Skill-using Activities and Assessment Tasks

This package is intended to provide further clarification (including examples) on the distinction between skill-using activities and assessment tasks.* In the package, you will find:

- A chart that identifies and compares some of the key features of both skill-using activities and assessment tasks.
- Four examples of skill-using activities and assessment tasks (including set-up). Each example shows how a task can be used as either a skill-using activity or an assessment task. Two of the four examples illustrate a receptive and a productive skill using an instructor-made resource. The other two examples illustrate a receptive and a productive skill using a published resource. With each example, we have included the original handout as well as an annotated copy that clarifies specific aspects of the activity/task.
- All activities and tasks relate to Real World Tasks Goals that are embedded in a module and are examples that could be included in a portfolio.

*This is a companion document to Portfolio Expectations document.
Skill-Using Activities and Assessment Tasks

Throughout the term instructors will have learners add skill-using activities (tasks) and more formal assessment tasks to their portfolios.

On page 38 of the PBLA Guide, it says:

In programs aligned to the CLB, language-assessment tasks, like skill-using learning activities, simulate or parallel real-world language tasks. Completion requires learners to assemble an array of communicative knowledge and skills to negotiate a purposeful and meaningful message for a specific context and audience. Both language assessment tasks and skill-using activities also relate to specific CLB competencies and are carried out under conditions appropriate for the particular CLB level (see Features of Communication and Profile of Ability).

However, they are different in several ways.

Skill-using activities provide a bridge from instruction to more formal assessment. They are a way for learners to practise what they’ve been learning. Instructors may intervene to clarify, support or scaffold the tasks. In skill-using activities action-oriented feedback may be the result of self, peer or instructor assessment. It can occur during or at the completion of the task; it can be written or oral and be provided individually or in a group. Well-planned, feedback strategies increase learner autonomy, provide information learners can use to improve their performance, and can be structured in ways to minimize the marking burden for instructors. Skill-using activities may be included as entries in the PBLA portfolio if it is clear what portion is completed by the individual learner (i.e. not completed by a group).

Language assessment tasks, on the other hand, have a greater degree of formality and are carried out to determine what learners are able to communicate independently. Formal feedback is provided to the individual learner.

The chart on the following page identifies some of the key features of skill-using activities versus assessment tasks. Following the chart are four examples that show that a task can be used either as a skill-using task or an assessment task depending on how it is set up. In actual practice, the instructor would use the task as either as a skill-using activity or an assessment task but never both.

See also PBLA Guide pp. 40-41 for further examples of artefacts.
# Skill-using Activities and Assessment Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Skill-using activity (task)</th>
<th>Assessment task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Opportunity for learners to <em>practise</em> what they have been learning</td>
<td>Opportunity for learners to <em>demonstrate</em> what they can do in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alignment to CLB</strong></td>
<td>Consistent with CLB expectations (competencies, indicators of ability, profiles of ability)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Criteria</strong></td>
<td>Instructors introduce and discuss key criteria to learners before undertaking the task.</td>
<td>Instructors introduce criteria to learners before undertaking the task. Assessment criteria and criteria for success are indicated on the task and/or on an assessment tool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criteria may be indicated on the task sheet or shared informally (e.g., shared orally or written on the board)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of instructor</strong></td>
<td>Instructor may provide some scaffolding or instructional support before or during the task. This may be indicated on the portfolio entry. e.g., In a writing task at CLB 4 learners brainstorm what could be included before writing their paragraphs independently e.g., Learners review and discuss an exemplar (speaking or writing) before completing the speaking/writing task.</td>
<td>Instructors review the expectations but learners complete the task independently without additional peer, instructional or scaffolding support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment feedback</strong></td>
<td>Learners may self-assess and/or receive peer or instructor feedback. Feedback may be written or oral, and may be anecdotal. e.g., Learners do a role play in small groups and receive peer feedback. Instructor circulates and makes notes. Instructor debriefs the activity with the class and makes overall suggestions. He/she may point out something a learner did particularly well and include these anecdotal notes during the review of portfolios. Learners include their peer feedback in their portfolio.</td>
<td>Learners receive instructor assessment feedback and, in addition, may self-assess and/or receive peer feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Receptive Skills</strong></td>
<td>Learners may self-assess (e.g., self-assessment of strategies used). Tasks are ‘marked’ by instructor or learner* and feedback is given individually or with the group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Many instructors ask learners to complete Reading or Listening assessment tasks in pen and then learners self-mark their work in pencil. Instructors provide action-oriented feedback as they discuss the questions and answers with learners. *(e.g., How did you find the main idea in this passage? What information did you get from the caption to help you answer this question?)*. The instructor can then collect and review the learners’ work to note progress related to what constitutes success.
EXAMPLE 1: READING (SKILL-USING TASK)
CLB 2: Seniors and Falls*

Part A: Main idea. The writer wants to: (check the best answer)
• Tell us about seniors _______
• Tell us how to make our home safe for seniors _______
• Tell us about seniors’ breaking their hips _______

Part B: Understand the information to fix a problem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>You should:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: 1. The bath tub is slippery. It is easy to fall. <strong>d</strong></td>
<td>a. Put a handrail on both sides of the stairway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The hallway is very dark. <strong>____</strong></td>
<td>b. Use a grab bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The dishes are on a shelf that is very high. <strong>____</strong></td>
<td>c. Use a night light.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The bedroom is upstairs on the 2nd floor. <strong>____</strong></td>
<td>d. Use a rubber mat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. There are many children’s toys on the floor. <strong>____</strong></td>
<td>e. Use a nightlight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. There is milk on the floor. <strong>____</strong></td>
<td>f. Put them in a place they are easy to reach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| g. Clean up the spill |

Part C: Partner Activity: Talk to your partner and write your answer.

How can you make your home safer for seniors?
_______________________________________________________________________

*Reading text from English Express: eaa.alberta.ca/englishexpress
EXAMPLE 1: READING (SKILL-USING TASK)

CLB 2: Seniors and Falls*

The skill using activity is completed in the middle of a module on Home Safety. The instructor reviews the notion of ‘main idea’ and strategies for completing matching questions. Learners then read the article individually and complete Parts A & B in pen.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>2. The hallway is very dark.</td>
<td>b. Use a grab bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The dishes are on a shelf that is very high.</td>
<td>c. Don’t pour liquid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The bedroom is upstairs on the 2nd floor.</td>
<td>d. Use a rubber mat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. There are many children’s toys on the floor.</td>
<td>e. Use a nightlight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. There is milk on the floor.</td>
<td>f. Put them in a place they are easy to reach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g. Clean up the spill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part C: Partner Activity: Talk to your partner and write your answer.

How can you make your home safer for seniors?

Learners work with a partner to talk about what they can do to make their own homes safer for seniors. Learners then complete an answer for this question.

After learners complete Part A & B the instructor takes up the questions and learners mark their answers in pencil. Then they continue to Part C.

*Reading text from English Express: eaa.alberta.ca/englishexpress
EXAMPLE 1: READING (ASSESSMENT TASK)
CLB 2: Seniors and Falls*

Part A: Understand the main idea. Check the best answer. The writer wants to:
• Tell us about seniors ________
• Tell us how to make our home safe for seniors ________
• Tell us about seniors’ breaking their hips ________

Part B: Understand the information to fix a problem.

<table>
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<th>You should:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>6. There is milk on the floor.</td>
<td>f. Put them in a place they are easy to reach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g. Clean up the spill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part C: In your own home what can you do to make it safer for seniors?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Success: Must have “YES” in Parts A, B and C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Not yet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part B: Understands the details and key information. 5/6 items correct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part C: Applies the information. Answers question correctly (1/1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reading text from English Express: eaa.alberta.ca/englishexpress
EXAMPLE 1: READING (ASSESSMENT TASK)
CLB 2: Seniors and Falls*

Learners complete this assessment task independently at the end of a module on Home Safety. They have learned strategies for finding main ideas and completing matching activities and practised them in other activities. Learners complete the task in pen.

The instructor goes over answers and learners self-correct their papers in pencil. The instructor collects the papers and reviews Part C, completes the success chart and records learners’ success.

Criteria for success are clearly indicated. Instructor reviews criteria with learners before they begin the task.

*Reading text from English Express: eaa.alberta.ca/englishexpress
EXAMPLE 2: WRITING (SKILL-USING TASK)
CLB 4: Write a note to the landlord

It is a cold winter, and the heat in your apartment is not working. Write a note to your landlord. Explain the problem and ask for a repair. After you finish, your partner will give you feedback. Remember to:

Underline the part of your note that explains the problem and write “P.” Underline the part of your note that makes a polite request and write “R.”

☐ Be direct – describe the problem at the beginning of the note.
☐ Explain the problem – give the important information but not extra information
☐ Make a request
☐ Be polite

PEER COMMENTS:

Peer feedback by ___________________________
EXAMPLE 2: WRITING (SKILL-USING TASK)
CLB 4: Write a note to the landlord

In a module on housing, the class has been discussing issues related to renting an apartment and communicating with the landlord. Learners have practised the language for common problems in an apartment, making complaints and requests. This is the first time in the course that they have tried to write a note of complaint or request. They review a sample of a written complaint and request before completing their own example (using a different complaint).

After learners complete their writing, they share their drafts with a partner and give peer feedback using the criteria in the “Remember to” bullets. Learners then rewrite their notes and hand in both drafts to the instructor. The instructor provides action-oriented feedback using the stem: For next time . . . and provides feedback on major errors.
EXAMPLE 2: WRITING (ASSESSMENT TASK)
CLB 4: Write a note to the landlord

It is a cold winter, and the heat in your apartment is not working. Write a note to your landlord. Explain the problem and ask for a repair. Underline the part of your note that explains the problem and write “P.” Underline the part of your note that makes a polite request and write “R.”

Assessment tool:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>Not yet</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART A:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall message is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>clear and complete.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART B:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>*Identifies the problem at the beginning of the note</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Makes a polite request</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gives the right amount of information to support the request</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Uses appropriate vocabulary to describe the problem</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>*Adequate sentence structure</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriate closing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>For next time:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Success = YES in PART A + YES in 5/6 items in PART B (including all * items)
EXAMPLE 2: WRITING (ASSESSMENT TASK)
CLB 4: Write a note to the landlord

In a module on Housing, the class has discussed issues related to renting an apartment and communicating with the landlord. In a previous module on Consumer Rights, learners learned how to write business messages and wrote an e-mail of complaint as a skill-using activity.

In a module on Housing, the class has discussed issues related to renting an apartment and communicating with the landlord. In a previous module on Consumer Rights, learners learned how to write business messages and wrote an e-mail of complaint as a skill-using activity.

Learners engage in self-assessment by underlining the parts of their note that explain the problem and that make a polite request.

Instructor shares the assessment tool with learners before they begin the task and reviews the expectations.

The instructor will only make comments if there is something specific to note.

Instructor provides action-oriented

Criteria for success are indicated.

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EXAMPLE 3: LISTENING (SKILL-USING ACTIVITY)
CLB 1: Notes on a Calendar

From: *LINC Classroom Activities, LINC 1, p. 278*

Listen to your teacher, and mark six dates on your calendar. Listen again. Add the time.

- For vocabulary quiz, write VQ
- For reading homework, write RH
- For birthday party, write BP
- For grammar test, write GT
- For oral presentation, write OP
- For holiday, write H

**FEBRUARY 20**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>R.H</td>
<td>2:30 p.m.</td>
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<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXAMPLE 3: LISTENING (SKILL-USING ACTIVITY)
CLB 1: Notes on a Calendar

From: *LINC Classroom Activities*, LINC 1, p. 278

The class is doing a module on Education – using a calendar for class events. In this activity, taken directly from *LINC 1 Classroom Activities* book, learners listen to the details/times of the events and mark them on their calendars.

The instructor will complete the first entry together with the class so learners know how to complete the rest of the calendar. Learners will complete the calendar in pen. The instructor will review answers with the class and learners will self-correct their work in pencil. The instructor will collect the activity and note areas for further practice.
EXAMPLE 3: LISTENING (ASSESSMENT TASK)
CLB 1: Notes on a Calendar

From: *LINC Classroom Activities*, LINC 1, p. 278

Listen to your teacher, and mark six dates on your calendar. Listen again. Add the time.

- For vocabulary quiz, write VQ
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**FEBRUARY 20**

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<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Success: You can listen for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key words (4/5)</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dates (4/5)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not Yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times (4/5)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not Yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERALL</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not Yet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXAMPLE 3: LISTENING (ASSESSMENT TASK)
CLB 1: Notes on a Calendar

The class has completed a module on Education – using a calendar for class events. Learners complete the task independently.

FEBRUARY 20...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERALL</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not Yet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The instructor has added criteria for successful completion of the task.
EXAMPLE 4: SPEAKING (SKILL-USING ACTIVITY)
CLB 6: Making Small Talk

From: LINC 5-7 Classroom Activities, Volume 1, p. 261

TASK: Small Talk Conversation

CLB Competency: Interacting with Others – Participate in routine social conversations for some everyday purposes.

Choose one of the scenarios below. With a partner, present a short small talk conversation with a neighbour to another pair of learners for feedback.

Scenario 5: You notice that a new family has moved into the apartment beside yours. Knock on the family’s door and welcome them to the neighbourhood. Enjoy some small talk.

Scenario 7: It’s a cold snowy day and as you leave your house, you see your neighbour shoveling his driveway. Initiate some small talk.

Use this checklist as a reminder for yourself and to give feedback to your classmates.

☐ Use polite expressions to open the conversation
☐ Ask and answer questions to keep the conversation going (at least 5 turns)
☐ Comment on what the other person is saying
☐ Use appropriate body language (eye contact, expressive face, etc.)
☐ Signal appropriately to end the conversation
☐ Use polite expression to close the conversation

FEEDBACK:

Peer feedback by ___________________________ and ________________________________

I will make the following changes next time:

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
EXAMPLE 4: SPEAKING (SKILL- USING ACTIVITY)
CLB 6: Making Small Talk

The class is doing a module on In the Community – making small talk with neighbours. Learners have practised a number of skill-building activities around conversation strategies to maintain a conversation, polite expressions, level of formality and body language. They have also listened to an example of a small talk conversation between two people in the community.

In this activity learners work in groups of four. Two learners will do one of the role plays and the other group members will give peer feedback. Then they will switch roles. The instructor will circulate, observe and provide overall feedback to the class.

Learners will present their role plays to another pair of learners and give each other feedback.

Learners reflect on the feedback they were given and choose one or two improvements they can make next time.

The task is to be done in groups of four. Two learners will do one of the role plays and the other group members will give peer feedback. Then they will switch roles. The instructor will circulate, observe and provide overall feedback to the class.

Learners will present their role plays to another pair of learners and give each other feedback.

Learners reflect on the feedback they were given and choose one or two improvements they can make next time.
EXAMPLE 4: SPEAKING (ASSESSMENT TASK)
CLB 6: Making Small Talk

From: LINC 5-7 Classroom Activities, Volume 1, p. 261

**CLB Competency:** Interacting with Others – Participate in routine social conversations for some everyday purposes.

**Role Play Task:** With a partner, you will be given a scenario for a small talk conversation. You will have 1 or 2 minutes to choose your role in the conversation and set the scene.

**Assessment tool:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Meets Criteria</th>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART A: HOLISTIC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completes the task as</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>required; speaks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intelligibly, listener</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can follow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART B:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Opens, maintains the</td>
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<td>conversation using</td>
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<td>appropriate expressions</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Encourages the</td>
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<tr>
<td>conversation by asking</td>
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<tr>
<td>questions and/or adding</td>
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<tr>
<td>comments</td>
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<td>Uses the appropriate</td>
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<td>level of formality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses appropriate body</td>
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<td>language for situation</td>
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<td>*Signals appropriately</td>
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<td>to end the conversation</td>
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<td>and closes appropriately</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

For next time:

Success =
- Meets criteria in PART A
- Meets criteria in 4/5 items in PART B (including all * items)
EXAMPLE 4: SPEAKING (ASSESSMENT TASK)
CLB 6: Making Small Talk

From: LINC 5-7 Classroom Activities, Volume 1, p.261

CLB Competency: Interacting with Others – Participate in routine social conversations for some everyday purposes.

Role Play Task: With a partner, you will be given a scenario for a small talk conversation. You will have 1 or 2 minutes to choose your role in the conversation and set the scene.

Assessment tool:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART A: HOLISTIC</th>
<th>Holistic</th>
<th>Task set</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completes the task as required; speaks intelligibly, listener can follow</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PART B:</th>
<th>Holistic</th>
<th>Task set</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Opens, maintains the conversation using appropriate expressions</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Encourages the conversation by asking questions and/or adding comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses the appropriate level of formality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses appropriate body language for situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Signals appropriately to end the conversation and closes appropriately</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

For next time:

SUCCESS =
- Meets criteria in PART A
- Meets criteria in 4/5 items in PART B (including all * items)

The class has completed a module on In the Community – making small talk with neighbours. Learners have had a chance to practise small talk conversations using different scenarios prior to the assessment. Learners do the role play with a partner in one corner of the room while the instructor observes and provides feedback using the assessment tool. The rest of the class is working on an assigned activity while they are awaiting their turn.

Instructor shares the assessment tool with learners before they begin the task and reviews the expectations.

The criteria used for assessment reflects what was learned/practised through various skill-building activities in the class.

Criteria for success is indicated

The instructor provides action-oriented feedback.