



Royal Academy
of Engineering



Creating Inclusive Cultures

Language and banter

Team workshop series – Facilitator guide

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Getting ready to run your session

- Welcome to this inclusive team workshop and thank you for using this resource to help support teams to be more inclusive and therefore more productive.
- At the end of each part of the session, summarise what has been discussed (in a timely manner) so that you can move on to the next section.
- This guide is designed to help you run this 60-minute session. All of the materials you will need can be found on the [Academy website](#).
- Take your group through the resources and use this step-by-step guide to lead you through the session.
- Your role is to facilitate and encourage conversation – you do not have to be an expert on diversity and inclusion to run a successful session.

- ✓ You will need blue tac/tape, pens and a flip chart.
- ✓ You will be playing a video so ensure you have a suitable electronic device and speakers.
- ✓ Think about how you can make the content relevant to your audience.
- ✓ Think about the questions you're likely to be asked and what your answers will be.
- ✓ Consider the group size – ideally 10 to 12 people will work best - for a larger group, you will probably need to allow for more time so that all attendees can contribute.
- ✓ Think about the accessibility of the session and send out an email to all attendees to confirm if they have any specific requirements.
- ✓ Notify attendees that as the session covers language and banter, it will contain references to words that some people may find offensive. Ensure that individuals know that they should contact you as the facilitator if they have any particular concerns.

Advanced preparation

- ✓ Schedule time to prepare your session.
- ✓ Read the introduction and this guide and ensure that you are confident in how to run an inclusive session.
- ✓ Familiarise yourself with these facilitator notes and the slides so you know what to expect.
 - The notes provide both actions (indicated by a tick) and statements (indicated by a bullet).
- ✓ Make sure you download all of the content from the Academy website:
 - [facilitator notes and powerpoint](#)
 - three posters of team characters
 - the Academy [survey link](#) (and any organisational feedback forms).

On the day

- ✓ Set up the training space.
- ✓ Ensure screen and sound for video are working and all other equipment is in place.
- ✓ Encourage everyone to get involved, take part and ask questions.
- ✓ Recognise that there will be different learning styles – for example, some may need time to reflect on what is being discussed, and so may not immediately comment. Others may be very vocal and you may need to encourage them to let others in the group speak.

The structure of the session

Section	Purpose	Timings
1. Introduction	Safety message and ground rules Introduce what the session will cover	5 minutes
2. The video	Set the scene and illustrate the impact of language	5 minutes
3. Words	To begin to look at the impact of specific words and phrases	5 minutes
4. Meet the team	Understanding the reaction of others	5 minutes
5. Reactions of the three characters	To consider the impact on others	5 minutes
6. Your reactions	To discuss personal reactions	8 minutes
7. Words and locations	To consider the relevance of location	5 minutes
8. Protected characteristics	To introduce the protected characteristics	2 minutes
9. Banter	To discuss banter – the pros and cons	5 minutes
10. Challenge	To consider when and how to challenge effectively	5 minutes
11. Summary	To briefly capture what has been discussed	5 minutes
12. Thank you and feedback	To get feedback on the session	5 minutes
Optional extra - review in a month	To give the attendees time to reflect on what they have learned	15 minutes



1. Introduction

- **Timings:** five minutes.
- **Purpose:** to set the scene.
- **Prepare:** no additional resources required.

Do

- ✓ Welcome everyone and give a short health and safety message.
- ✓ Explain the purpose of the session.
- ✓ Facilitate ground rules.
- ✓ Explain that the session is very interactive.

Say

- Hello and welcome. My name and role is...
- The purpose of this session is to explore the impact of language as a team.
- This session is important to me because sometimes we can be unaware of the impact of what we say and I would like us to be an inclusive team where our language makes everyone feels welcome.
- You have been invited to attend because as a team it's useful for us to discuss together the impact of language on each other and, as an organisation, it's important that we ensure we comply with our obligations under equality law.
- Please feel free to ask questions and make comments as we go through and we'll discuss as a group.
- As a group lets agree our ground rules for this session.
- ✓ Capture the ground rules on a flip chart and keep visible for the session. These could include be honest, be open, be authentic, be participative. It could be a safe space for conversation around language.
- We recognise that during this session we may at times be clumsy but not intend to offend. If the conversation starts to go down the wrong path, as the facilitator, I will bring us back on track. Please speak up if you are struggling with any of the content.
- A warning that, for illustrative learning purposes, the workshop content may include references to words you find offensive. If you become uncomfortable at any time, you should have a quiet word with me and we will address this.
- To start, let's watch a short video.

2. The video

- **Timings:** five minutes.
- **Purpose:** to set the scene and illustrate the impact of language.
- **Prepare:** video [Run like a girl](#).

Do

- ✓ Play the video – [Run like a girl](#) (3:18).

Say

- ✓ During this session we are going to look at how we talk, and the impact it can have on others.
- ✓ I have used this video to illustrate how some language that we take for granted can have a significantly negative impact.

Ask

- ✓ Have you seen it before?
- ✓ What did you think?

Note: you do not need a long conversation here – this is just for illustration and the rest of the session will allow attendees to discuss further.



3. Words

- **Timings:** five minutes.
- **Purpose:** to begin to look at the impact of specific words and phrases.
- **Prepare:** paper and pens.

Do

- ✓ Have paper and pens available.

Say

- Today we are going to be talking about the impact of our language.
- We may think we know which words are really offensive and so should be avoided. However, sometimes words and phrases are so commonly used that we don't immediately think of their negative impact. We're particularly keen to think about those situations in this session.
- Later in this workshop we are also going to specifically consider banter. In itself there is nothing wrong with banter. Banter can be work colleagues having fun but it should not be at the cost of the dignity of a particular

colleague or group of people – for example racist, homophobic or sexist language. Banter can often inadvertently result in the exclusion, alienation or upset of a member of the team.

- First we are going to undertake a short group exercise.
- The aim is for us as a group to think about how words affect colleagues. We should consider the words themselves and the intent behind them (was it clumsy or ill-informed – or was it malicious and meant to belittle?).
- Please take a minute and write down one or two words (with the paper and pens provided), that you have heard in our workplace that you may think will negatively affect others.
- I am not looking for really obvious and offensive words – instead, let's think about the video we have just watched – I would like you to consider that type of language.
- When you have written your words, please put them on the table so we can all see them.

Action

After one minute state:

- I'm now going to introduce you to some colleagues.



4. Meet Bob, Pat and Tyrone

- **Timings:** five minutes.
- **Purpose:** to consider the impact on others.
- **Prepare:** posters (and blue tac or tape).

Do

- ✓ Stick the three posters up on a wall (using picture side).
- ✓ Make sure that everyone gets involved.

Say

- Please meet Bob, Pat and Tyrone – three colleagues at work.
 - **Bob:** 55-year-old man, married, was in merchant navy.
 - **Pat:** 36-year-old woman, works part-time.
 - **Tyrone:** 20-year-old man, graduate, openly gay.
- When we think about the impact of language it is helpful for us to consider how it might affect those around us at work.
- Consider the words we have just written as a group. Identify those you believe might have a negative impact on Bob, Pat and Tyrone. Pick two or three and stick them by the posters.

Action:

Allow two to three minutes to complete the task.

- Do you all agree with the words selected?
- This illustrates we may all have different views because of who we are, our backgrounds, our assumptions and our biases.

5. Reactions of the three characters

- **Timings:** five minutes.
- **Purpose:** to explore what you think reactions might be.
- **Prepare:** second part of each of the persona posters.

Do

- ✓ Stick the second sheet of each persona poster next to the first sheet.
- ✓ Make sure that everyone gets involved.

Note: the purpose of using 'personas' is that sometimes it's easier for people to talk about others, before they talk about themselves (which is the next section).

Say

- Please look at the reaction – when you see what had a negative impact on Bob, Pat and Tyrone, is it what you expected?
- What do you think drives their reactions? (for example – age, background, experience, unconscious biases?)
- What do you think of the additional information about Bob, Pat and Tyrone?
- This activity reminds us not to assume what might or might not offend people.
- We don't always know everything about the people with whom we work.
- It could be that we say something that we wish we had not said (for example shared a homophobic joke) now we know the person (for example, their son is gay). However, should we have said it at all?
- Usually, if it's something we wish we had not said when we know something more about the person we said it to, then it was something we should not have been saying in the professional environment at all.

6. Your reactions

- **Timings:** eight minutes.
- **Purpose:** to discuss personal reactions.
- **Prepare:** cards.

Do

- ✓ Facilitate the exercise using set of cards with words and phrases.
- ✓ Make sure that everyone gets involved.

Say

- We now have five minutes to explore our own reactions to the words we have written.
- As a group, please can you put the words in a line, from on the left 'doesn't bother me' to 'I would rather not hear it' on the right.
- If there are other **words** that you hear in this workplace – please add them to the paper.
- ✓ Give the group five minutes to map out the words, then ask the following question:
- How easy was that to agree to?

The following four questions are optional to help the conversation – you may not need them all.

- What words do you hear in our workplace?
- Is there a word here that you don't mind but offends someone else here in the room? Did you know that would bother them?
- Have **you** used these words or phrases?
- How important is **intent**? Is it how it is said, not just what is said?
- This exercise illustrates that we all may react differently and you may not realise how your colleagues feel.
- While we may feel it is more morally reprehensible for someone to intentionally offend someone else, from a legal perspective, for example when thinking about bullying and harassment, intent is not relevant, rather the focus is on the impact of what was said on individuals who heard it. Our language matters and so it is important to be thoughtful. Now that you know – what will you do differently?

7. Words and locations

- **Timings:** five minutes.
- **Purpose:** to consider the relevance of location.
- **Prepare:** no additional resources required.

Do

- ✓ Make sure that everyone gets involved.

Say

- We are now going to discuss context – I want you to think about the language we use/you hear in some different locations where you could be spending time with work colleagues.
- 1. Pub (at a leaving do).
- 2. Work meeting.
- 3. Shop floor.
- 4. Office.
- What are your thoughts on using the same words but in different locations? For example, can you get away with different language in the pub?
- **Would different locations have different rules?**
- ✓ Facilitate the discussion for about three minutes.
- While banter is likely to be used more at a work-related social event such as leaving drinks at the pub, than in the office, you are still required to be careful in the language you use. General rule: if it would not be acceptable language in the workplace, you should not say it among colleagues in the pub either. Any work-related activity, including social events, must be inclusive, regardless of its location.
- What's more, a company has legal obligations if a person is harassed at work. This extends to events that take place outside the office. It is not unheard of for people to be disciplined due to their behaviour at work social events. This is not about telling people not to have fun. It is about reminding people that they are not in their own private setting, but still represent the company in all these locations and that we all deserve to be treated with respect by work colleagues, wherever we are.

8. Protected characteristics

- **Timings:** two minutes.
- **Purpose:** to introduce attendees to the protected characteristics.
- **Prepare:** link to additional information.

Do

- ✓ Refer the group to additional resources that can be found on the [Equality and Human Rights commission website](#).

Say

- We all need to be mindful that the law protects people from discrimination and harassment in the workplace.
- In the UK, the Equality Act protects people from discrimination on the basis of nine 'protected characteristics':
 - age
 - being married or in a civil partnership
 - being pregnant or on maternity leave
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation.
- Among other things, we are all protected from discrimination or harassment because of, or related to, one of these protected characteristics. Employers have a number of legal duties to prevent discrimination or harassment and put disciplinary measures in place in the work environment. Companies are right to take this seriously because it is the right thing to do, but they can also be sued if they get it wrong.
- However, we should be respectful of the language we use with colleagues **regardless** of whether they are protected by law or not.

9. Banter

- **Timings:** five minutes.
- **Purpose:** to discuss banter – the pros and cons.
- **Prepare:** flip chart.

Do

- ✓ Facilitate a conversation with a flip chart using two columns headed 'positive' and 'negative'.
- ✓ This section is quite brief so you could choose to take longer if you have time.

Say

- **We are going to have a discussion about banter.**
- What is banter? Ask for suggestions.
- Here are two definitions – do you agree?
 - “Conversation that is funny and not serious” (Cambridge Dictionary).
 - “Playful and friendly exchange of teasing remarks” (Oxford English Dictionary).
- It can be used as an excuse – “it’s just banter” – for offensive language or behaviours, which may make some people feel excluded.
- It can also drive and reinforce ‘in group’ (people feeling part of a group).
- **Can you think of some examples of where it could have a positive impact?**
 - For example, in-group, helping people feel included, connected, fun or comfortable.
- **Can you think of some examples of where it could have a negative impact?**
 - For example out-group, making people feel excluded, offended or uncomfortable.
- Why is it not ok to banter in a closed room when others can’t overhear?

Here are some examples:

- At the morning meeting: “oh what a surprise the snowflakes aren’t here yet – too busy eating mashed avocado”.
- “She’s not available for the call at 5pm – what a part timer”.
- “Only a roomful of geeks like us would have completed this amazing project”.
- As you can see banter can be both positive and negative, so we all need to be mindful when and where we banter.

10. Challenge

- **Timings:** five minutes.
- **Purpose:** consider when and how to challenge effectively.
- **Prepare:** flip chart.

Do

- ✓ Facilitate a conversation and capture ideas on a flip chart.

Say

- This section is about how we consider challenging language and banter that is having a negative impact on us or those around us. I think we all know it can be hard to challenge other people so I would like us to have a short conversation about our views as a team.
- As a group, let's consider what we need to do when we **hear** language and banter that is negative.
- Do we need to do anything?
- Do you find challenging people easy or difficult?
- When should we challenge? (For example, early, in a public forum, quietly to one side)
- How would you challenge me? What would you say?
- How would you challenge each other? What would you say?
- Would you feel comfortable challenging another member of this group?

Practical exercise:

- Does anyone have an example where they would have liked to have challenged but didn't?
- Have you observed any situations where colleagues have challenged effectively? Either for themselves or as bystanders or allies?
- As a group, let's come up with some ideas on what could have been said.

To summarise – I think we know that challenging others can be hard, but as a team we have a better awareness of what might have a negative impact. I hope you know you can talk to me if you have a concern.



11. Summary

- **Timings:** two minutes.
- **Purpose:** to summarise content to conclude the session.
- **Prepare:** no additional resources required.

Do

- ✓ Summarise the session.

Say

- During the last hour we have discussed the impact of language.
- We have looked at a range of words.
- We have discussed the effect of these words on others.
- We have talked about banter.
- We have discussed the importance and the challenge of challenging inappropriate language.
- I hope you have found it useful to discuss this as a team and have increase your awareness of how we can create a more inclusive environment if we consider our language.



12. Thank you and feedback

- **Timings:** two minutes.
- **Purpose:** get feedback on the session.
- **Prepare:** feedback survey link.

Do

- ✓ Require participants to complete the [brief online feedback survey](#) for the Academy.
- ✓ Hand out any other feedback form your company wishes to use to receive feedback.
- ✓ Thank them for their participation.
- ✓ Show them where the [other workshops and further information](#) can be found.

Say

- ✓ Thank you all for attending this workshop and being active participants.
- ✓ Did you find it interesting? Thought provoking? I'm going to ask each of you what is your one take away from this session (go round the group).
- ✓ It is really important that you provide feedback to the Academy [and the company if the company requires this] so that we may continue to learn and improve the sessions we run. Please complete the feedback survey [and form] now.
- ✓ There are three other workshops available in this series by the Royal Academy of Engineering:
 - Why is diversity and inclusion important?
 - Ways of working
 - Problem-solving
- ✓ There is also a lot more information on the [Academy's website](#) explaining the research around this topic, such as the [Creating cultures where all engineers thrive](#) report.

Note to facilitator. It is very important that the Academy also receives your feedback, [available here](#). Thank you in advance for helping us to continue to improve the resources we provide by giving us your feedback.

Optional extra – review in a month

- **Timings:** 15 minutes.
- **Purpose:** to give the team time to reflect on what they have learned.
- **Prepare:** quotes.

Do

- ✓ Use some inspiring quotes to start the conversation (either this one below or an example from your own organisation).

“To be truly inclusive requires each of us every day to be mindful of how we behave, what we say and how we say it.”

*Mike Haigh, Group Managing Director
Mott MacDonald*

Cover these points

- What is one thing you learned at the session we held last month?
- What have you heard / seen since which you think is relevant?
- Have you challenged others?
- If not, what prevented you from doing so?
- Did you talk about the training?

Contact the Royal Academy of Engineering Diversity and Inclusion team:

✉ diversityteam@raeng.org.uk

📍 www.raeng.org.uk/engdiversity





Royal Academy of Engineering

This workshop was designed and developed by Sam Healy and Elspeth Marsh, in collaboration with other contributors. The Academy is very grateful for their work.

The Royal Academy of Engineering is harnessing the power of engineering to build a sustainable society and an inclusive economy that works for everyone.

In collaboration with our Fellows and partners, we're growing talent and developing skills for the future, driving innovation and building global partnerships, and influencing policy and engaging the public.

Together we're working to tackle the greatest challenges of our age.

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