

Do you talk too much?

Level: Pre-intermediate upwards

Timing: Approx. 90 minutes

Material needed: One copy of the student worksheets and Vocabulary record per student.

Group size: Any

Overview

This lesson plan, for both pre-experience and in-work business students is based around an article first published in *Business Spotlight* Issue 5/2011. It deals with talking; focusing specifically on whether someone talks too much, how to recognize this and what to do about it. In the article, the author asks questions so that the reader can self-evaluate his/her style of communication and offers tips and advice on how to be a more interesting and aware speaker.

The tasks in the student worksheets encourage the students to learn new business vocabulary and functional language, as well as to develop and practise skills that could be useful in business situations.

The teacher's notes provide suggestions for teaching and learning strategies, as well as ideas on how to present the tasks in the classroom, any necessary answer keys and extension tasks (to do in class or as homework).

Warmer

The questions are intended to introduce the topic. Stress to your students that when talking about people who talk too much, they should not name names (especially if they work in the same company). In order to avoid anyone feeling hurt or insulted, suggest that your students keep their descriptions general.

Key words

Looking at these key words prior to reading will help the students understand the article. Finding them in context (i.e. within the article in a sentence) will help them to understand the way in which the words are used.

Note that the words are numbered in the order that they appear in the article – this is helpful for the students to know as some of the definitions are similar to each other.

Key:

1. alienating; 2. blab on; 3. long-winded; 4. irritating;
5. bore the pants off somebody; 6. bend somebody's ear;
7. self-absorbed; 8. selfish; 9. run a red light; 10. gratuitous;
11. engaged; 12. trade something in for something

Do I talk too much?

The students read points 1-7 in the first half of the article and answer the questions for themselves. Ask them to decide whether the points describe them and their way of communicating. If they do, they should write *true* – if they don't, they should write *false*. After they've added up how many times they have written *true* and *false* they should continue to read the rest of the article.

Visualizing the article

Working in small groups to encourage them to speak in English and decide what they are going to depict, the students should draw a diagram / flow chart / pictogram to explain the 'traffic-light rule' as described in the article.

Teaching and learning strategy: Visualization (learning types)

Some people learn by reading and listening, others learn better when they are doing something. **Visual spatial learners** prefer using images, pictures, colours and maps to organize information and communicate with others. Regardless of how good (or bad) students are at drawing, it is worthwhile trying out some visual learning tasks in class. In the case of tasks 4 and 5, even if the person preparing the presentation is not a visual learner many in his/her audience may be. So, by offering a visualization of the middle part of the article, he/she may reach a greater level of understanding from the audience than if the slides or flip chart only contained words.

Information graphics or **infographics** are graphic visual representations of information, data or knowledge. These graphics present complex information quickly and clearly. Today, information graphics surround us in the media, in published works both pedestrian and scientific, and in road signs and manuals. They illustrate information that would be unwieldy in text form and act as a visual shorthand for everyday concepts such as *stop* and *go*.

Pictography is a form of writing which uses representational, pictorial drawings. Early forms of writing were based on pictographs (pictures which resemble what they signify) and ideograms (symbols which represent ideas). Pictographs remain in common use today, serving as pictorial, representational signs, instructions or statistical diagrams. Because of their graphical nature and fairly realistic style, they are widely used to indicate public toilets or places such as airports and train stations.

Type *Howard Gardner* and *learning types* into an internet search engine to find more information about the theory of different learning styles.

For more on learning styles, see www.business-spotlight.de/310

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Presentation

Working in small groups, the students should turn the whole article into a presentation using either PowerPoint or a flip chart. Ask them to remember what they have read in the article and to use the tips the author gives when they come to hold the presentation. They should try not to bore their audience!

Research

The article is written from the point of view of an American in Europe and, of course, not all countries and cultures communicate in the same way. This extension task encourages students to read about different styles of communication on the internet by searching for key words. The students should specifically look for information about their own country so they can read what others think about their style of communication, and about countries in which they work or have business partners. The task can also be done as homework with the results and findings reported in the next lesson.

Vocabulary record

Here, students should be encouraged to record all the new and useful vocabulary they have learned during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

Related topics on onestopenglish

For follow-up lessons on the same or related topics go to the following lesson plans in the Business section on onestopenglish:

Business Spotlight: Great expectations:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-spotlight/great-expectations/550766.article>

Business tasks: Talking:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/business-tasks/talking/157038.article>

Do you talk too much?

1 Warmer

Answer the following questions.

- Do you have any colleagues that you avoid because they talk too much?
- Do you ever not answer the phone when you see that a particular person is calling?
- Have you ever started to fall asleep in a meeting or presentation?
- Have you ever changed where you are sitting because someone was talking too much?

2 Key words

Match these key words and expressions from the article with their definitions and then find them in the article to read them in context.

bore the pants off somebody self-absorbed selfish gratuitous trade something in for something
engaged run a red light alienating bend somebody's ear irritating long-winded blab on

1. making someone not like you or not want to support you _____
2. to continue talking when it's no longer necessary or appropriate _____
3. using more words and taking more time than necessary to say something _____
4. someone who gets on your nerves and annoys you is this _____
5. an informal American English expression that describes how incredibly boring somebody is

6. to talk and talk to one person about something for an overly long time _____

7. too concerned about yourself and not interested in other people _____
8. thinking only about yourself and not caring about other people _____
9. literally *to drive through a traffic light even when you should stop*; an informal American English expression that means to carry on even when you should probably stop

10. done without any good reason _____
11. interested and involved in something _____
12. to exchange one thing for another _____

Do you talk too much?

3 Do I talk too much?

Read points 1-7 in the first half of the article and decide whether the points describe you. If they do, write *true* - if they don't, write *false*. Then continue reading the rest of the article.

Do you talk too much?

by Marty Nemko

Are you one of those people who often talk too much, thereby alienating your listeners? Marty Nemko tells you how you can change this.

Blah-blah, blah-blah, blah-blah, blah. Have you ever talked to someone who, long after you've stopped listening, continued to blab on? Being long-winded is a sure route to career failure. Of course, no one thinks they talk too much. Otherwise, they wouldn't do it. But without realizing it, could you be one of those irritating people? True or false:

1. You see yourself as a talker rather than a listener.
2. In conversation, you often talk without stopping for more than a minute. (This is the most important sign that you talk too much.)
3. You can come up with many ideas quickly, and you want to express them all at once.
4. You're detail-oriented. Those people who are detail-oriented often include things that seem important to them but bore the pants off the typical listener.
5. Your colleagues look away from you when you walk by. (They're afraid you'll come over and bend their ear.)
6. The people who know you best see you as self-absorbed, narcissistic, selfish, or egocentric. A conversation is about sharing and paying attention to your conversation partner's needs.
7. You don't look for a sign that your listener wishes you'd stop talking. Those signs could include eyes wandering more than a third of the time, or frozen in a stare. You might also notice fingers or toes tapping, interruptions, or body language that suggests the other person is trying to get away from you. Yes, some listeners are impatient, but if you see such reactions from more than 25 percent of people, the problem is more likely to be you.

The more times you answered "true" to those seven questions, the more you need to follow the "traffic-light rule." During the first 30 seconds, your light is green: your listener is probably paying attention. During the second 30 seconds, your light is yellow: your listener may be starting to wish you'd finish. After the one-minute mark, your light is red. Yes, there are rare times when you should "run a red light", if your listener is clearly interested. But usually, after a minute, you increase the risk of

boring the other person with each passing second. What can you do to be seen as interesting, not irritating? Try these tips:

- As you're talking, keep asking yourself: "Does this detail risk boring my listener?"
- Unless you're saying something you know deserves more than a minute, at the 30-second mark, look for a place to stop. Listeners who want more can ask a question. They rarely will. Try it and see.
- What if you're saying something that requires more than a minute? Break it up into segments, and after each segment, ask something like: "What do you think of that?" or "Am I being clear? Really?" The "really" is important because it lets the listener know that your request is not gratuitous.
- Be alert to the other person's non-verbal cues, especially after the 30-second mark. Does your listener seem fully engaged?
- Combine the traffic-light rule with taking an interest in what the other person is saying. This will make you a better conversationalist than 99 percent of the population. Encourage others to talk until the subject runs out. Then it's your turn.

Remember, anyone who cares about other people must make them part of a discussion. And if you tend to be selfish, know that you'll get more of what you want if you trade in your talk-talk-talk self for someone who truly listens – and doesn't just speak.



Image: Getty

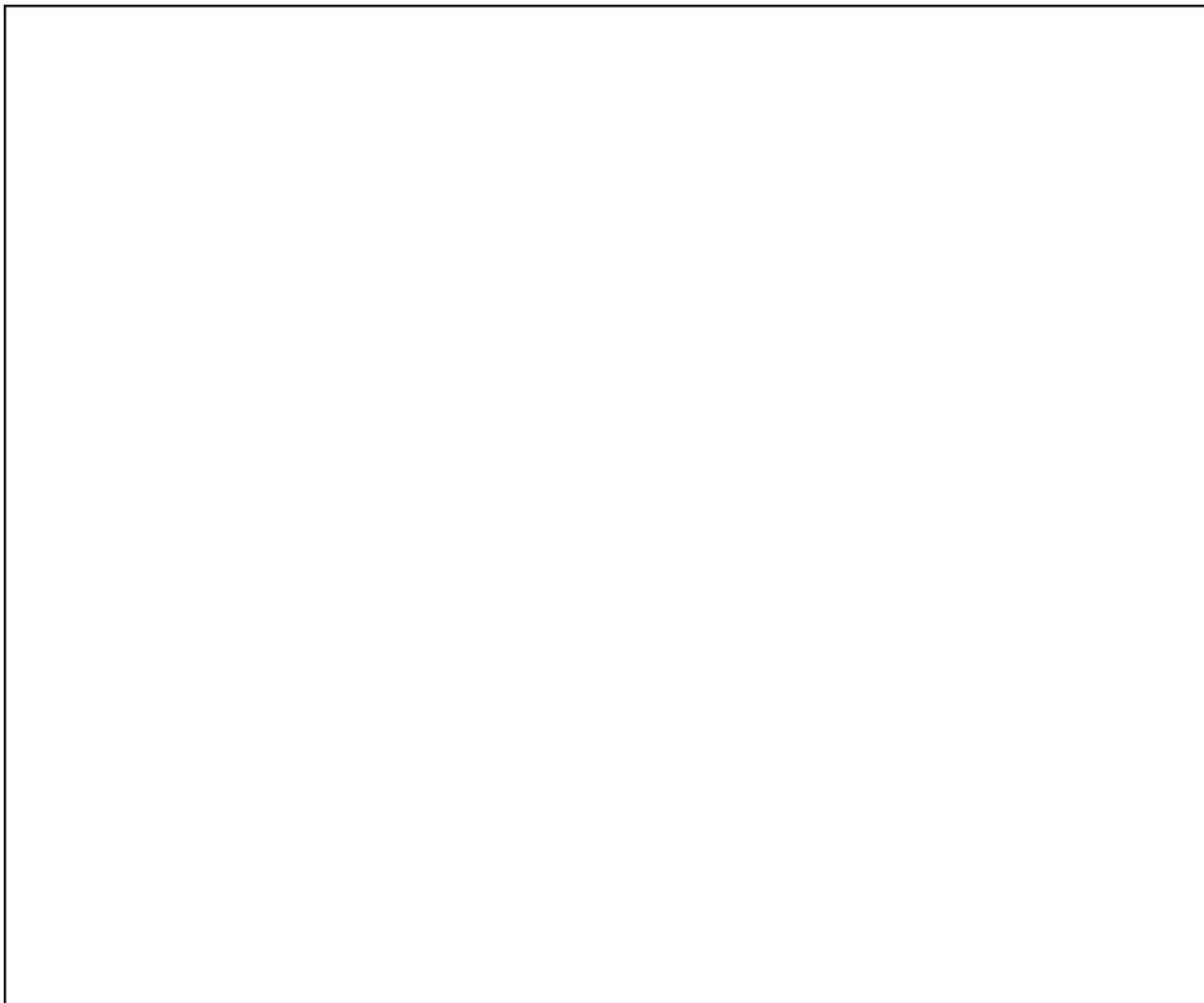
MARTY NEMKO is one of America's top career coaches. The author of *Cool Careers for Dummies*, he has been advising clients for more than 20 years. He is based in Oakland, California.

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Do you talk too much?

4 Visualizing the article

Draw a diagram / flow chart / pictogram to explain the 'traffic-light rule'.



5 Presentation

Turn the whole article into a presentation. Use either PowerPoint or a flip chart. Divide the article into three parts:

1. Reduce the introduction and points 1-7 to simple questions.
2. Use your visualization from task 4 to explain the 'traffic-light rule'.
3. Give tips and advice using the information in the last part of the article.

6 Different cultures

Of course, not all countries and cultures communicate in the same way. Read about different styles of communication by searching for *communication styles + intercultural* or *cross-cultural communication* on the internet. What can you find out about your own country and other countries you work with?

