Select A Topic

- Ask yourself
    - What is relevant to the work being performed?
    - Have there been any incidents lately?
    - Are there any high risk tasks or rarely performed tasks happening or soon to be happening?
    - Is there any new information, updates, changes, etc. that should be reviewed?
        - Policy
        - Procedure
        - Legislation
        - Prime contractor requests
    - Are there any corrective actions that need discussion or confirmation of understanding?
    - Review of training
        - WHMIS refresher
        - Inspection checklist for tools, equipment, etc. refresher
        - Company rules
        - Orientation updates/review
    - Seasonal change over reminders and updates
    - New phase of the project?
    - New tools in the workplace?

Regardless of the topic, it should be relevant to the site, the work activities, or the workers in respect to health and safety. Selective a topic goes hand in hand with selecting a 'learning outcome'. A learning outcome is essentially the goal of a toolbox talk or any communication session like training. Communicating the topic with an achievable statement such as a learning outcome will help you focus your attention on the key points of the toolbox talk you want to make.

Try phrasing your topic by finished this sentence:

"Attendees of the toolbox talk will be able to develop / demonstrate / perform / apply / recognize / communicate / (etc.) …. _____ "

Examples:

"….. **communicate** and **demonstrate** the procedure for using a fire extinguisher (P.A.S.S)"

"….. **recognize** the hazards of controlled products using in the workplace by **applying** the 3 principles of WHMIS"

"….. **describe** and **apply** the corrective action measures identified on the hazard assessment"

Using this kind of structured statement now easily identifies how you will communicate the information at the toolbox talk and how you will evaluate the comprehension and retention of the information by the attendees.

Personalizing A Toolbox Talk

Personalizing a toolbox talk simply means making it applicable to the attendees and we do this by using company data and specific examples. For example, a toolbox talk about WHMIS becomes far more engaging and useful when controlled products from the workplace are used a teaching tools.

Simply changing statements from:

"An SDS is required for all controlled products and should be reviewed prior to use of the product to ensure they are being used safely…"

- TO -

"Our SDS binder is kept in all company trucks. If controlled products are used, they must be identified as a hazard on the pre job assessment and the SDS must be reviewed as part of the corrective action taken…"

Makes the talk much more engaging and applicable. It starts to foster the desired result of workers understand and being able to put into the practice, the information communicated.

Doing a little research into the company policies and procedures will go a long way to help personalize these topics. The below list are all factors that can be considered and used to drive home the information of a talk.

Incidents and near misses related to the topic	Talking about the safe use of a utility knife can be pretty boring. Adding to the discussion the incidents that have happened within the company or using real examples of what can happen if it is not taken seriously can bring a sense of a reality to a conversation.
Policies, orientations or training	It is one thing to say 'work safely', it is a completely different thing to do so in practice. Discussing the previous training, or policy requirements to demonstrate that these are not optional requirements is a useful tool. Demonstrating that the safety rules and requirements are as non-optional is the building codes you follow helps put safety on the same level.
Props, pictures, diagrams, etc.	Discussing a tool to be used? Use it at the talk. Reviewing the safe use of a fire extinguisher? Have participants use one. Reviewing duties and responsibilities of workplace parties? Put up a diagram that shows the relationships.
Hazard identification	Discussing the application of a control measure? Use the hazard assessment or inspection to show the relevancy.
Active participation	Discussion vs. Dictation - Having a conversation with attendees stimulates more parts of the brain than simply listening or following along. Get workers involved in their own safety and their own education. Have attendees perform part of the task, sort information provided, answer questions, etc.

Delivering A Toolbox Talk

Have you ever been to a training course or a presentation you really like? How about one you didn't like at all? Think of what events, attributes or activities were great about the course you liked. Was it the group activities that helped break up the course? The use of humor and conversation? That you got to ask questions and discuss possible solutions? Whatever it was, remember it and use it!

The same goes for the presentations you didn't like. Lack of eye contact, couldn't be heard, 'bossy' instructors, not relatable, speaking on the wrong level, being unprepared, etc. are fairly universal no-no's. Use these examples to improve your delivery. Effective toolbox talks live and die by the ability of the provider to delivery it.

Not everyone is a public speaker and that's ok. For the less conversational personality types, take comfort in structure! Not a big talker? Use group activities. Not sure how to deliver a key point? Ask someone else for help. Have an attendee demonstrate the point or answer a question and confirm correct communication. If you plan these into your toolboxes it alleviates the pressures of having to 'steer the ship' yourself.

Delivery and personalizing go hand and hand. You can personalize a talk by how you deliver it! Whether you are comfortable with public speaking or not, ask yourself these questions regarding the key points of your talk:

- Can this point be discussed or demonstrated?
    - o If yes,
        - ▪ How do I start the discussion?
            - • What information do we need to cover in our discussion?
                - o Is there a way to prompt attendees to cover these topics?
        - ▪ How do I evaluate the demonstration?
            - • What steps am I looking for?
    - o If no,
        - ▪ Is there an activity that better communicates the point?
            - • Tour of the workplace?
            - • Diagram that demonstrates the point?
- Has this been done already?
    - o Has someone else covered this topic?
    - o Are there resources out there that I can use?

Although this may seem complicated and long winded for a simple toolbox talk, having a structure like this when first starting out will eventually become second nature and save a lot of time and frustration down the road. As the saying goes "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure", doing a little work now will save a lot of time and frustration later.

Put simply, *engaging attendees' fosters effective learning.* There are three types of learning styles. In order of effectiveness they are; Auditory, Visual and Tactile. The further we get from left to right, and the better mix of all three styles, the more effective the training becomes.

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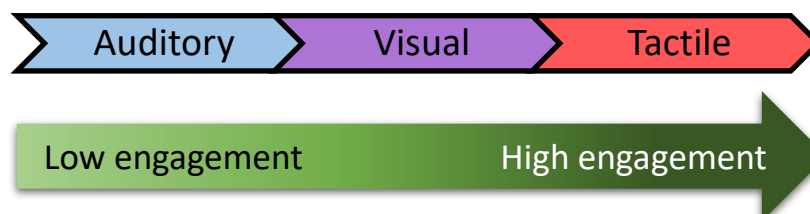
Documenting A Toolbox Talk

Documenting a toolbox talk is like putting the final touches on a job well done. Documentation serves as permanent record that the toolbox talk in fact happened and, just as important, what was discussed including the outcomes of those discussions.

Documenting the 'minutes' of a toolbox talk is the important part, but it is not the only thing we should consider documenting. Up until this point you have selected a topic, personalized the details of that topic and essentially developing a mini lesson plan. This is a lot of information to cover off the cuff so write it down!

Developing and documenting an agenda that outlines the 'guts' of the toolbox talk based on the topic selected is 90% of the documentation process. Simply attaching or transferring the key points of the agenda to a meeting minute form, have it signed and dated and you're done!

If nothing else, the date, location, topic(s) discussed and signatures of attendees should be documented for the purposes of due diligence. Keep in mind, detail is important! Take these statements for example, which one communicates better?

Reviewed Safe Job Procedures	Reviewed Circular Saw Procedure
WHMIS Review	Reviewed controlled products in the workplace and safe use
Discussed hazard assessment	Reviewed hazard assessment and developed and assigned corrective actions

The statements on the left are acceptable **IF** the details follow; if not, the single statement should be as detailed as possible. Always remember, signed documentation is legally evidence that something did or didn't happen so adding an extra line of detail can go a long way to prove everything *reasonably practicable* occurred.

Checklists and templates are the easiest way to get the information you need/want, while spending the least amount of time and effort to get there. Developing a template to follow for developing a topic and documenting a toolbox talk is strongly recommended.

See the attached for examples of:

- Meeting minutes template
- Meeting agenda
- Development template

Generally speaking, the person conducting the toolbox talk is the one who will document the minutes, however; it is a good idea to have someone else document the minutes for you. This allows you to focus on the actual talk. The person taking the notes can document the details using the template and get better details than if you tried to do it yourself. Switching up who documents the minute's gets attendees involved in the process and requires them to pay attention to the discussion.

The templates attached are great tools to use when you are first starting out or wanting to revitalize a toolbox talk. It is expected that as you become more comfortable with the process you will make changes and tweaks to the process and the templates to better suit you and your organizations specific needs. Always keep in mind that regardless of how you go about it, the intent of a toolbox talk is to effectively and efficiently communication relevant health and safety information to works and document the process.