INSTRUCT

Giving Clear Instructions

Giving clear instructions is one of the Instruct style behaviors in the Sphere of Influence 360˚.

When is giving instructions appropriate? Think of situations where people do not know how to carry out certain tasks. Situations where they are not yet practiced, competent, or when a group of people must perform a certain task the same way. In these contexts, giving clear instructions is particularly useful.

Giving the right instructions is crucial to ensuring a certain activity is performed well or when you are applying a lesson, facilitating a workshop, or conducting training. Providing people with clear instructions saves a lot of time while preventing misunderstandings and frustration.

In this exercise, we will help you to prepare clear and easy-to-follow instructions.

Exercise 1: Be prepared

Below, you'll find 10 tips to help you communicate instructions more effectively:

1. Be well prepared.
2. Be clear and specific.
3. Describe the exact steps and give time frames.
4. Deliver only a small number of instructions at one time.
5. Use examples, illustrating and demonstrating whenever possible.
6. Make sure you have others' attention.
7. Avoid rushing; take your time.
8. Give people time to process.
9. Encourage them to ask questions.
10. Ask for clarification.

In this exercise, we consider the first tip: **making sure you are well prepared**. Next time you need to give instructions, write out the different steps in advance.

	The instructions:	
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

Indicate how long people will need for each step, where applicable.

If you need more space than the 10 steps indicated in the previous table, write them out on a separate sheet. If you have many steps, decide whether you need to break your instructions down into separate sessions. This way, people do not need to process too much information at once.

Exercise 2: Clarity and completeness check

Take another look at your instructions from the previous exercise.

- Make sure they are listed in a logical sequence.
- Delete unnecessary information, and
- Check that you haven't forgotten essential ingredients.
- Add examples wherever they clarify your instructions.

Exercise 3: Practice

Go through the instructions to yourself out loud several times. This will help you adjust any unclear parts. Try also to ensure that you do not have to focus on the instructions themselves when you deliver them. Instead, you can focus on the people you're instructing!

Exercise 4: Reminders

Now it is time to share what you have prepared. Here are some final reminders we mentioned earlier (10 Tips).

Before you start, **make sure you have people's attention**. If people are distracted or still busy with other things, wait until everybody is ready to listen.

Take your time when instructing and avoid rushing. You know what you are going to say, but your conversation partners do not. **Give people time to process**.

Encourage people to ask questions to ensure they have understood the instructions correctly. You can also **ask them to clarify** what you have just said (e.g., repeat or summarize). This helps you ensure your instructions are both clear and properly understood.

Evaluation:

How did your attempt to give clear instructions work out?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

What did you learn? What insights did you gain?

What went well? What would you repeat?

What can you do to improve your performance?

What is your next step?