were discussed earlier in this manual.

The learner pages may be photocopied. To save cost you may decide to provide booklets for the students to write in. The choice is yours.

There are suggested activities with every section in the modules. It is important to allow plenty of time for the learners to practice what they have been taught. The activities are proven techniques that have been used to successfully practice the four strands: speaking, listening, reading and writing. This is not an exhaustive list as you will no doubt find other activities and resources that fit your teaching style.

## Using the handouts

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Handouts are available to guide the employees in their learning. Every handout contains the most important information for the modules. Handouts have been kept to one page per topic to keep photocopying costs low.

How to use the handout:

- Distribute the handouts the day before class so employees have the opportunity to read them. This would be particularly beneficial for those who are beginners in speaking English.
- Post handouts in the lunch room or in the washroom.
- Use as placemats in the lunchroom.

Facilitators should be familiar with the module handout and refer to it throughout the sessions. Encourage new Canadians to practice the vocabulary and idioms throughout the day, both at work and at home. The information found on the facilitator pages can be provided to the Canadian-born employees who have day-to-day interaction with the learners in your class.

Having the Canadian-born employees be aware of what is being taught in the class will enable them to recognize any new learning that has been transferred from the classroom to the workplace. Encourage the Canadian-born employees to support the newcomers in practicing what they have learned in a safe environment.

Handouts for vocabulary lists and dialogues have been created for the following industries:

**1. Food Processing**



**2. Food Service**



**3. Hospitality and Tourism**



**4. Manufacturing**



These pages can be found in the section starting on page 103 of the training manual. Advice on how to teach vocabulary and on how to create vocabulary lists for industries not appearing in this guide has been included preceding the vocabulary section.

## Gathering authentic workplace materials

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*Common Ground* has been created to give you and your company a strong beginning to the creation of your own workplace-specific English in the Workplace program. But to enhance the learning of specific workplace language, authentic materials must be gathered that represent the tasks the workers carry out. There are several reasons why this is important:

- Instructors are given a context as to how the tasks are completed.
- Instructors can identify what the learner must know in order to be successful at the workplace.
- Authentic workplace materials may be used to develop classroom lessons.
- Learners have the opportunity to learn, develop and utilize skills specific to the worksite.

Examples of Authentic Workplace materials:

- Company newsletters, union agreements
- Shift schedules
- Manuals – repair, procedure and safety
- Log books
- Bulletin boards – posters, announcements
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Forms – time sheets, pay stubs, accident and injury forms
- Regulations and labels

Learners may bring workplace materials to you as well. Additional materials can be found through unions, industry offices and internet sites.

## Using plain language

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Your learners will have differing levels of English. It is important to be clear in your communication in the classroom and about all other aspects of the worksite. Be careful when using idioms or other words that are difficult to quickly translate. Use plain language at all times. Guidelines for Plain Language are available in the Assessment section of the *Common Ground: A How-To Guide for Employers*.

- Use short sentences.
- Use common vocabulary.
- Define new vocabulary.
- Use bulleted lists.
- Use short paragraphs.
- Have one idea per paragraph.
- Avoid using idioms or jargon without explanation.
- Engage the reader or listener with the first or second person I, you or we.
- Use visuals such as charts, pictures, graphs, and posters.
- Speak in positive terms (e.g. "Keep area clear" rather than "Don't leave a mess").

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**Self Reflection: Who at the worksite can help to translate workplace materials into plain language?**

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# THE FIVE LEARNING SETTINGS

The five learning settings are:

- Class Time links
- Tutor Talks
- Coach's Hand
- Shift Talks
- Self-Study Centre

These settings are useful for personalizing workplace English training. The setting is simply a time and a place where workplace English discussions and learning are experienced. Use one of them, or all of them, as seldom or as often as you feel necessary. Of course, the more settings used, the greater the improvement in communication at your workplace. Clear communication is common ground for smart business.





### Class Time Links

- Class Time Links is the main learning setting for *Common Ground*.
- Classes can be held before, in the middle or after regular work hours for an agreed-upon period of time.
- Class Time Links allows time for feedback from the previous sessions to foster the interlinking of ideas.
- It is important to include Canadian-born employees even if they are not attending the newcomer class. Sending the topics of the week through email to shift supervisors will give the learners the opportunity to practice what they have learned with their Canadian-born coworkers. The feedback you receive from Canadian-born employees will help you understand what is learned is used at the worksite.



### Tutor Talks

- Tutor Talks are small group relationships among several workers born outside of Canada and one English-speaking employee. The facilitator will provide the tutor with information provided to the employees in the class.
- Tutor Talks are a safe place to learn and practice.
- The tutors will meet with the newcomer at regular times (lunch hours, coffee breaks) for 15 to 30 minutes. This may also take place on the assembly line or at a field location.
- The learners can share what they are learning and how they are applying the information to situations at the worksite. The learners will be able to ask for clarification or further information.
- If there are a large number of employees in the company, you may find running a Tutor Talks program to be beneficial in understanding each learner's growth. Tutors should keep track of the conversation and any observations.



### Coach's Hand

A coach is someone who will model the behaviour and language appropriate to the worksite and supports the employee in making connections with the culture and language of the workplace. It is best if the coach is someone in a supervisory position who works on the job site with the employee(s). The facilitator of the *Common Ground* course will provide the coach with the information given to the employees in the class.

A coach is someone who:

- is available to communicate on an as-needed basis
- has enough work/company experience to discuss problems and concerns
- has a caring personality, and who can be counted on for support
- has support and some training around intercultural communication and teaching ESL
- No formalized weekly meeting; it is usually quick chats to clarify and support, such as a check-up on a particular situation.

There must be a relationship of trust between the coach and the learner. This can only be built over time. Questions must be answered in confidence.



### Shift Talks

- Shift Talks occur in many workplaces in the form of safety talks.
- The talks last five to 10 minutes and are usually held at the beginning of a shift. This meeting involves smaller employee groups discussing how immediate, specific information relates to the themes discussed in the classroom.

Here are some points to consider:

- Hold small group meetings at the beginning of a shift, at coffee time, or at the end of a shift.
- The leader is usually a supervisor.
- Shift Talks can deal immediately with issues that have arisen.
- The leader can discuss how immediate, specific actions relate to the regular classroom lessons.
- The Shift Leader must be involved in the learning process and be made aware of the curriculum taught during the week.
- The Shift Leader can observe and report on how learning is used in the worksite.



### Self-Study Centre

- A self-study centre allows an employee time to learn independently, ideally using a computer.
- The place could be a quiet reading corner with a computer or a room where the workers can learn on their own.

In addition to websites pertaining to safety, pronunciation, intercultural awareness, idioms and conversation how-to's, other resources that could be included at the self-study centre include:

- *The English Express* – a Free Alberta-based ESL newsletter that gives the highlights of news in Alberta over a month. Included in the newspaper are teaching notes for ESL instructors.

To order: [www.englishexpress.ca](http://www.englishexpress.ca)

- Local newspapers
- Canadian dictionary and thesaurus
- Magazines
- Grammar reference books

# KEY TOPICS

## Why teach safety?

Safety is a main concern for the workplace. *Common Ground* includes safety topics to reinforce learners' safety knowledge, and allow them to ask questions as well as to express how safety rules are similar and different between their countries and Canada.

Note that safety information in *Common Ground* cannot cover all information required for every worksite. The materials listed in *Common Ground* are not specifically tailored for your business. Please use company-specific safety information in any of the five learning settings. Use the materials provided in the *Common Ground* modules as suggestions for classroom discussion.

Every Canadian-born employee expects to work in an environment that is free of occupational health and safety hazards. The Alberta government has laws and regulations in place to meet that expectation. However, worksites cannot totally eliminate all hazards. Protection must be provided in order to carry out tasks effectively and safely.

While we think of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as the first and foremost way of protecting the employee, we cannot forget to protect the employee with knowledge. By learning the language of safety at the worksite, employees will be able to engage in conversation – becoming more aware of the ways in which they are protected as well as their own responsibility to keep the worksite free from harm.

Companies in Alberta deliver many types of safety training to their employees. This training is not effective when a worker cannot understand or read English. If the language level of the employee is low, his/her participation in the training at the worksite is limited and the success of training may be jeopardized. Through the teaching of safety within the five possible learning environments, learners will benefit more from the training. Repetition is essential for learning. Simply being shown once during an orientation does not mean the employee has been properly trained.

Employees understand the health and safety issues they face at work will also recognize the value of their own contribution to the company. With the vocabulary and organization of the worksite in place, employees will be able to talk about experiences, problems and routines. This leads to greater confidence, competence and contribution to the worksite.

The modules include nine safety topics that can be discussed in the five learning settings. Discussion may include:

- Injury and accident reporting
- Hazards at work
- Personal protective equipment
- Fire safety
- WHMIS and MSDS
- Emergency responses
- Electrical safety
- Working Alone
- Employer and employee responsibilities

## Why teach clarity of pronunciation?

“ VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT, GRAMMAR, READING, WRITING, LISTENING AND SPEAKING WILL CONTINUE TO BE IMPORTANT, BUT CONTEXTUALIZED LEARNING THAT INCORPORATES PRONUNCIATION, PRAGMATISM AND AUTHENTIC PRACTICE WILL BETTER PREPARE STUDENTS AND WILL HELP MOTIVATE THEM TO LEARN. ”  
- Dr. Tracy Derwing

There is a myth that the older you get, the more difficult it is to learn a new language. People think children learn a language more easily than adults; that at some point between adolescence and their thirties, people lose the ability to learn languages well.

But in reality, research suggests the opposite to be true. A recent report on Americans learning Russian showed a clear improvement of capability with age; the ability to learn increased as age increased from childhood into adulthood. This is because adults know more about the world, and are therefore able to understand meanings more quickly.

Also, they are able to use experience and logical thinking to see patterns in the new language. And, they are more disciplined than children. It takes children pretty much their entire school lives to be ready to use English in a job. You may hear an employee within your class say they are "too old" to learn a new language or perhaps that their children have more time to learn pronunciation clarity. Research has shown this to be untrue. You are never too old to learn!

The Canadian workplace is a multicultural environment. Many workers have different first languages so everyone's English language needs to be very clear.

Most newcomers think that Canadians want them to use perfect grammar when they speak, when in fact it is more important that newcomers speak clearly, however imperfectly. Nor is using a Canadian accent the answer. Canada has many accents. Although each language has its unique challenges when compared with English, the top three ways to begin speaking more clearly in English are by:

- speaking more slowly
- connecting ideas in a sentence and pausing in appropriate places
- pronouncing all the sounds in a word

Most learners speak their first languages faster than English, so it feels unnatural for second-language speakers to speak English slowly. Slowing down will allow them to pause and let the listener think about the message. Also, Spanish, and tonal languages like Mandarin and Vietnamese, don't have some of the critical sounds of English. This makes their English pronunciation difficult to understand. Even if they have a good vocabulary, they often drop the end sounds (P,T,K,B,D and G). Spanish, Mandarin and Vietnamese words do not end with these sounds.

## What should I know about pronunciation?

“ WATCH ME, REPEAT, THEN FORGET WHAT YOU SAW ME DO. FIND YOUR OWN WAY. TRUST YOUR BODY, IT REMEMBERS. ”  
- Chungliang Al Huang

Incorrect pronunciation can create significant challenges for communication. Different language groups have different problem areas. When you help learners with pronunciation, you can use your own pronunciation as a model. However, when you want learners to produce the sounds correctly, sometimes you can give them more help if you are aware of what produces the differences. The four main aspects of pronunciation are:

1. voicing
2. mouth, tongue, and lip position
3. stress and rhythm
4. intonation



## What should I know about voicing?

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When a sound is voiced, the air used to make the sound causes the vocal cords to vibrate. You can tell if a sound is voiced by placing your hand tightly on your throat and saying the sound in isolation. If the sound is voiced, you will feel the vibrations. When a learner is saying a word incorrectly, one reason may be that he or she is voicing an unvoiced sound or is not voicing a voiced sound.

## What should I know about mouth, tongue and lip positioning?

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The position of the mouth, tongue, and lips (sometimes called articulators) makes a difference in sound.

### Vowels

Differences in vowel sounds are produced in these ways:

- How far forward or back the tip of the tongue is in the mouth
- How high or low the tongue is
- How much the jaw is dropped
- Whether or not the lips are rounded
- Consonants

Differences in sound are produced in these ways:

- Where the tongue touches the mouth
- Which part of the tongue touches
- Whether the air is stopped completely or is partially stopped and then released
- Articulators besides the tongue ("b" is produced by the upper and lower lip) or by the shape of the tongue rather than the position ("r" and "l" are different because the tongue curls up toward the roof of the mouth with "r")

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**TEACHING TIP:** If your learners are producing the sound incorrectly, try to imitate them to feel where your tongue is and how your mouth is shaped; then move your tongue to the correct position to make the sound. You ought to be able to help learners get their tongues and mouths into correct position in this way.

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## What are stress and rhythm?

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English has a stress and rhythm pattern that gives an equal amount of time between stressed syllables. This means that we say many unstressed syllables very quickly. The faster one speaks, the more blurred the unstressed sounds become. Words such as "and," "a," and "to" are often unstressed.

*Example:* "I want to go to the store and buy a book," actually sounds like "I wanna go tuh tha store an buy uh book."

### Pronunciation Modules

The modules include eight pronunciation elements that are essential for second-language learners to improve their pronunciation clarity. The eight topics are:

1. Speed
2. Pause
3. Multi-syllable words
4. Sentence stress
5. Stop consonants
6. Interjections
7. Conciseness vs. wordiness
8. Volume and enunciation

Each module includes background information on every pronunciation element and proven activities for the classroom.

## Why should I teach and develop intercultural skills?

“ UNDERSTANDING YOUR UNIQUENESS MAKES YOU SPECIAL. ACKNOWLEDGING DIFFERENCES MAKES LEARNERS IMPORTANT. LIKE WATER TO A FISH. A FISH DOES NOT KNOW THAT WATER EXISTS UNTIL IT JUMPS OUT OF IT. - Unknown ”

Newcomers to Canada bring an effective set of interpersonal and language skills that have enabled them to navigate in their cultures successfully.

Cultural characteristics are observable tendencies, not stereotypes. Personality, generation, language skills and context need to be taken into account in order to avoid assumptions and suspend impulsive judgments.

A Spartacus Group survey in 2003 discovered that 61% of surveyed employees observed cross-cultural conflict at work.

28% lost time avoiding the issues	53% lost time worrying about the issues
10% spent less time at work	12% changed companies
22% stated they were not as hardworking as before	37% stated their commitment to the organization was impacted

The world is a global village; however, every culture interprets actions and gestures in different ways. This difference in interpretation can cause frustration in understanding each other. Take, for example, a gesture as simple as a smile. Every culture will interpret that smile in an equally valid, yet contradictory way. For example:

### A smile in mainstream Japan is

- More in a person's eyes than mouth
- Can reveal embarrassment, anger, sadness, confusion, or happiness

### A smile in North America

- Carries historic connotations from the pioneer frontier as a way to say "I am a friend; I am not a threat."

### A smile in Korea

- A Korean proverb says "He who smiles a lot is not a real man."

### A smile in Thailand

- Known as the Land of Smiles – Thais are adept at performing at least 13 situational-specific smiles,

each with a different name. they can perform all 13 with perfect accuracy and are aware of the inherent message behind each smile:

- The *I am so happy I could cry* smile
- The polite smile *of a stranger*
- The *I win* smile
- The *I have high regard for you* smile
- The *sad* smile
- The *don't cry over spilt milk* smile
- The *I disagree* smile
- The *I told you so* smile
- The smile *in the face of all odds*
- The *dry* smile
- The smile that *hides evil*
- The stiff smile for *this joke is not funny*

Intercultural communication is a key component to the success of your English in the Workplace (EWP) program. Understanding the variety of communication styles will benefit not only your learners, but you as well.



## Why teach idioms?

An idiom is a group of words which, when used together, has a different meaning from the one which the individual words have. E.g. “How do you know about John’s illness?” “Oh, I heard it *through the grapevine*.”

Many languages use idioms to express ideas that others speaking the same language will understand. At the worksite we use idioms all the time. How many times have you had someone say to you “Give me a ballpark figure,” or “Be on the ball?” How confusing for a second language learner to interpret! First – how universal is the sport of baseball (ballpark), and why would anyone want to be standing on a ball? Thus, the importance of teaching idioms.

Modules Two through Ten will allow you to teach idioms to your class. Every module gives suggestions; however, it is important to use idioms that the employees will hear every day at their workplace. Listen to the shift supervisors or their colleagues and derive a list suitable for the classroom.

You may find that many of the idioms are sports related. “Ballpark figure” was mentioned before, but how about

“bottom of the ninth,” “step up to the plate,” “on the fly,” or “raise the roof?”

Selected idioms have been illustrated and included on the learner handout pages. Use the idiom drawings to reinforce the idea that is expressed. The idiom drawings can also be used for conversation starters, safety talks, vocabulary, and other useful classroom activities.

Idiom illustrations have been created for:

1. An accident waiting to happen (p.127, Training Manual)
2. Race against the clock (p.128, Training Manual)
3. Time is money (p.129, Training Manual)
4. Fuel to the fire (p.130, Training Manual)
5. Play safe (p.131, Training Manual)
6. Out on a limb (p.132, Training Manual)
7. Pick up the pace (p.133, Training Manual)
8. Rushed off our feet (p.134, Training Manual)
9. Playing with fire (p.135, Training Manual)

## Why teach conversation "how-to" techniques?

In every culture there is an appropriate way to start a conversation. This is learned from an early age and has proven to be successful for every learner in your class... at least in their own countries.

Learning the appropriate time to ask a question, make a demand, or give an opinion is essential for success. But what is appropriate in one country may be very different from all other countries. For example, let's say that in China a worker is given orders to complete a task. Immediately the worker realizes that the instructions given to him will not work. Instead of telling his boss this, he will remain silent because of the belief that the boss is the expert. One does not disagree with the boss, even though one may know better.

Here in Canada we know that this behaviour would be unacceptable. It is generally expected that an employee voice his/her disagreement, or at the very least, seek clarification as to why the task is to be done a certain way. If the task is serious, and the worker does not speak up, there may be serious consequences and the employee may even be fired.

There are nine conversation management techniques that can be taught in the Common Ground course. The conversation how-tos include:

1. How to correctly interrupt a conversation
2. How to make a request
3. How to clarify instructions or directions
4. How to make an apology or excuse
5. How to make a suggestion
6. How to ask for and give an opinion
7. How to agree or disagree
8. How to complain
9. How to handle conflict

All activities pertaining to conversation management techniques include role plays. Role plays are scenarios given to students which they must act out. Because one partner does not know in advance what the other partner is going to say, this technique comes closest to natural conversation.

- The learners may work in pairs in practicing the scenarios. The facilitator circulates, listens to the conversation and provides assistance if necessary.
- The role plays can be taped and transcribed on a whiteboard. Vocabulary and appropriate idiom usage may be discussed as well as the clarity of speech.
- The class may be divided into groups of three in which two participants have a conversation while the third group member writes down what he/she hears.





## Adapting the material to different CLB levels

In your class, it is very possible you will have a wide range of CLB levels to instruct – and this is a challenge. Although this curriculum has been written at a CLB 4 level, there are ways to adapt the weekly plans for lower levels (CLB 2 or 3) or slightly higher levels (CLB 5 or 6).

1. **Increase or decrease the amount of work.**
2. **Change the CLB outcomes.**

Refer to the CLB 2000 or ESL Resource Package for Alberta Communities (ERPAC) to find the competency outcomes for lower or higher levels. Teach to the tasks identified for those levels.

### To adjust your lesson to a lower CLB level:

- break down the language structure into smaller chunks
- practice individual words
- use repetition
- ask learners to write the structures on paper or the board
- give learners opportunities to manipulate the structure by changing one word
- practice smaller chunks of language in pairs
- teach structures they will use in the real world

3. **Adjust the language functions.**

For CLB 2, choose one function to teach:

- point and gesture to teach it
- write the phrases
- read the phrases

- practice saying the phrases
- Use fewer phrases for each function at a lower CLB level. Have learners practice them until they become automatic.
- For higher levels, make the phrases or dialogues more complex. Have the learners practice them and introduce some unpredictable responses.

### Language functions taught in Common Ground include:

- interrupting a conversation
- asking for and giving an opinion
- agreeing or disagreeing
- clarifying instructions or directions
- making an apology or excuse
- handling conflict
- making requests
- complaining appropriately

4. **Modify the vocabulary.**

### For CLB 2, limit the number of new vocabulary items to eight.

- Introduce words in context.
- Use the illustrations to practice other areas of language that learners are familiar with such as counting, colours, etc.
- Make personal connections. Point to things in the illustrations that are the same or different from learners' experiences.
- Use lots of pictures, drawings and authentic materials to explain or clarify.
- Use authentic (actual) materials or visuals with words.
- Give antonyms or synonyms.

**Self Reflection: Where are my learners at with their literacy level?**

**What will I need to do to adapt the material to different literacy levels?**

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## How can employees at a lower CLB level practice their English?

### Speaking Activities

- Meet a workmate at least once a week to practice what was learned.
- Record voice and listen to the speech.
- Read directions on how to get to a specific location and practice saying them aloud.
- Read out loud. Remember punctuation and stop longer at periods.
- Talk to people when shopping. Practice first in class and then speak to the sales clerk or the secretary.
- Volunteer at a school and speak to fellow parents in the child's classroom.
- Invite a neighbour who does not speak the native language for coffee or tea and speak only in English.
- At home, set aside at least 10 minutes a day to speak only in English.

### Listening Activities

- Watch television in English. The news, weather channel or soap operas often use closed captions.
- Listen to English radio, especially if travelling to work by car. Sing the song by looking up the words on the internet.

- Use the internet sites given by the teacher.
- Call government offices and local business after regular hours and listen to their taped messages.
- Listen to people who are speaking in English.

### Reading and Vocabulary Activities

- Have an English friend label everyday items in the household.
- Look at a picture and then read the article in the newspaper.
- Write down new words and phrases, and practice.
- Read a book to children and talk about the pictures in the book.
- Go around and try to name everything in English. Look up the words you do not know.
- Go to the library and borrow a bilingual book.
- Read daily.
- Read flyers.

### Writing Activities

- Write emails to people in English.
- Write the grocery list in English.
- Write sentences using labeled items.
- Write sentences about favourite photographs.
- Each day, write down at least three things that happened that day.

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### Self Reflection: What suggested activities are the employees using in their free time?

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# INDEPENDENT LEARNING

## *How can learners develop their vocabulary independently?*

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Everyone has a different learning style. Learners may be auditory, kinesthetic, visual or tactile learners. Here are some memory tricks that cater to different learning styles. Encourage your learners to try them all and see what works for them.

### **Vocabulary Techniques**

1. Students say the word and the definition over and over to themselves. (auditory)
2. Students write the word in the air or with their fingers on the back of their paper/book. (kinesthetic)
3. Students write the word several times on a scrap of paper and think of the definition each time they write it. (visual)
4. Students record their voice reading words and definitions onto a tape, then play the tape back to themselves. (auditory)
5. Students cover the definitions and see if they can think of the word.
6. Students cover the word and see if they can think of the definition.
7. Students will find a friend to quiz them on the words. (auditory)
8. Students write each word on one side of a card and the definition on the other. Then they review the vocabulary using their flash card. (visual)
9. Ask the students to go for a walk or ride the bus. Each time they reach a new landmark, have them memorize a word. Later, they can imagine the walk or the bus ride and see if they can remember which word they remembered in each place. (kinesthetic/spatial)
10. Students put papers with words and definitions in places they will easily see (kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom). Students read the paper each time they go that place. (visual/spatial)
11. Students imagine a picture of the thing described by the word. Then, in their minds, they try putting the letters belonging to that word on top of the image. (visual)
12. Students think of a story from their life about each of the words.
13. Students ask a study partner if he or she has any experience with a word or the thing the word means.
14. Students imagine a conversation they might have in which they would say these words.
15. Students leave messages for themselves on their answering machines, saying the words and definitions. (auditory)
16. Using word families – e.g. photograph, photography, photographer, photographic.
17. Come up with your own creative ideas. For example, can they text themselves words? What else can they do to remember words?









