I CAN

helps children
communicate

TALK FOR WORK

Developing communication skills for the workplace

Profile Guidance

Contents

About the
Talk for Work Profile

I CAN's *Talk for Work* Profile is a way of profiling student's strengths and difficulties in the communication skills they need in the workplace. The Profile is designed to be used with students in Year 9 (S3 in Scotland) and above.

The Profile is not a formal assessment, and is not standardised against age norms – so it is not a way of making judgements about whether or not a student has a communication difficulty.

The Profile looks at strengths and difficulties in the communication skills that employers have identified as important for a range of jobs. The Profile gives students a score, and includes guidance on how to interpret those scores, as well as practical ideas of how to address areas of concern.

The Profile has two parts:

● **Student Questions:** questions for you (as staff) to ask the student.

● **Staff Views:** questions that you complete from your knowledge of the student.

In addition, the Student Self-Rating Scale has questions that the student completes with your support, if necessary.

See page 4 for a Quick Start Guide to completing the Profile (Student Questions and Staff Views). We recommend you also read the more detailed guidance and the FAQs.

Quick Start Guide: Profile

1. Go to **icancharity.org.uk/talkforwork** and download and print the *Talk for Work* Profile and Profile Resources (Resources 1–8).

....

2. The text in black is instructions for you, as the person working with the student.

....

3. Read the text in ***blue bold italic*** out loud to the student.

....

4. Using the 1 to 5 rating scale, score the student based on their responses.

....

5. Work through all the Student Questions with the student.

....

6. Complete the Staff Views, without the student present. Your responses are based on your and your colleagues' knowledge of the student.

....

7. Transfer the scores from the Student Questions and the Staff Views to the Score Summary.

....

8. Input the scores into the Online Tracker, available at **icancharity.org.uk/talkforwork**

....

9. Download and print reports of the students' scores for your own monitoring.

Completing the Profile

The *Talk for Work* Profile comprises:

- Profile (Student Questions and Staff Views)
- Profile Resources
- Score Summary
- Student Self-Rating Scale
- Student Self-Rating Scale Resources

In addition, the ***Talk for Work*: Practical Activities** booklet builds on the Profile to help your planning, including useful activities, resources and signposting.

These are all available to download from **icancharity.org.uk/talkforwork**

Student Questions

The Student Questions in the Profile are in three sections:

Understanding

This covers students' ability to listen to and understand instructions and words related to the workplace, and how they're able to check when they're confused.

Talking

This explores how well students can explain ideas clearly, and how well they're able to talk in different situations, and to different people.

Interacting with others

This includes essential non-verbal skills, as well as teamwork.

Most of the questions include words that you need to say to the student. It's important to use this wording, as it ensures the Profile is used consistently. Words that you need to say to the student are shown in *blue bold italic*.

Before you work with students, it's a good idea to read through the Profile to familiarise yourself with it. The Student Questions take about 20 minutes to complete – but the first time will take longer as you get to grips with the format and questions.

When completing the Student Questions, remember:

- Give students time to think – try not to rush them.

- You can support students to make the decision, but not make the decision for them.

- There's no right or wrong answer.

- Don't give feedback about their choice once it's made.

- Use encouraging comments: 'You're doing very well', 'Great', etc.

We recommend that you complete a paper version of the Profile with each student and then go to **icancharity.org.uk/talkforwork** and input the scores into our Online Tracker. The Online Tracker will enable you to produce graphs of the scores and download and print reports. A 'How to Guide' about using the Online Tracker is available.

Profile Resources

Some of the Student Questions involve using additional resources. These Resources (Resources 1–8) are available to download at **icancharity.org.uk/talkforwork**

1 This symbol shows that you need a resource to complete the question: in this case **Resource 1**.

Staff Views

The Staff Views questions should be completed by an adult who knows the student well in a range of situations. Ask other members of staff to help form an accurate picture of how the student performs.

Completing the Staff Views should take about 20 minutes for each student, although the first time will probably take longer as you become familiar with the questions.

Scoring the Profile

Both the Student Questions and the Staff Views use a five-point scoring system. Broad guidance for these scores is as follows.

Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Very weak	Weak	OK	Good	Very good

You'll find more specific guidance for scoring after each question, including a descriptor for each score to help you decide.

The descriptor may not be exactly what the student says, but remember, this isn't a standardised assessment – use the descriptors as guidance to help you make a judgement.

In general:

- A score of 4 or 5 indicates that the student has communication skills to manage in the workplace.

- A score of 3 means they still need some help to be able to communicate in the workplace.

- A score of 1 or 2 indicates that they'll struggle to communicate effectively in the workplace.

To support you, some of the Student Questions have additional scoring guidance. At the end of each section, write down the student's total score for that section.

For the Staff Views, score each question using the descriptors as guidance, and write down the total scores at the end of each section.

Non-scoring questions

In each section of the Student Questions there's a 'non-scoring question' in a pale blue box. These questions are optional.

Filling in the student's response will help you to see whether they are developing strategies which help their communication. You can use these comments to guide discussion with the student – see the *Talk for Work*: Practical Activities booklet for guidance to support this.

Green	On track to have good communication skills for the workplace.
Amber	Showing signs that they may struggle with communication in the workplace. Students would benefit from support, discussion or focused activity in school to develop communication skills.
Red	Would have significant difficulty with communication in the workplace. We recommend discussion with the SENCo for further investigation and advice.

Score Summary

After you score the Student Questions and the Staff Views, transfer the total scores to the Score Summary.

Scoring is shown for 13–14 year olds and 15–16 year olds, and colour coded as Red, Amber or Green.

The table above shows what the scores mean for the student.

Compliance rating

At the end of the Student Questions, you're asked to rate how compliant students were when completing the questions. Sometimes students will find questions difficult, and not answer because they have communication difficulties. However, they may not answer because they're just being an adolescent!

If you rate the student as a 1 or 2 on Compliance you can use the alternative scoring guidance based ONLY on the Staff Views. You can also use the Red, Amber or Green guidance (above).

However, treat these scores with caution as they're based on only a few questions, and use the Red, Amber and Green guidance as an indication only.

We strongly recommend that:

● You try again to complete the Student Questions when students are more compliant. This will give a more comprehensive picture of student's strengths and areas of difficulty.

● Results are not considered in isolation. If the rating is Amber or Red, consider the results in conjunction with other measures you may have taken in school, and discuss with the school SENCo.

Note that you can't use the Online Tracker if you only complete the Staff Views.

About the Student Self-Rating Scale

Young people with communication difficulties can struggle to rate their own skills, often rating them more positively. However, their ability to label communication skills and reflect upon them (known as their metalinguistic ability) is very important for their further development.

The **Student Self-Rating Scale** – completed by the student – can be used with the outcomes of the Profile to support the student to reflect on their skills.

There are three ways to complete the Student Self-Rating Scale:

● **Option 1:** for students needing quite a bit of support. This is a visual rating activity completed by you and the student together.

● **Option 2:** for students needing some guidance. The student reads the questions in a booklet and makes choices with your help.

● **Option 3:** for students who don't need help. The student reads the questions in a booklet and makes choices independently.

The **Student Self-Rating Scale Resources** (Resources 9–12) will help you support the student to complete their rating.

For all three options, we recommend that you cut out each question on the Student Self-Rating Scale and create your own booklet. This gives less text on each page and makes it easier for the student to read.

See page 10 for a Quick Start Guide to supporting a student to complete the Student Self-Rating Scale. We recommend you also read the more detailed guidance and the FAQs.

Quick Start Guide: Student Self-Rating Scale

1. Go to **icancharity.org.uk/talkforwork** and download and print the *Talk for Work* **Student Self-Rating Scale** and the **Student Self-Rating Scale Resources** (Resources 9–12).

2. Prepare the **Student Self-Rating Scale** and the **Words card** (Resource 9), **Words and pictures card** (Resource 10) and the **Communication skills cards** (Resource 11).

3. Talk with the student to decide which of the three options to use.

4. Give the student as much support as they need to complete the Student Self-Rating Scale. See **Giving students support** on page 13 for more information on how to do this.

5. Transfer the student's scores to the **Student record** (Resource 12), and make a note of which option the student used.

6. Use the guidance in the *Talk for Work*: **Practical Activities** booklet to discuss the student's rating and their Profile score with them.

7. Make a plan with the student about how they will develop their skills further.

Completing the Student Self-Rating Scale

Use this additional information to help you choose the right option for each student

Option 1: Quite a lot of support

Option 1 is a visual rating scale for students who need quite a bit of support.

Give the student either the **Words card** (Resource 9) or the **Words and pictures card** (Resource 10) and a set of **Communication skills cards** (Resource 11).

You then support the student by reading what's on each Communication skills card, and explaining what it means. The student then chooses where to place the card on the Words card (or Words and pictures card) using the 5-point scale: from 'Very difficult' (1) to 'Very easy' (5).

Once the student has completed the Self-Rating Scale, transfer their scores to the **Student record** (Resource 12).

Option 2: Some support

In Option 2 the self rating scale is cut up and made into a booklet.

The student then takes the lead through the questions and selects the rating they feel best matches their skills in this area.

Once this is complete, transfer the scores to the **Student record** (Resource 12).

Option 3: No support

In Option 3 the self rating scale is cut up and made into a booklet the student then completes the Self Rating Scale independently.

The student works through the questions and selects the rating they feel best matches their skills in this area. They don't really need any support from you, although you may want to just give some very general feedback or encouragement.

Once this is complete, transfer the scores to the **Student record** (Resource 12).

Giving support

When supporting students to use the Student Self-Rating Scale, remember that this is the student's own rating. Although you may not agree with the rating they give, it's the student who makes the decision.

To support the student to make more accurate judgements about their own skills, see **Giving students support** on page 13. This gives some examples of how to prompt and cue the students – some students will need just a little guidance, while others may need quite a lot.

This guidance is for you to refer to, not for the student to use.

Remember these points while supporting students to complete the Student Self-Rating Scale:

● Remind the student to take their time – they often need time to process information.

● Explain to the student why they're completing the Self-Rating Scale.

● In Option 1 students can choose to use either the Words card or the Words and pictures card – it's up to them which one they prefer.

● Give prompts depending on what the student needs, e.g. you may want to model what the student needs to do, or give them a school situation to help them think about their skills in a specific context (examples on page 14-15).

● Try using open comments rather than closed questions, e.g. 'Tell me about this' or 'Tell me what you're thinking'.

● In the Student Self-Rating Scale, the 'OK' option is shaded. We recommend that the student reads this descriptor first, so they can then decide if this option is the best one for them. If it isn't, and they find the skill easier than the 'OK' option (3), they can read the 'Easy' and 'Very easy' options (4 and 5). If they find it harder, they can read the 'Difficult' and 'Very difficult' options (2 and 1).

Giving students support

Here's some guidance on ways you can support students to complete the Student Self-Rating Scale

Prompts

- Don't ask too many questions – use 'Tell me about' instead of 'What?' and 'Why?'
....
- Check that students understand the words and language being used.
....
- Use different ways of cueing: point, show, read, discuss, use the Words card (Resource 9) or Words and pictures card (Resource 10).
....
- Give students time to think – try not to rush.
....
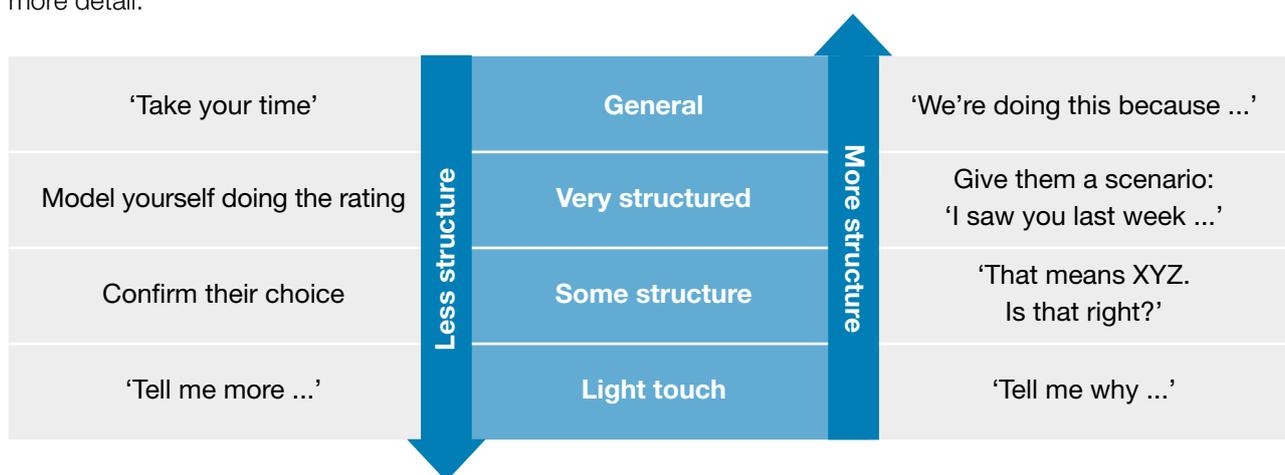- Support them to make the decision, but don't make the decision for them. Use the prompts as they're written.
....

- Make sure students know that there's no right or wrong answer.
....
- After students choose, don't give feedback about whether their choice is right. Use encouraging comments: 'You're doing very well', 'Great', etc.
....

Encourage students to ask questions if they're stuck so that you can support them to decide on their response.

Summary of strategies

Here's a quick summary of ways in which you can support students, while the **Strategies** on pages 14-15 give more detail.

	Less structure		More structure	
'Take your time'		**General**		'We're doing this because ...'
Model yourself doing the rating		**Very structured**		Give them a scenario: 'I saw you last week ...'
Confirm their choice		**Some structure**		'That means XYZ. Is that right?'
'Tell me more ...'		**Light touch**		'Tell me why ...'

Strategies

General prompts

Motivational support: provide incentives and encouragement	*How are you doing with that now?* *This is really going to show me your strengths/how you think/what's going on in your head when you're learning.*
Preview the wider picture	*Remember, we're doing this so that we can fill in your CV of achievement to show to Mrs X.* *Remember, if we do this now, we can do it again after Christmas to see the progress you've made.*
Structure their thinking	*Stop and think about what you do in this situation.* *Take your time.*
Encourage to verbalise	*Tell me what you're thinking right now.* *Tell me what you think this question is asking.* *Tell me what you think your answer might be.*

Very structured: prompts if they can't get going

Model doing the rating on yourself	*Hmm, so if this was for me, I'd be thinking that I like being in a team, but I'm usually quite quiet, so I think I'd choose number 4 ... What are you thinking?*
Model thinking out loud while you do the rating on the student	*I'm thinking of a time in Science class when you were confused about a question. When I encouraged you, you went and asked the teacher what he meant … Now is that a number 2 or a 3 – what d'you think?*

Very structured: more direct prompts to tell students what to do

One by one	Read each of the descriptors and pause after each one to ask: *Does that sound a bit like you?* *What do you think about that?* Read through all the descriptors, pausing after each one.
Sentence starter prompt	*Think about how you'd finish this sentence: 'When I can't understand in Science class I usually …'*
Cue in with a specific situation	*I'm thinking about when you were in Maths class last week, I noticed that you …*
Cue in with a non-specific situation	*So, think about when you're in Science class and you don't understand what the teacher's saying. What would you usually do?* *Tell me how it is when you're talking to someone you don't know.*
A fixed choice	*So is that a number 2 or a 3, d'you think?*

Providing some structure: prompts if they're placing cards randomly

Help the student to sort out their thinking: model a reason	*You're putting it there – that means you find it difficult to listen all the time – is that right?* *Tell me about why you've put it there.* *How is that skill different to another one?*
Check they understand the different descriptors	*You've chosen number 2; that means you* [give example] *– is that right?*

Light touch: prompts to encourage them to just check

Ask a student to elaborate to help them think through responses	*I see you've put that one at a number 2; tell me more about that.*
Ask a student to explain to help them think through responses	*Tell me, why have you put that one there?* *Tell me more about that one.*

Frequently asked questions

1. How has the *Talk for Work* Profile been developed and validated?

We developed the Profile because of the lack of tools for this age group that measure these functional communication skills. The skills covered by the Profile derive from a survey completed by employers where they identified the skills they most valued. More information about the survey is available at **www.ican. org.uk/talkabouttalksecondary**

The Profile is not a standardised assessment; it has, however, been trialled with 66 students across 9 schools.

The scoring is based on evidence available from research, from the I CAN Secondary Poster (see **http://icancharity.org.uk/secondaryposter**) and from Universally Speaking (11–18) (see **http:// icancharity.org.uk/UniversallySpeaking**) as well as professional consensus of experts working in the field of adolescent language development.

2. Is the *Talk for Work* Profile a full language assessment?

No. The Profile has not been designed as a full language assessment; it profiles only the communication skills needed in the workplace. It hasn't been standardised and doesn't replace specialist investigation by a speech and language therapist.

The Profile has been developed by teachers and speech and language therapists experienced in supporting secondary aged young people. It's based on the communication skills identified as those most valued by employers, and so will help you to differentiate between students with good communication skills for the workplace and those who may benefit from additional support.

3. Is the Profile an intervention?

No, it's a tool to profile students' skills. The *Talk for Work*: Practical Activities booklet contains activities that will get you started on supporting students in developing their skills. The booklet also signposts other interventions you can try, and includes an Action Plan so that you and the student can plan what skills they need to develop and the strategies they can use to do this.

4. Who's the *Talk for Work* Profile for?

You can use the Profile with any student. However, it's especially useful for students with communication difficulties who may need some extra help to practise and develop the skills they'll need for the workplace.

5. Can I use the Profile with students who are younger than Year 9?

We've created the Profile to be used with students in Year 9 (S3 in Scotland) or above. The scoring is based on skills we'd expect students this age to have or to be developing.

6. Can I use the Profile with students who are older than 16?

You can; however, we haven't trialled the Profile with older students, and the scoring is based on students aged 13–16 years.

7. Which staff members can use the Profile?

Anyone can use the Profile; however, we recommend that it's someone who knows the student well, as they may need reassurance and prompting.

We suggest that the person completing the Staff Views discusses the student's ratings with colleagues to get a range of opinions – you don't need to carry out a formal observation.

We also recommend you watch the webcast, which helps you understand how the Profile works.

8.   Do I have to complete both parts of the Profile: the Student Questions and the Staff Views?

Yes, as this gives a more complete picture of the student's skills. If the student is not compliant and doesn't answer the questions, you can just complete the Staff Views. However, in this case you won't be able to use the Online Tracker. See Q12 for more information about working with a student who's not compliant.

9.   How can the *Talk for Work* Profile be used?

You can use the Profile in a number of ways:

● To profile students' communication skills, identifying strengths and difficulties.

● To show progress in students' communication skills by repeating the Profile over time.

● For students to rate their own communication skills. Self-rating can be challenging for young people with communication difficulties, and so this aspect of the Profile isn't used to show progress. However, it is a useful process, to help develop their self-awareness.

● To discuss any differences between your ratings and the student's own ratings, so students become more aware of their communication skills profile. Guidance to support this discussion is included in the *Talk for Work:* Practical Activities booklet, along with suggestions for how to support students' communication skills. We also signpost other useful information, activities and resources.

10. Some of the Student Questions are quite complicated. Can I simplify them?

Some questions are deliberately complex because we want to find out if the student can ask for assistance. If you do need to re-word the question, reflect this in the score you give.

11. What's the point of Question 3 if the instructions are for an impossible task?

Sometimes in the workplace you may be asked to do something without having all the information you need to complete the task: Question 3 in the Student Questions tests a student's ability to ask for help and clarification. However, if the student seems anxious or upset by the question then reassure them and move on to the next question.

12. What if the student refuses to complete the Profile?

If the student refuses to complete the Student Questions we suggest you try again at another time. If they continue to refuse you can still complete the Staff Views to get a picture of the student's skills. However, you can't then use the Online Tracker – and the score should be treated with caution as it's based on only a few questions.

There's a Compliance rating at the end of the Student Questions, where you can make a note of the student's compliance. If their Compliance score is 1 or 2 we recommend that you don't use their Student Question scores and use only the Staff Views.

13. Should I complete the Profile more than once with a student?

You can use the *Talk for Work* Profile in several ways:

- You can use it once to help you get information about a student's skills.

- You can use it several times over a student's time in school to monitor how their skills are developing.

- You can use it before and after an intervention to measure a student's progress. The Profile is not an intervention but can be used to complement an intervention, such as I CAN's *Talk about Talk Secondary*.

14. What if the student gets a Red score?

A **Red** score suggests the student has significant difficulty with communication in a particular area, and we recommend that you look in more detail at the student's communication skills to find out more. The first stop is discussion with the school SENCo but there may be a need for further assessment or investigation.

15. What if the student gets an Amber score?

An **Amber** score means the student is showing signs that they may struggle with communication in the workplace in this particular area, and may need further support.

These students may benefit from the guidance and strategies described in the *Talk for Work:* Practical Activities booklet. The booklet also signposts other programmes and resources that may help these students.

16. What if the student gets a Green score?

A **Green** score means that the student is on track to have good skills for the workplace in this particular aspect of communication. However, we recommend you continue to monitor their skills.

17. What if the student has very mixed scores?

If a student has a very mixed profile – e.g. **Amber** or **Green** in some areas and **Red** in another – this suggests a difficulty in one particular area. For this we again recommend further investigation.

18. Why are the scores different for different age groups?

We'd expect older students to be more competent in the skills than younger students.

A **13–14 year old** student will not be ready for work: we'd expect that they still have some developing to do. Overall, to get a **Green** score, they may have good communication skills but may make the occasional error. They may be quiet and under-confident in the workplace but shouldn't be doing anything unusual or extreme as they have strategies to check.

Please note that although the Profile is to be used with students aged 13–16, it's not designed to be used with students who are not yet in Year 9. We recommend that it's used only with students in Year 9 or above.

A **15–16 year old** student should be getting higher scores, and have well-developed communication skills for the workplace. To get a **Green** score, they should be ready to make the transition to some jobs and be aware of the need to develop different styles of talking, and different skills. They should understand what's expected of them more quickly because of these skills.

19. Do I need to carry out a formal observation before completing the Staff Views?

No, just answer these questions from your knowledge of the student. We recommend discussing the ratings with colleagues to get the most accurate rating possible.

20. How much help can I give the students when they complete the Student Self-Rating Scale?

The Student Self-Rating Scale is the student's own rating of their skills; it may not be the same score as you'd give them. You can't decide for them, but you can give the student prompts to help them make their decision. Some students may need very little prompting, while others may need more structured support. See **Giving students support** on page 13 for more information.

21. Why is the 'OK' option shaded on the Student Self-Rating Scale?

The 'OK' option (3) is shaded to guide the student to read this option first. It's easier for the student to read this descriptor first and then decide if they need to go up or down the scale, rather than try and read all five descriptors and make sense of all the information.

22. Why do I have to cut up the Student Self-Rating Scale and create a booklet?

This is based on feedback from our pilot phase. School staff reported that there was too much written information on one page. By cutting up the Student Self-Rating Scale questions and creating a booklet, this reduces the amount of text on each page and makes it less overwhelming for the student.