

## Unit 401: Effective communication in business

### Handout 3: Communication types

It is generally accepted that there are four types of communication in business:

- **verbal**
- **non-verbal**
- **written**
- **visual.**

You may come across discussion about other types of communication, such as 'aural' (where sound other than speech is used) and 'electronic'. However, in terms of communications for, by and within a business, the four terms above cover most eventualities.

When considering **communication style** and **purpose**, the four types above are often further classified according to whether they are:

- **formal**
- **informal.**

Type of communication	Includes:	Additional information
Verbal	Sounds, language, speaking and words.	Language is said to have originated from mixing sounds with gestures. Two broad classifications of verbal use are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• interpersonal</li><li>• public.</li></ul>
Non-verbal	Posture, gesture, smell, facial expressions, touch, other physical contact, body motion, recognised signs (e.g. sign language); some also include lip-reading.	Recognised as adding meaning and/or weight to verbal communication. Often used for demonstrating emotion or feelings. Frequently misinterpreted and acknowledged as a barrier to effective communication when misunderstood.
Written	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Electronic: emails, blogs, SMS etc</li><li>• Printed: newspapers, books, typed letters (some crossover with electronic)</li><li>• Informal: handwritten letter, handwritten note, birthday card</li></ul>	
Visual	Information display: signs, symbols, topography, photography, (some people also include art)	Crossover with electronic communication includes video and TV etc. May be combined with sound (in the case of music) or speech

Within a business context, communication may also be seen in terms of whether it is:

- **internal (private)**
- **external (public)**

Again, within business, three additional communication types may be identified:

- **upwards**
- **downwards**
- **lateral**

Classifying communication is therefore dependent on the **situation** in which the interaction takes place and on its **purpose**.