# What are Interpersonal Skills?

Interpersonal skills are the life skills we use every day to communicate and interact with other people, both individually and in groups.  People who have worked on developing strong interpersonal skills are usually more successful in both their professional and personal lives.

Employers often seek to hire staff with 'strong interpersonal skills' - they want people who will work well in a team and be able to communicate effectively with colleagues, customers and clients.

There are a variety of skills that can help you to succeed in different areas of life and SkillsYouNeed has sections covering many of these. However, the foundations for many other skills are built on strong **interpersonal skills** since these are relevant to our **personal relationships**, **social affairs** and **professional lives.**Without good interpersonal skills it is often more difficult to develop other important life skills.

**Unlike specialised and technical skills (hard skills), interpersonal skills (soft skills) are used every day and in every area of our lives.**

**Find out how to improve and develop your interpersonal skills including:**

### Learn to Listen

**Listening is not the same as hearing.** Take time to listen carefully to what others are saying through both their verbal and non-verbal communication. Visit our [**Listening Skills**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/listening-skills.html) page to learn more.

### Choose Your Words

**Be aware of the words you are using when talking to others.** Could you be misunderstood or confuse the issue?  Practise clarity and learn to seek feedback to ensure your message has been understood.

Encourage others to engage in communication and use appropriate questioning to develop your understanding. Our page: [**Verbal Communication**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/verbal-communication.html), introduces the subject, you may also be interested in [**Effective Speech**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/effective-speaking.html) for tips on how to use your voice to full effect and [**Questioning**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/questioning.html) which can help you encourage communication in others and clarify what they have said.

### Understand Why Communication Fails

**Communication is rarely perfect and can fail for a number of reasons**. Learn about the various barriers to good communication so you can be aware of - and reduce the likelihood of - ineffective interpersonal communication and misunderstandings. See our page: [**Barriers to Communication**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/barriers-communication.html) for more information. Our page [**Communicating in Difficult Situations**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/communication-difficult-situations.html) offers further ideas to help you to get your message across when stress levels or other emotions are running high.

### Relax

**When we are nervous we tend to talk more quickly and therefore less clearly.**  Being tense is also evident in our body language and other non-verbal communication. Instead, try to stay calm, make eye contact and smile.  Let your confidence shine.

Learn to take time to relax, see our section: [**Relaxation Techniques**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/relax.html). Further relevant pages include:[**Dealing with Stress**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/stress-tips.html) and [**Coping with Presentation Nerves**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/present/presentation-nerves.html).

### Clarify

Show an interest in the people you talk to. Ask questions and seek clarification on any points that could be easily misunderstood. (See [**Reflection**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/reflecting.html) and [**Clarification**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/clarification.html)).

### Be Positive

Try to remain positive and cheerful.  People are much more likely to be drawn to you if you can maintain a positive attitude. More on [**Personal Presentation**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/personal-presentation.html) and [**Building Confidence**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/confidence.html).

### Empathise

Understand that other people may have different points of view. Try to see things from their perspective. You may learn something whilst gaining the respect and trust of others. More on [**Active Listening**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/active-listening.html) and read our article: [**What is Empathy?**](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/empathy.html).