



Understanding Workplace Tasks

Workbook

Newcomers and the Workplace Video Series (CLB 3–5)

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[youtube.com/watch?v=UIAM4Q3HaLM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIAM4Q3HaLM)

In this workbook you will learn how to:

- Ask for clarification on workplace tasks
- Paraphrase what others say to make sure you understand
- Recognize workplace tasks that need extra training
- Use communication strategies to understand others who speak English with an accent

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Vocabulary



Task 1

Read the word and the definition. Write a sentence using the new word.

Word	Definition	Sentence
Understand	You know what something means.	
Rotate the stock	Put older products at the front and new products behind them.	
Instructions	What your supervisor says or writes that tells you what to do.	
Confused	What you feel when you don't understand.	
Figure out	Solve a problem or find an answer.	
Get rid of	Throw away.	
Example	Someone shows you how to do something and you can copy what they say or do.	
Expired	When a food is not good or fresh anymore. Nobody can eat it.	
Expression	A phrase that many people use.	
Natural	When you sound “natural,” you sound like an English speaker.	

Communication



Task 2

Watch the video. Answer the questions.

1. Why didn't Jin-Soo understand Glen's instructions?

2. List the communication strategies in this video. There are two listening strategies and one speaking strategy.

3. List the four questions that Jin-Soo asked in this video.

4. To make sure he understood Glen's instructions, Jin-Soo repeated them back. What did Jin-Soo say to make sure he understood the instructions?

5. What new expression did Jin-Soo learn from Glen?

Communication tip

Jin-Soo needs help understanding

Jin-Soo has spent many of his first days at work listening to different people explaining the job to him. Sometimes he does not understand everything they say. In Canadian work culture, the boss assumes that if there is a problem understanding, the employee will ask about it.

Jin-Soo's supervisor said, "It didn't go so well when guys who worked for me were from other countries. I told them something, they said, 'yes, yes, yes' but then they didn't follow my instructions. They thought that if they asked questions they might get fired, but the truth is that because they didn't ask questions, they could have been fired."

Expressions you can use when you don't understand

There are different ways to let someone know that you don't understand and need the information repeated.

- Excuse me?
- Sorry, but I don't quite understand.
- I'm not quite sure I know what you mean.
- I'm not quite sure I follow you.
- I don't quite see what you mean.
- I'm not sure I got your point.
- Sorry, I didn't quite hear what you said.
- I don't quite see what you're getting at.

Vocabulary

Quite

Something we say when we almost understand but just need a little bit of help.

Clarify

Explain something again so it is clearer.

Vocabulary

In Canadian English, it is common to use words and phrases called softeners or hedges.

These words and phrases make our questions more polite. Some examples are:

I'm sorry, but...

Could you please...

I'm wondering if you could...

I'm not quite sure...

Without these words and phrases, your questions might sound rude to a Canadian.

Asking for clarification

Use these phrases to ask for clarification. There are a few different ways we can ask someone to clarify what they said.

To ask about a word you don't understand:

- What do you mean by... ?
- Could you explain what you mean by... ?

To ask someone to repeat what they said:

- Could you say that again, please?
- Could you repeat that please?

To ask someone to use different words:

- Could you say that in a different way, please?
- Could you rephrase that, please?

Repeating instructions

It is a good idea to repeat instructions to make sure you understand them. You can do this by adding one of these phrases to the beginning of your sentence:

- So, you want me to...
- Let me make sure I understand. I should...
- Okay. I should...

Then, you can repeat the instructions your co-worker or manager gave you. After you repeat the instructions, you can add a question to check that what you repeated was correct:

- Is that right?
- Right?



Task 3

Read another conversation between Glen and Jin-Soo.

Circle the words or phrases that Jin-Soo uses to show he does not understand.

Draw a box around the words or phrases that Jin-Soo uses to ask for clarification.

Underline the phrases Jin-Soo uses to repeat instructions and make sure he understands.

Glen: I need to explain how to rotate the stock. We always want to make sure that all of the product is sorted by date, so that the oldest products get taken first. To do this, make sure that the new product sits deepest on the shelves so customers grab the old product first.

Jin-Soo: Sorry, but I don't quite understand. Can you speak more slowly?

Glen: Yes, sorry about that. I'll make it simpler. Double check that the oldest product is at the front of the shelf.

Jin-Soo: So, the old product is close to the customers, right?

Glen: Exactly! That way we get rid of the old product first.

Jin-Soo: Got it.

Glen: Okay, so make sure you sort the product by date, and then organize them that way on the shelf.

Jin-Soo: Can you explain what you mean by sort?

Glen: Sure. Sort means put them in the correct order. Newest to oldest.

Jin-Soo: Okay, let me make sure I understand. I put the newest product on the shelf first because it is closest to the back. Is that right?

Glen: That's right!

Workplace culture

In this video, Jin-Soo learned how to do workplace tasks by watching his co-worker. In Canada, it is common to learn “on the job.” This means that you will learn how to do your job while you work.

You will watch your co-workers and manager do tasks and then try them yourself. You can ask questions and learn from your co-workers’ experience.

There are some tasks you can’t learn “on the job.” Some hazardous tasks need extra training for workers to do them safely. Always check with your manager before you do a new task to make sure it is safe.



Task 4

Look at the pictures of workplace tasks.

Circle the tasks that you need extra training to do safely.



Communication tip

If you need training on how to do a workplace task, you can use one of these phrases:

I’m sorry, but I have not done this task before. I need training to do it safely.

Can I get trained on how to... ?

I don’t know how to do this task. Can someone train me?

Reflection

In your home country, is it common to “learn on the job”?

YES NO

In your home country, how do workers get trained to do hazardous work?

Diversity and inclusion

In the Canadian workplace, you will work with people from many places in the world. That means your manager or co-workers might speak English with a different accent than you.

When you start working with someone who has a different accent than you, it might be difficult to understand them. Do not get angry or frustrated. Do not focus on their accent. Focus on practicing good communication strategies like Jin-Soo did in the video. You will become a better listener and a better communicator.

Read another conversation between Glen and Jin-Soo.

Vocabulary

Accent

How someone sounds when they speak. People who have different first languages have different accents.

Focus

Think about something a lot.

Frustrated

Upset because something is not working.

Jin-Soo: Hi Glen. How was your shift?

Glen: It was fine. How was yours?

Jin-Soo: Not very good. I cleaned out the freezer with Pradeep. It is difficult to work with him because I can't understand his accent! He really needs to improve his English skills.

Glen: I'm sorry Jin-Soo, but you will work with many people from around the world here. Lots of our co-workers have different accents. You and I have them too!

Jin-Soo: I know.

Glen: Maybe you can use this situation to practice your communication skills. What can you do when you don't understand something Pradeep says?

Jin-Soo: I always ask him to repeat things when I don't understand. But even when he says them again, I can't understand him!

Glen: Have you ever asked him to speak more slowly? You ask me that sometimes when I speak too quickly.

Jin-Soo: No, I haven't. He does speak pretty quickly.

Glen: Maybe you should try that. You can also repeat what you think he said back to him to make sure you understand.

Jin-Soo: Good idea. I forgot to do that when I get frustrated.

Glen: It's a good idea to use challenges at work to improve your skills. Instead of getting frustrated, think about what strategies you can use to solve the problem.

Jin-Soo: Thanks, Glen. You give good advice.

Glen: No problem.



Task 4

Glen gave Jin-Soo strategies to help him understand his co-worker.

Read each scenario. Look at the phrases in the communication tip. Write a phrase that Jin-Soo can say to make sure he understands Pradeep.

Jin-Soo and Pradeep are cleaning the floor together. Pradeep asks Jin-Soo a question. He speaks very quickly. Jin-Soo does not understand what he says.

Pradeep is helping Jin-Soo learn how to use the floor polisher. Jin-Soo thinks that Pradeep said “you need to make sure this switch is off before you plug it in,” but he isn’t sure.

Pradeep is showing Jin-Soo how to clean the meat slicing machine. Pradeep says, “You always need to kill the switch and wait until the blade stops moving before you start cleaning.” Jin-Soo does not understand the phrase “kill the switch.”

Reflection

Is it difficult for you to understand people who speak English with a different accent than you?

YES NO

Which strategy from this workbook will you practice to help you understand others?

In this workbook you learned how to:

- Ask for clarification on workplace tasks
- Paraphrase what others say to make sure you understand
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Transcript

Jin-Soo has been working at his new job for three weeks. He has learned a lot and his supervisor is happy with his work. Jin-Soo asks a lot of questions, but sometimes he doesn't understand everything people say.

Today, Jin-Soo was helping Glen stock the meats in the store. Glen was telling Jin-Soo what to do, but he spoke too quickly. Jin-Soo didn't understand everything.

"We need to rotate the stock. Check the expiry date. If any of the meat is expired, we need to get rid of it."

Jin-Soo didn't understand Glen's instructions. He feels confused.

"I don't understand 'rotate the stock' or 'expiry date'. How will I figure out what to do?"

Jin-Soo needs to ask questions to get the information he needs. This is a strategy to get the same information in a different way. Jin-Soo asks Glen to say his instructions again and to speak slower.

"Could you explain what you mean by 'rotate the stock'? Can you please say it slowly?"

"Oh sure. When you stock the shelf, older products go at the front and new products go behind them."

Jin-Soo understands more now, but still needs a bit more information. He will need to ask another question.

"Could you show me an example of an expiry date?"

Glen shows Jin-Soo the small sticker on the package that shows the expiry date.

"After the date on the sticker, we can't sell the food. See?"

Jin-Soo uses another strategy to make sure that he understood. He repeats the instructions back to Glen in his own words. If he is wrong, Glen will explain it again. If he is right, he can start the task.

"So... I need to read the expiry date on every package and put the older ones in the front?"

"You've got it. Don't forget, we also need to get rid of the expired ones."

Jin-Soo is feeling better, but he still didn't understand what Glen meant by 'get rid of it'. He decides to watch as Glen gets started rotating the meat. He sees that Glen throws the expired meat in the garbage. Now he understands and has learned a new expression too.

When you learn a new expression, it's a good idea to start using it. Using new expressions correctly is a strategy to make your English sound more natural.

"This one expires tomorrow. Should I get rid of it?"

"We won't check them again until Friday so yeah, we should throw that one out too. Good question!"

Use questions to get information explained in a different way. Repeat the



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