

# Communication on the building site: a training package for bricklaying students

## 1. Introduction

This document is about communication including written and verbal instructions, technical guidance booklets, drawings and where to obtain guidance. Good communication between all the people on a building site can help brickwork to be built better and with no defects. Therefore, it is in everyone's interest to pay attention to communication. Section 2 provides basic information that students should become familiar with.

## 2. Good communication

### 2.1 Technical information

Technical booklets and guidance should be available on every site. This information can help solve problems with brickwork and make sure that good bricklaying practice is being followed. Your supervisor should be able to get hold of copies of relevant booklets for you. The information is usually free and can be ordered from companies such as brick manufacturers and NHBC.

Technical information is also available in formats other than paper documents. For example, posters (as commonly used in site canteens) and instructions printed on the packaging of brick palettes. A particularly important source of information is the telephone help desks run by brick manufacturers. These provide free technical advice about brick related issues. Information can often be faxed to site.

### 2.2 Drawings

The quality of finished work is heavily dependent on the drawings supplied. Therefore, before starting work, make sure that the drawings you are going to use are as complete as possible, and that they have been checked by your supervisor or site agent.

If you spot a defect in a drawing make sure that you tell your supervisor, rather than just pressing on regardless. It is the same if you see a defect in the brickwork, or a safety hazard or think that there is a better way to get a job done - tell your supervisor. It all helps the quality of the brickwork and gives a better and safer working environment. (Table 1)

Event	Actions
Error noted in drawing or Incomplete or missing drawing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform site agent or supervisor.</li> <li>• Suggest remedy.</li> <li>• Reschedule work.</li> </ul>
Defect noted in brickwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform site agent or supervisor.</li> <li>• Suggest remedy.</li> <li>• Reschedule work.</li> </ul>
Safety hazard identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform site agent or supervisor.</li> <li>• List the points of safety that must be observed.</li> <li>• Reschedule work.</li> </ul>

**Table 1: Actions to be followed when defects are noted in drawings or brickwork**

Always remember the following key points:

- Drawings must be provided to site as early and as complete as possible.
- Drawings must be adequately detailed and checked before site work starts.

- There may be different means by which drawings could be produced to help building work progress more smoothly (e.g. colour coded, by trade or element, laminated, small or large sized).
- Consider where the drawings are to be used/kept - site office, supervisor, operatives?
- If you spot a defect or missing information in a drawing, always tell your supervisor - do not just press on regardless. The amended drawings should be returned back to you by your supervisor as quickly as possible.

### **2.3 Demonstration samples**

Demonstration samples and mock-ups are a good way to learn about complicated or new details on site (e.g. curved brickwork, thin joint mortar, complex window detailing). So if you are unsure about any detailing that you are asked to do, ask your supervisor to demonstrate it.

### **2.4 Meetings**

No matter what job you have, you will be involved in meetings at some stage. These can vary between informal small-scale chats in the canteen to formal affairs with agendas and procedures. All of you will be involved with the more informal variety. While meetings often prove worthwhile, beware that they can waste time unless handled properly. Here are some things that you must make sure that you know:

- Why you are there.
- Who is running or "chairing" the meeting.
- The aim of the meeting.
- What the outcome of the meeting was (e.g. jot down the key points at the end).

Ask the person running the meeting to summarise the outcome at the end.

If you are able to, suggest that the meeting has a time limit and that a list of items is discussed (with the most important ones first). If not the meeting could go on for a long time and still not decide anything important!

### **2.5 Clear communication**

There are so many different things going on around a building site, it is important that all communications are:

- Necessary (does it really need to be said, or is it just a distraction).
- Clear (make it clear what is required).
- Short and to the point (cover everything that needs covered but no waffle).
- Accurate (e.g. Mersey Brick not Misery Brick, 65 mm not 65 cm).
- Addressed to the relevant person (e.g. labourer, supervisor or site agent ?)
- Given out in good time (e.g. don't tell someone a delivery of bricks is due just a the lorry arrives on site)

## **3. Training tasks**

### **3.1 Introduction for teaching staff**

These five tasks should be carried out by students to help teach them about the importance of good communication. To complete the tasks the following will be required:

- Task 1 - A copy of the BDA Brickwork - Good Site Practice booklet.
- Task 2 - The fax template given on page 4.
- Task 3 - A computer with internet access and printer.

- Task 4 - A brickwork wall drawing with known error(s) included in it.

Task 5 can be carried out as a role playing exercise (e.g. with the student's supervisor taking the role of the gate person). Two telephones will be required.

### 3.2 Tasks for students

#### **Task 1**

The Brick Development Association (usually simply know as the BDA) publish a booklet called "Brickwork - Good Site Practice". (Figure 1).

Find out from this booklet the four tips given when bricklaying is to be done in cold weather.

#### **Task 2**

Use the template on page 4 to prepare a fax asking for information from a brick manufacturer s Technical Help Desk.

The brick manufacturer is called Mersey Brick Ltd and the information needed is the standard working sizes and the manufacturing tolerances of the Mersey Red Buff brick.

#### **Task 3**

Access a brick manufacturer s web-site (e.g. marshalls.co.uk or hanson-brickseurope.com).

Find and print information relating to good bricklaying practice.

#### **Task 4**

The brickwork wall drawing provided to you includes an error(s).

Mark up the drawing and write a short note to the site agent or supervisor showing that an error(s) has been found. Describe the error and what needs to be done to solve the problem.

On a separate piece of paper, list the effects of not communicating the error and leaving the wall to be built as the original drawing showed, under these headings:

- Who may be affected?
- How they will be affected?
- What could be the cost?

#### **Task 5**

You are working on a large site and waiting for an urgent delivery of ready-to- use mortar to arrive on site.

Contact the gate person by mobile phone to ask if the delivery has arrived. Arrange for the mortar to be delivered to the part of the site where you want to use it.

***A B Smith (Builders)***  
***Quality is our guarantee***

---

**Fax Transmission**

---

To Technical Help Desk  
At Mersey Brick Ltd  
Fax 07777 7777

Number of Pages  
(including this page)

---

From A B Smith (Builders)

Date

Tel

Fax

Your Ref

Our Ref

---

**Message**