

Unit 401: Effective communication in business

Handout 11: Overcoming barriers to verbal communication

Type of barrier	Possible problem
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Different languages• Inaccurate translation or interpretation• Different meaning within social context• Use of jargon• Insufficient grasp of the language (inability to speak it properly)
Social/cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Different cultures – for example, eye contact between men and women may be unacceptable• Different social conventions, such as not looking directly at a person in authority• Social taboos• Personal space in one-to-one communications• Lack of feedback
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emotional override of either the sender or recipient, depleting the message• Lack of attention• Fear or mistrust of either sender or recipient• Inconsistency of message
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Geographic distances• Noisy environment• Environmental discomfort (e.g. too hot or cold, pouring with rain etc.)• Length of message (loss of interest by recipient)• Non-verbal signals at odds with message
Physiological	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sender with a speech impediment• Recipient with a hearing impairment
Systemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An organisational structure that blocks communication channels• Lack of subject knowledge (not doing the homework)• Information overload (too much or too complex for audience)
Attitudinal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Already having a negative opinion of the speaker before the communication starts• Stereotypes• Differences in perception and viewpoint• Moralising• Sender showing disbelief in the message they're trying to communicate• Assumptions about the message content before delivery• Not listening

Overcoming barriers

Type of barrier	Ways of overcoming the barrier
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use simple language• Avoid jargon and colloquialisms (culturally specific, informal terms)
Social/cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know your audience – research controversial issues• Respect the individual• Give positive feedback• Plan what to say and how to say it
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain openness when communicating• Recognise and account for emotional states
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compensate for the environment• Minimise disruption• Pay attention to non-verbal communication
Physiological	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognise and make appropriate adjustments• Openly discuss methods to alleviate disadvantage
Systemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand your audience• Prepare properly
Attitudinal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose when it is appropriate to communicate• Listen actively!