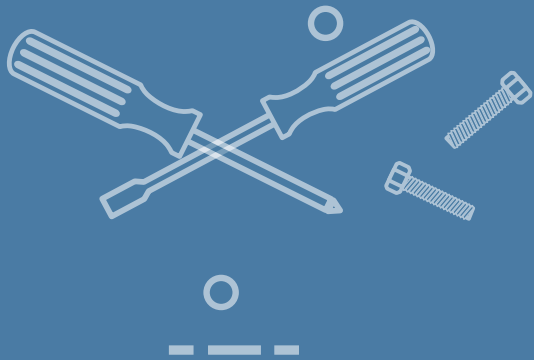


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## Toolbox Talk

### Tips to Successfully Deliver a Toolbox Talk

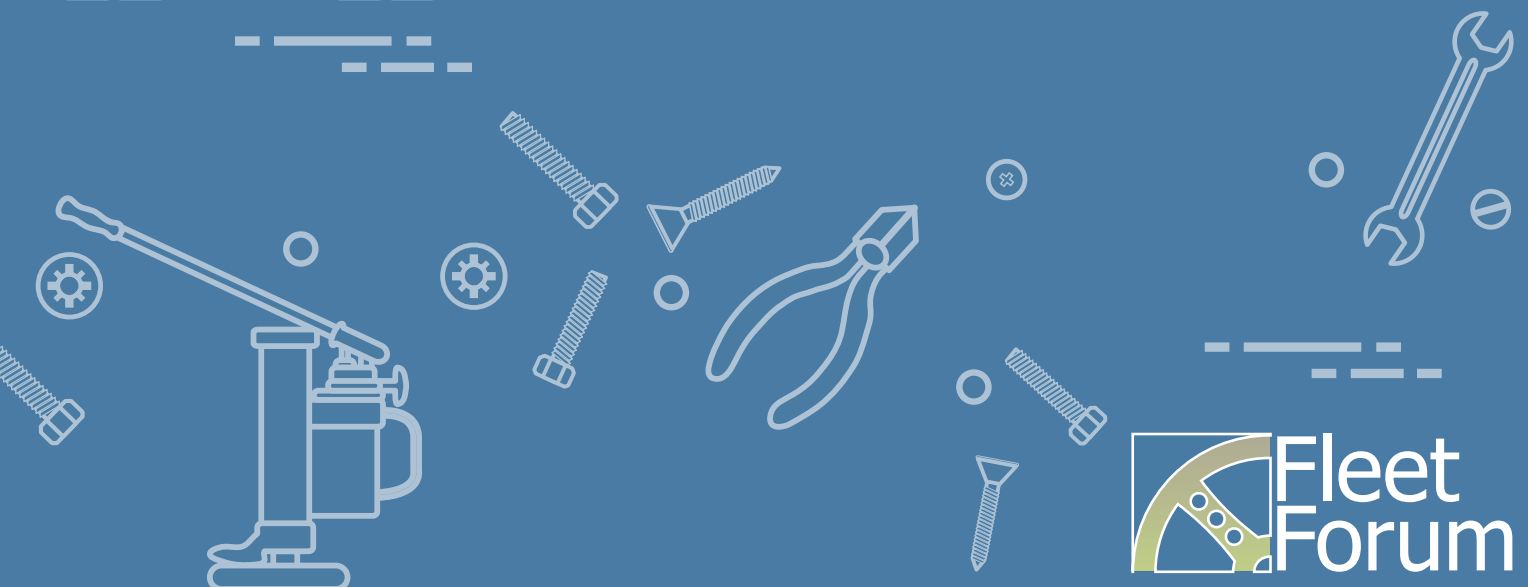


A Toolbox Talk is a short briefing or presentation to staff. This Toolbox Talk is an example of how to successfully deliver a Toolbox Talk on any topic in your organisation.



A Toolbox Talk, or short discussion with staff members, is a great way to:

- ▶ Promote safe working practices
- ▶ Fight complacency
- ▶ Solidify and sustain lessons from training
- ▶ Increase employee engagement
- ▶ Provide opportunities for feedback



## 15 Tips for a Successful Delivery

**Tip 1: Set a goal** Before you start, ask yourself one question: What do you hope to accomplish with the Toolbox Talk? Identify one clear goal. For example, are you trying to ensure compliance, address a recurring issue, or raise awareness? Goal setting has been proven to boost the effectiveness of any activity. In one sentence, you should be able to describe what you want to accomplish.

**Tip 2: Know your audience** Know your audience and how the subject of a Toolbox Talk relates to them. Position the subject to have meaning and benefits to the audience. Try giving them an example that they can relate to in order to help them draw the connection between the topic and their own personal safety.

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### Ask, never assume

Don't assume you know what matters to your employees. Ask them questions directly to find out what motivates them to come to work. Is it to provide for their family, or the satisfaction of a job well done?

Knowing what they care about will help you engage them directly on the subject of road safety.

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**Tip 3: Anticipate problems** Consider how you will deal with potential issues that may arise:

- ▶ What questions will people likely have and how will you answer those questions?
- ▶ What is your plan B if the Toolbox Talk is derailed?
- ▶ Is there a difficult person that could try to circumvent your message during or after the Talk?

Look at your audience as you're delivering the talk. Are they engaged? Pay attention to these cues and adjust your sessions accordingly. Informing staff members that you are open to discussing their questions one-on-one after the session may be enough to allow you continue with your discussion.

**Tip 4: Practice** When it's time to present a Toolbox Talk or other critical communication, a lack of presentation skills can seriously hinder effectiveness and results. Skilled speakers become great through preparation and practice. Try the following:

- ▶ Familiarise yourself with the material ahead of time
- ▶ Practice reading out loud to increase your comfort level and identify any problem areas
- ▶ Record yourself reading to ensure you're speaking in a confident and natural tone
- ▶ Use words that are natural to you so that the Talk doesn't sound dry or clinical
- ▶ Prepare a personal story or anecdote to make the talk authentic and relatable

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## Preparation is key

Research shows that being prepared for a presentation improves the odds of success.

But practice is only one aspect. Setting goals, anticipating issues and planning the session will make your presentation much stronger.

**Tip 5: Engage your audience** Focus on engaging staff members, not on talking at them. An engagement-first approach will boost results. A study from Bucknell University found that active learning, such as discussions, “surpasses traditional lectures for retention of material, motivating students for further study and developing thinking skills.”<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ Make eye contact and avoid reading from your notes
  - ▶ Make it personal by using people’s names
    - ▶ Use site-specific examples
  - ▶ Ask questions of the audience

**Tip 6: Combine statistics with stories** The goal of most Toolbox Talk sessions is to help staff members keep safety in mind throughout the day. Statistics, alone, are rarely compelling enough to do that. See for yourself in the examples below. Which scenario do you think is more memorable? In most cases, Scenario B works better, especially if you ask the group what can be learned from Jerry’s story.

### Scenario A

You tell staff that the data shows that wearing a seatbelt in the front seat of a vehicle reduces the risk of death by 45%, and cuts the risk of serious injury by 50%. You state that, no matter what, staff should follow the rule of wearing seatbelts.

### Scenario B

You tell workers about Jerry, a staff member at another office who always said he was the best driver. One day, he drove the vehicle to a gas station to fill up. He did not wear his seatbelt because he wasn’t driving far. He was in a crash and was injured. Today, Jerry is in a wheelchair.

1) Prince (2004). “Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research” from the Journal of Engineering Education.

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**Tip 7: Be SMART in your message** Use these SMART guidelines to make safety meetings efficient and effective:

<b>S</b> hort	Keep it short and simple
<b>M</b> essage	Stick to a single message
<b>A</b> void	Avoid teaching something new, instead refresh them on something they already know
<b>R</b> einforce	Find different ways of conveying the same message, like telling a personal story and sharing an example specific to your workplace
<b>T</b> akeaway	The message should have a specific takeaway, such as an action to complete

**Tip 8: Involve your audience** Involving staff members in sharing information is a powerful engagement tool. Ask someone to share a story about a crash, near miss or good catch that occurred to them, what hazards others should look out for, and how injury could have been prevented.

This approach will help you achieve three goals:

1. Demonstrate that you care about their opinions and experience.
2. Improve knowledge retention because people learn best when they have to recite information.
3. Build engagement and teamwork through peer-to-peer involvement.

**Tip 9: Include examples from home** To keep your talks from becoming stale, expand the scope to include off-the-job stories. Almost every issue that affects workers is caused by human factors, such as rushing, frustration, fatigue and complacency, which lead to people taking their eyes and mind off of a task. Sharing examples from outside of work help get staff members thinking about safe behaviour in a broader context and that will keep safety top of mind.

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## Motivation Starts at Home

Every adult thinks they're safe enough. But ask them about their family, and in particular their kids, and they will say that there's no such thing as "safe enough".

Staff may participate more in talks if they understand that safety skills can be taught to their kids – once they learn them first.

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**Tip 10: Be Positive** A positive, encouraging approach to a Toolbox Talk will foster stronger safety skills, better awareness, and more engagement with the company's safety culture. There's no easy road to positivity. It starts one interaction at a time. It can be challenging to achieve and maintain a positive attitude in the face of workplace incidents, but the benefits are worth it.

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If you don't look forward to a Toolbox Talk, then nobody else will either. Stay as positive and upbeat as possible, and focus on preventing future injuries rather than scolding workers for past incidents.

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**Tip 11: Cover everything, not just compliance** Talking about rules isn't enough. You also need to deal with why people break them.

When staff members are rushing, frustrated, tired or complacent they're more likely to overlook, forget or ignore an important safety regulation. Even if they follow all the rules, human factors can cause people to take their eyes and mind off task. It's important to address these human state-of-mind issues and how to avoid them.

**Tip 12: Tie it to your safety programme** Your Toolbox Talk sessions are a good opportunity to reinforce every aspect of your safety programme. They can be used to remind workers about elements of safety that aren't always visible or front of mind, or to support ongoing safety initiatives. Above all, make sure the talks share the same message as the rest of your safety training.

**Tip 13: Shake things up** If your Toolbox Talks aren't effective, try different approaches, formats, topics and locations to see what works best. Ask for feedback from staff members to find out what's working and what isn't. Change one factor at a time, such as where you deliver the talks, and keep everything else the same. This will allow you to accurately assess the value of whatever it is that you're testing.

**Tip 14: Invest in Toolbox Talks** When it comes to safety talks, you get what you pay for. Common issues with free toolbox talks include:

- ▶ A one-size approach that doesn't fit your workplace
- ▶ Poor production quality
- ▶ Inaccurate facts and bad advice
- ▶ Too long or too short
- ▶ Lack of storytelling or audience engagement

This means you have two options: Buy them from a reputable source or create your own.

**Tip 15: Create your own** To be effective, follow a few key steps:

- ▶ Pick a topic that your staff may deal with that week.
- ▶ Offer a story about a relevant incident to get things started.
- ▶ Outline what the safety standards are or ask the audience for best practices.
- ▶ Ask the audience how one's state of mind, such as rushing, frustration, fatigue and complacency, could elevate the safety risk.

The goal of your Toolbox Talk is to engage your workers and get them thinking about possible risks. Anything that gets them talking about hazards, human factors and safety practices will achieve that.