



# Introducing the 4Ds

## A guide for leaders

Version 1.2

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# Purpose

This guide helps you to lead safety activities with your workers to make mahi (work) safer and easier. It uses the 4Ds (Dumb, Dangerous, Difficult, Different) to spark good kōrero (talk) and find smart fixes together, while following the 3Ls leadership engagement process of Listen-Learn-then Lead.

## What are the 4Ds?

The 4Ds help us notice everyday problems that can affect health, safety, and how easy or hard the job feels:

- **Dumb** – Something that doesn't make sense, frustrates, or slows the job down.
- **Dangerous** – Something that puts someone at risk of harm or feels unsafe.
- **Difficult** – Something hard to do, needing more effort, or demanding on workers.
- **Different** – Something that's changed, surprising, or not how we usually do it.

Spotting these helps us fix things before someone gets hurt or frustrated.

### Learn from work, use the 4D's.

When doing this work, what do you find .....

 <b>Dumb</b> What doesn't make sense or feels frustrating?	 <b>Dangerous</b> What is risky or feels unsafe?
 <b>Difficult</b> What makes it difficult or demanding?	 <b>Different</b> What is changing or surprising?



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# The 3L leader-led safety conversation

## Safety conversations not observations

Traditionally, 'safety' is thought to be present when the number of unacceptable outcomes (work that doesn't go well) are as low as possible.

The 3L Leader-led safety conversations are different. They are about leaders learning from those who do the work and helping to ensure the number of acceptable outcomes (work that goes well) is as high as possible by understanding the difference between Work As Imagined (WAI) and Work As Done (WAD).

By seeking to understand the work environment in this way, we create opportunities for learning and improvement.

The 3Ls model of Listen-Learn-then Lead is a six-step process for learning from everyday work.

### Step 1: Plan and prepare

You are taking time from your workday and the workday of your frontline workers.

Time is valuable and must have purpose and meaning.

Your engagement as a leader with the frontline to have a safety conversation should focus on part of a job, process or activity from everyday work that you want to learn from.

It could be routine or high-risk work.

### Step 2: Focus on system and processes, not people

Going to where normal everyday successful work is performed, is not a performance evaluation for workers or contractors.

A leader safety conversation is meant for engaging with the frontline, recognising workers as the experts of normal work, asking curiosity-based questions, which makes visible the gap between Work As Imagined and Work As Done.

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### Step 3: Ask curious questions (4Ds)

Use the 4Ds to engage storytelling with the frontline workers about the “rubs” with normal work, such as;

When doing that work, can you share with me when;

- That work didn’t make sense or frustrates you (**DUMB**)
- Doing that work didn’t feel right or mentally taxing (**DANGEROUS**)
- Work was harder, more demanding than normal (**DIFFICULT**)
- The work was **DIFFERENT**, changing or surprising from what it normally is.

### Step 4: Don’t suggest change or rush to a fix

The safety conversation is for engaging, listening and learning.

Any improvements or actions (even if they feel obvious to you) comes later.

Fixing is easy and obvious, creating sustainable change through continuous improvement is a cycle of learning and improving for workers and the organisation.

### Step 5: Explore opportunities, share learnings, follow through

Themes will emerge from the storytelling, give yourself some space / “soak time” to reflect on what you have learnt.

Continue the safety conversation about possible improvements after soak time.

Then share those learnings with others, so you can explore the opportunities that could lead to activities to create improvements and follow through with the group.

### Step 6: Mix it up and repeat

Schedule these safety conversations at different times of the work day.

Mixing it up helps you to see how things change throughout the day, week or month.

# Resource cards

## Use the 3L's for leader led work insights.

Workers are the experts of normal work, be curious about the work to....

### Listen

Focus on systems,  
not people.

Talk with workers  
to gain insights  
about normal  
work.

Flip Card for  
4D's talk.

### Learn

Don't suggest  
change or rush to  
a fix.

Take soak time to  
learn from the  
4D stories.

Talk with others  
about what you  
learnt.

### Lead

Reflect on what  
you have learnt.

Support the need  
to improve and  
make sustainable  
change.

Share those  
learnings with  
others.



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## Learn from work, use the 4D's.

When doing this work, what do you find .....



### Dumb

What doesn't  
make sense or  
feels frustrating?



### Dangerous

What is risky  
or  
feels unsafe?



### Difficult

What makes it  
difficult or  
demanding?



### Different

What is  
changing or  
surprising?



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# Ngā mihi

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