**Communication Skills**

**Communication is simply the act of transferring information from one place, person or group to another.**

Every communication involves (at least) one sender, a message and a recipient. This may sound simple, but communication is actually a very complex subject.

The transmission of the message from sender to recipient can be affected by a huge range of things. These include our emotions, the cultural situation, the medium used to communicate, and even our location. The complexity is why good communication skills are considered so desirable by employers around the world: accurate, effective and unambiguous communication is actually extremely hard.

Defining Communication

**communication**, *n*. The imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium. …The successful conveying or sharing of ideas and feelings.

Oxford English Dictionary

As this definition makes clear, communication is more than simply the transmission of information. The term requires an element of success in transmitting or imparting a message, whether information, ideas, or emotions.

**A communication therefore has three parts: the sender, the message, and the recipient.**

The sender ‘encodes’ the message, usually in a mixture of words and non-verbal communication. It is transmitted in some way (for example, in speech or writing), and the recipient ‘decodes’ it.

Of course, there may be more than one recipient, and the complexity of communication means that each one may receive a slightly different message. Two people may read very different things into the choice of words and/or body language. It is also possible that neither of them will have quite the same understanding as the sender.

In face-to-face communication, the roles of the sender and recipient are not distinct. The two roles will pass back and forwards between two people talking. Both parties communicate with each other, even if in very subtle ways such as through eye-contact (or lack of) and general body language. In written communication, however, the sender and recipient are more distinct.

Categories of Communication

**There are a wide range of ways in which we communicate and more than one may be occurring at any given time.**

The different categories of communication include:

* **Spoken or**[**Verbal Communication**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/verbal-communication.html), which includes face-to-face, telephone, radio or television and other media.
* [**Non-Verbal Communication**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/nonverbal-communication.html), covering body language, gestures, how we dress or act, where we stand, and even our scent. There are many subtle ways that we communicate (perhaps even unintentionally) with others. For example, the tone of voice can give clues to mood or emotional state, whilst hand signals or gestures can add to a spoken message.
* [**Written Communication**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/writing-skills.html): which includes letters, e-mails, social media, books, magazines, the Internet and other media. Until recent times, a relatively small number of writers and publishers were very powerful when it came to communicating the written word. Today, we can all write and publish our ideas online, which has led to an explosion of information and communication possibilities.
* **Visualizations**: [**graphs and charts**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/num/graphs-charts.html), maps, logos and other visualizations can all communicate messages.

The desired outcome or goal of any communication process is mutual understanding.

The Communication Process

**A message or communication is sent by the sender through a communication channel to a receiver, or to multiple receivers.**

The sender must encode the message (the information being conveyed) into a form that is appropriate to the communication channel, and the receiver(s) then decodes the message to understand its meaning and significance.

**Misunderstanding can occur at any stage of the communication process.**

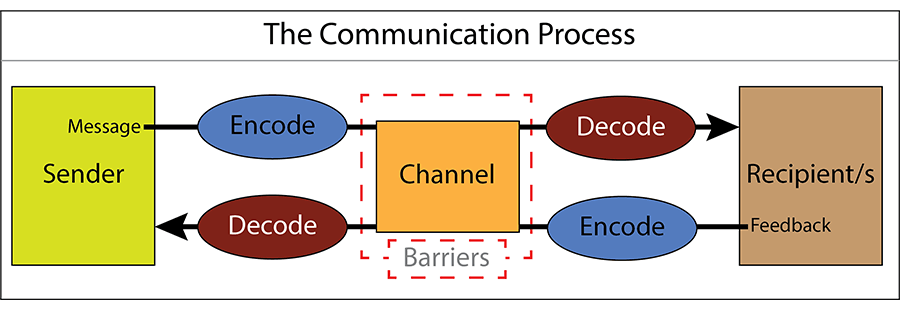
Effective communication involves minimising potential misunderstanding and overcoming any barriers to communication at each stage in the communication process.

*See our page:*[***Barriers to Effective Communication***](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/barriers-communication.html)*for more information.*

**An effective communicator understands their audience**, chooses an appropriate communication channel, hones their message to this channel and encodes the message to reduce misunderstanding by the receiver(s).

They will also seek out **feedback** from the receiver(s) as to how the message is understood and attempt to correct any misunderstanding or confusion as soon as possible.

Receivers can use techniques such as [**Clarification**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/clarification.html) and [**Reflection**](https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/reflecting.html) as effective ways to ensure that the message sent has been understood correctly.



**TYPES AND LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION**

**Types & Levels of Communication**

We communicate with one another on many different levels.

Because we do not have direct access to the thoughts and feelings of other people, we must rely on communication to convey messages to one another. There is more to communication than simply using language to speak to one another. Communication exists on a number of levels and in a variety of forms.

**Verbal Communication**

Verbal communication refers to the use of symbols in the form of spoken words to transmit messages. Verbal communication is complicated by the fact that language is arbitrary, meaning that words change over time; ambiguous, meaning that many words lack clear-cut meanings; and abstract, meaning that words are not the phenomena to which they refer. Thus, miscommunication occurs when the meaning we attach to a word changes with time, when a word lacks a clear-cut, precise meaning or when words are used that are too general. For example, the word "love" is a very imprecise term; one person's definition of love may differ substantially from another person's.

**Nonverbal Communication**

Nonverbal communication refers to the use of symbols other than words to transmit messages. It includes gestures, body language, how we utter words, aspects of our environment that influence meaning and objects such as jewelry, furniture and clothing that send people messages about ourselves. Research suggests that nonverbal communication constitutes anywhere between 65 and 93 percent of all human communication. Just like words, nonverbal symbols are ambiguous. What is a polite gesture to one person may be considered rude by another person. Certain forms of nonverbal communication may also have different meanings in different cultures. For example, direct eye contact is appropriate in U.S. society but considered disrespectful in many Asian countries.

**Intrapersonal Communication**

Intrapersonal communication is also known as self-talk or thinking, and refers to the ways we communicate with ourselves. We use intrapersonal communication to plan our lives, rehearse scenarios before we act them out, and tell ourselves what to do or not do. The way we communicate with ourselves greatly affects our self-esteem. A person who tells himself, "I'm so stupid" when he fails an exam will likely have poorer self-esteem than someone who thinks, "I did really well on the previous four exams. I must have just been having an off day, and I'll do better next time."

**Interpersonal Communication**

Interpersonal communication is the communication we have with other people. This type of communication varies from highly impersonal to extremely personal. The degree to which we communicate, or fail to communicate, with others influences how our relationships with them develop, continue or come to an end.

**Public Communication**

Public communication refers to public speeches that we deliver in front of audiences. Public communication serves three main purposes: to entertain, to persuade and/or to inform. It is different from other forms of interaction in that it requires greater levels of planning and preparation on the part of the speaker and involves less direct interaction. Audience members still interact with the speaker via mostly nonverbal symbols, but there is a lesser degree of give and take than there is in one-on-one conversations.

**Mass Communication**

Mass communication refers to any type of media that is used to communicate with mass audiences. Examples of mass media include books, television, radios, films, computer technologies, magazines and newspapers. Although mass communication does include certain computer technologies, it does not include technologies like email that are used to communicate one-on-one with someone. Mass communication is responsible for giving us views of events, issues and people from cultures that differ from ours. It enables us to learn what is going on in distant places in the world and lets us learn the viewpoints of people and cultures with whom we do not have direct contact.

The levels of communication are the following..

  1) INTRAPERSONAL COMMUNICATION- is language use or thought internal to the communicator. Intrapersonal communication is the active internal involvement of the individual in symbolic processing of messages. The individual becomes his or her own sender and receiver, providing feedback to him or herself in an ongoing internal process. It can be useful to envision intrapersonal communication occurring in the mind of the individual in a model which contains a sender, receiver, and feedback loop.  Although successful communication is generally defined as being between two or more individuals, issues concerning the useful nature of communicating with oneself and problems concerning communication with non-sentient entities such as computers have made some argue that this definition is too narrow

2.)INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION-Interpersonal communication is defined by communication scholars in numerous ways, though most definitions involve participants who are interdependent on one another, have a shared history. Communication channels are the medium chosen to convey the message from sender to receiver. Communication channels can be categorized into two main categories: Direct and Indirect channels of communication. Direct channels are those that are obvious and can be easily recognized by the receiver. They are also under direct control of the sender. In this category are the verbal and non-verbal channels of communication. Verbal communication channels are those that use words in some manner, such as written communication or spoken communication. Non-verbal communication channels are those that do not require silly words, such as certain overt facial expressions, controllable body movements (such as that made by a traffic police to control traffic at an intersection), color (red for danger, green means go etc), sound (sirens, alarms etc.). Indirect channels are those channels that are usually recognized subliminally or subconsciously by the receiver, and not under direct control of the sender. This includes kinesics or body language, that reflects the inner emotions and motivations rather than the actual delivered message. It also includes such vague terms as "gut feeling", "hunches" or "premonitions". Channels means mode of communicating the messages. Participants is the communicators who are both senders and receivers. Context refers to the interrelated condition of communication. It consists of such factors as: physical Milieu

Turn-taking: Managing the flow of information back and forth between partners in a conversation by alternating roles of speaker and listener

 Having good interpersonal communication skills support such processes as:

parenting

intimate relationship

management

selling

counseling

coaching

mentoring and co-mentoring, which is mentoring in groups

conflict management

 Interpersonal communication is the subject of a number of disciplines in the field of psychology, notably Transactional analysis.

3.) GROUP COMMUNICATION- refers to the nature of communication that occurs in groups that are between 3 and 12 individuals. Small group communication generally takes place in a context that mixes interpersonal communication interactions with social clustering.

4.) PUBLIC COMMUNICATION- It's at the heart of our economy, society, and politics. Studios use it to promote their films. Politicians use it to get elected. Businesses use it to burnish their image. Advocates use it to promote social causes. It's a field built on ideas and images, persuasion and information, strategy and tactics. No policy or product can succeed without a smart message targeted to the right audience in creative and innovative ways.

**Communication**

Communication is a process of exchanging information, ideas, thoughts, feelings and emotions through speech, signals, writing, or behavior. In communication process, a sender(encoder) encodes a message and then using a medium/channel sends it to the receiver (decoder) who decodes the message and after processing information, sends back appropriate feedback/reply using a medium/channel.

**Types of Communication**

People communicate with each other in a number of ways that depend upon the message and its context in which it is being sent. Choice of communication channel and your style of communicating also affects communication. So, there are variety of types of communication.

**Verbal Communication**

Verbal communication refers to the the form of communication in which message is transmitted verbally; communication is done by word of mouth and a piece of writing. Objective of every communication is to have people understand what we are trying to convey. In verbal communication remember the acronym KISS(keep it short and simple).

When we talk to others, we assume that others understand what we are saying because we know what we are saying. But this is not the case. usually people bring their own attitude, perception, emotions and thoughts about the topic and hence creates barrier in delivering the right meaning.

So in order to deliver the right message, you must put yourself on the other side of the table and think from your receiver’s point of view. Would he understand the message? how it would sound on the other side of the table?

**Verbal Communication is further divided into:**

Oral Communication

Written Communication

Oral Communication

In oral communication, Spoken words are used. It includes face-to-face conversations, speech, telephonic conversation, video, radio, television, voice over internet. In oral communication, communication is influence by pitch, volume, speed and clarity of speaking.

Advantages of Oral communication are: It brings quick feedback. In a face-to-face conversation, by reading facial expression and body language one can guess whether he/she should trust what’s being said or not.

**Written Communication**

In written communication, written signs or symbols are used to communicate. A written message may be printed or hand written. In written communication message can be transmitted via email, letter, report, memo etc. Message, in written communication, is influenced by the vocabulary & grammar used, writing style, precision and clarity of the language used.

Written Communication is most common form of communication being used in business. So, it is considered core among business skills.

Memos, reports, bulletins, job descriptions, employee manuals, and electronic mail are the types of written communication used for internal communication. For communicating with external environment in writing, electronic mail, Internet Web sites, letters, proposals, telegrams, faxes, postcards, contracts, advertisements, brochures, and news releases are used.

Advantages of written communication includes: Messages can be edited and revised many time before it is actually sent. Written communication provide record for every message sent and can be saved for later study. A written message enables receiver to fully understand it and send appropriate feedback.

Disadvantages of written communication includes: Unlike oral communication, Written communication doesn’t bring instant feedback. It take more time in composing a written message as compared to word-of-mouth. and number of people struggles for writing ability.

**Nonverbal Communication**

Nonverbal communication is the sending or receiving of wordless messages. We can say that communication other than oral and written, such as gesture, body language, posture, tone of voice or facial expressions, is called nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication is all about the body language of speaker.

Nonverbal communication helps receiver in interpreting the message received. Often, nonverbal signals reflects the situation more accurately than verbal messages. Sometimes nonverbal response contradicts verbal communication and hence affect the effectiveness of message.

**Nonverbal communication have the following three elements:**

Appearance Speaker: clothing, hairstyle, neatness, use of cosmetics Surrounding: room size, lighting, decorations, furnishings

Body Language facial expressions, gestures, postures

Sounds Voice Tone, Volume, Speech rate

Types of Communication Based on Purpose and Style

Based on style and purpose, there are two main categories of communication and they both bears their own characteristics. Communication types based on style and purpose are:

Formal Communication

Informal Communication

**Formal Communication**

In formal communication, certain rules, conventions and principles are followed while communicating message. Formal communication occurs in formal and official style. Usually professional settings, corporate meetings, conferences undergoes in formal pattern.

In formal communication, use of slang and foul language is avoided and correct pronunciation is required. Authority lines are needed to be followed in formal communication.

**Informal Communication**

Informal communication is done using channels that are in contrast with formal communication channels. It’s just a casual talk. It is established for societal affiliations of members in an organization and face-to-face discussions. It happens among friends and family. In informal communication use of slang words, foul language is not restricted. Usually. informal communication is done orally and using gestures.

Informal communication, Unlike formal communication, doesn’t follow authority lines. In an organization, it helps in finding out staff grievances as people express more when talking informally. Informal communication helps in building relationships.

Communication (from Latin "communis", meaning to share) is the activity of conveying information through the exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, visuals, signals, writing, or behavior.

Communication requires a sender, a message, and a recipient, although the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication; thus communication can occur across vast distances in time and space. Communication requires that the communicating parties share an area of communicative commonality. The communication process is complete once the receiver has understood the message of the sender.

A variety of verbal and non-verbal means of communicating exists such as body language, eye contact, sign language, haptic communication, chronemics, and media such as pictures, graphics, sound, and writing.

**Nonverbal communication**

Nonverbal communication describes the process of conveying meaning in the form of non-word messages. Research shows that the majority of our communication is non verbal, also known as body language. In fact, 63-93% of communication is non-verbal.[citation needed] Some of non verbal communication includes chronemics, haptics, gesture, body language or posture; facial expression and eye contact, object communication such as clothing, hairstyles, architecture, symbols infographics, and tone of voice as well as through an aggregate of the above.

Speech also contains nonverbal elements known as paralanguage. These include voice lesson quality, emotion and speaking style as well as prosodic features such as rhythm, intonation and stress. Likewise, written texts include nonverbal elements such as handwriting style, spatial arrangement of words and the use of emoticons to convey emotional expressions in pictorial form.

**Oral communication**

Oral communication, while primarily referring to spoken verbal communication, can also employ visual aids and non-verbal elements to support the conveyance of meaning. Oral communication includes speeches, presentations, discussions, and aspects of interpersonal communication. As a type of face-to-face communication, body language and choice tonality play a significant role, and may have a greater impact upon the listener than informational content. This type of communication also garners immediate feedback.

**Business communication**

 A business can flourish when all objectives of the organization are achieved effectively. For efficiency in an organization, all the people of the organization must be able to convey their message properly.[citation needed]

**Written communication and its historical development**

Over time the forms of and ideas about communication have evolved through the continuing progression of technology. Advances include communications psychology and media psychology; an emerging field of study. Researchers divide the progression of written communication into three revolutionary stages called "Information Communication Revolutions".[citation needed] During the first stage, written communication first emerged through the use of pictographs. The pictograms were made in stone, hence written communication was not yet mobile.

During the second stage, writing began to appear on paper, papyrus, clay, wax, etc. Common The third stage is characterised by the transfer of information through controlled waves and electronic signals.

Communication is thus a process by which meaning is assigned and conveyed in an attempt to create shared understanding. This process, which requires a vast repertoire of skills in interpersonal processing, listening, observing, speaking, questioning, analyzing, gestures, and evaluating enables collaboration and cooperation.

Misunderstandings can be anticipated and solved through formulations, questions and answers, paraphrasing, examples, and stories of strategic talk. Written communication can be clarified by planning follow-up talks on critical written communication as part of the every-day way of doing business. A few minutes spent talking in the present will save valuable time later by avoiding misunderstandings in advance. A frequent method for this purpose is reiterating what one heard in one's own words and asking the other person if that really was what was meant.

**Effective Communication**

Effective communication occurs when a desired effect is the result of intentional or unintentional information sharing, which is interpreted between multiple entities and acted on in a desired way. This effect also ensures the message is not distorted during the communication process. Effective communication should generate the desired effect and maintain the effect, with the potential to increase the effect of the message. Therefore, effective communication serves the purpose for which it was planned or designed. Possible purposes might be to elicit change, generate action, create understanding, inform or communicate a certain idea or point of view. When the desired effect is not achieved, factors such as barriers to communication are explored, with the intention being to discover how the communication has been ineffective.

**Barriers to effective human communication**

Barriers to effective communication can retard or distort the message and intention of the message being conveyed which may result in failure of the communication process or an effect that is undesirable. These include filtering, selective perception, information overload, emotions, language, silence, communication apprehension, gender differences and political correctness

This also includes a lack of expressing "knowledge-appropriate" communication, which occurs when a person uses ambiguous or complex legal words, medical jargon, or descriptions of a situation or environment that is not understood by the recipient.