

# How to: COMMUNICATING WITH CLIENTS WITH LOW ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

	What to think about	How to make it work
<b>Cultural Practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having some background information about your client's culture prior to meeting with them may be invaluable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check out the following two websites for some basic outlines of cultural practices for clients from particular countries or ethnicities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="http://www.diversityinhealth.com/regions">www.diversityinhealth.com/regions</a></li> <li>- <a href="http://www.health.qld.gov.au/hssb/cultdiv/home.htm">www.health.qld.gov.au/hssb/cultdiv/home.htm</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>Contact an ethno-specific organisation or Migrant Resource Centre to find out more about a particular culture</li> </ul>
<b>Literacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some clients may have had a disrupted education through unrest in their home country and/or migration experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Try to locate (translated) information that contains explanatory diagrams as well as text</li> </ul>
<b>Meanings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meanings of words or phrases can differ across cultures</li> <li>A 'yes' or 'no' answer won't necessarily have the same meaning as you expect – sometimes yes is an acknowledgement rather than an agreement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you cannot explain without using difficult terminology, consider using an interpreter</li> <li>Try explaining things in more than one way, using different words</li> <li>Determine a logical sequence for the explanation</li> </ul>
<b>Time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicating cross-culturally takes extra time and effort</li> <li>The client is likely to be mentally translating everything you say into their first language, formulating a response, then translating back into English before they answer your question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take the time to talk to other family members as well as the client, but only where this is culturally appropriate and the client has given permission to do so</li> <li>Be clear about the importance of punctuality and advising of a cancellation</li> <li>Allow a longer than usual time for a reply when asking the client questions</li> </ul>
<b>Proficiency in English</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be careful about assuming what someone's level of proficiency is</li> <li>Proficiency in speaking is not always equal to a person's ability to understand</li> <li>Proficiency in everyday language may not indicate proficiency in health and medical terminology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use plain English and avoid idioms or Pidgin English</li> <li>Decide on the main point to communicate</li> <li>Stick to one topic at a time</li> <li>Use words the patient is likely to know</li> </ul>
<b>Understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making the assumption that someone doesn't understand may mean you come across as patronising</li> <li>Understanding of English may diminish in stressful situations such as illness or injury</li> <li>Understanding may diminish with age</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask some open questions to elicit understanding</li> <li>Confirm what the client has said</li> <li>Simplify the form of sentences you use</li> <li>Ask the client to repeat what you have said in their own words</li> <li>Limit the use of questions which require a 'yes' or 'no' answer</li> </ul>
<b>Beliefs and Attitudes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your client may have different health beliefs</li> <li>Your client may have different notions of causes of illness, prevention, self-management and treatment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask the client to tell you their preferences, rather than assuming what they might be</li> <li>Show that you value their perspective</li> </ul>
<b>Speech</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making adjustments to the way you speak may influence the success of the communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speak slowly and do not raise your voice</li> <li>Repeat important information</li> <li>Use visual diagrams as an aid</li> <li>Avoid rhetorical questions</li> </ul>
<b>Listening and Observation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Giving the client your full attention will enable you to pick up both verbal and non verbal cues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be aware that body language can differ markedly between cultures</li> <li>Try not to finish client's sentences</li> <li>Be comfortable with silences and long pauses</li> </ul>