

# Making appointments

## LEARNING OUTCOMES



- To contact the GP practice by telephone or in person to make an appointment
- To negotiate appointment details with the receptionist
- To agree and record appointment times and other details

## RESOURCES

- Copies of Resources 1–3
- Cards with excerpts from conversations 1–3 prepared by teacher (Activity 1 Support)
- Audio equipment 36–40

## RELATED TOPIC

Recording appointments (Theme 10, Topic 5)

### HEALTH SKILLS

Appointments systems operate in almost all GP practices throughout the UK but patients are normally allowed accelerated access in cases of genuine urgency. This topic helps learners arrange a consultation with their GP, either as an appointment or as an urgent case.

### FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

In order to make an appointment with a GP, learners need to be able to:

- request an interview at a suitable time
- provide essential personal information
- listen and respond to a receptionist's suggestions.

#### Functional Skills/Core Curriculum

Activities in this topic will contribute to learning in the following curriculum areas:

- speak clearly in a way which suits the situation **English** L1.2 (**E**Sc/L1.1a)
- make requests **English** E3.1 (**E**Lr/E3.3a)
- give personal information **English** E3.2 (**E**Sc/E3.4b)
- listen for detail **English** E3.2 (**E**Lr/E3.2b)
- make arrangements with others **English** E3.6 (**E**Sd/E3.1f).

## Engage

- Discuss learners' experience of making an appointment with a GP in and outside the UK.
- Compare experiences of:
  - how quickly you can get an appointment
  - other staff available (e.g. whether the practice has a nurse or other medical staff you can see straight away)
  - what happens if you need to see the doctor immediately
  - whether the practice has appointments or a walk-in system
  - what you do if you can't make an appointment.
- Draw out differences in learners' experiences. Learners need to be aware that practices operate different appointment systems, and they need to be familiar with what happens in their own practice.
- Explore what learners understand about the rights of a patient to see a GP or other health professional.

*What is good about an appointments system for a) the patient and b) the doctor?*

*What can you do if you want to see a doctor urgently?*

## Enable

### ACTIVITY 1 36–38

#### Explore different conversations between a patient and a GP's receptionist

- In pairs, ask learners to talk about what is happening in each of the pictures on Resource 1 and what ought to happen next.
- Ask them to suggest and practise how the conversations might continue.
- Encourage them to discuss the handwritten note giving details of an appointment and to talk about how they would record and remember appointments.
- Play the three conversations for learners to compare with their own versions.
- Discuss any new or difficult language.

#### Support

- Focus on the pictures one at a time with the group.
- Help and encourage learners to talk about each picture and read the speech-bubbles aloud.
- Select examples from the audio script of follow-up statements for each of the three pictures, and mount them on cards.
- Distribute the cards to pairs of learners to match to a picture and speaker.
- Play the conversations one at a time, pausing for learners to find the right card, revising their matching if necessary.

#### ESOL

- Learners will need support in handling unpredictable responses such as 'he's fully booked today'; 'No, I can't fit you in ... I'm sorry.' Practise different replies.
- Help learners prepare for a range of responses, such as 'I'm afraid Dr X is off sick today. Do you want to see Dr Y?'; 'The doctor's very busy. Will you see the nurse?'; 'There are about ten before you in the queue, but you can wait if you like.'

#### TIP

Intervene with questions and supply key vocabulary to keep the discussion flowing.

## ACTIVITY 2 39

### Understand and respond to a GP's receptionist

- Play the conversation between the patient and the receptionist. Talk about what is happening.
- Ask learners to:
  - practise spelling their own names and addresses to each other in pairs
  - write down the time and date of the appointment. (See the model on Resource 1.)

#### Support

- Play the conversation more than once.
- Replay relevant short sections as necessary.

#### ESOL

- Spelling names may need revision. Discuss what information learners might have to spell when making appointments.
- Introduce some phrases for offering to spell a name (e.g. 'That's ...'; 'I'll just spell that for you.').
- Set up pairs to practise; circulate to check and correct individual problems with specific letters.

*What types of situations are urgent?*

## ACTIVITY 3

### Practise making a telephone call to a GP practice

- Set up a telephone role-play in pairs, using the scenario cards from Resource 2.
- Use real telephones or sit learners back to back so they can't communicate through gesture or body language.
- Review the role-play and make a list of useful questions and vocabulary.

#### Support

- Read through one of the scenario cards with learners, asking direct questions to check understanding (e.g. 'When does he want the appointment?' 'Is it urgent?').
- Discuss the roles and, from learners' suggestions, build up and display a list of responses to the receptionist.
- Role-play the scenario with one of the learners before asking them to practise the conversation in pairs.

#### ESOL

Work with learners to build up a bank of useful words and expressions for making an appointment at their GP practice. Suggest they design a checklist of things to do and say which they can refer to when making a real appointment.

*What is the key information you need to remember when you make an appointment?*

*Do you have to say **why** you want the appointment?*

## Action

- Ask learners to identify a primary medical care or health service they need or would like to visit, such as a GP practice, a dentist, an optician, a physiotherapist, a counsellor, a pharmacist who offers cholesterol testing, etc.
- Ask them to make an appointment with the relevant service.
- Have a feedback and review session on the process of making an appointment.
- Provide a writing frame for learners to record individualised information and useful phrases to use when making appointments at their GP practice, dentist, etc. Include sections such as:
  - things I can say (e.g. 'Can I make an appointment to see ...?')
  - things I may hear (e.g. 'I can fit you in at 10.')
  - useful phone numbers (e.g. GP practice, dentist, etc.).

## TIP

Respect learners' right to privacy in the feedback session. Allow them to give general feedback on the process without identifying the health service involved.

# Making appointments

## RESOURCE 1

36 1



37 2



38 3



Tuesday 6th  
5:15 pm  
Dr Ahmed

## SCENARIO 1

**PATIENT**

You want to make an appointment to see Dr Ahmed this week.  
It isn't urgent.  
You would like an appointment in the evening because you are busy in the day.

**RECEPTIONIST**

I'm afraid Dr Ahmed is fully booked this week.  
Dr Green is free at 10:30 on Tuesday.  
I have no evening appointment until next Monday.  
I might be able to fit you in at 5 o'clock on Friday.

## SCENARIO 2

**PATIENT**

You want to make an appointment for your child with Dr Green.  
Your child has a bad cough and a temperature.  
You want to see the doctor today.

**RECEPTIONIST**

I'm afraid Dr Green is fully booked.  
As the patient is a child, I can fit you in as an urgent appointment.  
I might be able to fit you in with Dr Golden.

## SCENARIO 3

**PATIENT**

You have a rash on your skin.  
You want to make an appointment to see Dr Golden.  
You work in the day until 5 pm.

**RECEPTIONIST**

Dr Golden is free on Wednesday at 10:45.  
His first evening appointment is on Thursday at 4 pm.  
He also has a space on Thursday at 10 to 6.

## SCENARIO 4

**PATIENT**

You want to see Dr Green.  
You can come tomorrow (Tuesday) before 11 am.  
You can't come until after 4 on Wednesday or Thursday.  
On Friday you can only come at 5 pm or later.

**RECEPTIONIST**

Can you come on Wednesday at 10:45?  
In that case, what about Thursday at the same time, or Friday?  
I can fit you in with Dr Ahmed first thing tomorrow morning.

## ACTIVITY 1



### Conversation 1

**Receptionist:** Can I make an appointment to see the doctor, please? My name's Gina Dutton.

**Receptionist:** Are you registered with us?

**Patient:** Yes.

**Receptionist:** And how do you spell your name?

**Patient:** D-U-T-T-O-N.

**Receptionist:** D-U-double T-O-N. Thank you. And what's your address, please?

**Patient:** 36 Stanmore Gardens. That's S-T-A-N-M-O-R-E ...



### Conversation 2

**Patient:** I need to see the doctor.

**Receptionist:** He can't see you until tomorrow, I'm afraid.

**Patient:** But the pain's so bad! I can't wait till tomorrow.

**Receptionist:** I'm sorry, he's fully booked today.

**Patient:** Please, it's really bad. I have to see him.

**Receptionist:** Oh ... well ... if it's urgent ... Is it urgent?

**Patient:** Yes, it is. I must see him now.

**Receptionist:** All right. Sit down and I'll ask him to see you as soon as the next patient comes out.

**Patient:** Thank you. I feel very ill and I think I'm going to faint!



### Conversation 3

**Receptionist:** I'm sorry, we're fully booked this morning. What about 4 o'clock?

**Patient:** I can't come then. Are you sure you can't fit me in now?

**Receptionist:** No, I can't ... I'm sorry. I can give you an appointment at 9:15 on Thursday.

**Patient:** That's a long time away. What about tomorrow? Can I come between 5 and 6?

**Receptionist:** Let me see ... it's difficult ... but I'll see what I can do.

**Patient:** Thank you.

## ACTIVITY 2



### Conversation 4

**Patient:** Can I make an appointment to see the doctor, please?

**Receptionist:** Yes. Are you registered with us?

**Patient:** Yes.

**Receptionist:** And your name, please ...?

**Patient:** Stephen Billingham.

**Receptionist:** Sorry ... did you say 'Billinghurst'?

**Patient:** Yes, Billingham ... that's B-I-L-L-I-N-G-H-U-R-S-T.

**Receptionist:** Billingham ... right. Address ...?

**Patient:** 35 Shelley Street.

**Receptionist:** Which doctor would you like to see?

**Patient:** I don't mind. Whoever can see me.

**Receptionist:** Well, I can fit you in with Dr Ahmed tomorrow morning at 9.

**Patient:** Oh ... can't I come today?

**Receptionist:** I'm afraid not. We're fully booked.

**Patient:** Oh ... I'll come tomorrow then ... Did you say 9?

**Receptionist:** Yes.

**Patient:** Could it be at 9:30?

**Receptionist:** Well ... I can make it for 9:40 but that'll be with Dr Golden.

**Patient:** That's all right ... So that's tomorrow at 9:40 with Dr Golden.

**Receptionist:** Yes ... tomorrow, Wednesday 7th, at 9:40.

**Patient:** Thank you. I'll see you then.