



Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association

Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association (CIWA) is a non-profit, charitable organization established in 1982 to address the barriers, needs and concerns of immigrant and refugee women, youth and families. It is our vision that women from diverse backgrounds be empowered to reach their goals and dreams as equal and contributing members of Canadian society.

Essential Skills Curriculum Project

This resource is the product of a one year project funded by the Government of Canada’s Human Resources and Social Development Department. It was developed to respond to Essential Skills training needs identified by project staff and our partner employers through interviews with management and staff, on the job observation, focus groups and review of written materials from the workplace. Our hotel partners and their staff identified Oral Communications, particularly with guests, as the area they wished us to concentrate on, so in every lesson, students practice listening and speaking to guests.

Initially a hotel partner asked us to design a series of 60-90 minute “Lunch and Learn” classes for housekeepers to give them more confidence in speaking with guests. This is the format in this curriculum for the first 3 units (Cleaning Guest Rooms, Customer Care and Safety and Emergencies). We later adapted much of the same material for use in 90-120 minute workshops at another hotel at the end of the working day.

As we gave the classes, it became apparent that there were some housekeepers with higher levels of English who were capable of helping in other departments in the hotel, as needed, if only they knew more of the vocabulary and customer care approaches used in those departments. To prepare them for this, we designed an Introduction to the Hotel unit, which briefly goes through the departments and job titles common in a large hotel; customer care functions of front desk and some other departments; and the needs of business travelers. We offered this as a pilot one day workshop. It could also be split into 2 half days, or a series of short workshops.

These lessons have been written for use by housekeeping supervisors and other hotel staff responsible for staff training. The appropriate lessons could also be used for training commercial cleaning staff.



CLB level of the material

The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB's) were developed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to provide a yardstick that can be used to describe an individual's ability to communicate in English as a Second Language. They describe a set of communication tasks the individual is able to perform, including a global performance profile, performance conditions, outcomes and standards, all expressed in a common language used by English as a Second Language educators across Canada. The Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 address four language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Each skill is organized into three stages--basic (CLB 1-4), intermediate (5-8) and advanced (9-12)--for a total of 12 benchmarks in each skill.*

The resources in Units 1 to 3 in this book were designed for immigrant housekeepers working in the hotel industry with CLB's 1 to 3. In practice, in our pilot workshops, our students had a wider range of ability than this, so some optional supplementary material was added. Unit 4 was specifically added as an extension, for housekeepers with higher levels of English and the potential to assist in or move to other parts of the hotel. This unit is also suitable as a short introduction to the hotel industry for those with intermediate or higher English.

It is important to remind students that many hotels in Canada require a very high level of English, fluency in other languages and experience and/or a post secondary qualification in Hotel Management or equivalent to work in Front Desk positions.

*For further information, see Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 by Grazyna Pawlikowska-Smith, Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, published by Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2005, or the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks website: www.language.ca.

Structure of the lesson plans

These training materials consist of a series of short, varied practical group lessons, based on a training outcome identified as important to customer service. Each lesson builds on and reviews content from the previous lessons in the unit. They are designed following a participative/communicative model of learning.

Lessons start with a short activity, designed to introduce the topic, introduce the associated vocabulary and allow the instructor to assess what students already know.



When summarizing vocabulary activities, instructors are encouraged to model the activities and formats used in the worksheets presented at the end of the session, to build students' Document Use skills. The worksheets were very popular with students, both for review and to allow students who missed a session to catch up. As students requested pronunciation activities, we inserted brief optional pronunciation pointers after introducing new vocabulary which might present pronunciation challenges.

Students were not confident in Oral Communications. In the first few lessons it was challenging to get students to speak at all. Therefore in each lesson, students watch a skit, then practice the language they hear in role plays and other activities. Although reading was not a focus in the first 3 units, we used word, sentence and activity cards to reinforce understanding and to help those interested in improving their reading skills.

Students are expected to learn from the materials, their trainer and from each other. We found it particularly helpful to have a member of the hotel safety committee available to answer questions during the lessons in the Safety and Emergencies unit. Lessons are designed for use with groups of new trainees or more experienced staff and can be combined to fit the time and training format. Many can be adapted for use with individual trainees.

Tips for presenting one to one

***Tell them what you are going to do and why
Tell them what you are doing and why
and tell them what you did and why.***

- Go through vocabulary using real supplies, a real room or equipment wherever possible.
- Demonstrate actions, saying what you are doing, preferably in simple, present tense (for example: Dust the furniture). Then mime or do the actions asking the student: *What is this?*
- Do a listening check, to ensure the student understands: for example, ask for something. Ask the student to repeat what you wanted and show you the item you are asking for.
- When you move to other topics, a light hearted quiz, for example, the names of items in the room, prepositions and amenities, is a good way for students to practice and review vocabulary.
- Many of the activities and worksheets can be used one to one and are useful ways to check learning after a demonstration. Start with simple worksheets, and have students give you verbal answers. If she can, she can also point to, match or copy



the appropriate words. See how much help she needs for this, then you can decide if she can do other worksheets more independently.

- If you think a worksheet may be too difficult, let her do it with help and encouragement (either from you, another housekeeper or someone at home).
- For the skits, use a Speaking Practice worksheet. Explain the situation, and read through it, pointing at the people in the picture, if there is one, as you say their part. Ask questions to see what the student understood. Repeat key phrases from the skit and ask her to repeat. Then try the role play with her acting as the housekeeper. Give her a copy to take home and to practice with, if there is someone at home who can help.
- Use the pronunciation activities only if the student needs them. If the student wishes to improve pronunciation, it takes a lot of practice, so encourage her to repeat the pronunciation activities often.