

Unit	1057
Title	Describe and Apply Assessment Attributes and Techniques
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# Unit Introduction

By the end of this unit you will be able to demonstrate knowledge of:

- Questioning techniques
- Use of voice to enhance assessment
- Nonverbal attributes
- Situational and environmental awareness

# **Section 1057-1: Verbal Communication**

## **What you will learn in this section**

By the end of this section you will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the following key points:

- 1.1 Questioning techniques
- 1.2 Importance of voice in assessment

# Key Point 1.1: Questioning Techniques

Verbal questioning is an important tool used to assess underpinning knowledge. The strength of questioning lies in the ability to explore application, range, and context. It also allows for the exploration of ethics, values, and attitudes.

One of the most common assessment tools used to assess underpinning knowledge is a competency conversation or technical interview. Unlike a multiple choice written assessment where the responses are given to the candidate, the verbal questioning used in a competency conversation clearly identifies whether the candidate understands the material or concept.

While questioning can be utilized as a stand-alone technique, it is often used in conjunction with other assessment gathering methods. For example, when a practical assessment tool is used, questioning is a valuable means to explore range and context. Often, a candidate who cannot explain something is able to when in front of the 'object' that is under question.

Questioning can also be used as a replacement assessment tool for a candidate with a reading difficulty or a candidate who finds exams stressful. Under any situation, it is important to ask the right question, in the right way, with the right amount of information so that the candidate can understand and respond in a way that helps gather evidence of competence.

Questions can be used for a variety of reasons including:

- Provoking thought
- Gaining attention
- Increasing interest
- Discovering learning gaps
- Enhancing practical experience
- Exploring attitudes, values, and ethics
- Exploring range and context including transferability to other situations

## Characteristics of a good question

A well-thought out question has a number of characteristics that maximize its value. This includes being:

- Clear and concise
- At the right level for the audience (vocabulary, learning level, purpose)
- Related to the learning point or benchmark
- Posed so as not to provide clues to the response

## Level of questioning

There are many types of questions that can be used to draw out information. On written exams, consideration should be given to the purpose of the question and the intended taxonomy level of the question. Taxonomy supports the classification of questions.

In vocational applications in Canada, Bloom's taxonomy is commonly combined into three basic taxonomy levels. The levels are:

1. Recall
2. Procedure or application of knowledge
3. Problem solving or critical thinking

Consolidated Taxonomy Levels	Bloom's Taxonomy Levels
1. Recall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge</li><li>• Comprehension</li></ul>
2. Procedure or application of knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application</li><li>• Analysis</li></ul>
3. Problem solving or critical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Synthesis</li><li>• Evaluation</li></ul>

## Taxonomy and difficulty

Taxonomy levels refer to types of questions and not necessarily how difficult the question is. The cognitive thought process is different with each taxonomy level.

For example, the following two questions are both taxonomy one questions:

1. How many people were on the flight?
2. What were their names?

In both instances, the question is designed to ask the candidate to recall facts. However, the second question is more difficult than the first.

The level of difficulty of a question is a separate consideration in developing questions. Careful attention should be given to the experience and knowledge level of the audience. There is no prescribed number of taxonomy types that should be used.

Certain verbs lend themselves well to different taxonomy levels. For example, 'repair' and 'install' lend themselves to taxonomy two questions. Verbs such as 'diagnose' traditionally lend themselves to taxonomy 3 questions related to problem solving and critical thinking.

Common questioning techniques include the following:

Question Type	Example
Invitation	<b>How</b> did you fall the tree?
Exploration	<b>Who</b> was on your team?
Reflection	<b>What</b> worked well in that situation?
Investigation	<b>What</b> questions were you asked?
Open ended	<b>How</b> did you fix the equipment?
Closed	<b>Can</b> this tool be used to dismantle the bike?



### **REMEMBER!**

Being comfortable with a range of questioning techniques will help you draw the information from the candidate.

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# Key Point 1.2: Importance of Voice

Voice plays an important role in keeping the assessment process fair and ensuring that the candidate is comfortable and at ease during the assessment process. Important factors to consider include the following:

- Tone of voice
- Language
- Clarity

## Tone of voice

The tone of voice used by an Assessor can have a profound effect on the candidate and the assessment process. Assessments are generally stressful on a candidate and an aggressive or gruff tone can unsettle the candidate and affect the outcome of the assessment. A calm, empathic voice will have the effect of enhancing the assessment in a positive way and help keep the assessment about the competence of the candidate. Candidates must feel safe in the assessment environment.



## Language

Along with tone of voice, the language used by the Assessor is important. Assessors should keep language:

- Professional not personal
- At the expected level of the assessment
- Related to the topics being assessed

## Clarity

Assessors must be clear and concise when speaking with a candidate. Every effort must be made to stick to the topic. Clarity is especially important at the beginning of an assessment when roles, expectations, and timelines for the day are explained. A good technique to use is to ask the candidate to repeat back the instructions to ensure that they are received and understood.



### **REMEMBER!**

As an Assessor your tone of voice matters. If you are uptight or stressed it will become evident in the tone of your voice.

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# **Section 1057-2: Non-verbal Communication**

## **What you will learn in this section**

By the end of this section you will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the following key point:

2.1 Non-verbal communication

# Key Point 2.1: Non-verbal Communication

It is commonly understood that approximately 80% of communication is transmitted by non-verbal communication. Assessors need to be aware of their body language and attitude, their effect on the candidate, and the potential effect on the outcome of an assessment. Being approachable and showing empathy and ease are key attributes for an Assessor.

The WorkSafeBC instructional reference guide outlines five things to consider when thinking about body language. They include:

- Facial expressions
- Posture
- Gestures and movement
- Appearance
- Eye contact

## Facial expressions

Facial expressions reflect our thoughts and action. Assessors should take care that their expression does not betray what they are thinking especially when things are not going well. Smiling and a word of encouragement go a long way.

## Posture

Posture also reflects our state of mind. A slouching posture may indicate we are tired or uninterested. When undertaking a field practical, Assessors should stand straight, head held high and shoulders straight.



## Gestures and movement

Gestures and movement can be helpful and a distraction. Some people have difficulty speaking without using their hands for emphasis. Natural gestures are fine, but don't let your gestures become a distraction. People can often have nervous gestures which they do without thinking about it including taking glasses on and off or tapping something incessantly. Refrain from activities such as loud gum chewing which are both annoying and a distraction.

## Appearance

A well-kept appearance indicates good habits and that the Assessor cares and takes pride in what they do. Being clean, tidy, and well-groomed keeps the focus on the task at hand and not on the Assessor. In general, people are more comfortable around those who keep up appearances.

## Eye contact

Eye contact indicates engagement with your audience. Not maintaining eye contact with your audience gives the impression you are nervous, not engaged, or do not know what you are talking about. Don't look in the distance or at someone else. Eye contact is also an indicator of active listening.



### **REMEMBER!**

Non-verbal nervous gestures can give clues to how the assessment is progressing. The candidate can read things into non-verbal gestures that may not be true and cause added stress during the assessment.

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# **Section 1057-3: Situational Awareness**

## **What you will learn in this section**

By the end of this section you will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the following key point:

3.1 Situational awareness

# Key Point 3.1: Situational Awareness

Assessors are required to be aware of themselves, their surroundings, and environment. This includes understanding personal traits and bias that can affect assessment. Assessors must respect personal and professional boundaries and demonstrate flexibility and adaptability in the assessment environment.

## Personal traits and bias

Some bias we are aware of. An example of this is preferring one type of food over another. Other biases are not so obvious. An experienced older Assessor may think that the candidate is too young to be competent and may, without realizing, let this bias cloud the assessment process.

## Common Bias

Wikipedia defines common bias as follows:

### **Confirmation Bias:**

The human tendency to pay selective attention to things that confirm what they believe (following an accident, this can be seen when people look for evidence to support what they think happened), and to ignore or undervalue things that contradict what they believe.

### **Fundamental Attribution Error:**

People have an extremely hard time noticing the influence of context. It feels much more natural to focus on people's personalities to account for their behavior rather than on influencing conditions. An example of this is when someone bumps into you on the sidewalk and you automatically assume he or she is an inconsiderate jerk. It may not even enter your mind that they might have a very legitimate reason for bumping into you, and if you were in their shoes, you probably would have behaved the same way.

### **Hindsight Bias:**

This is also known as the 'knew-it-all-along' effect. When looking back on an event from the past, people tend to believe the event was easier to predict than it really was.

### **Outcome Bias:**

People tend to evaluate a decision or action based on the outcome rather than on what conditions influenced the decision or action. This often leads to judgment of actions and decisions as good or bad, right or wrong, etc.

### **Counterfactual thinking:**

Counterfactual means 'contrary to the facts.' Whenever you invent an alternate outcome, you are thinking counterfactually (This wouldn't have happened if...). Engaging in counterfactual thinking presumes that you can predict the future. People tend to use counterfactual thinking without a thorough understanding of the situation, which all-too-often leads to damaging results

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_cognitive\\_biases](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cognitive_biases)

Being aware of and understanding individual strengths and weaknesses help keep the assessment fair.

## **Personal and professional boundaries**

In an effort to put candidates at ease, personal and professional boundaries can be blurred. When this happens, it becomes difficult to maintain professional boundaries through the remaining assessment. A colorful joke, or remark, can blur the lines between professional and personal and make the assessment uncomfortable. An Assessor should be professional and polite at all times, and make every effort to make the candidate comfortable and at ease, but should keep conversation general, related to experience or the task at hand.







### **Learning Point**

A Trainer has been involved with a candidate from the start of the learning experience and has taken a special interest in helping the learner. It is time for the summative assessment to occur. Should the person who trained them conduct this assessment? Why or why not?

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## **Flexibility and adaptability**

Being rigid or having the attitude 'my way or the highway' undermines a key principle of assessment. Flexibility in the time of assessment, or elements of the assessment based on the situation and candidate, is not only important but also critical to the assessment process.

Flexibility and adaptability do not lower the standard required to demonstrate competence but recognize that things change, people are different, and not everything will be the same every time.



### **REMEMBER!**

Assessors must be aware of their own biases and the things that can take away from an objective, evidence-based decision on competence.

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# Self-Quiz

1. What is a quality of well written multiple choice question?
  - General in nature
  - Related to a benchmark
  - Covers multiple topics
  - Provides subtle clues to correct response
2. What kind of voice should be used when questioning?
  - Calm
  - Business like
  - Passive
  - Firm
3. Why is eye contact important?
  - Demonstrates knowledge of subject
  - Shows you are empathetic
  - Shows you are listening
  - Shows dominance
4. What type of bias makes a person pay selective attention to things they believe?
  - Hindsight bias
  - Outcome bias
  - Counterfactual thinking bias
  - Confirmation bias



Now check your answers on the next page.

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# Self-Quiz Answers

1. What is a quality of well written multiple choice question?

Answer: **Related to a benchmark**

2. What kind of voice should be used when questioning?

Answer: **Calm**

3. Why is eye contact important?

Answer: **Shows you are listening**

4. What is a common bias?

Answer: **Confirmation bias**