

WORKING IN **GROUPS**

SEVENTH EDITION



ISA N. ENGLEBERG | DIANNA R. WYNN

Working in Groups

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Working in Groups

Communication Principles and Strategies

Seventh Edition

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Cover Printer: *Phoenix Color*

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Engleberg, Isa N., author. | Wynn, Dianna, author.
Title: Working in groups: communication principles and strategies / Isa N. Engleberg, Prince George's Community College, Dianna R. Wynn, Nash Community College.
Description: Seventh edition. | Boston : Pearson Education, Inc., [2017] | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2016009869 | ISBN 9780134415529 | ISBN 0134415523
Subjects: LCSH: Group relations training. | Small groups. | Communication in small groups.
Classification: LCC HM1086 .E53 2017 | DDC 302/.14--dc23 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016009869>

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Books A La Carte:

ISBN-13: 978-0-13-441552-9
ISBN-10: 0-13-441552-3

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Preface

One central question has always guided our research and writing for *Working in Groups*: What do college students enrolled in a group communication course *really* need to know?

Our guiding question led us to include both classic and current theories of group communication that focus on “how groups work” as well as practical group communication strategies and skills that emphasize “how to work in groups.”

Unified Perspective: Balance and Group Dialectics

Beginning with the first edition of *Working in Groups*, we have used the concept of **balance** as a central metaphor for learning how to work in groups. A group that reaches a decision or completes a task is not in balance if group members dislike or mistrust one another. A group that relies on two or three members to do all the work is not in balance. Effective groups balance factors such as task and social maintenance functions, individual and group needs, and leadership and followership.

We further developed the balance metaphor into a unique model of **group dialectics**—the interplay of opposing or contradictory forces inherent in group work. A dialectic approach examines how group members negotiate and resolve the tensions and pressures they encounter while working together to achieve a common goal. We apply contemporary theories and research to illuminate the nine group dialectics that characterize the delicate balance achieved by effective groups.

Group Dialectics

Individual Goals	↔	Group Goals
Conflict	↔	Cohesion
Conforming	↔	Nonconforming
Task Dimensions	↔	Social Dimensions
Homogeneous	↔	Heterogeneous
Leadership	↔	Followership
Structure	↔	Spontaneity
Engaged	↔	Disengaged
Open System	↔	Closed System

Comprehensive Topic Coverage

The Seventh Edition of *Working in Groups* strengthens the text’s scholarship and applicability. Review the detailed table of contents to get a feel for the depth and breadth of topic coverage. We include **classic and traditional group communication** subject matter, such as

- Group Development
- Member Diversity
- Verbal and Nonverbal Communication
- Decision Making and Problem Solving
- Group Norms and Roles
- Leadership Theories and Power
- Group Cohesiveness and Conflict
- Planning and Conducting Meetings

We also include **cutting-edge theories, research, and communication strategies**, such as

- Group Dialectics and Balance
- “Team Talk” Strategies and Skills
- Communication Apprehension in Groups
- Communication Ethics in Groups
- Group Goal Setting and Motivation
- Adapting to Group Diversity
- Group Deliberation
- Virtual Teams
- Argumentation in Groups
- Brownell’s HURIER Listening Model
- Personality Traits in Groups
- Decision-Making Styles
- 5M Model of Effective Leadership
- The Collective Intelligence of Groups

Pedagogical Features

The pedagogical features of this Seventh Edition that link the theories of group communication (how groups work) with related communication strategies and skills (how to work in groups) include the following:

Case Studies

Provided at the beginning of every chapter, **original case studies** and accompanying questions enable students to

anticipate, discuss, and apply chapter content. The case study questions do not offer a single or correct answer; rather, they ask students to apply what they learn in the chapter and to explore what they believe are appropriate responses to the case study questions.

Video Scenarios

Incorporated into the first 11 chapters, **video scenarios** highlight important group communication theories, strategies, and skills. Instructors can use these videos to supplement classroom lectures and discussions, as the basis for exam questions, or as cases for analysis.

Groups in Balance

The **Groups in Balance** feature calls attention to group dialectics and the need to balance the contradictory forces inherent in all group work. The feature also examines the ways in which groups negotiate and resolve a variety of tensions using a both/and approach. Many of the Groups in Balance features are new or revised for the Seventh Edition.

Theory in Groups

Throughout this edition, we use the **Theory in Groups** feature to explain why groups succeed or fail and how related strategies and skills in this book can enhance group effectiveness. Many of the theories in the Seventh Edition are revised or new to the text.

Ethics in Groups

Every chapter includes an **Ethics in Groups** feature that examines the many ethical issues and dilemmas that frequently arise when interdependent group members collaborate with one another to achieve a common goal.

Virtual Teams

In each chapter, the **Virtual Teams** feature offers strategies and skills to help groups and members achieve common goals both in mediated face-to-face settings and in virtual teams that communicate across time, distance, and organizational boundaries.

GroupWork

GroupWork features in each chapter demonstrate and apply group communication principles in structured individual and/or interactive activities. This feature offers personal insights and opportunities for critically thinking about the ways in which related theories, strategies, and skills affect how and why group members collaborate with one another to achieve a common goal.

Group Assessment

Group Assessment features provide new and revised measures for evaluating student and group understanding of important theories, strategies, and skills.

End-of-Chapter Summary and Quiz Questions

Chapter **Summary Sections** review the major concepts in each chapter. Students should be able to explain and apply summary statements to a variety of group situations and contexts.

End-of-chapter **Quiz Questions** link to chapter learning outcomes and give students the opportunity to assess their understanding, application, analysis, and evaluation of chapter content.

New to this Edition

The Seventh Edition of *Working in Groups* includes up-to-date research and expanded coverage of contemporary topics that build on our tradition of intellectual rigor, practical focus, and commitment to student learning.

- **Updated, contemporary approaches to traditional topics** such as group roles, listening, leadership, conflict resolution, and problem solving
- **Expanded and updated sections on virtual teams and communication technology** in every chapter, with an emphasis on applying group theory, strategies, and skills to working in virtual teams
- **Greater focus on collaboration and deliberation** as vital components of group effectiveness
- **Expanded topic coverage** focusing on successfully resolving conflict, avoiding groupthink, managing problematic group members, preparing for team presentations, and using parliamentary procedure
- Updated sections on **adapting to group diversity** incorporated throughout most chapters, with contemporary research on gender and intercultural communication
- **New Theories, Research, and Practical Applications:** Collective Intelligence; Gender and Leadership; Cultural Synergy; Cosmopolitanism and Ethics; The 4Rs of Conflict Management; Group Deliberation and Decision Making; The Progressive Problem-Solving Method; Organizational Culture and Problem Solving; Deliberative Argumentation; A Parliamentary Procedure Primer
- **Excerpts from text-specific video scenarios** applicable to specific sections of chapters followed by related questions for group discussion or writing assignments

- **Revised learning objectives** for every chapter and linked to specific chapter content, as well as the end-of-chapter summary and quiz questions

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The following instructor resources can be accessed in the left hand navigation of Revel under "Resources" or by visiting <http://www.pearsonhighered.com/irc>

- **Instructor Manual:** includes chapter summary, learning objectives, handouts and additional resources.
- **Test Bank:** includes additional questions beyond the REVEL in multiple choice and essay response—formats.
- **PowerPoint Presentation:** provides a core template of the content covered throughout the text. Can easily be added to customize for your classroom.
- **MyTest:** Create custom quizzes and exams using the Test Bank questions. You can print these exams for in-class use. Visit: <http://www.pearsonhighered.com/mytest>

Acknowledgments

Although the title page of *Working in Groups* features our names, this project exemplifies the value of collaborating with our talented and creative publishing team. We are particularly grateful to the group of content editors, copy editors, production editors, graphic designers, photo editors, behind-the-scenes technicians, and what we describe as our "online transformers" who literally transformed a traditional manuscript into a digital text.

We extend very special thanks to Carly Czech, who became our sounding board, quality-assurance expert, and go-to fixer in the production process.

We also extend our gratitude to the *Working in Groups* Development Team including Karen Trost, our resourceful, supportive, and insightful Development Editor, whose professionalism, innovative ideas, and kindness made all the difference. Rashida Patel, our Instructional Designer, for demonstrating the versatility of digital media in transforming flat, linear content into new learning tools that individual and groups of students can ask, answer, interact with, and learn from interactive activities. Marla Sussman, our Assessment Writing Supervisor, taught us more about writing, analyzing, and maximizing quiz questions than we have learned from anyone else in many years of creating tests and exams. Manas Roy, our Digital Publishing Project Manager, demonstrated a perfect combination of the expertise, efficiency, patience, and diplomacy needed to transform our text into digital form.

In addition to our publishing team, we enjoyed, learned a great deal from, and made needed changes based on the advice of our conscientious reviewers, whose excellent suggestions and comments enriched every edition of *Working in Groups*.

We are particularly indebted to the students and faculty members who have shared their opinions and provided valuable suggestions and insights about our teaching and our text. They are the measure of all things.

Isa Engleberg and Dianna Wynn

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Working in Groups

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Chapter 1

Introduction to Group Communication



Like most successful groups, formation skydiving requires the collaboration of three or more interdependent members working to achieve a common goal.



Learning Objectives

- 1.1** Explain why employers consistently rank teamwork and the ability to collaborate with others as essential skills
- 1.2** Explain the importance of the five key elements in the definition of group communication
- 1.3** Compare the advantages and disadvantages of working in groups
- 1.4** Describe how understanding the components of the group communication process can enhance group effectiveness
- 1.5** Explain how successful groups balance various dialectic tensions by using a collaborative both/and approach
- 1.6** Practice the ethical principles included in the National Communication Association's Credo for Ethical Communication

Case Study: The Study Group Dilemma

Grace has always wanted to be a pediatric nurse. When she was accepted into the nursing program at a local college, she looked forward to studying for her dream job. However, her first day in Anatomy and Physiology class turned her hopes into fears. Her professor explained that every student must learn and understand the significance of more than 15,000 terms! As she looked around the classroom, she could see that many of the other new nursing majors seemed just as stunned as she was.

After class was over, she walked down the hallway with four classmates. The mood was gloomy. After an uncomfortable period of silence, one of the other students suggested that they form a study group. Grace had her doubts. She thought, “A study group will just take up a lot of my time and energy with no guarantee that it will help me earn a good grade. As much as I’d like to get to know these students better, I can probably learn more by studying alone. Besides, what if we don’t get along? What if I end up doing most of the work or the others don’t show up?”

Grace’s concerns—like those of many people—are understandable. Groups use a lot of time, energy, and resources. In some cases, a single person can accomplish just as much or more by working alone. And even if a study group has the potential to aid learning, it also has the potential for interpersonal conflicts and long-lasting resentments.

Critical Thinking Questions

After reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following critical thinking questions:

- Given Grace’s concerns about spending a lot of her valuable time and energy in a study group, what would you say to encourage her to join?
- What communication strategies should a study group use to ensure that members are satisfied with the group experience?
- Which dialectic tensions are most likely to affect how well Grace and her study group achieves its goal?
- Is it ethical for a study group to work together in order to improve their chances of earning a good grade when other students in the same class study alone? If yes, why? If not, why not?

1.1: The Importance of Groups

1.1 Explain why employers consistently rank teamwork and the ability to collaborate with others as essential skills

All of us work in groups—at school, on the job, in voluntary organizations, and in interactive leisure activities. Depending on the situation, group members can be family members, friends, colleagues, and new acquaintances. Meeting locations range from sports fields and battlefields to courtrooms and classrooms, and even from cyberspace to outer space.

Individual performance was once the measure of personal achievement, but success in today’s complex world depends on your ability to work in groups. Researchers Steve Kozlowski and Daniel Ilgen describe our profound dependence on groups:

Teams of people working together for a common cause touch all of our lives. From everyday activities like air travel, fire fighting, and running the United Way drive to amazing feats of human accomplishments like climbing Mt. Everest and reaching for the stars, teams are at the center of how work gets done in modern times.¹

Working in groups may be the most important skill you learn in college. A study commissioned by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) asked employers to rank essential learning outcomes needed by college graduates entering the workplace. In two of four major categories (“Intellectual and Practical Skills” and “Personal and Social Responsibility”), the top-ranked outcome was “teamwork skills and the ability to collaborate with others in diverse group settings.” Recent graduates ranked the same learning outcomes as top priorities.² A business executive in the same study wrote that they look for employees who “are good team people over anything else. I can teach the technical.”³ In another major study, employers identified group-related communication skills as more important than written communication, proficiency in the field of study, and computer skills.⁴

Group Assessment Group Communication Competencies Survey⁵

What are the critical group communication skills identified by employers? Fortunately, there are many research-based competencies that characterize effective group member behavior. As a way of introducing you to the theories, strategies, and skills in this text, assess the importance of each of the competencies presented in the *Group Communication Competencies Survey*.

Directions: On a 5-point scale, where 5 is “Extremely Important” and 1 is “Not at All Important,” rate the following group competencies in terms of their importance for becoming an effective group member. Select only one number for each item. When you are finished, ask yourself this question: How competent am I in the “Extremely Important” areas?

Group Competencies	5 Extremely Important	4 Very Important	3 Somewhat Important	2 Not Very Important	1 Not at All Important
1. Reduce your nervousness when speaking in a discussion or meeting.					
2. Understand, respect, and adapt to diverse group members.					
3. Communicate openly and honestly.					
4. Assume critical task roles (ask questions and analyze ideas) and social maintenance roles (motivate and support members).					
5. Influence group members to change their attitudes and/or behavior.					
6. Correctly interpret and appropriately respond to members' feelings.					
7. Develop clear group goals.					
8. Listen appropriately and effectively to other members.					
9. Intervene appropriately to resolve member and group problems.					
10. Develop positive interpersonal relationships with group members.					
11. Manage and resolve interpersonal conflicts.					
12. Develop and follow a well-organized meeting agenda.					
13. Actively contribute to group discussions.					
14. Use gestures, body language, facial expressions, and eye contact effectively.					
15. Demonstrate effective leadership skills.					
16. Research and share important ideas and information with group members.					
17. Use presentation aids and presentation software (PowerPoint) effectively.					
18. Plan and conduct effective meetings.					
19. Use appropriate procedures for group decision making and problem solving.					
20. Ask questions to clarify ideas and get needed information.					
21. Motivate group members.					
22. Use assertiveness strategies and skills confidently and effectively.					
23. Respect and adapt to group norms (standards of behavior).					
24. Promote equal participation in discussions by all members.					
25. Prepare and deliver an effective presentation or oral report.					
26. Use appropriate and effective words in a group discussion.					
27. Use effective technologies and skills to communicate in virtual teams.					
28. Develop and present valid arguments and opinions in a group discussion.					
29. Provide appropriate emotional support to group members.					
30. Other strategies or skills: a. _____ b. _____ c. _____					

1.2: Defining Group Communication

1.2 Explain the importance of the five key elements in the definition of group communication

When does a collection of people become a group? Do people talking in an elevator or discussing the weather at an airport constitute a group? Are the members of a church congregation listening to a sermon or fans cheering at a baseball game a group? Although the people in these examples are groups, they are not necessarily working for or with other members.

There are two basic uses of the word *group*. The first describes people brought together by a circumstance, such as a group of fans at a sporting event or concert, a group of people waiting in line for a bus or at airport check-in, or a group assembled at a political rally or a wedding. The second use of the word identifies a group as people who interact with one another to accomplish something. (Table 1.1) In this textbook, we concentrate on the second meaning in which group members are highly focused and dependent on communication. We define **group communication** as the collaboration of three or more interdependent members working to achieve a common goal.

Table 1.1 Shared Goals OR Shared Circumstances

Examples	Classification
People who work with their neighbors to pick up trash on Earth Day	People who interact with one another to accomplish a shared goal
People discussing the weather at an airport	People brought together by a shared circumstance
People who are members of a church congregation listening to a sermon	People brought together by a shared circumstance
People who get together to choose a scholarship winner from among high school honors students	People who interact with one another to accomplish a shared goal
People who get together to watch a Presidential candidates' debate on television	People brought together by a shared circumstance

Although people frequently assemble in a variety of circumstances and settings, group members who actively collaborate with one another to achieve a shared goal have the most influence and impact on their own lives and the lives of others. When describing group communication, we use the terms *group* and *team* interchangeably. Thus, a group of friends organizing an annual block party can be just as diligent and productive as a corporate team organizing and conducting a stockholders' meeting. Although we don't call a football team a football group or family members a team (unless they're playing a sport or game together), we can

safely say that all of these people are working together in order to achieve a common goal.

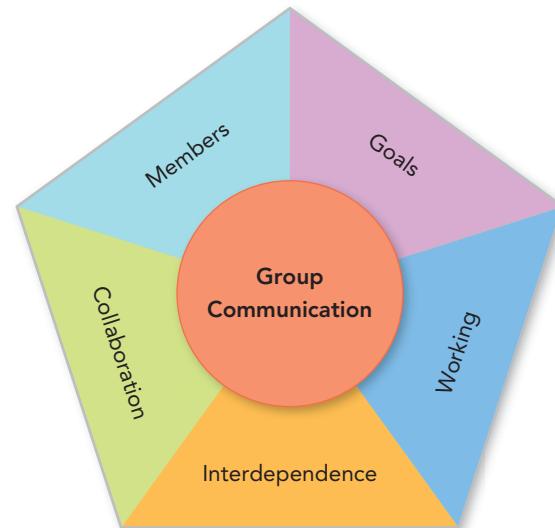
1.2.1: Key Elements of Group Communication



The Green Bay Packers have won more championships than any other team in National Football League history. How do the Packers exemplify the definition of group communication: the collaboration of three or more interdependent members working to achieve a common goal?

Now, let's break down our definition into the five essential components of group communication shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Components of Group Communication



THREE OR MORE MEMBERS The saying "Two's company, three's a crowd" recognizes that a conversation between two people is fundamentally different from a three-person discussion. If two people engage in a conversation, Jill communicates with Jack and Jack communicates with Jill.

But if a third person is added, the dynamics change: A third person can be the listener who judges and influences the content and style of the conversation. While two group members talk, support, or criticize one another, a third person can offer alternatives and make a tie-breaking decision if the other two people can't agree. We do not identify two people as a group because researchers note that two people working together perform at about the same level as the same two people working alone.⁶

As the size of a group increases, the number of possible interactions (and potential misunderstandings) increases exponentially. For example, a group with five members has the potential for 90 different interactions; if you add just two members, a group of seven has the potential for 966 different interactions.⁷

At this point, you may wonder whether there is an ideal group size.

The answer is: It depends. It depends on members' knowledge, attitudes, and skills; on the nature and needs of the task; and—most importantly—on the group's common goal. Fortunately, researchers have looked at the group-size question and given us some useful guidelines:

- Most group members and leaders prefer groups of three to nine members.
- Groups larger than nine members are generally less productive.⁸
- Groups of five to seven members are generally more effective for *problem-solving* discussions.
- To avoid tied votes, an odd number of members is usually better than an even number.

Smaller groups are generally more effective than larger groups. As group size increases, cohesion and effective collaboration decreases, and members tend to divide into subgroups. In large groups, members are more argumentative, less unified, and more competitive than cooperative. Some members may feel left out or inconsequential, and as a result, member satisfaction decreases as group size increases.⁹ The best advice is the simplest: limit "group size to the smallest number of members necessary to accomplish group goals."¹⁰

Many organizations have learned the importance of creating groups in a size most likely to achieve specific goals. For example, successful megachurches in the United States may have thousands of members in their congregations, but small groups are often the key to their success. Church members are encouraged to create or join tightly knit groups of five to seven people who meet in a member's home to pray and support one another in times of need. Worshipers match their interests with those of other group members—new parents, retired accountants, moun-

tain bike riders—and use their commonalities as the basis for religious discussions, member support, and volunteer projects. Thus, although successful megachurches boast large congregations that share a common belief system, they rely on the motivation, comfort, and work of small groups to sustain religious faith and church membership.¹¹

WRITING PROMPT

Key Elements of Group Communication

Think about the task groups in which you've been a member. Choose one or two examples and explain how the size of the group and the nature of the task affected its ability to achieve a common goal.

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COLLABORATION Collaboration is a fairly common word that encompasses such behaviors as coordination, cooperation, interaction, and teamwork. In groups, **collaboration** is characterized by coordinated group interaction in which members share a common goal, respect others' perspectives and contributions, and work together to create a successful group experience.

Effective collaboration ensures that members share relevant information and opinions, make responsible decisions, and develop positive interpersonal relationships. The way in which group members communicate does more than reveal group dynamics; it creates them.¹² Members learn which behaviors are appropriate, and which are inappropriate. Whether members meet face to face or in cyberspace, effective group communication requires collaboration.

INTERDEPENDENCE **Interdependence** refers to the influence of each group member on the thoughts and actions of other members. A successful group with interdependent members functions as a cohesive team in which all members feel responsible for doing their part. The failure of a single group member can adversely affect the entire group. For example, if one student in a study group fails to read and explain an important section of an assigned chapter, the entire group will be unprepared for questions related to the material covered in that chapter. Few tasks can be accomplished by a group without information, advice, support, and assistance from its interdependent members.

WORKING **Working** describes the physical and/or mental effort group members expend when trying to accomplish something. That "something" can be a social goal, such as getting friends together for a surprise party;

a family goal, such as deciding jointly where to go on vacation; a medical team's goal of planning training sessions for improving patient care; or a management goal, in which group members develop a strategic plan for their organization.

Working in a group is not about hard labor. Rather, when we work effectively in groups, we join others in a productive and motivating experience in which members combine their talents and energy to achieve a worthy goal.

COMMON GOAL Group members come together for a reason. Their collective reason defines and unifies the group. A group's **common goal** represents the shared purpose or objective toward which group work is directed. A group's goal guides its actions, sets standards for measuring success, provides a focus for resolving conflict, and motivates members. Large-scale studies have found that a clear common goal is the most significant factor separating successful groups from unsuccessful groups.¹³

It doesn't matter whether you call it a goal, an objective, a purpose, a mission, an assignment, or a vision. Without a common goal, group members would have difficulty answering several critical questions: Why are we meeting? Why should we care or work hard? Where are we going? How will we know when we get there?

Some groups have the freedom to develop their own goals. For example, a gathering of neighbors may meet to discuss ways of reducing crime in the neighborhood, or nursing students may form a study group to prepare for and do well on an upcoming exam. Other goals are assigned. A marketing instructor may require a semester-long project to assess a student group's ability to develop a marketing campaign. An industrial company may assemble a group of employees with the purpose of developing recommendations for safer storage of hazardous chemicals. Whatever the circumstances, effective groups work to accomplish a common goal.

Theory in Groups

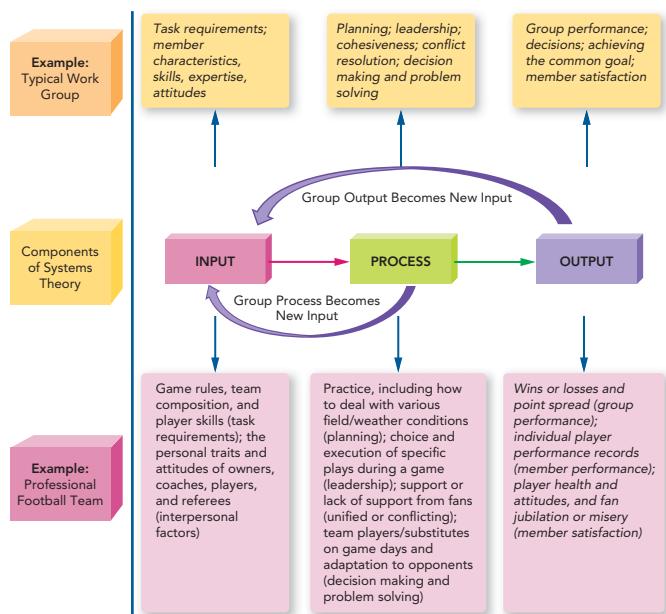
Systems Theory

Objective: Provide an example that shows how the Input-Process-Output Model of Systems Theory demonstrates the complex nature of group communication.

Systems Theory (Figure 1.2) encompasses a group of theories that examines how interdependent factors affect one another in a complex environment. In communication studies, Systems Theory recognizes that "communication does not take place in isolation, but rather necessitates a communication system."¹⁴

Every group we describe in this textbook is a **system**, a collection of interacting and interdependent elements work-

Figure 1.2 Components of Systems Theory



ing together to form a complex whole that adapts to a changing environment. However, groups are not the only systems in our lives. In biology, we study the digestive system, the nervous system, and the immune system, and recognize that when one of these biological systems fails, it can affect the others with serious or even deadly consequences. We embrace the democratic system of government, marvel at our solar system, and hope that our computer system doesn't crash.

One way of looking at groups and systems is through Input-Process-Output (I-P-O) models. *Inputs* come from both outside the group and within the group. *Process* takes place within the group as it works to achieve its common goal. *Output*, the results of input and process, can influence future input and processes. Understanding how your group functions as a system is just as important as doing your personal best in helping your group succeed.

WRITING PROMPT

Systems Theory

Identify the input, process, and output of a college study group, and explain how the group's process and output can affect input.

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

1.2.2: Types of Groups

Like their individual members, groups have diverse characteristics and goals. Although a basketball team, a study group, a corporate board of directors, and a homecoming

committee are groups in which interdependent members collaborate with one another to achieve a common goal, each one has unique features and functions.

The most common types of groups fall into eight categories that span a wide range of groups, from the most personal and informal types of groups to more formal, structured types. You can identify each type of group (**primary, social, self-help, learning, service, civic, organizational, and public**) by observing its purpose (why the group meets) and examples of membership (who is in the group), as shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Types of Groups

Type of Group	Purpose	Examples of Membership
Primary	To provide members with affection, support, and a sense of belonging	Family, best friends
Social	To share common interests in a friendly setting or participate in social activities	Athletic team, college sororities and fraternities
Self-Help	To support and encourage members who want or need help with personal problems	Therapy groups, Weight Watchers
Learning	To help members gain knowledge and develop skills	Study groups, ceramics workshops
Service	To assist worthy causes that help other people <i>outside</i> the group	Kiwanis, charity or volunteer groups
Civic	To support worthy causes that help people <i>within</i> the group	Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), neighborhood associations
Organizational	To achieve specific goals on behalf of a business or organization	Management teams, committees
Public	To discuss important issues in front of or for the benefit of the public	Open-to-the-public panel discussions, governance groups

The eight types of groups are not absolute categories. Many of them overlap. A Girl Scout belongs to both a social group and a learning group, and their scout leaders, who operate under the direction of the national association, belong to both a service group and an organizational group. The last two types of groups in Table 1.2—organizational groups and public groups—serve the interests of recognized organizations and public audiences.

Organizational groups may have goals as complex as reengineering a global corporation or as simple as sharing relevant information at a weekly staff meeting. Most organizational groups work within a system that has its own rules, vocabulary, levels of power, and member responsibilities. If you are employed, you probably

belong to several organizational groups. You may be a member of a production team or a work crew. You may belong to a sales staff, service department, management group, or research team.

As noted in Table 1.2, public group members interact in front of or for the benefit of the public. Although public groups may engage in information sharing, decision making, or problem solving, they are also concerned with making a positive impression on a public audience.

Virtual Teams Groups in Cyberspace

Objective: List the fundamental requirements of an effective virtual team, regardless of the medium or media members use to collaborate with one another.

Today, regardless of when or where you work in groups, you already do or inevitably will participate as the member of a virtual team. **Virtual teams** rely on one or more mediated technologies to collaborate, often across time, distance, and organizational boundaries.

Thousands of miles and several time zones may separate virtual team members, whereas others work in the same room using technology to collaborate on a group project. Diverse and geographically distributed teams are now the model for businesses and governments around the world. In fact, research concludes that “with rare exceptions all organizational teams are virtual to some extent.”¹⁵

Virtual teams are everywhere. At least 75 percent of U.S. companies allow employees to work remotely—and that number is expected to increase significantly.¹⁶ Surveys of multinational corporations reported that 80 percent of the respondents were part of a virtual team; 63 percent indicated that about half of these teams were located in other countries. In one survey of major corporations, 52 percent reported that virtual teams are used by top management, and 79 percent are used for project teams.¹⁷ Some companies—with names such as Art & Logic, Automattic, Basecamp, and peopleG2—operate completely or mostly in virtual teams.¹⁸

The increasing prevalence of virtual teams creates new challenges: Employees rated tasks such as managing conflict, making decisions, expressing opinions, and generating innovative ideas as more difficult in virtual teams than in face-to-face meetings. In addition, 95 percent reported that their greatest challenge was overcoming the inability to read non-verbal behavior in text-only contexts. And 90 percent said they don’t have enough time during virtual meetings to build relationships. The top-rated characteristics of an effective virtual teammate include:

1. a willingness to share relevant information,
2. active engagement and interaction with others, and
3. the ability to collaborate.

These are also essential communication competencies needed by the members of all groups—whether meeting face to face or via cyberspace with members across the globe.¹⁹

Groups must balance the advantages and disadvantages of using technology. On the one hand, organizations spend billions of dollars on technology that allows employees to communicate with one another, collaborate on projects, and participate in virtual meetings. On the other hand, “hundreds of millions of those dollars will be wasted chasing fads and installing technology that people will use to work the same way they worked before the technology was installed.”²⁰

Virtual teams are complex. Members may come from a variety of organizations, cultures, time zones, and geographic locations, not to mention the many technologies they can use. For example, their levels of experience and expertise in using a particular virtual medium may vary. They may also have computer systems with different capabilities, such as older or newer versions of the software being used for group communication. As a result, virtual teams develop distinct group dynamics compared to groups that meet face to face.²¹

In addition to the ones you know best (email, social media tools, instant messaging, and frequently-used video and audio conferencing systems), hundreds of commercially available tools help virtual teams manage their work in different time/space configurations. Table 1.3 provides examples of virtual team products by function. By the time you read this list, there are sure to be new, improved, and more innovative tools for groups to use. Have you used any of these tools? Did they help or hinder your group? What other products would you add to the list?

Table 1.3 Virtual Tools for Virtual Teams²²

Function	Sample Products
Collaboration	Redbooth, Slack, Blackboard Collaborate
Project Management	Microsoft Project, Basecamp, Primavera
Document Storage/File Sharing	Dropbox, Google Drive, Share Point
Electronic Meetings	WebEx, GoToMeetings, Google Hangouts
High-End Video Conferencing	Cisco Telepresence, Polycrom Telepresence, Logitech LifeSize
Meeting Schedulers	Doodle, Timebride, ScheduleOnce
Document Co-Creation	Google Docs, Prezi, Conceptboard

Whether you welcome the benefits of working in virtual teams or not, they are here to stay. These powerful tools will become increasingly prevalent in all types of groups. Certainly, in organizational environments, virtual teams will become “the norm in conducting business.”²³ To help you succeed in these groups, we offer strategies and skills throughout this textbook that focus on working effectively and

efficiently in virtual environments. The following are fundamental requirements for an effective virtual team:

- adequate resources (funding, people, skills, etc.) to achieve a group’s common goal,
- appropriate and effective information technology and support,
- members with adequate and appropriate electronic communication skills,
- members with adequate and appropriate collaboration skills suited to a mediated environment, and
- members who serve as role models for others in virtual interactions.²⁴

1.3: Advantages and Disadvantages of Working in Groups

1.3 Compare the advantages and disadvantages of working in groups

If you’re like most people, you probably have suffered through at least one long, boring meeting run by an unskilled and incompetent leader. Perhaps you have lost patience with a group that couldn’t accomplish a simple task that you could do easily by yourself. Even so, the potential advantages of working in effective groups far outweigh the disadvantages.

Let’s begin by acknowledging several certainties about group work. There is no question that some tasks are impossible for one person to complete alone. Prehistoric people joined together in groups to hunt large, ferocious animals and to protect their families and clan. Today, we form groups to build skyscrapers and rocket ships, to perform life-saving surgery and classical symphonies, and to play football games and clean up oil spills.

In our daily lives, we also rely on smaller groups such as mobile emergency medical teams, study groups, neighborhood safety committees, coaching staffs, and our families to make decisions and solve problems. Do these groups do a better job than one person can? If the group is poorly organized, lacks a clear goal, and includes unmotivated members with limited or inappropriate knowledge and skills, the answer is no. However, when groups work effectively, efficiently, and ethically, they have the potential to outperform individuals working alone and can make significant contributions to the quality of our lives. The critical question is not, “Are groups better than individuals?” Rather, ask yourself this: “How can we become a more effective group?”²⁵

GroupWork It Was the Best of Teams, It Was the Worst of Teams

Directions: This activity is designed to help you identify some of the advantages and disadvantages of working in groups based on your own experiences and the experiences of others. Consider one of the groups in which you have worked. Then think about what you liked and disliked about working in that group. Now you should be able to identify characteristics unique to the best groups and worst groups.

The Best of Teams

Example: One member kept track of everyone's birthday. On the meeting day closest to a birthday, we presented a card signed by everyone and shared a cake or cookies.

1.

2.

3.

4.

The Worst of Teams

Example: The boss or leader refused to explain her decisions. When we'd ask why we could or couldn't do something, she'd say, "Because I said so."

1.

2.

3.

4.

Figure 1.3 notes that, in most cases, the potential advantages of group collaboration far outweigh the potential disadvantages.

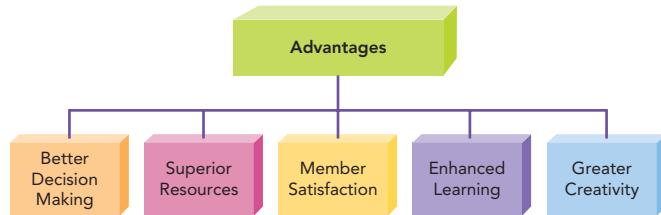
Figure 1.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Working in Groups



1.3.1: Advantages of Working in Groups

The advantages of working in groups (Figure 1.4) outweigh the disadvantages when group members collaborate effectively with one another in pursuit of a common goal. The first two advantages—Better Decision Making and Superior Resources—are the most obvious. What you may not have

Figure 1.4 Advantages of Working in Groups



considered are the ways in which group communication can enhance member satisfaction, learning, and creativity.

BETTER DECISION MAKING Do groups or individuals perform better and make better decisions? The answer is: It depends. When a task is fairly simple and routine (e.g., write a memo, total the day's receipts), an individual working alone may perform it as well as or better than a group. A simple, routine task such as putting stamps on envelopes does not require a group because collaboration and interdependence are unnecessary. Even a more difficult task or problem that has one right answer may be solved more easily by a smart person or expert working alone than by a group. However, when a task is complex and the answers or solutions are unclear or require an understanding of multiple perspectives, a group has the potential to do a better job than individuals working alone.

Once researchers understood the types of jobs that groups do best, their findings were nearly universal: groups usually outperform the average of their members' individual judgments.²⁶ Of course, there are exceptions. In a "bad" group of poorly chosen or too-busy members lacking sufficient information, motivation, and structured techniques, failure is likely.

SUPERIOR RESOURCES Every group member brings a wide variety of resources, including different life experiences, special expertise, and unique perspectives as well as ideas, information, and opinions about a variety of issues. When group members share what they know and what they believe, it broadens and enriches the group's knowledge base. These collective ideas, information, and perspectives are likely to result in better-informed, more meaningful, and more effective group decision making and problem solving. With rare exceptions, a group has more and better resources to call upon than an individual working alone.

MEMBER SATISFACTION The social benefits of group work can be just as important as task achievement. People belong to and work in groups because groups give them the opportunity to make friends, socialize, receive peer support, and feel part of a unified and successful team. Not surprisingly, the more opportunities group members have to communicate with one another, the more satisfied they are with the group experience.

ENHANCED LEARNING Working in groups is a collective learning experience in which members share ideas, information, and opinions relevant to a common goal. Research comparing cooperative, group-based learning with traditional approaches in college courses indicates that collaborative learning promotes higher individual achievement in knowledge acquisition, retention, accuracy, creativity in problem solving, and higher-level reasoning.²⁷ New members learn from veterans, and amateurs learn from experts. In addition to learning more about the topics under discussion, members also learn more about how to work as a group.

GREATER CREATIVITY In addition to performing better than individuals working alone, groups also generate more innovative ideas and creative solutions. As MIT management professor Peter Senge writes, “If you want something really creative done, you ask a team to do it—instead of sending one person off to do it on his or her own.”²⁸

Lee Towe, author of *Why Didn't I Think of That? Creativity in the Workplace*, writes that the “key to creativity is the mental flexibility required to mix thoughts from our many different experiences.”²⁹ When you combine your thoughts with those of other group members, you increase the group’s creative potential. In addition to providing a creative multiplier effect by tapping more information, more brainpower, and more insights, groups have “awesome superiority” when trying to unleash creativity and solve challenging problems.³⁰

Groups in Balance . . . Create Synergy

When three or more interdependent group members collaborate and work toward achieving a common goal, they have the potential to create a synergy. The term **synergy**, often expressed as the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, comes from the Greek word *synergos*, meaning “working together.” Synergy does not occur when people work alone; it only occurs when people work together. In terms of group communication, **synergy** is a state in which the effective collaboration of group members produces better results than what would be expected given the sum of skills and abilities of individual members working alone. A sports team of good players may, by the virtue of synergy, defeat a team with several superstars. A design team at a high-tech company may surprise the world with new technological breakthroughs that the individuals on the team could not have developed alone.

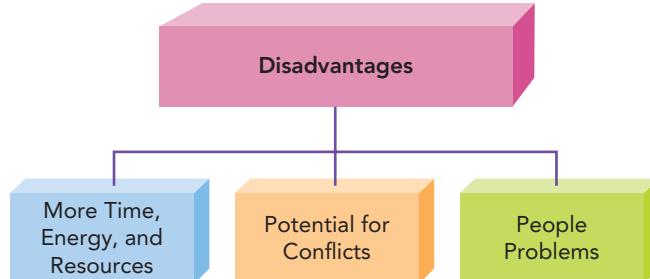
Effective groups are synergistic. Baseball teams without superstars have won the World Series. Companies with executives who earn modest salaries have surpassed other companies

in which CEOs are paid millions of dollars. Ordinary groups have achieved extraordinary results. Synergy occurs when the knowledge, talents, and dedication of group members merge into a force that surpasses anything group members could have produced without collaboration.

1.3.2: Disadvantages of Working in Groups

The advantages are clear when groups are working efficiently and effectively. The disadvantages (Figure 1.5) are more likely to occur when working in a group is not the best way to achieve a goal, when members don’t work to their full potential, or when problems interfere with group members’ willingness and ability to communicate. The most common complaints about working in groups concern the amount of time, energy, and resources expended by groups and the conflicts and people problems that can arise.

Figure 1.5 Disadvantages of Working in Groups



MORE TIME, ENERGY, AND RESOURCES Working in groups costs time, energy, and resources. Nonproductive meetings, poor communication, and vague group objectives can gobble up as many as two of every five workdays. Workers report spending an average of 5.6 hours a week in meetings, and rate 69 percent of those meetings as ineffective.³¹ The wasted psychic and physical energy expended in poorly run meetings can lead to counterproductive stress and indifference. We spend a lot of time and energy in groups; if that time and effort are wasted, we are throwing away valuable resources.

POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT Very few people enjoy or seek out conflict, but when group members work together to achieve a common goal, there is always the potential for disagreement. Members who habitually disagree may be seen as aggressive or disruptive. As a result, some people will do almost anything to avoid conflict and confrontation. They may go out of their way to avoid working in groups, even though discussing different perspectives and exploring alternative options promote better group problem solving and decision

making. Some group members avoid meetings in which controversial issues are scheduled for discussion; others are unwilling to express their opinions when they do attend.

PEOPLE PROBLEMS As much as we may want others to share our interests, viewpoints, and willingness to work, there is always the potential for individual group members to create problems. Like anyone else in our daily lives, group members can be stubborn, lazy, and even cruel. The presence of certain members can even influence decisions about whether to participate in a particular group.

To avoid conflict or extra work, some members may go along with the group or play “Follow the leader” rather than search for the best solution to a problem. Strong, domineering members can put so much pressure on others that they effectively stifle productive discussion and constructive dissent. Although no one wants to work with a group of unpleasant members, there may be circumstances in which people problems cannot be avoided. Fortunately, this textbook provides a wide range of effective strategies and skills for conducting successful and efficient meetings, managing the inevitable conflicts that arise in groups, and coping with and overcoming inappropriate member behavior.

Watch The Group Project



Watch a clip of the video “The Group Project,” which illustrates several disadvantages of working in groups as well as questions about member ethics.

WRITING PROMPT

Advantages and Disadvantages of Working in Groups

1. The chapter text identifies several types of groups. Which type or types would best describe the group in the video?
2. To what extent did one member’s gossip about Sarah influence the group leader? How would a comment like this influence you in a similar group?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

1.4: The Nature of Group Communication

1.4 Describe how understanding the components of the group communication process can enhance group effectiveness

Now that you have learned the basic components and types of groups, two concepts can help you to better understand the complex nature of group communication: (1) the critical functions of communication theories, strategies, and skills; and (2) the nature of the group communication process.

1.4.1: Theories, Strategies, and Skills

Throughout this textbook, we examine the theories, strategies, and skills needed to promote and balance group productivity and member satisfaction.³²

- A **theory** is a clear, systematic, and predictive explanation of a phenomenon.

Unlike the personal hunches or guesses you may have about how effective groups work, who will win *Dancing with the Stars*, or the impact of climate change, valid theories are based on the interpretation of knowable and verifiable facts. Group communication theories help us understand what is occurring in a group as well as why groups succeed or fail.

- A **strategy** is a method, guideline, or technique for dealing with the issues and problems that arise in groups.

Effective strategies are based on theories. Without theories, you won’t know why a particular strategy works in one situation yet fails in another. If, contrary to leadership theory, you believe that a domineering leadership style is more effective than a democratic one, you may find yourself at odds with group members and even out of your leadership job.

- A **skill** is a specific ability that helps a group engage in collaborative work to achieve its common goal.

Communication skills are the most important skills available to group members. Like strategies, skills are most effective when their use is based on theories. For example, although active and empathetic listening skills are difficult to master, theories and research demonstrate they are well worth the effort because they enhance the quality of group collaboration.

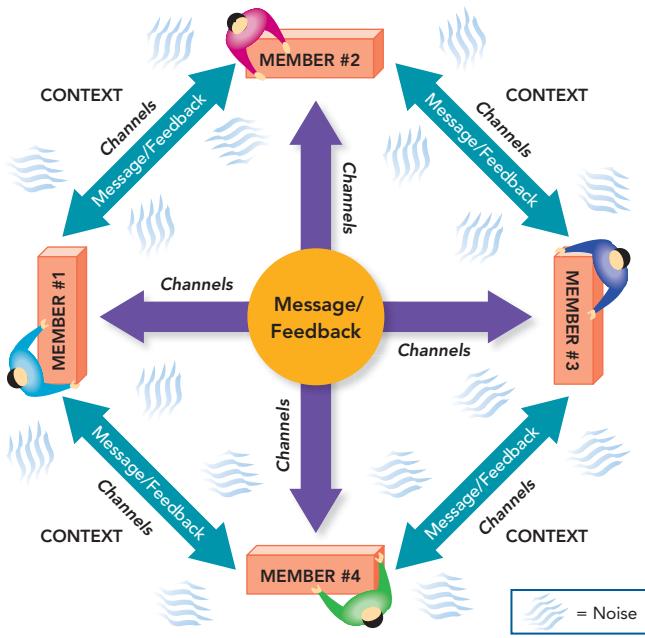
A group member may know what strategies and skills to use, but may have no idea why the strategies work or how to perform the required skills. Eager to solve problems or achieve a common goal, a group may use inappropriate skills or hunches that don’t address the true causes of a problem or help achieve the goal. Using strategies and

skills without an understanding of appropriate theories can make the process of working in groups inefficient, ineffective, and frustrating for all members.

1.4.2: The Group Communication Process

Figure 1.6 illustrates the interactions among the six basic elements of group communication.

Figure 1.6 The Group Communication Process



Effective communication helps group members create a worthy common goal, share relevant information and opinions, make sound decisions, effectively solve problems, and develop supportive interpersonal relationships.

Table 1.4 Basic Elements of Group Communication

Basic Elements of Group Communication	Description	Group Examples
Members	People with distinct knowledge, experiences, personality traits, attitudes, skills, and cultural backgrounds who are recognized as belonging to the group	A surgical team includes one or more surgeons, an anesthesiologist, and function-specific surgical nurses.
Messages	The ideas, information, opinions, claims, and/or feelings expressed by group members that generate meaning in others	Group members ask for and share relevant ideas, information, and opinions.
Context	The physical and psychological environment in which a group communicates, including factors such as group size, working conditions, and the relationships among members	A study group meeting in the college cafeteria communicates in a different context than a corporate marketing team holding a video conference with international clients.
Channels	The media through which group members share messages using one or more of their five senses in face-to-face or mediated settings	Group members express themselves verbally (words), nonverbally (facial expressions, body language, vocal cues) and/or through various mediated channels.
Feedback	Verbal and/or nonverbal responses from members that indicate how well others received and interpreted a message	Group members noticeably respond verbally, nonverbally, and/or through mediated channels to the meaning of others' messages.
Noise	Any external (sounds, room conditions) or internal (attitudes, beliefs, and values) factors that interfere with how well members express themselves or interpret the messages of others	<i>External Noise:</i> Hallway sounds, hot/cold room, poor lighting, uncomfortable seating <i>Internal Noise:</i> Biases, worried thoughts, anger, fatigue, hunger, headaches

Communication is complex enough when just two people interact, and becomes even more complicated when additional people are involved. At its most fundamental level, the group communication process includes six basic elements common to all forms of human communication: **members**, **messages**, **context**, **channels**, **feedback**, and **noise**. These elements are described in Table 1.4.

1.5: Balance as the Guiding Principle of Group Work

- 1.5** Explain how successful groups balance various dialectic tensions by using a collaborative both/and approach

At the heart of this textbook is an important guiding principle: An ideal group succeeds because it achieves **balance**, a state of equilibrium in which extreme approaches neither dominate nor interfere with the group's ultimate ability to achieve its common goal.

In group communication, the group's common goal is the point on which members must balance many factors. A group that makes a decision or completes an assigned task is not in balance if group members end up hating one another. A group that relies on one or two members to do all of the work is not in balance. Effective groups weigh factors such as the group's task and social functions, individual and group needs, and the responsibilities of leadership and follower-ship. Achieving balance requires an understanding of the interplay of the contradictory forces that operate in all groups.

1.5.1: Groups in Balance

All of us balance competing options every day. Should you work or play? Should you spend or save? Should you eat a



Successful groups learn to balance the competing and contradictory forces that operate in all groups.

big bowl of ice cream or a piece of fresh fruit for dessert? Such tensions are best resolved by taking a *both/and* approach rather than the *either/or* perspective just described. For example, if you're lucky, you may have *both* a job that pays well *and* one in which you enjoy working. If you *both* spend wisely *and* save more, you can look forward to a more secure financial future. If you eat *both* small portions of ice cream *and* fresh fruit, the result is a more balanced diet. Even in close personal relationships, a couple may *both* cherish their time together *and* respect each other's need for time apart. As you will see, a *both/and* approach helps group members collaborate with one another in pursuit of a common goal.

1.5.2: Balancing Group Dialectics

The term **dialectics**, a method for examining and resolving two contradictory or opposing ideas, may be new to you. Linked to the notion of dialectics is the need for balance as a means of maintaining equilibrium between the competing pressures in groups. It may help you to remember that the prefix *di-* means two, as in *diagonal* (joining two opposite points) or *dialogue* (a conversation between two people). Effective groups engage in a cooperative effort to balance group dialectics through effective communication strategies.

Theory in Groups

Relational Dialectics Theory

Objective: Evaluate the different methods groups use to balance the dialectic tensions that arise when members collaborate to achieve a shared goal.

Communication scholars Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery use the term *dialectics* to describe the complex and contradictory nature of personal relationships. Their **Relational Dialectics Theory** claims that relationships are characterized

by ongoing, dialectic tensions among the multiple contradictions, complexities, and changes in human experiences.³³ The following pairs of common folk proverbs illustrate such contradictory, dialectic tensions:

"Opposites attract," *but* "Birds of a feather flock together."

"Two's company; three's a crowd," *but* "The more, the merrier."³⁴

Rather than trying to prove that one of these contradictory proverbs is truer than the other—an *either/or* response—relational dialectics takes a *both/and* approach. Unlike relational dialectics and more narrow in scope, **group dialectics** are the inevitable, contradictory tensions group members experience as they collaborate with one another to achieve a common goal. Researchers describe several ways in which groups try to resolve such dialectic tensions. We have consolidated these options into four categories, each of which is followed by an example. The first three are usually less effective than the fourth, which is *both* the most effective *and* (not surprisingly) the most difficult.³⁵

- **Do Nothing**

A group and its members ignore, deny, or pretend to fix dialectic tensions. In other words, they do nothing. If the tensions are trivial or diminish with time, this strategy can work. Suppose a person invited to join the group because of a specialized expertise or talent dominates discussions and belittles less-informed group members; the group may tolerate the resulting tension, hoping that group pressure eventually will modify the new member's behavior.

- **Select Only One and Ignore the Other**

A group chooses only one of the dialectic behaviors, such as stick to a strict agenda *or* rely on creativity. Or even though a group knows that two absent members would vote against a proposal, they go ahead and make the decision anyway—all in the name of avoiding tensions.

- **Choose Different Options for Different Situations**

Say that a group's monthly meeting usually adheres to a highly structured agenda. When group members have difficulty coming up with new ideas or a range of solutions to a problem, they may choose a dissimilar approach: set aside the agenda and do some unstructured brainstorming. Switching back and forth may work when the group carefully chooses techniques compatible with the group's task and member traits.

- **Collaborate**

In our definition of *group communication*, we use the term **collaboration** to describe coordinated group interaction in which interdependent members share a common goal, respect others, and work together. Effective collaboration also occurs when a group recognizes dialectic tensions and attempts to work out creative, *both/and* responses to it.³⁶ Depending on the nature of the problem—be it the potential for conflict between members, a domineering member, tension between structure and spontaneity, or any other tension—the group may choose any of the above three options, *or* collaborate with one another by balancing a *both/and* approach.

When members collaborate, they openly acknowledge and honestly confront the dialectic tensions. Only then can they discuss ways to balance the contradictory tensions in the hope that the problems will be resolved.

A group's inability to recognize and appropriately address serious dialectic tensions can result in failure to achieve a common goal as well as member dissatisfaction and antagonism. Restoring balance and resolving dialectic tensions are critical tasks in all groups seeking to achieve a common goal.³⁷

Successful groups balance dialectic tensions by using a collaborative *both/and* approach. You may *both* enjoy warm friendships with some members *and* effectively cope with members who are difficult. Your group may want *both* a stable, predictable process of problem solving *and* the freedom to experiment and seek creative outcomes. Table 1.5 presents nine group dialectic tensions that call for a balanced approach to their resolution.³⁸

Table 1.5 Group Dialectics

Group Dialectics	Balancing Group Dialectics
Individual Goals ↔ Group Goals	<p>Members' personal goals are <i>balanced</i> with the group's common goal.</p> <p>A group will not function well—or at all—if members focus entirely on their individual goals rather than on the group's common goal. When a group agrees on a clear and important goal, members can pursue both individual <i>and</i> group goals as long as their personal goals do not undermine the common goal. For example, if you join a group because you're interested in forming a romantic attachment with another member, your support of the group's common goal may impress the person you desire, allowing you to attain your individual goal.</p> <p>In the best of groups, your personal goals support the group's common goal. If you do not share the group's goal, you may become frustrated or even try to undermine the group. In ideal groups, members negotiate their personal needs and interests to achieve a balance between the dialectic tension of being an independent member of an interdependent group.</p>
Conflict ↔ Cohesion	<p>The value of constructive conflict is <i>balanced</i> with the need for unity and cohesiveness.</p> <p>Conflict is unavoidable in effective groups. How else can members express disagreements that may lead to better solutions? How else can groups ensure that ethical standards are upheld? Groups without constructive conflict are groups without the means to analyze the wisdom of their decisions. At the same time, groups also benefit from cohesion—the mutual attraction and teamwork that holds the members of a group together. All for one and one for all! Cohesive groups are committed and unified, but they are also willing to disagree and engage in conflict when necessary.</p>
Conforming ↔ Nonconforming	<p>A commitment to group norms and standards is <i>balanced</i> with a willingness to differ and change.</p> <p>Group norms are specific standards of behavior expected by members of a particular group. Norms affect the quality and quantity of work by group members. Dialectic tensions can arise when one or more members challenge a group norm or standard. Effective groups recognize that constructive criticism contributes to group success. Contradictory group norms highlight the need for <i>both</i> conformity <i>and</i> nonconformity.</p>
Task Dimensions ↔ Social Dimensions	<p>The responsibility and motivation to complete tasks are <i>balanced</i> with promoting member relationships.</p> <p>The best groups negotiate the task dimensions ↔ social dimensions dialectic by balancing work with social interaction. A group's task dimensions focus on achieving its goal. The social dimensions focus on the interpersonal relationships among group members. Thus, a group discussing a department's budget primarily focuses on its task. If, however, at the end of the meeting, the group surprises a member with a cake in celebration of her birthday, the group's focus shifts to the social dimension. More often, groups exhibit both task <i>and</i> social dimensions when they get the job done in a way that makes everyone feel socially accepted and valued.</p> <p>When groups balance work and play, they are more productive. Think of how frustrating it is to work on a group task when members don't get along. Think of how disappointing it is to work with friends who don't take a task seriously or don't make significant contributions. The old saying "All work and no play makes Jack [or Jill] a dull boy [or girl]" certainly applies to groups. However, all play and no work can make you unemployed.³⁹</p>
Homogeneous ↔ Heterogeneous	<p>Member similarities are <i>balanced</i> with member differences in skills, roles, personal characteristics, and cultural perspectives.</p> <p>The prefixes <i>homo</i> and <i>hetero</i> come from the Greek language. <i>Homo</i> means "same or similar"; <i>hetero</i> means "different." A homogeneous group is composed of members who are the same or very similar to one another. The members of a heterogeneous group are different from one another.</p> <p>Not surprisingly, there is no such thing as a purely homogeneous group because no two members can be exactly the same. Certainly, some groups are more homogeneous than heterogeneous. For example, the Black Caucus in the U.S. Congress is more homogeneous than the Congress as a whole. The legal team representing a client is more homogeneous in terms of education, income, professional experience, and lifestyle than the jury selected to hear the case. Every person on this Earth—and thus every member of a group—is different, and that's a good thing. If every group member were exactly alike, the group would not achieve much more than one member working alone. At the same time, similarities assure members that they share some common characteristics, traits, and attitudes.</p>
Leadership ↔ Followership	<p>Effective and ethical leadership is <i>balanced</i> with committed and responsible followership.</p> <p>Effective leadership has many components and challenges. It is not a solo task—it also requires competent and responsible followers. Effective leaders have the confidence to put their egos aside and bring out the leadership in others.⁴⁰ When group members assume specific leadership functions, the group has achieved an optimum balance of <i>both</i> leadership <i>and</i> followership.</p>

Table 1.5 Group Dialectics (*Continued*)

Group Dialectics	Balancing Group Dialectics
Structure ↔ Spontaneity	The need for structured procedures is <i>balanced</i> with the need for innovative and creative thinking. Group communication scholar Marshall Scott Poole claims that procedures are “the heart of group work [and] the most powerful tools we have to improve the conduct of meetings.” ⁴¹ Structured procedures help groups balance participation, resolve conflicts, organize discussions, and solve problems. However, if a group becomes obsessed with rigid procedures it misses out on the benefits of spontaneity and creativity. Whether it’s just “thinking outside the box” or organizing a creative problem-solving session, groups can reap enormous benefits by encouraging innovation and “what-if” thinking. Effective groups balance the need for structure with time for spontaneous and creative thinking.
Engaged ↔ Disengaged	Member energy and labor are <i>balanced</i> with the group’s need for rest and renewal. The engaged-disengaged dialectic has two dimensions—one related to the amount of activity, the other related to the level of commitment. Groups often experience two opposite types of activities: high-energy, nonstop action, relieved by periods of relaxation and renewal. Effective groups understand that racing toward a distant finish line may only exhaust group members and leave some sitting on the sidelines panting for breath. At the same time, low energy and inaction accomplish nothing. Balancing the urge to run with the need for rest and renewal challenges most groups.
Open System ↔ Closed System	External support and recognition are <i>balanced</i> with internal group solidarity and rewards. All groups are systems. Effective groups maintain a balance by moving between open and closed systems. When a group functions as an open system, it welcomes input from and interaction with its environment. That input can be the opinions of nongroup members, information from outside research, or challenges from competing groups. When a group functions as a closed system, it guards its boundaries and discourages input or interaction with the outside. Depending on the situation, a group may open its boundaries and welcome input, or close them to protect the group and its work. Effective groups understand that there are times when they must function as an open system and other times when they must close the door and work in private. For example, a hiring committee may function as an open system in order to recruit candidates and research their backgrounds. When they have finished this process, they meet privately and confidentially to evaluate the candidates and make a hiring recommendation.

Groups in Balance . . . Enjoy Working Together

Have you or a group you’re in ever been totally caught up in what you were doing, wholly focused on it, and also able to perform at a very high level with ease?⁴² If your answer is yes, you have had an **optimal group experience** in which all group members are caught up in the group’s work and are performing at a high level of achievement. When group participation becomes an optimal experience, members are highly motivated. They are committed and inspired. Creative thinking comes easily, and working on the task is pleasurable. Hard work is energizing rather than exhausting. Some groups find the optimal experience so pleasurable that they’d rather do group work than relax or socialize.⁴³

To achieve this optimal level of motivation, you and your group must negotiate several dialectic tensions. First, you must have a worthy goal that motivates *both* individual members and the group as a whole. You must balance *both* task and social dimensions by encouraging members to complete tasks and by promoting strong interpersonal relationships. You must *both* support and reward member engagement and accommodate members who need to disengage by pausing, recharging, and relaxing.

Sometimes, high-energy action is unstoppable because group members are extremely motivated, person-

ally committed, and appropriately rewarded for their work. Stopping to recharge or relax would only frustrate a group with pent-up energy. At the other end of the dialectic spectrum, members who plod through group work with little enthusiasm may feel unmotivated, uncaring, and unrewarded. Asking such groups to pick up speed would only increase their resentment.

1.6: Ethical Group Communication

1.6 Practice the ethical principles included in the National Communication Association’s Credo for Ethical Communication

Ethics requires understanding whether you and other group members behave in a way that meets agreed-upon standards of right and wrong.⁴⁴ Ethical questions—Are we doing the right thing? Is he dishonest? Is she tolerant of different viewpoints?—arise whenever we communicate because communication has consequences. What you say and do can help or hurt both group members and other people affected by the group’s decisions and actions.

1.6.1: Ethics in Balance

All of the characteristics, guidelines, dialectics, theories, strategies, and skills in this chapter are questionable if a group and its members fail to behave ethically. **Ethics** embodies an understanding of whether group members' communication behaviors meet agreed-upon standards of right and wrong.

Initially, you may think that the "rules" of ethical behavior are absolute: "Thou shalt not steal" or "Thou shalt not lie." Is it ethical, however, to steal a loaf of bread if your family is starving? Is it acceptable to lie if telling the truth would do more harm than good? There are often dialectic tensions involved in making ethical decisions.

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle offered his **doctrine of the mean** as an ethical principle based on moderation and appropriateness.⁴⁵ In this doctrine, the term *mean* is used as in "a point between extremes," rather than *mean* as in "nasty" or "cruel." The doctrine of the mean counsels that when you face an ethical decision, you should select an *appropriate* reaction somewhere between two extremes. Aristotle's golden mean constitutes the essence of the *and/or* approach to group dialectics. For example, highly effective groups learn how to appropriately balance individual and group goals, conflict and cohesion, structure and spontaneity, as well as six other dialectics.

Ethical questions arise whenever you work in groups. Is it ethical to share questionable rumors about a job candidate to make sure your group doesn't hire an unsuitable person? Is it acceptable to tell exaggerated, heartbreaking stories about hungry children to persuade a group to provide financial support to a local food bank? Is it fair for some group members to boycott a meeting because they are strongly opposed to the politics of a person who has been invited to participate? Aristotle would tell us to avoid a yes or no answer. An ethical group and its members seek an appropriate and ethical *both/and* response. Throughout this text, we provide regular features about group ethics that address issues facing you and your group as you work toward a common goal.

1.6.2: Credo for Ethical Communication

The National Communication Association, the largest professional communication association in the world, formulated and adopted the **NCA Credo for Ethical Communication**, a set of guiding principles that assess how well communication behaviors meet agreed-upon standards of right and wrong.⁴⁶ In Latin, the word *credo* means "I believe." Thus, an ethics credo is a belief statement about what it means to be an ethical communicator.

All of the ethical principles in the NCA Credo apply to working in groups. Ethical communication requires an understanding of the tensions that operate in all groups as well as a desire to communicate in a way that meets agreed-upon standards of right and wrong.

Ethics in Groups

The National Communication Association Credo for Ethical Communication

I Objective: Understand the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication

Preamble

Questions of right and wrong arise whenever people communicate. Ethical communication is fundamental to responsible thinking, decision making, and the development of relationships and communities within and across contexts, cultures, channels, and media. Moreover, ethical communication enhances human worth and dignity by fostering truthfulness, fairness, responsibility, personal integrity, and respect for self and others. We believe that unethical communication threatens the well-being of individuals and the society in which we live. Therefore we, the members of the National Communication Association, endorse and are committed to practicing the following principles of ethical communication:

Principles of Ethical Communication

- We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.
- We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision making fundamental to a civil society.
- We strive to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages.
- We promote access to communication resources and opportunities as necessary to fulfill human potential and contribute to the well-being of families, communities, and society.
- We promote communication climates of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of individual communicators.
- We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through distortion, intimidation, coercion, and violence, and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.
- We are committed to the courageous expression of personal conviction in pursuit of fairness and justice.
- We advocate sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant choices while also respecting privacy and confidentiality.
- We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences of our own communication and expect the same of others.

GroupWork The Ethics Credo in Action

Are there unique ethical standards for working in groups? Are members ethically obligated to share accurate and important information with other members? Should members encourage one another to express controversial and conflicting points of view and opinions? Provide examples in *The Ethics Credo in Action* that demonstrate your understanding of ethical communication in groups.

Directions: Review the preamble and principles in the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication. The first column lists all nine principles, and the second column provides an example of how the credo can be applied to groups. Your job is to provide another example in the third column—Additional Example—for each of the ethical principles to demonstrate your understanding of each principle. The example can be a situation you or group members have experienced personally, or it can be taken from current events or from history.

Credo for Ethical Communication Principle	Example of Application to Working in Groups	Additional Example
1. Truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason are essential for ethical communication.	Groups should urge members to accurately quote and cite the sources of researched information they share with others.	
2. Freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent are fundamental to a civil society.	Groups should create a supportive climate in which members feel free to express their ideas, opinions, values, and feelings.	
3. Ethical communicators strive to understand and respect others before evaluating and responding to their messages.	Group members should strive to understand members' unfamiliar or controversial beliefs and values before making judgments.	
4. Access to communication resources and opportunities are necessary to fulfill human potential and contribute to the well-being of families, communities, and society.	When working in virtual groups, all group members should have access to similar equipment.	
5. Ethical communicators promote climates of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of individual communicators.	Groups should respect and adapt to members whose cultural backgrounds are different than the majority of group members.	
6. Ethical communicators condemn communication that degrades others through distortion, intimidation, coercion, and violence, and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.	Group members should not tolerate statements that belittle or stereotype others within or outside the group.	
7. Ethical communicators express their personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.	Group members express well-informed and reasonably argued political and personal beliefs.	
8. Ethical communicators share information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant choices while also respecting privacy and confidentiality.	Group leaders should keep members informed about their individual progress in private and in confidence.	
9. Ethical communicators accept responsibility for the consequences of their own behavior and expect the same of others.	Group members who are justly criticized for disrupting the group process should accept the consequences of their actions.	

Watch The Group Project



Watch a clip from the video “The Group Project,” which focuses on the responsibilities, communicative behavior, and ethics of group members.

WRITING PROMPT

Ethical Group Communication

1. Is this situation rare or all-too-familiar in your experience working in groups? Even if it's rare, what could you and the members have done to prevent the problems they're encountering so near the deadline? To what extent did each member contribute to the problem?
2. Which disadvantages of working in groups were evident in this group?
3. Evaluate the extent to which group members demonstrated or failed to demonstrate specific principles expressed in the National Communication Association's Code for Ethical Communication.

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

Summary: Introduction to Group Communication

1.1: The Importance of Groups

- Working in groups is an inescapable part of everyday life; most people spend a considerable amount of time and energy working in groups.
- Many employers view group-related skills as more important than written communication skills, proficiency in the field of study, and computer skills.

1.2: Defining Group Communication

- Group communication is the collaboration of three or more interdependent members working to achieve a common goal.
- Collaboration in groups requires a joint effort in which members share a common goal, respect various perspectives and contributions, and work together to create a successful group experience.
- In general, groups of three to nine members are preferable; groups of five to seven members are generally more effective for problem-solving tasks.
- A clear common goal is often the most significant factor separating successful groups from unsuccessful groups.
- According to Systems Theory, every group is a system, a collection of interacting, interdependent elements working together to form a complex whole that adapts to a changing environment.
- Types of groups include primary, social, self-help, learning, service, civic, organizational, and public groups.
- Virtual teams are groups that rely on one or more mediated technologies to collaborate, often across time, distance, and organizational boundaries.

1.3: Advantages and Disadvantages of Working in Groups

- Advantages: Better decision making, superior resources, member satisfaction, enhanced learning, and greater creativity.
- Disadvantages: The amount of time, energy, and resources expended by groups; the potential for interpersonal conflicts and people problems.
- Synergy is a state in which the effective collaboration of group members produces better results than what would be expected given the sum of skills and abilities of individual members working alone.

1.4: The Nature of Group Communication

- Understanding and applying theories, strategies, and skills are fundamental to successful group communication.

- Six basic elements—members, messages, channels, feedback, noise, and context—interact with one another in the group communication process.

1.5: Balance as the Guiding Principle of Group Work

- Baxter and Montgomery's Relational Dialectics Theory claims that interpersonal relationships are characterized by ongoing, dialectic tensions among the multiple contradictions, complexities, and changes in human experiences.
- Group dialectics represent the need for balance between competing and contradictory components of group work by taking a *both/and* approach to resolving such tensions.
- There are nine group dialectics: individual goals ↔ group goals; conflict ↔ cohesion; conforming ↔ non-conforming; task dimensions ↔ social dimensions; homogeneous ↔ heterogeneous; leadership ↔ followership; structure ↔ spontaneity; engaged ↔ disengaged; open system ↔ closed system.
- Groups in balance typically enjoy optimal group experiences in which all group members are caught up in the group's work and are performing at a high level of achievement.

1.6: Ethical Group Communication

- An ethical group and its members seek an appropriate, both/and response to ethical dilemmas.
- The National Communication Association (NCA) Credo for Ethical Communication sets forth guiding principles to assess how well communication behaviors meet agreed-upon standards of right and wrong.

SHARED WRITING CASE STUDY: THE STUDY GROUP DILEMMA

Use the information you have learned to answer the following questions about the case study that was presented at the beginning of the chapter:

What strategy or strategies should the study group use to ensure that members are satisfied with and benefit from the group experience? Briefly explain how these strategies could be implemented.

Review and discuss the similarities and differences between your answer and those of at least two of your classmates.

► A minimum number of characters is required to post and earn points. After posting, your response can be viewed by your class and instructor, and you can participate in the class discussion.

Post

0 characters | 140 minimum

Chapter 2

Group Development



Effective groups develop strong ties with one another, clear goals, productive norms, and motivated members.



Learning Objectives

- 2.1** Describe the five group development stages by identifying each one's fundamental characteristics and strategies
- 2.2** Explain the guidelines for establishing a clear and elevated group goal
- 2.3** Describe strategies for creating and changing explicit and implicit group norms
- 2.4** Compare the four categories of motivators

Case Study: Nice to Meet You, Too

A group of community volunteers meets for the first time to plan and raise funds for building a neighborhood playground. Although Dave, Betty, Ray, Bill, and Aisha live in the same community, they don't know one another well, and some have never met. They begin the meeting by introducing

themselves. They all smile a lot, but communication is a bit stiff and awkward. Betty's handshake connects to other members only at her fingertips, while Ray and Bill have firm grips. As Aisha introduces herself, she giggles and runs a hand through her long hair. Dave sits at the head of the table and chairs the meeting.

Aisha has come to the meeting well prepared. After she hesitantly raises her hand to speak, Dave recognizes her. Aisha reports that, according to her research, a simple playground can

range from \$5,000 to \$50,000. She suggests that \$35,000 would be a good target budget. Bill starts to respond by saying, "Well, uh, . . ." but when he sees that Ray has raised his hand, he turns the conversation over with, "Go ahead." Ray says, "Oh, I was going to say—ah—I've looked it over a bit—\$35,000 is—ah—I don't know—I guess that would be good, but I think we should stay as high as we can." Bill now responds with, "Ah—I was thinking just the opposite—kind of—we should go lower—uh . . ." Dave interrupts and suggests that they go with the \$35,000 Aisha proposed, just to get started. Bill seems a bit annoyed with Dave's suggestion, but doesn't say anything.

Dave notes that, regardless of the cost, they need to discuss ways of raising money for the playground. At this point, Aisha begins taking notes. Betty says, "Well—it worked at our church—in the other city where I lived . . . we had great bake sales—twice a year." Ray politely tells Betty that a bake sale is a great idea, but that it may not raise enough funds. Others in the group grimace or roll their eyes, ignoring Betty's offer to run a bake sale. Aisha then asks if group members know anyone connected to a foundation that might donate some of the money. After Betty reveals that she has a dear friend who is actively involved in a large, local foundation, the group sits up and pays a lot more attention to her. Ray even jokes about getting the foundation to help with the bake sale, too. Everyone laughs.

Only three minutes of the meeting have gone by. The group has a lot more to discuss, but in just this short period of time members have begun to become better acquainted with one another and have a better feeling about how they will work together and get along.

Critical Thinking Questions

When you finish reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following critical thinking questions about this case study:

1. What verbal and nonverbal behaviors demonstrated the forming stage of group development?
2. In your opinion, which members are most likely to compete for status and influence in the storming stage?
3. What strategies did group members use or should they have used to decrease primary tension?
4. What, if any, dialectic tensions will affect how well this group achieves its common goal and how well members get along with one another?

2.1: Group Development Stages

2.1 Describe the five group development stages by identifying each one's fundamental characteristics and strategies

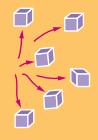
How do you behave when you attend the first meeting of a new group? Do you march into the room confidently,

extend your hand to the first person you see, and say "Hi, I'm [your name]—Nice to meet you"? Or do you pause at the door, check things out as you move into the room, and look for a suitable moment to introduce yourself? Or perhaps you just take a seat and say nothing? Like many people, you may choose the more cautious approaches. Welcome to the world of group development! In this chapter, we examine how groups form and evolve as they try to balance the complex and contradictory dialectic tensions inevitable in group work.

There are recognizable milestones in the lives of most groups. Like individuals, groups move through stages as they develop and mature. A new "infant" group behaves differently than a group that has worked together for a long time and has matured into an "adult." A group's ability to "grow up" directly affects how well its members work together. By observing the behavior of groups and their members in a variety of settings and circumstances, researchers have identified distinct phases that groups experience as members collaborate to achieve a common goal.

Bruce Tuckman, an educational psychologist, created **Tuckman's Group Development Model**, which identifies four discrete stages in the life cycle of groups—forming, storming, norming, and performing.¹ A fifth stage was later added to the model—adjourning.² In this chapter, we use Tuckman's model, as shown in Figure 2.1, because it is well recognized in communication and business management literature, the five stages are easy to remember, and the model remains one of the most comprehensive models of group development relevant to *all* types of groups.³

Figure 2.1 Tuckman's Group Development Stages

Forming	Storming	Norming	Performing	Adjourning
<p>Members are socially cautious and polite.</p>  <p>Ask yourself: Who are the group members? How can I help reduce primary tensions? What is our common goal?</p>	<p>Members compete for status and openly disagree.</p>  <p>Ask yourself: How can I help reduce secondary tensions? How should I react to criticism? Is everyone committed to our common goal?</p>	<p>Members resolve status conflicts and establish norms.</p>  <p>Ask yourself: What does the group expect of me? How can I foster collaboration among group members? What is the group's plan for achieving our common goal?</p>	<p>Members assume appropriate roles and work productively.</p>  <p>Ask yourself: Are we using effective decision-making and problem-solving strategies? How can I assist and support other group members? Are we collaborating effectively and progressing toward achieving our common goal?</p>	<p>Members disengage and relinquish responsibilities.</p>  <p>Ask yourself: How should we celebrate the group's accomplishments? How will we maintain contact with one another after the group disbands? How well did I contribute to achieving the group's common goal?</p>

Watch Planning the Playground



Watch this clip from the video "Planning the Playground," which illustrates concepts in this section.

WRITING PROMPT

Group Development Stages

1. What verbal and nonverbal behaviors shown in the video demonstrated the forming stage of group development?
2. In your opinion, which group members are most likely to compete for status and influence in the storming stage? Explain your answer.
3. How did David try to resolve an initial disagreement among members of the group?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

2.1.1: Forming Stage

When you join a group, you rarely know what to expect. Will everyone get along and work hard? Will you make a good first impression? Will this be a positive group experience or a nightmare? Most people enter a new group with caution.

During the initial **forming stage**, members become acquainted with one another and attempt to understand the nature of their task.⁴ Members may behave cautiously and feel somewhat uncomfortable about working with a group of strangers or unfamiliar colleagues. They try to figure out what they will be asked to do, test personal relationships, and determine which behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable. Although little gets done during this orientation phase, members need this time to get to know one another and assess the group's goal. At this point in the group development process, "the most important job . . . is not to build a better rocket or debug . . . a new software product or double sales—it is to orient itself to itself."⁵ Eventually, group members become more comfortable, open, and spontaneous with one another.⁶

PRIMARY TENSION Primary tension describes the social unease and inhibitions experienced by group members during the getting-acquainted stage of a group's development.⁷ Because most members of a new group want to create a good first impression, they tend to be

overly polite. Members don't interrupt one another, and there may be long, awkward pauses between comments. When members do speak, they often speak softly and avoid expressing strong opinions. Although laughter may occur, it is often strained, inappropriate, or uncomfortable. When the group starts its discussion, the topic may be small talk about sports, the weather, or a recent news event.

A group that experiences primary tension may talk less, provide little in the way of ideas and opinions, and be perceived as ineffective. Before a group can work efficiently and effectively, members should try to reduce primary tension. In some groups, primary tension lasts for only a few minutes. In less fortunate groups, primary tension may continue for weeks, but eventually it should decrease as members become more comfortable with one another.

MANAGING PRIMARY TENSION Although primary tension often disappears quickly and naturally as group members get to know one another and gain confidence, some groups need direct intervention to relieve such tensions.

Recognizing and discussing primary tension is one way of breaking its cycle. A perceptive member may behave purposely in a way that counteracts primary tension, such as talking in a strong voice, looking involved and energized, sticking to the group's topic, and expressing an opinion.

Here are some additional suggestions for managing primary tension during the group's forming stage:⁸

- Get acquainted with group members. Introduce yourself.
- Create a supportive and comfortable communication environment. Be positive and energetic. Smile and laugh. Nod in agreement. Exhibit enthusiasm.
- Participate in but don't dominate the discussion, especially if you are the group's leader.
- Be prepared and informed before your first meeting so you can help the group focus on its task. If you are the leader, prepare and distribute a meeting agenda.
- Clarify the group's purpose or assignment. Ask questions, and encourage others to ask questions about the group's goal.
- Be patient and open-minded, knowing that primary tension should decrease with time.

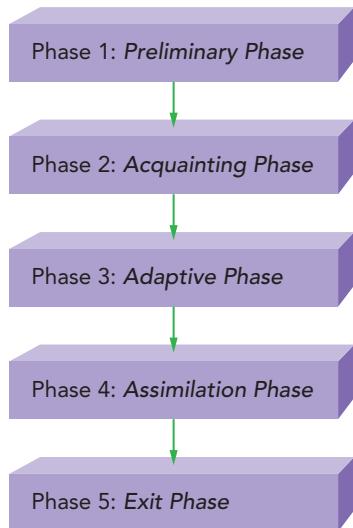
Groups in Balance . . . Socialize Newcomers

In some instances, you will be a newcomer to an already well-established group. Not surprisingly, your experiences in other groups affect how you adapt to and communicate with new group members. Understanding the socialization process can help you reduce the uncertainty that accompanies every new group experience.

In the context of group communication, **socialization** is a process in which members communicate with one another in

order to acquire or adjust to the social knowledge, behavioral expectations, and skills necessary to function effectively in a particular group.⁹ The socialization process is important in groups because “positive socialization creates stronger commitments to confront and balance the multiple issues and tensions involved in participating in group activities.”¹⁰ New group members move through five phases as they experience the socialization process (Figure 2.2):¹¹

Figure 2.2 Five Phases of the Socialization Process



- Preliminary Phase** A newcomer brings beliefs and attitudes, cultural dimensions, needs and motives, communication skills, personality traits, knowledge, and prior group experiences to a group. These factors influence how well the group accepts the newcomer: If the group needs and values what the newcomer has to offer, socialization will be faster and easier.
- Acquainting Phase** Members of an established group determine if a newcomer meets the group’s needs and expectations. They may look for someone with certain types of knowledge or communication skills. They may have heard that the newcomer shares their beliefs and attitudes. The newcomer and group members consider how the new member might contribute to the group’s work. Socialization is more likely to succeed if the newcomer’s characteristics, motives, and abilities align with the group’s needs and expectations.
- Adaptive Phase** During this phase, newcomers try to fit in and adjust to group expectations. The newcomer assumes needed functions, communicates effectively with other group members, and finds an appropriate balance between individual and group goals.
- Assimilation Phase** During this phase, newcomers become fully integrated into the group’s culture. Established members and newcomers blend into a comfortable state of working together to achieve common goals. At this point, the newcomer becomes a fully functioning member of the group.
- Exit Phase** In this final phase of new member socialization, a newcomer may leave an established group. Some groups, such as families, may never disband, although they change as new members join and others leave. Working groups

manage this process by giving departing members a warm send-off and welcoming new members who take their place. Regardless of the reason (whether positive or negative), leaving an established group can be a difficult experience.¹²

Generally, newcomers gain acceptance by asking the group for help or information, offering assistance to other group members, and conforming to group expectations.¹³ Socialization in groups is a give-and-take process in which members and groups come together to satisfy personal needs and accomplish group goals.

2.1.2: Storming Stage

After resolving the initial tensions of the forming stage, group members realize that “being nice” to one another may not accomplish very much, particularly when there are critical issues to address and problems to solve. As a group moves from the forming stage to the storming stage, disagreements arise. Members confront personal, procedural, and status issues.

During the **storming stage**, some members compete with one another to determine individual status, establishing member **roles**, and agree upon a common goal. In this stage, groups address the conflict ↔ cohesion dialectic and the leadership ↔ followership dialectic. Some members lose their patience with the niceties of the forming stage. During this stage, group members may become argumentative and emotional. As the group tries to get down to business, the most confident members compete for both social acceptance and leadership. They openly disagree on issues of substance. However, it is still too early in the group’s existence to predict the outcome of such competition.

Many groups try to skip this stage in order to avoid competition and conflict. However, storming is a necessary part of a group’s development. Without it, a group may fail to establish productive roles, appropriate leadership responsibilities, and clear goals.

SECONDARY TENSION **Secondary tension** is characterized by the frustrations and personality conflicts experienced by group members as they compete with one another for acceptance and achievement.¹⁴ Primary tension arises from lack of confidence. Secondary tension emerges when members have gained enough confidence to become assertive and even aggressive as they pursue positions of power and influence. Conflicts can result from disagreements over substantive issues, conflicts in values, different work styles, and an inability to deal with disruptive members. Regardless of the causes, a group cannot hope to achieve its common goal without managing secondary tension.

The signs of secondary tension are almost the direct opposite of primary tension. There is a high level of energy and agitation. The group is noisier, more dynamic, and physically active. Members speak in louder voices, inter-

rupting and overlapping one another so that two or three people may be speaking at the same time. Members sit up straight, lean forward, or squirm in their seats. Everyone is alert and listening intently.

MANAGING SECONDARY TENSION Members of successful groups develop ways to handle this stage of group development. Often, one or two members will joke about the tension. The resulting laughter is likely to ease the stress. If secondary tension threatens to disable a group, someone needs to bring it up as an issue that the group discusses and tries to minimize by focusing on the group's goal. Here are some strategies for managing secondary tension:¹⁵

- Explain the concepts of forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning stages so members understand why problems are occurring and why they should diminish.¹⁶
- Recognize that conflict during the storming stage is inevitable and necessary to becoming an effective group. Encourage constructive disagreement among group members.
- Make sure that group members fully understand and agree to the group's common goal and task requirements by the end of the storming stage.
- Discuss how the group will approach decision making and problem solving.
- Discuss members' potential contributions toward achieving the group's goal.
- Consider your role and how you can contribute to the group's work.
- Participate in the group's discussion. Contribute information, opinions, and suggestions. Express disagreement constructively and respectfully.
- Avoid conflict over personality and work-style differences.
- Analyze how you react if your ideas and comments are criticized or rejected.

As was the case with primary tension, members should be patient and open-minded, knowing that secondary tension should decrease with time. In some cases, members will work outside the group setting to resolve the personal difficulties and anxieties of group members. Dealing with secondary tension can be difficult and even painful. However, the reward of resolving such tension is a balanced group ready and able to move to the next stage of group development.

Most groups experience some form of primary and secondary tension during the forming and storming stages. In fact, a little bit of tension is a good thing. It can motivate a group toward action and increase a group's sensitivity to feedback. Effective groups learn to balance the needs for conflict and cohesion (Figure 2.3). As group communication scholars Donald Ellis and Aubrey Fisher point out,

"the successful and socially healthy group is not characterized by an absence of social tension, but by successful management of social tension."¹⁷

Figure 2.3 Balancing Primary and Secondary Tensions



2.1.3: Norming Stage

During the forming and storming stages, groups lack balance; they are either too cautious or too confrontational. Once a group reaches Tuckman's third stage, group cohesion emerges as the foundation for effective group work. During the **norming stage**, members resolve early tensions and begin collaborating as a committed and unified team pursuing a common goal. A group that fails to resolve such forming and storming tensions before this third stage will probably fail to develop productive norms and a structured process.¹⁸

As members learn to trust one another, they are more willing to disagree and express opinions. They develop structured methods for achieving group goals and establish **norms** or rules of engagement. Group members are comfortable interacting with one another and are ready to focus on the tasks necessary to achieve their common goal.

Here are suggestions for successfully navigating the norming stage of group development:¹⁹

- Clarify the tasks necessary for achieving the group's common goal. Develop a plan for successfully achieving the goal.
- Identify each member's responsibilities and roles within the group. Make sure you understand what the group expects you to do.
- Keep members focused on the group's tasks.
- Encourage collaborative work relationships among members.
- Recognize and adapt to differences among members.
- Modify or eliminate destructive or counterproductive behaviors.
- Resolve conflicts constructively, and use agreed upon decision-making procedures.

There is more order and direction during this third stage of group development. Members have begun to balance a wide range of group dialectics, with special emphasis on norms (conforming ↔ nonconforming), task requirements (structure ↔ spontaneity), effective deliberation (conflict ↔ cohesion), and adapting to member characteristics (homogeneity ↔ heterogeneity).

neous ↔ heterogeneous). At the same time, members should remember that “All work and no play” can make group work tedious and counterproductive. Take time to socialize with and support members, but don’t get carried away. An 80% work to 20% play ratio is both welcome and beneficial.²⁰

2.1.4: Performing Stage

When a group reaches the **performing stage**, members are fully engaged and focused on collaborating to achieve group goals. Roles and responsibilities are fluid, adapting and changing according to group needs and task requirements. In this stage, group loyalty and morale are generally high. Members have internalized “constructive, task-related” roles and activities.²¹ When groups reach the performing stage, members focus their energies on both the task and social dimensions of group work as they make major decisions and solve critical problems. Nearly everyone shares in and supports a unified effort to achieve a common goal. Although disagreements occur, they are usually resolved intelligently and amicably. During this stage, groups experience very little tension. Members support one another and feel a sense of accomplishment as they collaborate.

The following strategies can help your group collaborate effectively during the performing stage:²²

- Devote time to planning how the group will make decisions, solve problems, and achieve its common goal.
- Stay focused on completing your assigned tasks.
- Encourage collaboration and innovation. Offer to help other members. Ask for help when you need it.
- Solve problems as they arise and make the decisions necessary for achieving the group’s goal.
- Use constructive conflict resolution methods when disagreements occur.
- Adapt to group expectations for communicating with members, following group procedures, and meeting standards of quality.
- Evaluate the group’s processes and progress regularly. Make sure that all members are working effectively toward the common goal.
- Encourage creativity, innovation, and constructive criticism.

Theory in Groups

Collective Intelligence

Objective: Identify the three factors that exemplify collective intelligence in groups.

Researchers have identified a *c factor* that explains why some groups perform better than others—they are literally

smarter. This factor, called **collective intelligence**, is a phenomenon in which “smart” groups are more likely to succeed when members are sensitive to one another’s feelings, promote equal participation, and include female members.

Before examining the finer points of collective intelligence, reconsider the concept of synergy. Recall that **synergy** occurs when a group performs better than expected given the sum of skills and abilities of individual members working alone.²³ In other words, the whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts. Collective intelligence is more than synergy; it is a unique characteristic of groups that transcend the apparent synergy of other groups.

Three factors characterize groups that exemplify collective intelligence:²⁴

- 1. Members are highly sensitive to their colleagues’ feelings.** They accurately interpret the meaning of and feelings exhibited in members’ nonverbal behavior, such as playfulness, irritation, boredom, or the need for comfort. They also listen skillfully, share criticism constructively, have open minds, and are not dictatorial or dominating. Even in virtual team settings where nonverbal behavior cannot be seen, groups that exhibit collective intelligence sense and keep track of how others feel as well as what they know and believe.²⁵
- 2. Members seek an even distribution of talking time and turn-taking in discussions.**²⁶ All members contribute to the group equally. No one dominates; no one is left out. As one researcher put it, “groups that had smart people dominating the conversation were *not* very intelligent groups.”²⁷
- 3. Membership includes women.** In most cases, the presence and contributions of women in a group enhance the entire group’s collective intelligence.

Collective intelligence is not the sum of group members’ IQs. In fact, the collective intelligence of groups made up of people with very high IQs may be lower than one made up of people with average intelligence. A group composed of members who do not recognize and display sensitivity toward others’ feelings, who do not encourage or allow equal contributions from all members, and who are all of a single gender, may be considerably less “intelligent” than groups with these three important components.

2.1.5: Adjourning Stage

When a group reaches the final **adjourning stage**, it has achieved its common goal and begins to disengage and disband.²⁸ Many groups never reach an adjourning stage. They may be a permanent work group; a regular group of friends who play basketball, tennis, or card games together; a board of directors for a public or private institution; or a

virtual team of doctors who collaborate online to help diagnose puzzling ailments.

Other groups achieve their common goal and end their existence as a group. A study group for a particular course, a one-time mountain-climbing group, an impromptu emergency rescue team, or a group sand-bagging the banks of a flooding river may have no reason to continue once they've achieved a singular goal. In other cases, individual members leave a group for personal or professional reasons.

When an entire group disbands, members may experience the stress that comes with relinquishing group responsibilities. Although members are often proud of what they've achieved, they may also feel a sense of loss when the group dissolves. Some members may struggle with whether or how to preserve friendships that developed during the life of the group. When groups adjourn, the dialectic balance shifts from engagement to disengagement. Some writers describe this fifth stage as "mourning," which recognizes the loss felt by group members.²⁹

Here are some suggestions for managing the adjourning stage:

- Acknowledge and celebrate the group's accomplishments.
- Recognize individual members' contributions toward the group's goal.
- Sustain friendships developed within the group by maintaining contact with those members after the group disbands.
- Evaluate your role in the group's success. Identify what you did well as a group member and where you could improve. Apply these lessons to your other group experiences.

Tuckman's group development model is linear: It describes development stages as small changes that follow one another in a fixed path.³⁰ However, many groups don't move through each successive stage systematically or as though they are running a clearly marked obstacle course. Most groups work through a stage until circumstances motivate them to take on the challenges of another stage. Factors such as "changes in membership, external demands, and changes in leadership" may slow development or push a group back to a previous stage.³¹

Group development stages are "ideal" steps, but groups often deviate from this ideal. For example, a very large, new group may have difficulty getting itself going, but a smaller group with members who have worked together previously may skip or move quickly through the early stages. Although some groups "may

stagger back and forth among stages" as members, issues, and conditions change, they still "have a tendency to move forward" through specific development stages.³²

WRITING PROMPT

Tuckman's Group Development Stages

In your opinion, which group development stage is the most stressful? The most rewarding? Explain your answers.

The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

[Submit](#)

Virtual Teams Developmental Tasks

Objective: Recommend specific strategies that help virtual teams succeed as they move through four group developmental stages.

Most group development theories assume that members interact face to face at the same time and in the same place. This assumption does not apply when describing developmental stages in virtual teams. Two developmental features of virtual teams require added attention:

- The planning, organization, and use of technology add components to each stage of group development.
- Members' technical expertise, attitudes toward, and confidence with technology can affect how groups move through every stage.

Forming Stage

During the forming stage, virtual team members begin to develop codes of virtual conduct, review software and hardware requirements, and raise and answer questions about how they will use technology to accomplish the group's goals. Because resolving this stage is critical to group development, some virtual teams arrange a face-to-face orientation meeting before going online. An initial face-to-face meeting is particularly helpful if members do not know one another, the project is complicated or requires significant collaboration among members, or the goal is unclear.³³

Storming Stage

During a virtual team's storming stage, members must deal with the added complication imposed by the virtual environment. In addition to expressing opinions and debating substantive issues, the group may encounter technical problems and different levels of member expertise. For example, some members can tolerate and adjust to a bad phone connection or slow

online response rate, but for others—perhaps a non-native English speaker, a member who is hearing impaired, or a slow typist—these challenges can make interaction difficult or impossible. What should the group do if technical systems are not compatible, or if some members are technically unskilled or apprehensive about using advanced technology? Virtual teams must solve technical problems if they hope to address task-related issues and move beyond the storming stage.

Norming Stage

During the norming stage, virtual teams focus on the task. They define members' roles, resolve conflicts, solve most technical problems, and accept the group's norms. Virtual teams address issues related to differences in time, distance, technology, member cultures, and organizational environments. At this point, the group is ready to begin working effectively in the virtual environment.

Performing Stage

Once a virtual team reaches the performing stage, members engage in ongoing virtual interaction and encourage equal participation by all members. They have overcome or adjusted to technical roadblocks, have become comfortable with the virtual media used by the group, and are hard at work to achieve the common goal.

Adjourning Stage

As a group disbands, members may rely on virtual communication to manage the separation anxiety that comes with the adjourning stage. If a group has matured and performed well, members will be reluctant to completely end relationships with their colleagues. Even if a virtual team no longer operates in an official capacity, members may continue to consult and interact with one another via email, text messages, or other communication media.

2.2: Group Goals

2.2 Explain the guidelines for establishing a clear and elevated group goal



Rescue teams, NASA astronauts, surgical teams, mountain climbers, and sports teams work together to achieve a goal.

An effective group has *both* a clear understanding of its goal *and* a belief that its goal is meaningful and worthwhile.³⁴ In a three-year study of characteristics that explain how and why effective groups develop, researchers found “A clear and elevated goal” to be the top attribute on the list.³⁵ Any old goal is not enough; the goal must be *elevated*—one that is of higher importance than others—a goal that is grand, energizing, high-minded, and worth working toward. The Apollo Moon Project, initiated during the Kennedy administration, is a good example. Which goal is more specific: “To be leaders in space exploration” or “To land a man on the moon by the end of the 1960s”? Fortunately, NASA adopted the second goal, and its simple words were both clear and inspiring.³⁶

Clear, elevated goals challenge group members and give them the opportunity to excel—both as individuals and as a group. Here is how Carl Larson and Frank LaFasto describe what happens when groups work to achieve such goals:

[Groups] lose their sense of time. They discover to their surprise that it's dark outside and they worked right through the supper hours. The rate of communication among team members increases dramatically, even to the point that individuals call each other at all hours of the night because they can't get something out of their minds. There is a sense of great excitement and feelings of elation whenever even minor progress is made toward the goal.³⁷

2.2.1: Establishing Group Goals

If your group is assigned a goal by someone outside the group, group members may not be inspired by or fully understand the goal. However, if your group develops its *own* goal, members are more likely to embrace it and work hard to achieve it. This increase in enthusiasm and motivation occurs because group-based goal setting produces a better balance between member and group needs, a better understanding of the group tasks necessary to achieve the goal, and a better appreciation of how individual members can contribute. In addition, the process of goal setting can promote a more collaborative and cohesive group environment.

Group goals should be both specific and challenging. As implied by the two NASA goals, specific goals lead to higher performance levels than general goals. For example, telling a group to “find the best candidate for the job” is a generalized goal. A specific goal would be more like the following: Review the candidates for the job, recommend three top candidates, and include a list of each top candidate’s strengths and weaknesses. Table 2.1 summarizes some questions to ask in deciding on goals.

Table 2.1 Key Questions for Setting Group Goals

Regardless of the circumstances or the setting, your group will benefit by asking six questions about your group's goals:³⁸

Questions for Setting Group Goals	
1. Clarity	Is the goal clear, specific, and measurable if achieved?
2. Challenge	Is the goal challenging, inspiring, and thought provoking?
3. Commitment	Do members see the goal as meaningful, realistic, and attainable? Are they dedicated to achieving the goal?
4. Compatibility	Can both group and individual goals be achieved?
5. Cooperation	Does the goal require collaboration among group members?
6. Cost	Does the group have adequate resources, such as time and materials, to achieve the goal?

Setting a specific, clear, and elevated goal benefits every group. You don't have to be a NASA scientist or a corporate executive to set impressive goals. Even if your only task is to participate in a graded classroom discussion, your group should take the time to develop a set of appropriate goals. For example, in many group communication classes, instructors require students to participate in a problem-solving discussion. The group usually chooses its topic, creates a discussion agenda, and demonstrates its preparation and group communication skills in class. This is nothing like "Landing a man on the moon." Yet even a classroom discussion can be more effective if the group establishes a clear, elevated goal, such as, "Every member of our group will earn an A on this assignment." To achieve this goal, your group will have to do many things: Choose a meaningful discussion topic, prepare a useful agenda, research the topic thoroughly, make sure that every member is well prepared and ready to contribute, and demonstrate effective group communication skills during the discussion. A clear, elevated goal does more than set your sights on an outcome; it helps your group decide how to get there.

Theory in Groups

Goal Theory and Group Work

Objective: Explain the criteria for developing an effective group goal.

Researchers Edwin Locke and Gary Latham emphasize the value of setting group goals and recommend methods for accomplishing those goals. Their research establishes a strong relationship between the difficulty and specificity of a

goal and how hard people will work to achieve it. On the flip side, a simple, routine goal is not a strong motivator. For example, if your goal is to merely pass a difficult college course, you may not work hard or feel proud of the results if you succeed. However, if you strive for an A or B, you will work harder, be proud of your work, and—if you succeed—enjoy the rewards that come with achieving an enviable grade in a notorious "killer" course.

Locke and Latham conclude that groups function best when their goals are:

- specific,
- hard but realistic,
- accepted by members,
- used to evaluate performance,
- linked to feedback and rewards,
- set by members and groups, and
- framed to promote member growth.³⁹

Effective goal setting does more than raise group productivity and improve work quality—it also clarifies group and member expectations, increases satisfaction with individual and group performance, and enhances members' self-confidence, pride, and willingness to accept future challenges. Provided the group accepts them as worthwhile, challenging goals can lead to greater effort and persistence than easy goals.⁴⁰

2.2.2: Balancing Group Goals and Hidden Agendas

A group will *not* function well—or at all—if members focus only on their personal goals rather than a common goal. When a group agrees on a clear and important goal, members can pursue both group and individual goals, as long as their personal goals do not undermine the group goal.

When a member's personal goal is secret and radically different from or contrary to the group's common goal, the result is a hidden agenda. **Hidden agendas** occur when one or more members have undisclosed reasons for doing something that will benefit only individual members rather than the group as a whole. In some situations, hidden agendas can have serious negative consequences that prevent a group from achieving its goal.

Hidden agendas represent what people really want rather than what they say they want. When hidden agendas become more important than a group's goal, the result can be group frustration and failure because real issues and concerns may be buried while misleading and false arguments dominate the discussion. A student reported

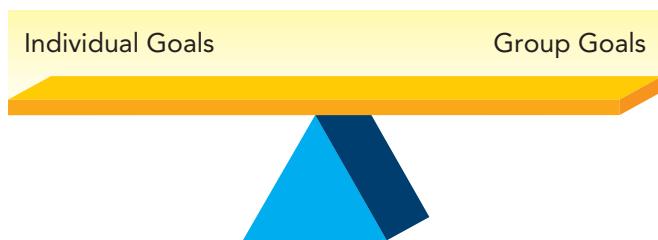
the following incident in which a hidden agenda disrupted a group's deliberations:

I was on a student government board that decides how college activities funds should be distributed to student clubs and intramural teams. About halfway through the process, I became aware that several members were active in intramural sports. By the time I noticed their pro-sports voting pattern, they'd gotten most of what they wanted. You wouldn't believe the bizarre reasons they came up with to cut academic clubs while fully supporting the budgets of athletic teams. What made me mad was that they didn't care about what most students wanted; they only wanted to make sure that *their* favorite teams were funded.

If unrecognized and unresolved during the forming and storming stages, hidden agendas are likely to infect the remaining stages of group development. Effective groups deal with hidden agendas by recognizing them and trying to resolve them whenever they occur. If a group member doesn't participate in a critical discussion or if the group's progress is unusually slow, look for hidden agendas. A question such as, "What seems to be hanging us up here?" may prompt members to reveal some of their personal concerns and self-centered goals. Recognizing the existence of hidden agendas may be sufficient to keep a group moving from one stage to another in its development and may tip the group's balance toward individual goals (Figure 2.4).

Even when you recognize the existence of hidden agendas, some of them cannot and should not be shared because they may create an atmosphere of distrust. Not many people would want to deal with the following revelation during a group discussion: "I only joined this group because I thought it would look good on my résumé." Recognizing hidden agendas means knowing that some of them can and should be confronted, but others need not be shared with the group.

Figure 2.4 Balancing Individual Goals and Group Goals



Groups can resolve the dialectic tensions caused by hidden agendas through early agreement on the group's common goal and by carefully choosing appropriate group procedures. Sociologists Rodney Napier and Matti Gershengen suggest discussing hidden agendas during

the early stages of group development.⁴¹ Initial discussions could include some of the following questions:

- What are the group's goals?
- Does the leader have any personal concerns or goals that differ from the group's goals?
- Do any members have personal concerns or hidden agendas that differ from the group's goals?
- What outcomes do members expect?

Group Assessment How Good Is Your Goal?⁴²

An effective group has both a clear understanding of its goal and feels the goal is meaningful and worthwhile. The *How Good Is Your Goal* assessment is an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the goal in a group in which you have been a member.

Directions: For each of the following questions, answer "Yes" or "No" to assess the overall goal of a group you currently belong to or belonged to in the past. Each time you select a "No" response, consider how the goal could have been improved.

	Yes	No
1. Does your group have a common goal?		
2. Is the goal specific?		
3. Do group members understand the goal?		
4. Do group members believe the goal is worthwhile?		
5. Is the goal achievable?		
6. Are the resources available to achieve the goal?		
7. Is the goal sufficiently challenging to group members?		
8. Are all members committed to the goal?		
9. Do all members know what they have to do to achieve the goal?		
10. Does the goal require group collaboration?		
11. Does the group recognize any individual hidden agendas?		
12. Has the group resolved any hidden agendas?		
13. Do members receive feedback about their own progress and the group's progress?		
14. Is there a reward for achieving the group's goal?		
15. When achieved, is the goal observable or measurable?		

2.3: Group Norms

2.3 Describe strategies for creating and changing explicit and implicit group norms

Earlier in this chapter, we used the word *norm* to describe an expected way of behaving in a particular group. We also discussed the *norming* stage of group development in which members resolve initial tensions and learn to collaborate with one another as a committed and cohesive

team. In this section, we examine the nature of group norms and how they affect a group's overall ability to achieve a worthy common goal.

Norms are expectations concerning the kinds of behaviors and opinions that are acceptable or unacceptable in a particular group. Put more simply, norms are a group's accepted rules of behavior that, when followed, ensure effective collaboration among group members. Norms are important because they serve many important functions. Norms

- express the values and ethical standards of the group.
- help the group function efficiently and effectively.
- define appropriate and inappropriate task and social behavior.
- enhance productivity in the performing stage of group development.
- ensure group survival when faced with threatening challenges.

Group norms influence how members behave, dress, speak, and work. For example, the norms for the members of a company's sales team may include a dress code, regular meetings before lunch, applauding one another's successes, and staying late at work without complaining. Without norms, there would be no consensus on how to organize and perform work.

However, some norms can work against a group and its goals. If group norms place a premium on friendly and peaceful discussions, group members may be reluctant to voice disagreement or share bad news. If group norms permit members to arrive late and leave early, meetings may not have enough participating members to make important decisions. Norms that do not support a group's goal can prevent the group from succeeding.

Group norms are powerful predictors of group behavior. According to psychologist Nicky Hayes, "Group norms are intangible and often difficult to express in words, but that doesn't mean that they are not real. People who belong to groups often try very hard to conform to their group's norms—because the price of failure may be exclusion from the group, or even ridicule."⁴³

2.3.1: Types of Norms

There are two general types of group norms—explicit and implicit.

Explicit norms are group norms that are written or stated verbally and shared with all group members. Explicit norms are often imposed on a group by a leader or by someone outside the group. The group leader may have the authority to determine work rules. A large group or organization may have standard procedures that it expects everyone to follow. For example, the workers in a customer service department may be required to wear

name badges. The staff members may have recommended this rule, the supervisor may have ordered this "custom," or the company may have established a policy regarding employee identification.

Implicit norms are group norms that are rarely discussed or openly communicated, but are still expected rules of behavior. As a result, they may not be easily recognized or understood by outsiders or by new group members. Generally, implicit norms evolve as members interact with one another. For example, it may take new group members several weeks to learn that meetings begin 15 minutes later than scheduled. Even seating arrangements may be governed by implicit norms: Almost all of us have been unsettled when we walked into a classroom or meeting to discover someone sitting at "our" desk or in "our" chair. Although not a word is spoken, offending members may sense that they have violated an implicit norm, whether or not they understand what it is. Members who fail to "get it" may soon be viewed as inconsiderate or clueless.

GroupWork

Classroom Norms⁴⁴

Without norms, group work can be a confusing and disorderly experience. Norms do more than provide guidelines for member behavior. They are vital to the effective collaboration needed to achieve a group's common goal. This activity ask you to distinguish between implicit and explicit norms.

Directions: List three implicit norms and three explicit norms that operate in some of your classes. When you have identified examples of each type of norm, rank the norms in terms of their usefulness in ensuring quality instruction and effective learning. Do all of the norms that the group listed contribute to a positive classroom experience? Should some of the existing norms be modified? Are any additional norms needed?

Explicit Classroom Norms	Your Ranking	Implicit Classroom Norms	Your Ranking
<i>Example:</i> The syllabus states that no makeup work is allowed without a legitimate written excuse.		<i>Example:</i> When students come in late, they tiptoe to the closest available seat.	
1.		1.	
2.		2.	
3.		3.	

2.3.2: Categories of Norms

Regardless of whether norms are explicitly communicated or implicitly understood, they can be divided into four categories: interaction norms, procedural norms, status norms, and achievement norms as shown in Table 2.2.

- **Interaction norms** specify how group members should communicate with one another.
- **Procedural norms** specify how the group should operate and what structured procedures it should use.
- **Status norms** specify the levels of influence among group members and how status (prestige, respect, power) is established or earned in the group.
- **Achievement norms** specify the quality and quantity of work expected from group members. Achievement norms help members determine how much time and energy they should devote to working in a particular group.

Table 2.2 Categories of Norms

Categories of Norms	Key Questions	Examples of Implicit Norms	Examples of Explicit Norms
Interaction Norms	What communication behavior is appropriate?	We tend to use the pronouns <i>we, us, and our</i> rather than <i>I, me, and my</i> .	The group leader is responsible for making sure that everyone gets a chance to speak.
Procedural Norms	How does the group operate?	Everyone turns off cell phones and other technologies during meetings.	We always get an agenda in advance and use it during our meetings.
Status Norms	Who has power and control?	The group leader always sits at the head of the table.	When a group vote is tied, the leader casts the deciding vote.
Achievement Norms	What are the group's standards?	Everyone shows up on time or early for our scheduled meetings.	All members <i>must</i> have full references for any reports or research they cite.

Recall that dialectic tensions can arise when one or more members challenge the group's norms or standards. At the same time, constructive criticism that promotes a group's goal can contribute to group effectiveness. Understanding the nature of the conformity ↔ nonconformity dialectic can help your group resolve this common tension (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5 Balancing Conformity and Nonconformity



2.3.3: Conformity

Group norms function only to the extent that members conform to them. **Conformity** occurs when group members adopt attitudes and actions that adhere to group norms and are favored by a majority of group members.⁴⁵ We learn the value of conformity at a young age. In the classroom, children learn that standing in line and raising their hands are expected behaviors. On the playground, children who refuse to play by the rules may find themselves playing alone.

Although some group members may have reasons for ignoring norms or wanting to change them, most groups pressure their members to conform. You are more likely to conform to norms when one or more of the following factors are present:

- You want to continue your membership in the group.
- You have a lower status than other group members and do not want to risk being seen as an upstart.
- You feel obligated to conform.
- You get along with and like working with the other group members.
- You may be punished for violating norms and/or rewarded for compliance.⁴⁶

Ethics in Groups

Beware of Unreasonable Norms

Objective: Explain the implications for group behavior based on the famous Zimbardo study in which college students played the roles of prison guards and prisoners.

Groups can exert enormous pressure on members to conform even when a norm is unethical or dangerous. Thus, groups have an ethical responsibility to establish reasonable norms. Two classic (and disturbing) studies illustrate our tendency to conform to unreasonable norms.⁴⁷

During the 1960s, Stanley Milgram of Yale University designed a series of experiments to find out whether people would obey commands from a stranger who tells them to inflict what seems to be considerable pain on another person. Subjects were told by the supposed experimenter to administer painful electric shocks to a research associate if the associate answered a question incorrectly. In fact, *no* shock was given, but the associates were trained to writhe in pain, scream, and pound on walls. Even though these behaviors convinced the subjects that they were causing enormous pain, most subjects increased the shocks as directed by the experimenter. In this case, pressure from an authority figure outweighed individual judgment and morality.

In another famous study conducted in the early 1970s, Philip Zimbardo created a realistic-looking prison in a Stanford University basement in which student subjects were assigned to play the role of prison guard or prisoner for several days. Very quickly, the prison guards began abusing their power and became increasingly cruel. After a brief period of rebellion, the prisoners became passive, demoralized, and depressed. Zimbardo halted

the experiment because it was “out of control” and causing psychological and physical damage to the subjects.⁴⁸

In some groups, discriminatory norms exclude people because of race, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, or personal philosophy. When group norms restrict members’ freedom of expression or human rights, an ethical member should object to the norm and try to change it. If all else fails, ethical members may publicly renounce the group or quit in protest.

A group and its members have ethical responsibilities. The following strategies will help you and your group develop constructive norms and navigate ethical dilemmas:⁴⁹

- When you join a group, focus on the group’s goals rather than your own.
- If someone in the group asks you to do something unethical, object to or decline the assignment—and make the rest of the group aware of the ethical issues and consequences.
- If a group adopts unethical norms, such as restricting the free flow of information or refusing to include diverse members, take responsibility and push for changes to such restrictive norms.
- Promote a group climate in which all members can develop to their full potential as individuals of worth and dignity.
- As members become more aware and knowledgeable about the ethical issues that arise whenever people communicate, the group should develop a well-thought-out credo or code of ethics.

2.3.4: Nonconformity

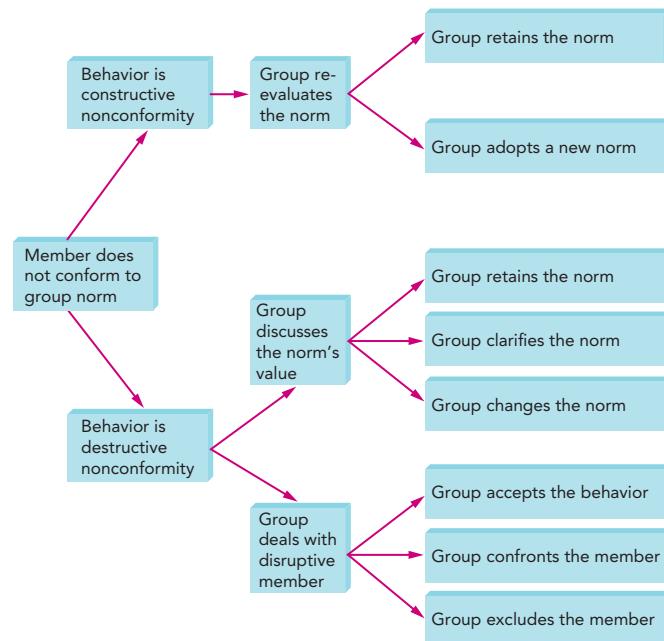
Members decide whether they will conform to group norms or not. **Nonconformity** occurs when a member’s behavior does not reflect the norms or expectations of the group. Although conformity to most norms is essential to the functioning of a group, nonconformity can improve group performance when members have legitimate concerns and alternative suggestions. Figure 2.6 presents the process for managing nonconformity. Nonconformity can be either constructive or destructive.

CONSTRUCTIVE NONCONFORMITY



Group norms express group values, help groups function efficiently, and define appropriate social behavior. Why does constructive nonconformity also help a group achieve its common goal?

Figure 2.6 Managing Nonconformity



Constructive nonconformity occurs when a member resists conforming to norms as a way of alerting members about problems that may prevent the group from achieving its common goal. Constructive nonconformity is sometimes needed and can be a valuable asset. Movies, television shows, and books have championed the holdout juror, the stubbornly honest politician, and the principled but disobedient soldier or crewmember. Sometimes there is so much pressure for group members to conform that they need a nonconformist to shake up the process, to provide critical feedback, and to create doubt about what had been a confident but wrong decision. Nonconformity can serve a group well if it prevents members from ignoring important information or making a poor decision. The following statements are examples of constructive nonconformity:

- “I know we always ask the newest group member to take minutes during the meeting, but we may be losing the insight of an experienced member and skilled note taker by continuing this practice.”
- “I have to question devoting my time to these weekly meetings if we continue to take three hours to get through a routine agenda.”

Groups in Balance . . . Change Norms as Needed

When norms do not meet the needs of a group or its members, new ones should be established. Some norms may be too rigid, whereas others may be too vague. Some norms may have outlived their usefulness. Finding an appropriate balance between existing norms—which may be old, rigid, or useless—and new, untested norms presents a challenge to

every group. Effective groups learn how to change norms in order to prevent or curb recurring disruptions or problems. Norms can be difficult to change, especially when they are implicit or unspoken. Changes in group norms typically occur as the result of the following conditions or behaviors:

- Contagious behavior, such as changing a work procedure, a dress code, or speech patterns
- Suggestions or actions of high-status or highly confident members
- Suggestions of outside consultants
- Group discussion and decision making (for explicit norms)
- Continued interaction (for implicit norms)⁵⁰

When group norms no longer help a group achieve its purpose, some members may resist changes simply because change can be disruptive and threatening. However, fear of change should be weighed against probability of failure. Effective groups know when to hold on to tried-and-true norms and when to change them. The natural development of groups usually requires changes in goals, membership, and/or norms.

DESTRUCTIVE NONCONFORMITY In contrast, **destructive nonconformity** occurs when a member resists conforming to norms without regard for the best interests of the group and its goals. For example, sending and responding to text messages during meetings by a member in spite of the group's clear disapproval is distracting, annoying, and even threatening if allowed to continue.

Nonconformity of either type provides a group with an opportunity to examine its norms. When members deviate, the group may have to discuss the value of a particular norm and subsequently decide whether to change it, clarify it, or continue to accept it. At the very least, nonconforming behavior helps members recognize and understand the norms of the group. For example, if a member is reprimanded for criticizing an office policy, other members will learn that the boss should not be challenged.

Rather than accepting a nonproductive norm, some groups may attempt to correct nonconforming members. Imagine the challenge of dealing with the following nonconforming behavior:

- Despite a commitment to high standards of group work, a member continues to underperform so that work does not get done or other members have to pick up the slack.
- Despite the group's agreement on a common goal, a group member openly and aggressively pushes a personal agenda for a different outcome.
- Despite clear norms about equal participation by all members, one group member dominates discussions and blocks others from speaking so that meetings run twice as long as they should.

Although most groups can handle an occasional encounter with a renegade, dealing with consistently disruptive members is another story. Fortunately, several strategies can help a group deal with a member whose disruptive behavior becomes destructive. The methods discussed in the following sections begin with efforts to accommodate a disruptive member and escalate to a more permanent solution.

A group can accept, confront, or even exclude the troublesome member.

ACCEPT In some cases, a group will accept and put up with disruptive nonconformity. Acceptance is not the same as approval; it involves learning to live with disruptive behavior. When the disruption is not critical to the group's ultimate success, or when the member's positive contributions far outweigh the inconvenience and annoyance of putting up with the behavior, a group may allow the disruptive behavior to continue. For example, a member who is always late for meetings but puts in more than her fair share of work may find her tardy behavior accepted as an unavoidable fact of group life.

CONFRONT Another strategy for dealing with disruptive nonconformity is confrontation, particularly when a member's behavior is impossible to accept or ignore and when it threatens the success of a group and its members. At first, rather than singling out the disruptive member, the entire group can address the issue by talking in general terms about coming to meetings prepared and on time, not interrupting others while they are speaking, or criticizing ideas rather than people. However, when a member becomes "impossible," groups may need to confront the perpetrator more directly. Members may direct nonverbal messages (frowning, looking away, eye-rolling, heavy sighs, groans) to the wayward member in an attempt to show that the group is displeased. Or a group may address the member directly during the course of the discussion: "Barry, it's distracting and disrupts our discussion when you answer your cell phone in meetings. Please turn it off." Although such attention can be intimidating and uncomfortable for the nonconforming member, it is not always sufficient to overcome the problem.

As an alternative to a public confrontation, there may be value in discussing the problem with the disruptive member outside the group setting. A frank and open conversation between the disruptive member and the leader or a trusted member of the group may uncover the causes of the problem as well as solutions for it. Because some nonconforming members may not view their behavior as disruptive, they may not understand why the group is ignoring, confronting, or excluding them. Taking time to talk with a disruptive member in a nonthreatening setting can address both personal and group problems.

EXCLUDE When all else fails, a group may exclude disruptive members. Exclusion can take different forms. During discussions, group members can turn away from problem members, ignore their comments, or refuse to make eye contact. Instead, exclusion might mean assigning disruptive members to unimportant, solo tasks or ones that will drive them away from the group. Finally, a group may be able to expel unwanted members. Being asked to leave a group or being barred from participating is a humiliating experience that all but the most stubborn members would prefer to avoid.

Rather than covering up for disruptive and noncontributing members, effective groups deal with such individuals. As Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith wrote in *The Discipline of Teams*, “Sometimes that requires replacing members, sometimes it requires punishing them, and sometimes it requires working with them. [An effective group] does whatever it takes to eliminate disruptive behavior and ensure productive contributions from all of its members.”⁵¹

2.4: Group Motivation

2.4 Compare the four categories of motivators

The word *motivate* comes from a French word, *motif*, which means “causing to move.” Thus, if you motivate someone, you give that person a cause or reason to act. Group **motivation** provides the inspiration and/or incentives that move group members to work together to achieve a common goal.⁵² Without motivation, we may know what we need to do and even how to do it, but we lack the will and energy to do it.

Most us of are familiar with **extrinsic motivation**, the incentives that come from external sources, such as a boss or business, a teacher or coach, a friend, family member, or role model. These rewards can take the form of money, job benefits and perks, good grades and blue ribbons, or the approval and praise of others. Extrinsic rewards do not necessarily motivate group members because they force members to work. Perks and praise push or drive members to collaborate with others and achieve a goal. Extrinsic incentives can be positive or negative.⁵³ For example, hoping that your boss will give you a promotion for a job well done is a positive extrinsic motivator. However, fear of getting fired for doing a poor job is a negative extrinsic motivator.

In contrast, **intrinsic motivation** constitutes rewards that come from internal sources inherent in a particular activity. These rewards take the forms of pride in doing good work and achieving a challenging goal as well as a sense of personal accomplishment.⁵⁴ Intrinsic rewards inspire and move members because they care about and want to do the work. The push and pull dialectic of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is captured by a major league

baseball player who said, “I used to enjoy playing baseball until I started getting paid for it.”⁵⁵

Every group has the potential to make group work an optimal experience for members by using the four categories of motivators to energize and reinforce an entire group depicted in Figure 2.7: a sense of meaningfulness, a sense of choice, a sense of competence, and a sense of progress.⁵⁶

Figure 2.7 Thomas's Intrinsic Motivators in Action



2.4.1: A Sense of Meaningfulness

The shared feeling that the group is pursuing a worthy task creates a **sense of meaningfulness**. Highly motivated groups believe that the job is worth doing and that they are capable of getting it done. Whether your group is setting out to climb Mt. Everest, planning a homecoming rally, or establishing a new product line, make sure there is a clear and elevated goal supported by every member of the group. You can also promote a sense of meaningfulness in your group by meeting members’ needs and adapting to their personality types. If you are leading a group, give group members feedback that tells them whether their efforts are contributing to the group’s goal.⁵⁷

2.4.2: A Sense of Choice

Motivated groups feel they have a **sense of choice**—the shared feeling that the group has the power and ability to make decisions about how to organize and do its job. In addition to focusing on the group goal, group members should select agreed-upon strategies for achieving the goal. Every member knows what she or he is expected to do. If you are the group’s leader, you can promote a sense of choice by encouraging members to make decisions about how tasks are accomplished and accept the inevitability of making mistakes when exploring innovative approaches. When group members have the power to make decisions, they are motivated by a greater sense of personal control and responsibility.

2.4.3: A Sense of Competence

The shared feeling that the group is doing excellent, high-quality work is a **sense of competence**. Motivated groups need more than a clear goal and strategies for achieving that goal. They also need competent group members who are ready, willing, and able to perform the tasks necessary to achieve their common goal. When members experience a sense of competence, they become totally absorbed in what they are doing, are willing to take on new challenges, and feel personal and group pride. You can promote a sense of competence in your group by providing constructive feedback to group members and listening to their feedback, complimenting member abilities and achievements, and setting high standards for yourself and for the group.

2.4.4: A Sense of Progress

Motivated groups must feel a **sense of progress**—the shared feeling that the group is accomplishing something. “How are we doing?” is an important question for all groups. It is difficult for members to stay motivated if they have no idea whether the group is making progress toward its goal. A well-chosen, structured goal should be measurable. Motivated groups “create good, objective measurements that people can relate to their specific behavior.”⁵⁸ A group can provide a sense of progress by tracking and measuring progress; monitoring and, if needed, finding ways to sustain group motivation; and celebrating group accomplishments.

Watch Planning the Playground



Watch this clip from the video “Planning the Playground,” which illustrates concepts in this section.

WRITING PROMPT

Group Motivation

1. What strategies did group members use to decrease primary tension?
2. As these group members continue working together to achieve the group's goal, what types of rewards are most likely to be effective?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

Summary: Group Development

2.1: Group Development Stages

- The life cycle of groups has five discrete stages—forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.
- During the forming stage, many groups experience primary tension, the social unease that accompanies the getting-acquainted stage in a new group.
- During the storming stage, secondary tensions often emerge as members pursue positions of power and influence.
- Groups with collective intelligence have three characteristics: (1) a social sensitivity to member emotions, (2) equality in the amount of talking and turn-taking in discussions, and (3) the presence and participation of female members.

- The process of socializing newcomers in a group moves through five phases: preliminary, acquainting, adaptive, assimilation, and exit.
- Virtual teams must take into account their members' confidence and expertise with technology in order to move through group development stages efficiently and effectively.

2.2: Group Goals

- An effective group has *both* a clear understanding of its goal *and* a belief that its goal is meaningful and worthwhile.
- Effective group goals require attention to clarity, challenge, commitment, compatibility, cooperation, and cost.

- Goal Theory claims that groups function best when their goals are specific, challenging, accepted, used to evaluate performance, and promote member growth.
- Hidden agendas occur when a member's private goal conflicts with the group's goal.

2.3: Group Norms

- Norms are expectations held by group members concerning acceptable behavior; they can be explicit or implicit.
- Norms can be classified as interaction, procedural, status, and achievement norms.
- Constructive nonconformity occurs when a member resists a norm while still working to promote a group goal.
- Destructive nonconformity occurs when a member resists conforming to norms without regard for the best interests of the group and its common goal.
- When members engage in destructive nonconformity, a group can accept, confront, or even exclude them.
- Groups have an ethical responsibility to establish norms that are reasonable and respect the rights of others.

2.4: Group Motivation

- Group motivation provides the inspiration and incentives that move group members to work together to achieve a common goal.

- Whereas extrinsic motivation relies on incentives that come from external sources in the form of money, job benefits, good grades, and praise from others, intrinsic motivation relies on rewards that come from internal sources inherent in a particular activity in the form of personal pride and a sense of accomplishment.
- Members are motivated by a sense of meaningfulness, a sense of choice, a sense of competence, and a sense of progress.

SHARED WRITING CASE STUDY: NICE TO MEET YOU, TOO

Use the information you have learned to answer the following question about the case study that was presented at the beginning of the chapter:

Which members, if any, are most likely to compete for status and influence in the storming stage?

Review and discuss the similarities and differences between your answer and those of at least two of your classmates.

► A minimum number of characters is required to post and earn points. After posting, your response can be viewed by your class and instructor, and you can participate in the class discussion.

Post

0 characters | 140 minimum

Chapter 2 Quiz: Group Development

Chapter 3

Group Member Participation



In successful groups, members assume critical roles, adapt to one another's interpersonal needs, and communicate confidently and assertively.



Learning Objectives

- 3.1** Recognize the inclusion, control, and affection needs of group members
- 3.2** Explain how group task and social maintenance roles contribute to group productivity and member satisfaction

- 3.3** Apply specific strategies and skills to enhance the communication confidence of group members
- 3.4** List the benefits and skills characteristic of effective assertiveness

Case Study: Taming Tony the Tiger

Anthony ("Tony the Tiger") Tarantella is a conscientious and assertive man who has always liked working in groups. He is a member of a large family, has lots of friends, enjoys playing Tuesday night basketball on a neighborhood team,

and finds his work as a Kiwanis Club member rewarding. At work, Tony manages the sales and advertising department for a small business. For the past 20 years, his group experiences have been, for the most part, positive.

Recently, he has sensed a change in his feelings and commitment to several groups. Members of his basketball team often miss games, saying they're too tired or too busy. On the job, he seems to have less time to complete more work. His

younger and less-experienced colleagues respect his expertise, but he no longer gets excited when working with them.

Tony understands that things have changed. His family has grown up, and he has less influence in their lives. Some of his close friends have moved out of the neighborhood. Retirement has claimed several of his best coworkers. He also recognizes that his way of working may not be in sync with the work styles of younger employers. He can tell that some staff members don't like his insistence on clear schedules and meeting deadlines. He knows he becomes aggravated and critical when a basketball game is canceled or someone at work makes a last-minute request for a new advertisement. He finds himself losing patience with his wife and kids when they change plans without consulting him. To make matters worse, everyone knows he's frustrated, but he can't seem to tone down his judgmental reactions. A few times, he has lost his temper over small issues and had to apologize for his behavior. Tony decides he needs to take a good look at himself to help figure out how to recapture his commitment to group work.

Critical Thinking Questions

When you finish reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following critical thinking questions about this case study:

1. What needs motivate Tony's participation in groups? To what extent are those needs met in his current job?
2. What roles does Tony assume in his groups, and how do these roles affect his attitude and behavior as a group member?
3. How can Tony balance his interaction style and become less aggressive?
4. Which dialectic tensions help explain the problems Tony is experiencing as he works in groups?

3.1: Group Member Needs

3.1 Recognize the inclusion, control, and affection needs of group members

Most of us join groups because they satisfy specific needs. For example, some people join volunteer fire departments or participate in neighborhood watch programs to safeguard their community. College students join campus clubs and societies to be with friends or make new ones. New employees may soon quit if the boss and work team seem intolerant or disagreeable. In many cases, you may join a group to meet an individual need separate from the group's common goal. For instance, a young attorney might join a local civic organization in an effort to meet prospective clients. A retiree may volunteer at a hospital to feel productive and appreciated.

Although many psychologists have studied human needs and offered theories to explain their impact, psychologist Will Schutz focused on the interpersonal needs of

group members. His work explains why we join, remain in, and even leave groups.

3.1.1: Schutz's Theory of Interpersonal Needs

Will Schutz developed the **Fundamental Interpersonal Relationship Orientation (FIRO) Theory** that examines how the need for inclusion, the need for control, and the need for affection influences how group members interact with one another. Schutz maintains that we join groups in order to satisfy one or more of these needs.¹ As you will see, ideal group members meet these needs by finding a balance between two extremes.



A group of volunteer firefighters certainly serves a need in the community, but joining the local fire department may also fulfill individual volunteer's interpersonal needs.

WRITING PROMPT

Group Member Needs

How have your experiences in groups satisfied or not satisfied your interpersonal needs? Are you a democratic, social, and/or personal group member?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

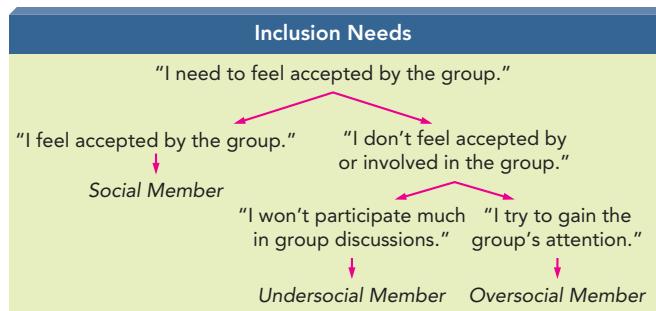
THE NEED FOR INCLUSION An **inclusion need** represents our desire to be given attention and to feel significant and accepted by other group members.² For some group members, the need for inclusion is strong—they want to fit in and be appreciated by other members. The need for inclusion is less important to other group members—they are quite content to work without a great deal of involvement with others. When a group meets a member's inclusion need, the result is an ideal **social member**—a person who enjoys working with people but is also comfortable working alone.

When inclusion needs are *not* met, members do not feel accepted; they do not fit in with the group and may engage in either undersocial behavior or oversocial behavior.

- An **undersocial member** may feel unworthy or may withdraw from the group. Because these people believe that no one values them, they try not to be noticed and thus avoid being hurt.
- An **oversocial member** seeks attention to compensate for feelings of inadequacy. Such members seek companionship for all activities because they can't stand being alone. They try to impress other members with what and whom they know.³

If group members exhibit undersocial and/or oversocial behavior, try to satisfy their inclusion needs. Making new members feel welcome and veteran members feel valued requires a careful balance between the inclusion needs of individual members and the group's need to achieve its common goal. Figure 3.1 illustrates how members react when their inclusion needs are met as well as the consequences of unmet inclusion needs.

Figure 3.1 Inclusion Needs



THE NEED FOR CONTROL A **control need** refers to the desire to feel competent, confident, and free to make decisions. The need for control is often expressed by a member who wants to be the group's leader. For some members, the need for control is strong—they want to take charge of the group and influence members. For other group members, the need for control is less important—they are quite content to be followers and entrust leadership tasks to others. When a group meets a member's control need, the result is a **democratic member**—a person who has no problems with power and is just as comfortable giving orders as taking them. Such members are often excellent leaders because they can exercise control when needed, but they also put the group's goals ahead of their own needs.

Unmet control needs can result in the emergence of an abdicrat or an autocrat. Each type manifests control needs through opposite behaviors.

- An **abdicrat** is a group member who reacts to unmet control needs by being submissive and avoiding

responsibility. Abdicrats often feel no hope of having any control in the group. Generally, they do what they are told and avoid responsibilities.

- The **autocrat** reacts to unmet control needs by trying to dominate the group. Autocrats often criticize other members and try to force their decisions on the group.⁴

Dealing with abdicrats and autocrats requires the group to grant members a sense of control appropriate to their needs without jeopardizing group productivity and member satisfaction. Giving members responsibility for and leadership of special projects or tasks may satisfy their need for control. For example, asking a member to chair an important subcommittee may satisfy an autocrat's control need. Figure 3.2 illustrates how members react when their control needs are fulfilled, as well as the consequences of unmet control needs.

Figure 3.2 Control Needs



THE NEED FOR AFFECTION An **affection need** reflects our desire to express and receive warmth or be liked by others.⁵ Members with strong affection needs seek close friendships and expressions of warmth from others. Similar to inclusion and control needs, some group members have a high need for affection—they want to be liked and develop strong friendships with group members. For others, the need for affection is less important—they don't need to be liked to be a productive group member. When a group meets a member's affection need, the result is a **personal member**—a person who is emotionally comfortable interacting with group members. While preferring to be liked, an ideal personal member is secure enough to function in a group where social interaction and affection are not high priorities.

When affection needs are not met, members do not feel liked; they become uncomfortable in the group setting. Reactions to this deficit fall into two categories: underpersonal behavior and overpersonal behavior.

- An **underpersonal member** may establish only superficial relationships with other members. Because they believe no one likes them, they may appear aloof and uninvolved, and when pressed, they rarely share their honest feelings or opinions.

GroupWork Group Attraction Survey⁶

When group membership fulfills the interpersonal needs of members, the result is a highly collaborative group. When group membership fails to fulfill such needs, resultant member behaviors can jeopardize a group's ability to achieve its common goal. To determine the factors that probably motivate you to join and/or remain a group member, complete the *Group Attraction Survey*.

Directions: Think of an effective group in which you currently participate or in which you have participated in the past. Keep the selected group in mind as you complete this questionnaire. The 15 statements describe the possible reasons you were attracted to, joined, and remained a member of this group. Indicate the degree to which each statement applies by selecting whether you:

1) Strongly disagree; 2) Disagree; 3) Are undecided; 4) Agree; or 5) Strongly agree.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1. I like having authority and high status in the group.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. I want the other group members to act friendly toward me.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. Group members help one another solve personal problems.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I am proud when the group achieves a goal or an objective.	<input type="radio"/>				
5. I try to be an active participant in group activities.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. Some group members are close friends.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. I become upset if group members waste time and effort.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. I like to do things with group members outside the group.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. Group members are excellent decision makers and problem solvers.	<input type="radio"/>				
10. Group members like me.	<input type="radio"/>				
11. I work hard to be a valuable group member.	<input type="radio"/>				
12. I try to influence the opinions and actions of group members.	<input type="radio"/>				
13. I like it when group members invite me to join their activities.	<input type="radio"/>				
14. I enjoy talking to group members, even when the conversation is unrelated to the group's goal.	<input type="radio"/>				
15. I try to get group members to do things the way I want them done.	<input type="radio"/>				

 Reset

 Submit

Scoring

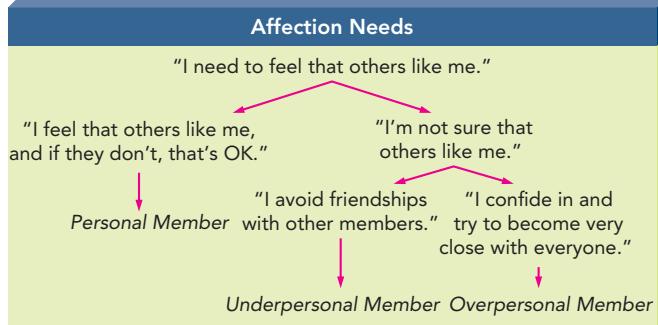
Group Attraction	Scoring	Score
Seek Task Achievement	Add your responses to items 4, 7, and 9	
Seek Social Interaction	Add your responses to items 3, 8, and 14	
Seek Inclusion	Add your responses to items 5, 11, and 13	
Seek Control	Add your responses to items 1, 12, and 15	
Seek Affection	Add your responses to items 2, 6, and 10	
Total Score _____		

Score Interpretation: A score of 12 or above in any category indicates that this need is an important reason why you joined and stay in this group. A score of 6 or below indicates that this need was not an important factor in joining the group and not a major reason for you staying in it. Examining your needs and attraction to other groups in which you work may result in different scores.

- An **overpersonal member** seeks intimate friendships despite the disinterest of other members. Such members are often too talkative, too personal, and too confiding.⁷

Dealing with underpersonal and overpersonal members requires expressions of fondness and friendliness.

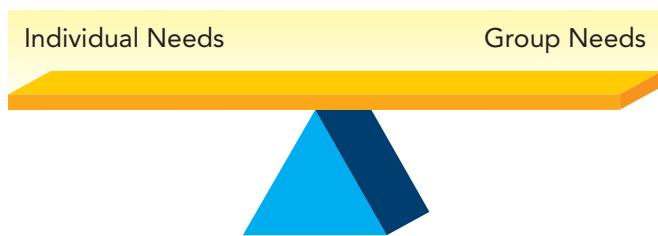
Being friendly to new members and taking the time to communicate affection to long-standing members takes extra effort, but these actions can convert unsatisfied participants into ideal personal members. Figure 3.3 (see page 40) illustrates how members react when their affection needs are fulfilled as well as the consequences of unmet affection needs.

Figure 3.3 Affection Needs

3.1.2: Balancing Individual Needs and Group Needs

Using Schutz's FIRO theory to improve a group's performance requires a balanced approach that helps members meet *both* individual inclusion, control, and affection needs *and* the group's need for productive collaboration. For example, a member who seeks attention or tries to impress other members may have a strong inclusion need. Rather than giving up on or criticizing an undersocial or oversocial member, you can help satisfy members' inclusion needs by praising their good work. When members have strong control needs but are not capable enough or eligible to lead a group, you may be able to satisfy *both* their need for control *and* the need to advance the group's goal by asking them to lead a special project. Praising and rewarding effective group behavior can help group members feel included, competent, and well liked.

There are reasons to be cautious about using FIRO theory to explain and predict group behavior. Undersocial behavior may not reflect an unmet inclusion need; the member may be quite comfortable and happy working alone. Overpersonal behavior may not reflect an unmet affection need; such behavior may represent an enthusiastic effort to create a positive social climate for the group (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4 Balancing Individual Needs and Group Needs

3.2: Member Roles

3.2 Explain how group task and social maintenance roles contribute to group productivity and member satisfaction

A **role** is a pattern of behaviors associated with a member's specific functions within a particular group. A role is not just

what you do in a group; it's also what members expect you to do. For example, a group may rely on one member to generate enthusiasm for group work and promote teamwork, and another member to reconcile disagreements, reduce tension, and calm anxious members. Both of these roles serve valuable group functions.

Members may adopt different roles at different times in different groups. Some members take on multiple roles. Thus, you may assume the role of coordinator in a group that lacks direction, but function as a harmonizer in another group that needs help in resolving conflicts. If you know the most about the discussion topic, your primary role may be that of information provider. And if a member dominates a discussion, several group members may try to counteract this behavior by taking on the positive role of gatekeeper. What's critical is finding a *balance* of appropriate roles based on the group's progress toward achieving its goals.⁸

Group roles fall into two functional categories: task roles and social maintenance roles. **Task roles** are sets of behaviors that affect a group's ability to complete its work and achieve a common goal. **Social maintenance roles** are sets of behaviors that affect how group members get along with one another while pursuing a common goal. They focus on building relationships and keeping the group cohesive and cooperative. (See Table 3.1.)

Table 3.1 Group Roles

Task Roles	Social Maintenance Roles
Coordinator	Harmonizer
Information Provider	Motivator
Opinion Provider	Supporter
Questioner	Gatekeeper
Clarifier	Team Builder
Analyzer	
Implementer	

In the following sections, each functional role is categorized, named, described, and illustrated with statements that might be heard from a member assuming that role.⁹

3.2.1: Group Task Roles

Seven essential task roles enable groups to "get the job done." Not surprisingly, there is overlap in these functions. An effective coordinator provides information, asks questions, and helps implement a plan in addition to the primary task of maintaining group focus. However, the task roles in this section go well beyond an occasional helping-hand or insightful analysis. Instead, they represent a consistent set of expected behaviors taken on by specific group members. Table 3.2 provides descriptions and examples of the following seven task roles: coordinator, information provider, opinion provider, questioner, clarifier, analyzer, and implementer.

Table 3.2 Group Task Roles

Task Role	Description	Examples
Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serves as the group's manager by keeping the group focused on its goal, planning and conducting meetings, assigning tasks, facilitating decision making, and identifying group process problems. Makes sure that group meetings are productive and that members know their responsibilities. May serve as the group's chairperson, facilitator, manager, or designated leader. Ideally, several group members share coordination functions. 	<p><i>"Drew, would you mind designing our presentation slides?"</i></p> <p><i>"Don't forget—if you have any issues you want added to our next meeting's agenda, please email them to me at least two days in advance."</i></p> <p><i>"It sounds like we've fully analyzed the relevant issues. Let's move on and talk about possible solutions."</i></p>
Information Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researches and shares relevant information, offers well-informed suggestions, and/or contributes specialized expertise and skills. Ensures that members are fully informed. 	<p><i>"I checked with the accountant, and she said . . ."</i></p> <p><i>"I have an idea. I know several local artists who might donate their art to our fundraising auction. I'll ask a few and let you know the results."</i></p> <p><i>"I'm very familiar with copyright law and suggest that we get the photographer's written permission to use her images in our brochure."</i></p>
Opinion Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expresses informed opinions, interprets the opinions and perspectives of others, and ensures that members are familiar with various points of view when making decisions. 	<p><i>"I don't agree that radio ads are the answer, because they'll use up our entire promotional budget."</i></p> <p><i>"Chris couldn't make the meeting today, but he told me that he doesn't think a bake sale will raise enough money."</i></p> <p><i>"I think it would be better if we all contributed some slides to the presentation instead of relying on one group member to design them."</i></p>
Questioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks for information and opinions, requests clarification, probes for what others think or feel, and tests for group consensus. Helps a group identify the information it needs and promotes a better understanding of the issues in a group's discussion. 	<p><i>"How can we decide on a policy for students with disabilities without knowing more about the new federal laws and regulations?"</i></p> <p><i>"Christina, I understand that you believe the project management software should be upgraded, but I'm not sure I understand why it's necessary. Could you please explain it more?"</i></p> <p><i>"Do we all agree that the lobby should be renovated this year?"</i></p>
Clarifier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains ideas and suggestions, corrects misunderstandings, summarizes the group's discussion and conclusions, and helps the group refine its goal. Minimizes confusion and provides members with a clearer understanding of the group's discussion and its goal. 	<p><i>"Marshall isn't saying that the IT department needs more technical training. Instead, he's suggesting that they attend a team-building workshop."</i></p> <p><i>"Okay, so far we've agreed to hold a fundraising gala, but we don't yet have agreement on the event's theme."</i></p> <p><i>"Our goal—to promote citizens' full participation in our democracy—is noble but a bit vague. Let's consider a more specific goal, such as 'Register 100 new voters each month.'"</i></p>
Analyzer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assesses information, opinions, and arguments; evaluates courses of action and suggests multiple options for solving problems. Makes sure that the group engages in effective critical thinking and that group decisions are based on accurate information and sound reasoning. 	<p><i>"I think we've forgotten something here. These building figures don't take into account monthly operating costs, such as utilities and maintenance."</i></p> <p><i>"Ashley's suggestions make sense, but there are a couple of potential problems we should discuss before we take a final vote."</i></p> <p><i>"We need to consider the consequences of dramatic changes to the work schedule in the sales department. Employee morale could suffer."</i></p>
Implementer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transforms group ideas into action by developing action plans, following through on assigned tasks, creating oral and/or written reports, and helping other members needing assistance with their tasks. Without implementers, a group's great idea never becomes a reality. 	<p><i>"I've created a schedule with deadlines. Let's look it over to make sure it works for everyone."</i></p> <p><i>"We're going to need a fairly large committee to get this done. I'll do a simple spreadsheet that shows the tasks that need to be completed and whether the potential committee members have the will and skill to do them."</i></p> <p><i>"If you need some extra help, I'd be happy to work with you on creating a realistic budget for the project."</i></p>

3.2.2: Group Social Maintenance Roles

Five social maintenance roles help group members get along with one another as they pursue a common goal. Like task roles, social maintenance roles can overlap. Table 3.3 provides descriptions and examples of the following five social maintenance roles: harmonizer, motivator, supporter, gatekeeper, and team builder.

The need to balance the seven task roles and the five social maintenance roles is illustrated in Figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5 Balancing Task Roles and Social Maintenance Roles

Table 3.3 Group Social Maintenance Roles

Social Role	Description	Examples
Harmonizer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates a cooperative group environment by reducing tensions, helping members resolve conflicts, and encouraging the group to adapt to interpersonal differences. Helps the group manage the primary and secondary tensions that occur during the early stages of group development and encourages members to get along with one another. Promotes group cohesion and facilitates constructive conflict resolution. 	<p><i>"This first meeting is a bit awkward since we don't know each other. Let's go around the table and introduce ourselves."</i></p> <p><i>"I know we're starting to get on each other's nerves, but we're almost done. Let's put aside our differences and finish up."</i></p> <p><i>"It looks as though we're not going to agree on this one. Maybe we can improve the old system rather than trying to come up with a brand new way of doing it."</i></p>
Motivator¹⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates enthusiasm for the group's goal, empowers the group to make its own choices, encourages members to do their best, and acknowledges member and group accomplishments. Motivates group members to believe that the goal is meaningful, to feel that they have the power to make decisions, to know that they are capable of the work, and to enjoy a sense of accomplishment. 	<p><i>"What our group is proposing could transform the entire organization. This is so exciting!"</i></p> <p><i>"After our presentation, let's get together for dinner and celebrate a job well done!"</i></p> <p><i>"As the division manager, I could develop a new employee grievance procedure on my own, but I think this team is fully capable of developing a reasonable and fair process. I'll plan on implementing the process this group recommends."</i></p>
Supporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers encouragement, praises group members, identifies and expresses group feelings, and listens with empathy to other members. Promotes member confidence and provides emotional support in stressful situations. Focuses on the emotional needs of group members. 	<p><i>"The information you found has been a big help. Thanks for taking the time to research this."</i></p> <p><i>"I sense that the group is getting tired and would appreciate a break before discussing the next item on the agenda."</i></p> <p><i>"I understand that you're feeling a bit overwhelmed by this project right now. Would you like to talk about it?"</i></p>
Gatekeeper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates member participation by monitoring the flow of communication within the group, encouraging quiet members to speak, and discouraging anyone from dominating a group discussion. Ensures that all members have an opportunity to fully participate in group discussions. 	<p><i>"I think we've heard from everyone except Sophie, and I know she has strong feelings on this issue."</i></p> <p><i>"Alex, we're pretty clear on your position. Let's hear what others have to say."</i></p> <p><i>"Too many people are talking at once. Let's listen to one person at a time, and we'll make sure everyone gets a chance to express their opinions."</i></p>
Team Builder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhances group cohesion by promoting a group identity, showing respect for other members, and expressing pride in the group's work. Creates camaraderie and unity among members. 	<p><i>"I'm honored to be a part of this project. What a great group!"</i></p> <p><i>"We've got this. Remember our motto—One Dream, One Team!"</i></p> <p><i>"I'm very impressed with the talent in our group. I'm learning a lot working with all of you."</i></p>

Theory in Groups

Belbin's Team-Role Theory

Objective: Explain Belbin's Team-Role Theory and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each of Belbin's nine roles.

R. Meredith Belbin's Team-Role Theory goes well beyond the dozens of traditional roles developed more than half a century ago.¹¹ **Team-Role Theory** explains that, in effective groups, members seek out and perform roles compatible with their personal characteristics and skills.¹² After studying corporate work groups for many years, Belbin identified nine primary roles that lead to team success.¹³ He concluded that groups work best when "there is a balance of primary roles and when team members know their roles, work to their strengths, and actively manage weaknesses."¹⁴ Thus, depending on the nature of the task, a group may not achieve its goal without both specialists and team workers or with too many evaluators and not enough resource investigators.

As you review Belbin's nine roles in Table 3.4, keep in mind that there is no such thing as a "pure" role. Most members

assume a mix of roles depending on the needs of the group and its members as well as the nature of the task. The best group members are those with **role flexibility**, the ability to assume the roles need by a group in a particular context.¹⁵

Given Belbin's declaration that balance rather than intellect is the key to group success, every group should seek an optimum combination of role functions. In a perfectly balanced group, writes Belbin, "there is always someone who can deal naturally with any set of responsibilities"¹⁶ Let's apply this notion to the list of task and social maintenance roles we presented. A group without an analyzer may fail to base its decisions on accurate information and sound reasoning. Similarly, without the influence of a gatekeeper, some members dominate a discussion but others never get an opportunity to express their opinions.

Effective group members identify appropriate roles for themselves and know how to work with group members who assume other roles.¹⁷ Group members should also be "very clear about their roles," but they should also avoid the temptation of establishing inflexible roles.¹⁸ Instead, they should seek balance by calling on group members' multiple talents.¹⁹

Table 3.4 Belbin's Team-Role Theory

Belbin's Role	Function	Characteristics
Coordinator/ Chairperson	Clarifies goals; helps allocate roles, responsibilities, and duties; articulates group conclusions.	Calm, trusting, impartial, self-disciplined, mature, positive thinker, confident; decisive when necessary; may be seen as manipulative.
Shaper	Seeks patterns in group work; pushes group toward agreement and decisions; challenges others.	Energetic, high achiever, anxious, impatient, outgoing, argumentative, provocative, dynamic; can be abrasive.
Innovator	Advances proposals and offers new and creative ideas; provides insights on courses of action.	Creative, individualistic, serious and knowledgeable, unorthodox, intellectual; may disregard practical details and people.
Resource Investigator	Explores opportunities, makes contacts, shares external information; negotiates with outsiders; responds well to challenges.	Extroverted, curious, versatile, sociable, innovative, communicative, noisy and energetic; sometimes lazy.
Monitor/Evaluator	Analyzes problems and complex issues; monitors progress and prevents mistakes; assesses the contributions of others; sees all options; judges accurately.	Sober, clever, discreet, detached, unemotional prudent, not easily aroused; takes time to consider; rarely wrong; may appear cold.
Implementer	Transforms talk and ideas into practical action; develops actions plans for group members.	Tough-minded, practical, tolerant, conservative, methodical.
Teamworker	Gives personal support and help to others; is socially oriented and sensitive to others; resolves conflicts; calms the waters; serves as an ingroup diplomat.	Cooperative, sensitive, team-oriented, indecisive, deputy leader, gregarious, supportive, may sacrifice task for social goals; listens well.
Completer/Finisher	Emphasizes the need for meeting schedules, deadlines, and completing tasks; searches out errors.	Perfectionist, persevering, conscientious, detail oriented, persistent, anxious; sometimes obnoxious.
Specialist	Single-minded, self-starting, dedicated; provides unique or rare expertise and skills.	Contributes in narrow area; dwells on technicalities; overlooks the "big picture".

3.2.3: Disruptive Behaviors

Ideally, every group member assumes task and maintenance roles appropriate to the group and its task. Unfortunately, some members consistently engage in disruptive behavior that may prevent a group from achieving its common goal. These disruptive members may have unmet interpersonal needs, hidden agendas, or poor communication skills. Regardless of the reasons for their behavior, such members interfere with a group's ability to work effectively.

Occasionally, an otherwise productive member may disrupt group work by dominating a discussion because

the issue is of huge importance to the member and the group. Another member who usually assumes the roles of motivator and team builder may become a nonparticipant for reasons related to health or personal problems outside the group, or as a way of allowing quiet members more opportunities to participate. However, when members are highly disruptive, a group may lose its will to work and fail to achieve its common goal. Table 3.5 identifies six common types of disruptive behaviors in groups: dominator, obstructionist, attacker, egoist, support seeker, and nonparticipant.

Table 3.5 Disruptive Behaviors in Groups

Disruptive Behavior	Description	Example
Dominator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevents others from participating by monopolizing discussions in a way that inhibits effective collaboration and decision making. Interrupts others, aggressively asserts dominance, takes inflexible positions on issues, and rejects the ideas and arguments of other members. May have a high control need expressed in autocratic behavior. 	<p><i>"That's crazy, Sophie! Right off the top of my head I can think of at least four reasons why we can't do it your way."</i></p> <p><i>"I've told you all exactly what we should do. If we don't do it my way, then don't count on my department's support or resources."</i></p>
Obstructionist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blocks group progress by consistently making negative statements and unreasonably disagreeing with others. May change the subject or the group's direction. Often uses negative nonverbal behavior such as constantly shaking the head "No," rolling the eyes, and smirking to frustrate other members and create disorder. May bar the way toward progress no matter what a group member says. 	<p><i>"There's no point in wasting time discussing that idea. There's no way it will work."</i></p> <p><i>"I don't see any solutions here. We might as well give up on this whole project."</i></p>
Attacker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Puts down other members or deflates others' status for self-centered reasons (to achieve a personal rather than the group goal, to hurt a disliked member, or to create fear and gain power). Is often sarcastic, unreasonably critical of others, and may take credit for others' work or ideas. Makes statements that are humiliating, offensive, or verbally abusive. 	<p><i>"It's a good thing I had time to rewrite your report. There were so many mistakes in it, we would have been embarrassed by it."</i></p> <p><i>"If that's the best idea you can come up with, then this group is in trouble."</i></p>

(continued)

Disruptive Behavior	Description	Example
Egoist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks personal attention in ways that distract the group from achieving its goal. May joke around too much, brag excessively about accomplishments or skills, and talk too much about personal issues unrelated to the group's work; self-centered and proud of it. 	<p><i>"Listen—I've been working on this outrageous impersonation of the boss. I've even got his funny walk down."</i></p> <p><i>"As the only person here to have won the company's prestigious top achiever award, I personally suggest that . . ."</i></p>
Support Seeker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs frequent and excessive emotional support and sympathy from the group. May inappropriately share private feelings and problems with the group rather than contributing to the group's goal. Has an incessant need for inclusion and affection expressed as helplessness and incompetence, even though fully capable of completing a task. Distracts the group from its goal by demanding an excessive amount of emotional support. 	<p><i>"I've broken up with my girlfriend and can't focus on the group project right now. Do you think I should try to get back together with her? I need some advice."</i></p> <p><i>"Everyone else in the group has so much more experience than me. I don't think I can do my part of the report. I'm a lousy writer."</i></p>
Nonparticipant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Never or rarely contributes to a group's discussion or work. May sit silently during most group discussions, give in on issues to avoid conflict, not show up for meetings, desert the group when it most needs everyone's participation, and regularly fail to complete assigned group tasks. Is often distracted by other tasks during group meetings such as texting, emailing, eating, whispering to others, or doing work unrelated to the group's project. May be "present" on a virtual team, but certainly not "there" for any productive purpose. 	<p><i>"I'm leaving now because I have to go to an important meeting."</i></p> <p><i>"I didn't have time to write my portion of the report. Someone else needs to do it."</i></p>

Watch “Helping Annie”



Watch the video “Helping Annie,” which illustrates concepts in this chapter.

WRITING PROMPT

Helping Annie

- Which, if any, of Schutz's needs are expressed or evident in the video clip?
- Review the group task and social maintenance roles, Belbin's team roles, and the list of disruptive behaviors. Which positive roles did group members assume? Which disruptive behaviors were evident? How did these roles affect the group's ability to achieve its common goal?
- Which positive roles were not evident in the group and how could they have helped the group achieve its common goal?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

3.3: Member Confidence

3.3 Apply specific strategies and skills to enhance the communication confidence of group members

Imagine the benefits and satisfaction of working with group members who have positive and realistic perceptions about themselves and their abilities. Add to that personal attributes such as assertiveness, optimism, enthusiasm, affection, pride, independence, trust, the ability to handle criticism, and emotional maturity. These attributes describe a nearly perfect group member.

Members with a positive, “can-do” attitude cope more effectively with unexpected events, problematic behavior, and challenging assignments. Fostering group and member confidence is much more than the power of positive thinking—it helps groups commit to ambitious goals and believe in their ability to meet them.²⁰

3.3.1: Communication Apprehension

Communication scholars have investigated the anxieties that people feel when they must speak to others in a variety of contexts. The result is a large body of research that has important implications for working in groups.

James C. McCroskey identified and defined **communication apprehension** as the “fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons.”²¹ Communication apprehension includes more than public speaking anxiety; it also encompasses fear of speaking in conversations, meetings, and group settings. About 20 percent of the U.S. population experiences very high levels of communication apprehension in certain situations,

while more than 70 percent experience apprehension when faced with the prospect of making a presentation.²²

There are different levels of communication apprehension, depending on several factors, such as the personality of the speaker, the nature of the listeners, and the characteristics of the occasion or setting. For example, talking at a weekly staff meeting may be easy, but defending a department's actions at a meeting of company executives may generate high levels of anxiety. How apprehensive are you in different communication contexts? Complete the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) self-assessment that appears on the next page before reading the rest of this section.

Communication apprehension "may be the single most important factor in predicting communication behavior in a small group."²³ Consequently, it is not surprising that highly apprehensive people may avoid group communication or sit quietly in a group if they must be present.²⁴ Table 3.6 lists basic characteristics of group members with high apprehension and low apprehension.

Table 3.6 Communication Apprehension in Groups

Members with High Apprehension May ...	Members with Low Apprehension May ...
avoid group participation.	initiate discussions.
talk less often.	speak more often.
agree with others rather than voice disagreement.	assert themselves and their beliefs.
smile and giggle inappropriately.	become group leaders.
fidget.	strategically choose when to speak and when to remain silent.
use awkward phrases as fillers, such as "well," "uh," or "you know."	appear more confident.
have difficulty following a discussion.	dominate a discussion or talk compulsively.

3.3.2: Strategies for Reducing Communication Apprehension²⁵

If your PRCA score classifies you as an apprehensive speaker, or if you believe that your level of anxiety associated with talking in groups is unusually high, you can use several effective strategies to reduce your apprehension level.

- *Know That You Are Not Alone.* Everyone has experienced communication apprehension in certain settings. If you dread the thought of communicating in a group or public setting, you are one of millions of people who feel the same way. Such feelings are normal. As you listen to other group members, don't assume that it is easy for them to talk. Several of them are probably experiencing the same level of anxiety that you are.
- *Be Well Prepared.* Although you cannot eliminate communication apprehension completely, you can boost your confidence by being well prepared for every group discussion. Many successful group members who expe-

rience high levels of communication apprehension spend extra time making sure that they are well prepared to participate in a discussion or meeting. Well-prepared members know more about the topic and have a clear idea of the positions they support. As a result, they have more to contribute when they participate. Being well prepared will not eliminate anxiety entirely, but it can reduce your fear of being at a loss for relevant ideas and information when called upon to speak.

- *Learn Communication Skills.* If you wanted to improve your tennis game, you would try to improve specific skills—perhaps your serve, your return, or your backhand shot. The same is true about communicating in groups: Learning and practicing specific skills can help you improve your ability to participate in groups. These skills are described throughout this text. Learning to become more sensitive to feedback, to follow a group's agenda, or to serve as an effective group leader and participant can enhance the skills you need to succeed in a group discussion. Improving your communication skills will not eliminate communication apprehension, but it can reduce your level of anxiety.
- *Relax Physically.* One reason we experience communication apprehension is that our bodies feel tense. Our hearts beat faster, our hands shake, and we're short of breath. This response is a natural one, and may reflect excitement and eagerness as much as anxiety and fear. By learning to relax your body, you may also reduce your level of communication apprehension. For example, break the word *relax* into two syllables: *re* and *lax*. Inhale slowly through your nose while saying the sound *re* ("ree") silently to yourself. Then breathe out slowly while thinking of the sound *lax* ("laks"). Inhale and exhale three or four times while thinking, "Reeee-laaax." By the time you finish, your pulse should be slower and—hopefully—you will also feel calmer.²⁶
- *Think Positively.* You may be able to reduce apprehension by changing the way you *think* about communicating. Rather than thinking, "They won't listen to me," try thinking, "Because I'm so well prepared, I'll make a valuable contribution." **Cognitive restructuring** is a technique for reducing communication apprehension that analyzes irrational beliefs about speaking to others (cognitions) and seeks to modify those thoughts (restructuring).²⁷ Researchers who study emotions contend that thinking happy or sad thoughts can make you *feel* happy or sad.²⁸ So think positively and feel confident! Next time you feel apprehensive about communicating, tell yourself these positive statements: "I have good ideas," "I am well prepared," and "The group respects me even when they don't accept my suggestions."
- *Visualize Success.* Closely related to cognitive restructuring is **visualization**, a technique for reducing communication apprehension that encourages positive

Group Assessment Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24)²⁹

The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) instrument is the best available measure of communication apprehension. Your PRCA score is a relatively permanent trait that is not likely to change significantly unless you engage in some type of effective intervention or training to change it.³⁰

Directions: Indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by selecting whether you:

- 1) Strongly disagree; 2) Disagree; 3) Are undecided; 4) Agree; or 5) Strongly Agree.

Statement	Degree of Relevance				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1. I dislike participating in group discussions.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I like to get involved in group discussions.	<input type="radio"/>				
5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in a group discussion.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. Usually, I am calm and relaxed while participating in a meeting.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called on to express an opinion at a meeting.	<input type="radio"/>				
10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.	<input type="radio"/>				
11. Communication at meetings usually makes me feel uncomfortable.	<input type="radio"/>				
12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.	<input type="radio"/>				
13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.	<input type="radio"/>				
14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.	<input type="radio"/>				
15. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.	<input type="radio"/>				
16. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.	<input type="radio"/>				
17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.	<input type="radio"/>				
18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.	<input type="radio"/>				
19. I have no fear of giving a speech.	<input type="radio"/>				
20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while I am giving a speech.	<input type="radio"/>				
21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.	<input type="radio"/>				
22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.	<input type="radio"/>				
23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.	<input type="radio"/>				
24. While giving a speech, I get so nervous that I forget facts I really know.	<input type="radio"/>				

Reset Submit

Scoring: The PRCA provides one total score and four subscores. The subscores are related to communication apprehension in each of four common communication contexts: group discussions, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking. To compute your scores, merely add or subtract your scores for each item as indicated here.

Scoring Formula

Group Discussions: 18 + total of scores for items 2, 4, and 6; minus total of scores for items 1, 3, and 5.

Meetings: 18 + total of scores for items 8, 9, and 12; minus total of scores for items 7, 10, and 11.

Interpersonal Conversations: 18 + total of scores for items 14, 16, and 17; minus total of scores for items 13, 15, and 18.

Public Speaking: 18 + total of scores for items 19, 21, and 23; minus total of scores for items 20, 22, and 24.

(continued)

Subscores

Group Discussions Meetings Interpersonal Conversations Public Speaking

To obtain your total score for the PRCA, add your four subscores together. Your score should be between 24 and 120. If your score is below 24 or above 120, you have made a mistake in computing the score. Scores for each of the four contexts (groups, meetings, interpersonal conversations, and public speaking) can range from a low of 6 to a high of 30. Any score above 18 indicates some degree of apprehension. For example, if your score is above 18 for the public speaking context, you are like the overwhelming majority of Americans who experience some communication apprehension.

U.S. Norms for PRCA-24

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Total Score	65.5	15.3
Group	15.4	4.8
Meetings	16.4	4.8
Interpersonal	14.5	4.2
Public Speaking	19.3	5.1

The above scores represent U.S. norms. Various studies have compared CA scores in the United States to those in other cultures. Countries with levels of communication apprehension higher than the United States include China, Micronesia, Japan, New Zealand, Russia and Taiwan. The following countries have scores lower than those in the United States: Australia, South Korea, and Puerto Rico. Some countries scores were similar to the United States: Argentina, Finland, and Sweden.

Virginia P. Richmond, Jason S. Wrench, and James C. McCroskey, *Communication: Apprehension, Avoidance, and Effectiveness*, 6th ed. (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2013), pp. 50–60.

thinking about communicating in groups by physically relaxing and imagining yourself succeeding. Many professional athletes improve their performance by finding a quiet place where they can relax and visualize themselves competing and winning.³¹ You can do the same thing. Take time—before you meet with your group—to visualize yourself communicating effectively. Mentally practice the skills you need in order to succeed while also building a positive image of your effectiveness. When you can visualize or imagine yourself succeeding in a group and you can maintain a relaxed state at the same time, you will have broken your fearful response to communicating in groups.

Virtual Teams Confidence with Technology

Learning Objective: Explain how writing apprehension, computer anxiety, and hyperpersonal communication can affect communication within a virtual team.

When groups use audioconferences or videoconferences, or participate in online or computer-mediated discussions, member confidence may erode or improve, depending on the electronic medium and the personal preferences of members. In a videoconference, for example, members who experience high levels of communication apprehension may find themselves *more* nervous because they are “on television.” Every word and movement is captured for all to see and hear.

When a conference moves into cyberspace, two different types of anxiety come into play:

1. Writing Apprehension: “The fear or anxiety associated with writing situations.”³² Because many online interactions depend on *written* words, poor writers and those who experience writing apprehension find themselves anxious about and preoccupied with the task of writing rather than being focused on the group’s goal.

2. Computer Anxiety: A condition affecting as many as 50 percent of all Americans—is “A feeling of being fearful or apprehensive when using or considering the use of a computer.”³³ Factors such as past failure, the nature of the task, and the use of a new computer application have the potential to affect every group member.³⁴ Fortunately, researchers have found that the more experience people have with technology, the less anxious they are.³⁵ The solution? Help anxious group members acquire and master computer skills, and their anxieties are likely to decrease. Also, “many tried-and-true, face-to-face methods of confidence building still apply,” such as letting group members know when they are doing a good job.³⁶

There is, however, a flip-side to the confidence coin when applied to online conferences and computer-mediated discussions. Some people are *more* confident when communicating online. A theory called **hyperpersonal communication** explains why some group members express themselves more competently and confidently in mediated settings than they do in face-to-face discussions:³⁷

- *Impression Management.* Consider how you feel when communicating online. You have greater control over how you present yourself. An added confidence booster is the fact that your written message is separate from your appearance, gender, race, social status, and any accent or dialect. Depending on the technology, many of these nonverbal factors are not displayed in your message unless you choose to include that information.
- *Response Time.* Some online channels allow members to take the time to construct suitable replies. For example, depending on how soon you have been asked to reply to a question posed in an email, you can consult a report or do research and sound like an expert.
- *Feedback.* Online communication usually provides feedback that lets you know whether your message was received and interpreted as you intended. Confirming feedback reinforces confidence.³⁸

3.3.3: Strategies for Helping Apprehensive Members

Effective groups learn to *both* support members who experience high levels of communication apprehension (high apprehensives) *and* tactfully curb those with low levels of apprehension (low apprehensives) who may talk too much or are oblivious to how other members feel about speaking. If your PRCA score classifies you as a low apprehensive, this puts you in a position to help the more apprehensive group members. Three strategies may help reduce other members' level of communication apprehension: supportive and constructive feedback, encouragement and inclusion, and allowing others to speak.

PROVIDE SUPPORTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

All group members work more effectively when they receive supportive feedback. When apprehensive group members are speaking, smile and nod, listen patiently, and don't interrupt or let other members interrupt them. Sometimes, however, feedback must address a problem. For example, say that your group is supposed to develop a plan for raising scholarship funds, but the members have spent the last fifteen minutes complaining about the high cost of textbooks. Here, you should provide constructive feedback as you describe your own feelings, thoughts, and wants:

- "I'm confused." (feeling)
- "We've discussed several interesting fundraising ideas, but we're getting side-tracked." (thought)
- "Let's review the group's goal." (want)

Expressing feedback constructively can increase your own credibility and other members' confidence while also moving the group forward.

ENCOURAGE AND INCLUDE ANXIOUS MEMBERS

Patience and understanding alone may not be enough to encourage a member who is too anxious to join in a discussion. Encouraging apprehensive members to speak up contributes to the group's overall success because quiet members often have important information and good ideas.³⁹ However, there are both effective and counterproductive ways to include someone. Confronting a reluctant speaker with a direct challenge—such as, "Why in the world do you disagree with the rest of us?"—is not very helpful. It's much more effective to ask a question that you know the apprehensive person is able to answer, such as, "Could you explain why you disagree?"

STOP TALKING Finally, the most obvious thing you can do to help those who have difficulty participating is to stop talking. If you know that other members have difficulty entering the discussion or interrupting someone who is speaking, curb your own comments so that others have a chance to contribute. Keep a careful eye on less-

than-confident participants. Often you will see members take a breath as though they want to speak, only to be stifled by your continued comments or by the comments of others. When that happens, conclude your remarks and give that person an opportunity to speak: "Just one moment, Jill, but I think Alex has something to say about this."



Unlike the depiction in this photograph, communication apprehension is rarely visible to listeners. It can, however, have a significant effect on group effectiveness because highly apprehensive members may be reluctant to participate in group discussions.

WRITING PROMPT

Communication Apprehension

In light of what you've read about helping members feel more confident about communication in groups, identify several strategies to alleviate communication anxiety. How might they backfire and make the problem worse?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

3.4: Member Assertiveness

3.4 List the benefits and skills characteristic of effective assertiveness

Assertiveness—speaking up and acting in your own best interests without denying the rights and interests of others⁴⁰—has the potential to enhance the confidence

Group Assessment Assertiveness Scale⁴¹

Some group members are very comfortable expressing their feelings and opinions, speaking up for their own rights and the rights of others, and acting on their own behalf and in the group's best interests. Assertiveness is not measured by whether you get what you want. Instead, it's a way of deciding what to say and how to behave that balances individual and group goals.

Directions: Indicate the behavior to which each statement applies by selecting "I usually act this way" or "I rarely act this way" for each statement.

Statement	Relevance	
	I usually act this way	I rarely act this way
1. When I make a mistake in a group, I admit it, apologize, and if possible, try to fix it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I speak up during group discussions when I have a question or believe I can answer another member's question.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. If a group member is not paying attention--having a side conversation, texting, or apparently daydreaming--I say something to get the member's attention back on task.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. If a group member says or does something that upsets me, I find an appropriate time to talk with the member about the problem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. If a group member asks me to do a favor, but I'm very busy, I say that I cannot help and do not offer a big apology or make up an excuse.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. If a group member is rude or insulting to me or another member during a discussion, I interrupt and object to the behavior or insult.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Generally, I look members in the eye when talking to them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. If a group member justly criticizes me, I take time to analyze and correct the problem without becoming defensive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I express my emotions openly during group discussions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Even when I disagree with group members, I respect their right to express their opinions and feelings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Interpretation of Results: If most of your check marks are in the "I usually act this way" column, you perceive yourself as highly assertive. If most of your check marks are in the "I rarely act this way" column, you may have a lot to gain by becoming more assertive. As a reality check, ask some friends, colleagues, or group members with whom you've worked or played, whether they agree with your assessment.

and effectiveness of a group and its members. When expressed appropriately, assertive communication can also raise your level of confidence and reduce communication apprehension.

Assertive group members are confident; they stand up for themselves while interacting with others to achieve a group goal. They get along well with other members, are usually relaxed (as opposed to stressed) because they know how to handle most situations reasonably well, focus on the present rather than on past complaints or disappointments, and are confident about themselves and respectful of others.⁴² So, how assertive are you? Complete the *Assertiveness Scale* to find out.

3.4.1: Balancing Passivity and Aggression

As previously noted, when members lack the will or skill to behave assertively, they may behave passively.

- **Passivity** is nonassertive behavior characterized by a lack of confidence and/or a reluctance to express opinions and feelings. Passive members may experience

high levels of communication apprehension, fear criticism from others, have unmet inclusion needs, and do what they're told to do, even when they disagree with or dislike the request. They are rarely satisfied with their group experiences because they feel powerless and put-upon.

- **Aggressiveness** is critical, insensitive, combative, or abusive behavior that is motivated by self-interest at the expense of others. Aggressive members get what they want by taking over or by bullying other members into submission. As a consequence, they are often disliked and disrespected. In many cases, aggressive members behave this way because their needs for inclusion, control, and/or affection are not met, or they may not know how to express themselves assertively.

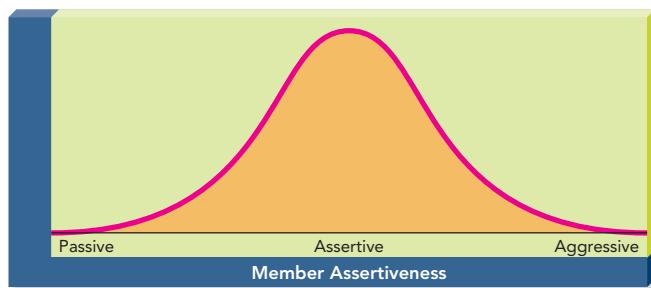
In some cases, passivity and aggression combine to create a third type of behavior:

- **Passive-aggressive behavior** is uncooperative and obstructive behavior that appears to be cooperative. Passive-aggressive individuals rarely exhibit aggressive behavior, even though they lack respect for the rights of

others. They also may appear confident rather than passive because they speak up and contribute. However, beneath the façade of effective participation lies a potentially destructive member. Passive-aggressive members often get their way by undermining other members behind their backs, by behaving cooperatively but rarely following through with promised contributions, and by appearing to agree while privately planning an opposite action. For example, a passive-aggressive member may volunteer to work on a subcommittee, but fail to do the work. Another may appear to handle criticism calmly, but then spread vicious rumors about the person who was critical.

The graph in Figure 3.6 demonstrates how group effectiveness is related to member assertiveness.⁴³ Group member effectiveness increases as you move from passivity to assertiveness, and then decreases as you move beyond assertiveness to aggressiveness.

Figure 3.6 Group Effectiveness and Member Assertiveness



Groups in Balance . . .

Know When and How to Say No

Knowing when and how to say no effectively is one of the most basic assertiveness skills, but it is also among the most difficult. Randy Paterson, author of *The Assertiveness Workbook*, puts it this way: "If you cannot say no, you are not in charge of your own life."⁴⁴ Why, then, do so many people believe that if someone asks them to do something, they have to do it? Several widespread beliefs prevent a passive person from saying no:

- They won't accept my no and will expect me to do it anyway.
- They won't accept or like me if I say no.
- Given our relationship, I don't have the right or the courage to say no.⁴⁵

Think of it this way: If someone said, "Can I have your car?" you'd refuse, wouldn't you? What about, "Would you write the group's paper and put everyone's name on it?" or, "Can the group meet at your house on Sunday?"

Certainly, there's nothing wrong with saying yes when the request is reasonable and you want to do it or you want to help

someone. But what if you want to say no? Fortunately, you can use several communication strategies and skills to say no:

- **Use assertive body posture.** If you say no with your words, but signal maybe with your body, people will believe that you can be persuaded to do what they want.
- **Choose your words carefully.** Use a clear statement, such as, "No, I'm not willing to do that," rather than, "Gee, I'm not sure . . . maybe another time."
- **Don't apologize or make excuses.** Unless an apology is necessary, minimize statements such as, "I'm sorry, but I can't . . ." or "I wish I could, but . . ."
- **Don't ask permission to say no.** Avoid saying, "Would it be okay if I didn't . . .?" or, "Will you be upset if I say no?"
- **Accept the consequences.** Just as you have the right to say no, others have the right not to like it.⁴⁶

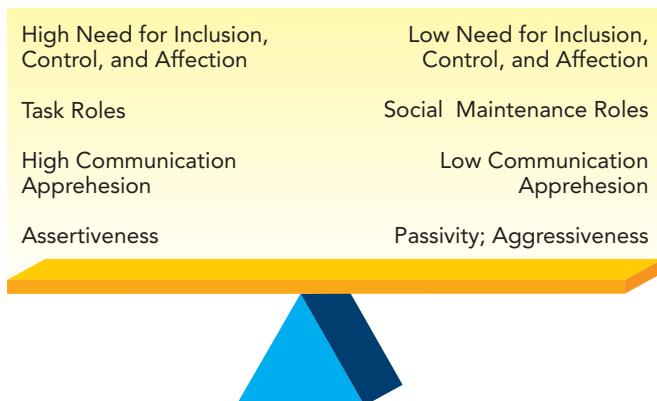
3.4.2: Assertiveness Skills

Regardless of how assertive you think you are, you can always improve your assertiveness skills. Building assertiveness skills incrementally can help you and the other members of your group increase confidence while reducing social tensions. The following list includes both simple and complex skills for enhancing your assertiveness:

- Devote a significant amount of time to preparing for group meetings.
- Enlist an assertive colleague who will make sure that you are recognized and given time to speak at meetings.
- Express your opinions clearly. Don't talk around the issue or ramble.
- Establish and maintain direct eye contact with individual group members.
- Assume an assertive body posture. Your body should be alert and focused in the direction of other speakers.
- Express your feelings as well as your thoughts. If you let group members see your emotions, your recommendations may be taken more seriously.
- Speak expressively—use volume, pitch, and rate to help your statements stand out.

Assertive group members reap many rewards. Generally, they are more satisfied with and proud of the work they do in groups. They are also more likely to become group leaders. Because assertive members respect the rights of others, they are well liked. There is much to be gained from exhibiting assertive behavior in groups, and first among those benefits is increased confidence. Figure 3.7 illustrates the need for balance among all of the factors involved in group membership discussed in this chapter.

Figure 3.7 Balancing Factors Affecting Group Membership



Ethics in Groups Managing Manipulators

Learning Objective: Explain the ethical implications of manipulative behavior, and describe strategies for responding to such behavior.

In the context of groups, **manipulators** are group members who skillfully, but unethically, influence and control others to their own advantage in an unfair, dishonest, or deceitful manner. For example, let's assume you have a high control need and that your experience and personality traits make you well suited for a leadership role you prize. By putting aside the rights and needs of group members, you enlist what you know about each member to get the position you want, rather than what your group *needs*. If you know that some members have high inclusion needs, you may praise and reward them well beyond what they deserve so they

feel accepted and valued. If others are highly apprehensive or reluctant to take on highly visible roles that require assertiveness, you may consign them to thankless or routine jobs. In these cases, you intentionally deceived some members and removed other, potentially talented members from contributing in a meaningful way in order to achieve your own selfish goal.

The National Communication Association's Credo for Ethical Communication calls for a commitment to the "courageous expression of personal conviction in pursuit of fairness and justice."⁴⁷ Ethical group members have an obligation to assert themselves, not only to pursue their own goals, but also to prevent unjust or unethical behavior by others. For instance, the members of a medical team must have the courage to speak up if they believe that a patient is being given the wrong treatment. Whether your group is deciding how to trim a budget, determining the best candidate to hire, or developing a marketing campaign, each group member has the responsibility to act assertively by expressing opposition to unethical group behavior and decisions.

Fortunately, the skillful use of assertiveness strategies can help you say *no* to such unethical behavior. Here are several strategies for dealing with a group member whose self-centered behavior seeks to manipulate others:

- Distance yourself emotionally when dealing with the manipulator's comments and behaviors. Use logic instead of emotion when responding.
- Challenge dishonest statements. Call out rudeness, offensive behavior, and unethical behavior.
- Agree to disagree and/or change the subject.
- Stand firm. Be prepared to repeat yourself many times until the manipulator gets the point.
- Enlist other group members to back you up when you take a stand, and back them up when they confront a manipulator.

Summary: Group Member Participation

3.1: Group Member Needs

- Schutz's FIRO Theory identifies three interpersonal needs (inclusion, control, and affection) that affect member behavior and group effectiveness.
- A social member's inclusion needs are met; undersocial or oversocial behavior may indicate that a member's inclusion needs are not met.
- A democratic member's control needs are met; control needs may not be met when members behave as abdicrats or autocrats.

- A personal member's affection needs are met; underpersonal or overpersonal behavior may indicate that a member's affection needs are not met.

3.2: Member Roles

- When a group member exhibits a unique set of skills or behavior patterns that serve specific functions within the group, that member has assumed a role.
- Group task roles focus on behaviors that enable a group to get the job done. The task roles are coordinator,

information provider, opinion provider, questioner, clarifier, analyzer, and implementer.

- Group social maintenance roles affect how group members get along with each other. The social maintenance roles are harmonizer, motivator, supporter, gatekeeper, and team builder.
- Belbin's Team-Role Theory claims that members seek out roles that are most natural to them—those that are compatible with their personal characteristics and skills.
- Disruptive behavior distracts the group from its goal. Common types of disruptive members include the dominator, obstructionist, attacker, egoist, support seeker, and nonparticipant.

3.3: Member Confidence

- Communication apprehension is an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons.
- The following strategies can help reduce communication apprehension: know that you are not alone, be well prepared, learn communication skills, relax physically, think positively (cognitive restructuring), and visualize success.
- The following strategies can help others reduce their level of communication apprehension: provide supportive and constructive feedback, encourage and include anxious members, and stop talking.

3.4: Member Assertiveness

- Assertiveness—speaking up and acting in your own best interests without denying the rights and interests of others—has the potential to enhance the confidence and effectiveness of a group and its members.
- Assertive group members know when and how to say “no” as well as when and how to manage manipulators.
- Effective assertiveness seeks a balance between passivity and aggression, and avoids passive-aggressive behavior.

SHARED WRITING CASE STUDY: TAMING TONY THE TIGER

Use the information you have learned to answer the following question about the case study that was presented at the beginning of the chapter:

How can Tony curb his demanding and judgmental reactions with a more patient and collaborative communication style? How can he recapture his commitment to group work?

Review and discuss the similarities and differences between your answer and those of at least two of your classmates.

► A minimum number of characters is required to post and earn points. After posting, your response can be viewed by your class and instructor, and you can participate in the class discussion.

Post

0 characters | 140 minimum

Chapter 3 Quiz: Group Member Participation

Chapter 4

Diversity in Groups



Member diversity helps groups make better decisions because diversity adds a wider range of perspectives.



Learning Objectives

- 4.1** Explain why member diversity can enhance the quality of group deliberation and outcomes
- 4.2** Give examples that clearly differentiate the meanings of ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination
- 4.3** Explain how personality differences among members can enhance group effectiveness
- 4.4** Describe how the paired characteristics of five cultural dimensions affect group communication
- 4.5** Explain how gender can affect group norms, roles, leadership, and goal achievement
- 4.6** List specific strategies to enhance group communication among members from different generations
- 4.7** Explain the importance of understanding, respecting, and adapting to group members with different religious beliefs and practices
- 4.8** Apply specific communication strategies to understand and react appropriately to diversity in groups

Case Study: Diversity Dilemma

Missing Kids is a charitable organization started by a group of grandfathers who wanted to help children who slip through the cracks in social service programs. The board has raised millions of dollars supporting a variety of initiatives, including college scholarships for impoverished kids who earn good grades in high school, special mobile clinics that provide free medical checkups, and houses for single parents and children who have been the victims of abuse.

After two decades of good work, many of the original organizers have left or will soon be leaving the governing board. As current board members and co-chairs of the nominating committee, Wanda and Wayne have been asked to review the charity's major donors and recommend replacements.

Wanda and Wayne are proud of the charity and its achievements, and they enjoy working with a dedicated group of board members. However, the original officers and board members were all white males. Because the children served by the charity are much more diverse, Wanda and Wayne have been asked to seek greater diversity among potential board members. The co-chairs have been diligent in their research. They've read that diverse groups are often more effective than homogenous groups, but homogeneous group members may get along better because they are comfortable with people who are similar. Most of the *Missing Kids* donors are also white, because board members sought donations from friends and people they knew well.

After coming up with only a few names in their search for new board members, Wanda and Wayne make a list of several non-white people they know. Wanda recommends an African American woman who works for the agency that provides volunteer doctors and nurses for the mobile clinic. Wayne knows a Latino man and an Asian woman at his accounting firm who might be willing to join. Wanda strongly recommends nominating more women. Wayne counters that they already have a few women on the board and should be looking for members from different racial and ethnic groups, regardless of gender.

The co-chairs soon realize that in addition to focusing on diversity, they must consider whether candidates can assume needed roles on the board and whether they have the potential to contribute innovative ideas, valuable insights, and relevant expertise. Equally important, Wanda and Wayne need to think about how the long-serving, older white board members will get along with the newcomers.

Critical Thinking Questions

After you finish reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following critical thinking questions about this case study:

- How can group member diversity help or hinder the *Missing Kids* organization's ability to achieve its goals?
- Wanda and Wayne have focused on race and ethnicity in looking for board members. What other cultural and personal dimensions should they consider?
- What strategies should Wanda and Wayne use to recruit qualified diverse members to the governing board more effectively?
- How do you think the predominantly white male governing board will respond if Wanda and Wayne recommend a list of new board members with no white males? How would you respond?

4.1: The Value of Group Diversity

4.1 Explain why member diversity can enhance the quality of group deliberation and outcomes

Every person on this Earth—and thus every member of a group—is different. Even identical twins have different experiences as well as different characteristics, abilities, and beliefs. Think about the many ways in which you differ from others by asking yourself the following questions:

- Where did you grow up, and how did that influence who you are now?
- What aspects of your culture do you value and would not give up?
- Which of your physical characteristics do you like? Are there any that you dislike?
- What are your interpersonal, intellectual, and physical skills?

Your answers to these questions reflect who you are and how you differ from other group members. These differences are not trivial. Your success, and that of your group, depends on your ability to handle the inevitable dialectic tensions that arise in diverse groups.

At the same time—and regardless of your culture, nationality, gender, religion, age, and abilities—you share more similarities than differences with others. According to the Institute for Global Ethics, eight core values transcend individual cultures and personal differences throughout the world: love, truthfulness, fairness, freedom, unity, tolerance, responsibility, and respect.¹ Remember that all of us smile when we're happy, blush when we're embarrassed, and cry when we're sad or in pain.

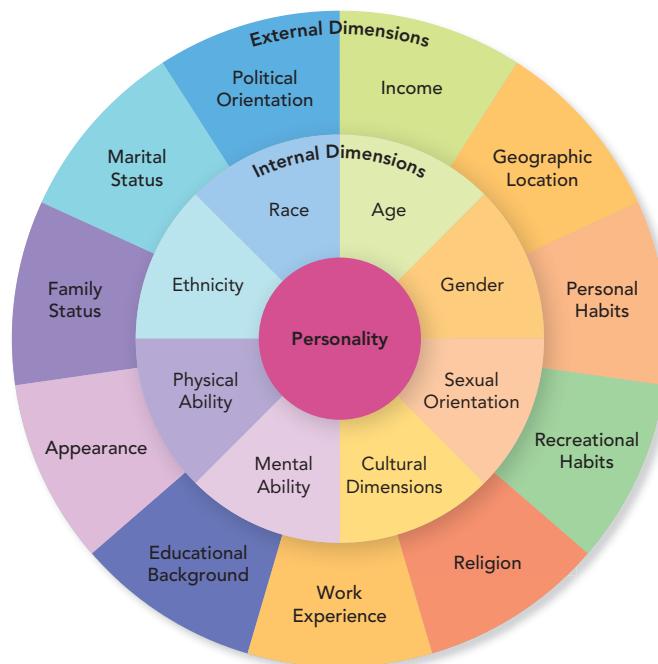
4.1.1: Culture and Diversity

Before going any further, we need to define the terms *culture* and *diversity*. **Culture** is “a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, and norms which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people.”² Within most cultures, there are also groups of people—members of **co-cultures**—who coexist within the mainstream society yet remain connected to one another through their cultural heritage.³ In the United States, Native American tribes are co-cultures, as are African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, Asian Americans, Arab Americans, Irish Americans, and members of large and small religious groups. Given our broad definition of culture, a Nebraska rancher and a Boston professor can have different cultural perspectives, as can native Brazilians, Indonesian Muslims, and members of the Chippewa tribe.

Now let’s compare the notion of culture to a broader concept: *diversity*. Diversity describes more than a person’s country of origin, skin color, or ethnic heritage. When discussing group communication, we use the term **diversity** in its most general sense—the quality of being different. In every group, you will work with members whose physical characteristics, status, traits, values, and attitudes are different from yours. These distinctive characteristics include age, occupation, physical ability, marital status, personality preferences, and much more.

Figure 4.1 illustrates three layers of diversity within every group member: core personality, internal dimensions, and external dimensions.⁴

Figure 4.1 Three Layers of Diversity



WRITING PROMPT

The Value of Group Diversity

Nour is a shy, Muslim high school student with an interest in music. She lives with her parents in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Adam is an energetic, politically liberal elementary school teacher. Recently, he and his wife have converted from Catholicism to Buddhism. In which of the three layers would you put each of Nour and Ben’s diversity characteristics? Explain your answers.

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

4.1.2: Homogeneous and Heterogeneous Groups

A **homogeneous group** is composed of members who are the same or very similar to one another; a **heterogeneous group** is composed of members who are different from one another. Successful groups balance member similarities and differences in skills, roles, personal characteristics, and cultural perspectives.

Group researchers are unanimous in their advocacy for heterogeneous groups. Member diversity helps groups make better decisions because it “adds perspectives that would otherwise be absent.”⁵ When group members are too much alike, they find it harder to keep learning because each member brings less and less new information to the table.⁶ Member diversity enhances a group’s ability to generate more potential solutions to problems, challenge ideas, perform a wider range of critical roles, avoid groupthink, and increase creativity and effectiveness.⁷ In work contexts, “The worst kind of group for an organization that wants to be innovative and creative is one in which everyone is alike and gets along too well.”⁸ Successful groups effectively manage the **homogeneous ↔ heterogeneous dialectic**.

In addition to differences in members’ cultures, a concept known as **deep diversity** describes member characteristics that are difficult to observe, such as the knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the demands of a group’s task.⁹ Members of deeply diverse and heterogeneous groups expand the range of possible solutions to a problem; in contrast, homogeneous groups narrow the range of solutions they are likely to consider.¹⁰ Deeply diverse groups tend to perform better than the very best member of the group working alone. Deep diversity also promotes synergy, which enhances group productivity.¹¹

Despite all of the advantages of diversity in groups, don’t assume that all homogeneous groups should be transformed into highly diverse groups. In some circumstances, a homogeneous group of all women (a rape victim

support group), all members more than 40 years old (a retirement planning group), or all Latino/Latina members (a highly focused political action group) may be exactly what is required to achieve a specific goal. However, heterogeneous groups may fail if members are chosen as token representatives of a race, ethnic group, generation, or religion in order to do nothing more than be able to claim that a group is diverse.¹² A commitment to group diversity is not an acceptance of political correctness; a truly diverse group offers powerful advantages essential to achieving common goals.

Figure 4.2 Balancing Homogeneous Groups and Heterogeneous Groups

Based on the description you just read, can you identify examples of a homogeneous and heterogeneous group?



Groups in Balance . . . Seek Intellectual Diversity

Let's assume that you belong to a group whose members boast a higher-than-average IQ. You're eager and ready to roll because your group is so brilliant! There's just one problem: Smart groups do not always make smart decisions. Before you conclude that your group should look for a balance of *both* smart and dumb members, stop! Instead, your group should look for a balance of *both* smart, well-informed members *and* members with needed skills and diverse points of view.

The concept of **collective intelligence** is a phenomenon in which "smart" groups are more likely to succeed when members are sensitive to one another's feelings, participate equally, and include female members. This concept emphasizes that a group of members with very high IQs may not be a smart group. If members do not recognize and are not sensitive to others' feelings, if they do not encourage or allow equal contributions by all members, and if the members are all men, the group may be much less "intelligent" than groups that have one or more of those three characteristics.

Scott Page, a political scientist at the University of Michigan who studies group characteristics, member intelligence, and problem solving, describes the nature of intellectual diversity in groups as follows:

On the group level, intelligence alone is not enough, because intelligence alone cannot guarantee you different perspectives on

a problem. . . . Grouping only smart people together doesn't work that well because the smart people (whatever that means) tend to resemble each other in what they can do. . . . Adding in a few people who know less, but have different skills, can improve the group's performance.¹³

Think about the many intelligent people on a U.S. president's staff—and then consider the terrible consequences of poor White House decisions such as the failed U.S. invasion of Cuba in 1961, the inexcusable Watergate conspiracy during the 1972 presidential election campaign, and the ill-advised 2002 decision to go to war in Iraq. Then think about the well-educated, intelligent people who run U.S. corporations and consider some of their appalling decisions—from denying the manufacture of defective products and condoning dishonest accounting to ignoring warnings about the imminent economic collapse and resulting 2008 recession. In addition to lacking collective intelligence, these groups may also succumb to **groupthink**, a phenomenon in which the deterioration of group effectiveness and moral judgment results from in-group pressure. As noted in Chapter 8, it takes a lot more than collective geniuses to avoid poor decision making.

4.2: Obstacles to Understanding Others

4.2 Give examples that clearly differentiate the meanings of ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination

Effective groups welcome a variety of opinions and use multiple strategies and skills for collaborating with members from diverse backgrounds. Something as simple as seeking, accepting, and respecting the differences among group members will generally make a group and its members more effective. At the same time, groups should reject four common barriers that prevent diverse members from interacting productively: ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination (Table 4.1).

4.2.1: Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is a mistaken belief that your culture is a superior culture, with special rights and privileges that are or should be denied to others. Ethnocentrism is not the same as patriotism. An ethnocentric communicator believes the following:

- My culture should be the role model for other cultures.
- People would be happier if they lived like people in my culture.
- Most other cultures are backward when compared with my culture.

Ethnocentric group members offend others when they imply that they represent a superior culture with superior values. For example, have you ever been insulted by someone who implies that because of her religious beliefs, she can go to heaven and you cannot? Have you been insulted by someone who believes that his culture's traditions, language, or even music preferences are better than yours? If so, you have seen ethnocentrism in action.

Table 4.1 Barriers to Working in Diverse Groups

Barrier	Definition	Example
Ethnocentrism	A mistaken belief that your culture is a superior culture with special rights and privileges that are or should be denied to others	"We need an engineer with good ol' American know-how!"
Stereotyping	A generalization about a group of people that oversimplifies their characteristics and results in erroneous judgments about the entire group of people	"Let's appoint Sharon to take minutes because women are better at secretarial tasks."
Prejudice	A preconceived attitude about other people based on faulty and inflexible stereotypes	"What would it look like if we made William the public spokesperson of our organization? He never finished college."
Discrimination	Acting out and expressing prejudice by excluding groups of people from the opportunities and rights granted to others	"Let's not ask anyone older than 50 to join our technology work team."

4.2.2: Stereotyping

A **stereotype** is a generalization about a group of people that oversimplifies their characteristics and results in erroneous judgments about the entire group of people. Depending on the observers, stereotypes about white Americans can be silly ("Whites can't dance or play basketball") or severe ("Most whites are cold, dishonest, greedy, and racist").¹⁴

When we stereotype others, we rely on exaggerated beliefs to make judgments. Unfortunately, stereotyping usually attributes negative traits to an entire group when, in reality, only a few people in that group may possess those traits. Even today, African Americans may be stereotyped as lazy and loud; Jews may be stereotyped as shrewd and greedy.

Stereotypes do not have to be negative; there are positive stereotypes, such as, "Asian students excel in math and science" and "Females are more compassionate than males." Although positive stereotypes may not

seem harmful, they can lead to unfair judgments. Stereotyping other group members does more than derail progress; it prevents members from contributing their best skills and may create long-lasting resentment and anger.

4.2.3: Prejudice

Stereotyping leads to **prejudice**—"negative attitudes about other people that are based on faulty and inflexible stereotypes."¹⁵ Prejudices often arise when someone has little or no direct experience with a cultural group. The word *prejudice* has two parts: *pre-*, meaning "before," and *-judice*, meaning "judge." When you believe or express a prejudice, you are making a judgment about someone *before* you have taken time to get to know that person and see whether your opinions and feelings are justified.

Although some prejudices may seem positive—"He must be brilliant since he went to Yale"—the result can be negative for those who do not conform. Statements such as, "He can't be brilliant because he only has a community college degree," "I don't want a person with disabilities working on our group project," or "I'm not voting for a pregnant woman to lead this group" are all examples of prejudices based on stereotypes. Such prejudices have several characteristics:

- They rarely are based on extensive direct experience and firsthand knowledge.
- They result in irrational feelings or dislike and even hatred for certain groups.
- They justify a readiness to behave in negative and unjust ways toward members of the group.¹⁶

4.2.4: Discrimination

Discrimination refers to acting out and expressing prejudice by excluding groups of people from the opportunities and rights granted to others. Examples of such opportunities and rights are found in areas such as employment, promotion, housing, political expression, and equal rights.

Sadly, discrimination comes in many forms: racial, ethnic, religious, and gender discrimination; sexual harassment; discrimination based on sexual orientation, disability, or age; and discrimination against people from different social classes and with different political ideologies. Discrimination has no place in groups.

Table 4.2 illustrates how ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination are frequently expressed when talking about race, nationality, gender, and religion.

Table 4.2 Obstacles to Understanding Others

	Ethnocentrism	Stereotyping	Prejudice	Discrimination
Race	Most important discoveries were made by white Europeans.	Latinos are very emotional.	Colored people live on welfare because they don't want to work.	I won't hire a white person as spokesperson for our cause.
Nationality	The U.S. is the best country in the world.	Japanese people are very polite.	I dislike Oriental markets because they cheat their customers.	I won't go to Indian restaurants.
Gender	My gender is more realistic and smarter than the other gender.	Men are good at home repairs; women are good at home decorating.	I prefer working for male supervisors.	I won't hire women because if they get pregnant, it will disrupt work and cost us additional sick leave.
Religion	My faith is the one and only true religion.	Catholics are unquestioning in their obedience to the Pope.	If she's an atheist, she's not a decent or moral person.	I will fight against letting a Muslim Mosque be built here.

4.3: Personality Dimensions

4.3 Explain how personality differences among members can enhance group effectiveness

How would you answer the following question: Do members' personalities affect group productivity and member satisfaction? Anyone who has ever worked in a group knows the answer: Of course they do. We define **personality** as a consistent set of relatively permanent traits that influence how we think, feel, and behave in a variety of contexts. Depending on the circumstances, these traits can help or hinder a group's progress toward a common goal. Understanding personality theories helps a group balance its collection of diverse temperaments, traits, and talents.

4.3.1: The Big Five Personality Traits

Psychologists use the **Big Five Personality Traits** to describe five factors (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience) that, taken together, constitute a personality. Like many of the group dimensions discussed in this textbook, personality traits have a dialectic perspective as well.

Consider the five personality traits and their opposites in Table 4.3.¹⁷

Table 4.3 The Big Five Personality Traits

Big Five Personality Traits	Characteristics Associated with Big Five Personality Traits	Opposite Personality Traits
Extroversion	Outgoing, talkative, sociable, assertive, active	Introversion
Agreeableness	Cooperative, friendly, courteous, flexible, trusting, good-natured, tolerant	Disagreeableness
Conscientiousness	Self-disciplined, organized, thorough, responsible, hard-working, persevering	Carelessness
Emotional Stability	Calm, poised, secure	Neuroticism
Openness to Experience	Imaginative, curious, broadminded, intelligent, original, artistically sensitive	Closed to Experience

Not surprisingly, high levels of two Big Five Personality Traits—agreeableness and emotional stability—are associated with group cohesiveness and sociability, whereas a third trait—conscientiousness—is associated with task performance. After all, who would choose or want to work with members who were disagreeable, neurotic, and careless?

At the same time, groups benefit by having introverted members who take time to think through ideas as well as “Closed to Experience” members who recognize the value of putting imagination and curiosity aside when the group must make an emergency decision.

4.3.2: The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®

In addition to the Big Five Personality Traits, a second personality model demonstrates why and how group members react to group tasks and social interactions in different ways. The **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)**¹⁸ is a widely used inventory that identifies specific personality types based on the ways in which people perceive the world around them and make judgments. The MBTI looks at the different ways in which “people *prefer* to use their minds, specifically, the way they perceive and the way they make judgments.”¹⁹ Thousands of corporations, including most Fortune 100 companies, use the MBTI “to identify job applicants whose skills match those of their top performers” and “to develop communication skills and promote teamwork among current employees.”²⁰

According to the MBTI, all of us have preferences of thought and behavior that fall into four categories, with two opposite preferences in each category. As you read about the following traits, ask yourself which preferences best describe your personality.

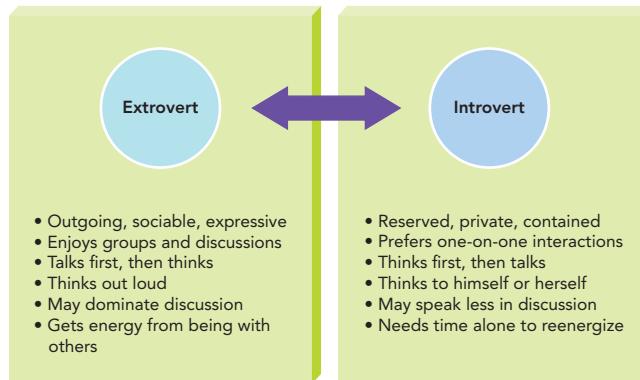
EXTROVERT-INTROVERT These two traits describe where you like to focus your attention. An extrovert²¹ focuses outward; an introvert focuses inward.

Extrovert is a Myers-Briggs personality type who is outgoing, usually talks more than others, and is often enthusiastic and animated during a discussion.

Introvert is a Myers-Briggs personality type who needs time to think before speaking and who may prefer to work alone rather than in a group.

Figure 4.3 lists the characteristics of and differences between extroverts and introverts.

Figure 4.3 Characteristics of Extroverts and Introverts



An extrovert usually likes working in groups and on committees, but an introvert may prefer a solo assignment. Introverts need more time to think before they speak or act. A group may miss good ideas and needed analysis if it rushes into solutions proposed by enthusiastic extroverts.

Groups in Balance . . . Value Both Introverts and Extroverts

Misunderstandings between extroverts and introverts are common in groups. “Extroverts complain that introverts don’t speak up in meetings. Introverts criticize extroverts for talking too much and not listening well.”²² Effective groups balance the needs of both personality types by accommodating the differences in communication style and tapping the best ideas from all members.

In *The Introvert Advantage: How to Thrive in an Extrovert World*, psychologist Marti Olsen Laney writes that “introverts are often surprised when they are not valued for their considerable contributions” to a group, in part because they don’t speak up. They also “find it hard to both absorb all the information and formulate an opinion about it. They need time away from meetings to sift and sort data.” Some introverts can become “brain locked” because they can’t find the right words to express their meaning.²³ Yet introverts, rather than extroverts, are more likely to assume important group roles such as clarifier, analyzer, implementer, and supporter.

Introverts can use several strategies to enhance their value and contributions by demonstrating they are particularly skilled and wholeheartedly involved in a group and its work.

- Say hello and smile when you enter a meeting room.
- Don’t schedule too many meetings on the same day.

- Before attending a meeting, write down some of the comments and questions you want to share with group members. Take notes during a meeting to help you focus your thoughts and avoid information overload.
- Nod your head, smile, and use eye contact to let others know you are listening.
- By listening carefully to what members say, particularly if an issue is controversial or causing conflict, you can enhance your value to the group by helping to clarify, analyze, or summarize what you’ve heard during the discussion
- Let members know that you will continue to think about an issue and get back to them with a reaction.²⁴

Now let’s examine how the extroverts in a group can help introverted members maximize their contributions and value. Begin by imagining that introverts such as Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein, J.K. Rowling, Bill Gates, and Mahatma Gandhi are members of your group. Wouldn’t you want to hear what they have to say? Here are a few strategies extroverts can use to encourage participation by introverts and let them know they are valued:

- Spend time, one-on-one, getting to know members who are introverts.
- Monitor your own talk and stop talking if you see or sense that an introvert wants to contribute or looks frustrated.
- Give introverts time and space to think before asking them to respond or contribute.
- Consider short breaks in long meetings so introverts can leave the room, get away from the group, and recharge their “batteries.”
- Recognize and praise introverts for their contributions.²⁵

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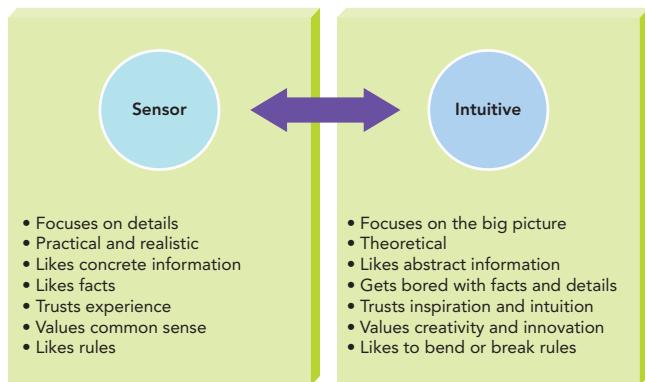
Value Both Introverts and Extroverts

Based on your reading, are you primarily an extrovert or an introvert? How does this trait affect the way you communicate with others and work in groups?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

SENSOR-INTUITIVE These two traits focus on how you look at the world around you—whether you see the forest or the trees. **Sensor** is a Myers-Briggs personality type who focuses on details and prefers to concentrate on one task at a time. A sensor sees the trees, and likes facts and details. **Intuitive** is a Myers-Briggs personality type who likes to make connections and formulate big ideas but who may become bored with details. An intuitive sees the forest, and prefers the big picture. Figure 4.4 compares the characteristics of sensors and intuitives.

Figure 4.4 Characteristics of Sensors and Intuitives

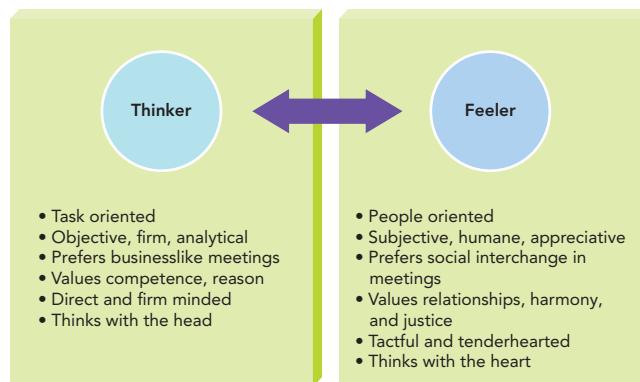
Sensors and intuitives often see things quite differently. Sensors like rules, systematic explanations, and detailed facts, but intuitives prefer theoretical models and often avoid rules and details.²⁶ Communication between sensors and intuitives can be difficult “because they see things so differently, and each believes that [their] information is more accurate, valid, and real.”²⁷

Groups need *both* kinds of members to function effectively and efficiently. Researchers Carl Larson and Frank LaFasto provide the following example:

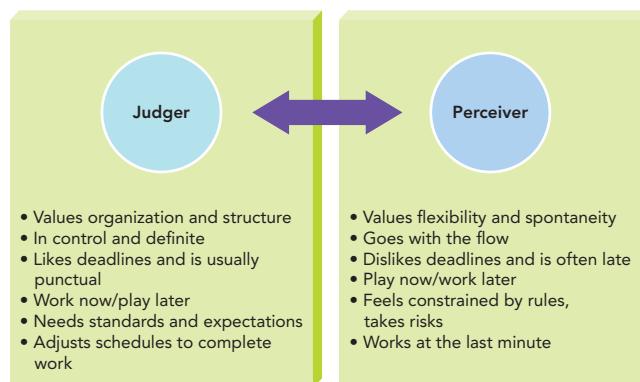
“In the construction business it’s important to have the ‘big picture’ people who can see the conceptual side of a project and know when major changes are necessary. This viewpoint needs to be balanced by people who are at the job site supervising the very detail-oriented portions of the work. Both are necessary members of a good project team.”²⁸

THINKER-FEELER These two traits explain how you make decisions. **Thinker** is a Myers-Briggs personality type who takes pride in thinking objectively and making difficult decisions. Thinkers are task-oriented and logical; they often enjoy arguing and making difficult decisions and want to get the job done, even if the cost is bad feelings among members. **Feeler** is a Myers-Briggs personality type who wants everyone to get along and who will spend time with other group members to achieve harmony. They are people-oriented members who think with their hearts. Figure 4.5 compares the characteristics of thinkers and feelers.

When thinkers and feelers work together in groups, there is the potential for misunderstanding. Thinkers may appear unemotional and aggressive. Feelers may annoy thinkers by “wasting” time with social chitchat. Thinkers should try to remember that what they intend as good advice may strike others as unkind. Feelers should learn not to take criticism too personally and to speak up if they feel they are being treated unfairly.²⁹ When thinkers and feelers appreciate their differences as decision makers, they can form an unbeatable team. Although the thinkers make decisions and move the group forward, feelers make sure that the group is working harmoniously.

Figure 4.5 Characteristics of Thinkers and Feelers

JUDGER-PERCEIVER The last two traits focus on how you deal with the outer world and its problems. **Judger** is a Myers-Briggs personal type who is highly structured and likes to plan ahead. Judgers are well organized, follow lengthy to-do lists, and look for closure. They are very punctual and can become impatient with people who show up late or waste time. **Perceiver** is a Myers-Briggs personality type who is less rigid about deadlines and time constraints and who is flexible and willing to try new options. Perceivers like open-endedness and view being on time as less important than being adaptable; they are often the group’s risk takers. However, they often procrastinate and end up in a frenzy to complete a task on time. Figure 4.6 compares the characteristics of judges and perceivers.

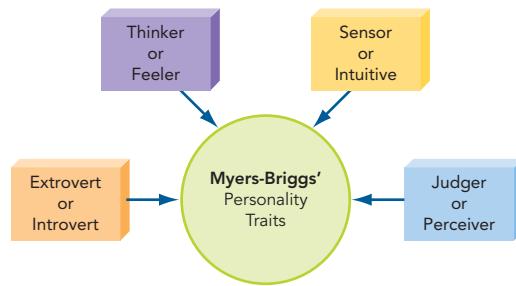
Figure 4.6 Characteristics of Judgers and Perceivers

Judgers and perceivers often have difficulty working together. To a judger, a perceiver may appear “air-headed” or scatterbrained. To a perceiver, a judger may appear rigid and controlling. Judgers come prepared to make decisions and solve problems, but perceivers “aren’t comfortable with things being ‘decided’; [they] want to reopen, discuss, rework, argue for the sake of arguing.”³⁰ As difficult as it is for them, judgers should try to stop “doing” and take time to relax with others. Perceivers should try to respect deadlines and keep the promises that they make to judgers.

DIVERSE PERSONALITY TRAITS Most groups benefit when there is an appropriate mix of personality traits. A group without judges or conscientious members may miss important deadlines and fail to achieve its goal. A group that lacks members who are open to experience fails to develop innovative approaches or seek creative solutions. A group without a sensor can overlook important details or critical flaws in a proposal.

The members of an ideal group would be agreeable, conscientious, open to experience, and emotionally stable. They would represent all eight Myers-Briggs traits—extroverts, introverts, sensors, intuitives, thinkers, feelers, judges, and perceivers—and “would put them together in such a way that they would not only understand their differences but could also draw upon them.”³¹ Although it is tempting to choose members with whom you share personality traits, your group will perform better with representatives of every personality trait (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.7 The Diversity of Myers-Briggs Personality Traits



4.3.3: Motivating Personality Types in Groups

Chandra, an intuitive extrovert, is asked to edit and proofread a 50-page report analyzing her company’s hiring procedures. She tries to do her best, but finds her eyes glazing over by the time she’s on the second page. Jerome, an introverted sensor, is asked to answer impromptu questions about hiring problems at a staff meeting. He draws a blank because he needs time to think over the questions before answering. Instead of being motivated, Chandra and Jerome are frustrated. Fortunately, adapting to their personality types can improve their productivity and personal satisfaction. Table 4.4 summarizes the many ways in which different personality types call for different approaches to motivation.³²

Now reconsider the frustrations experienced by Chandra and Jerome and how they may have contributed to their lack of motivation. One way to engage their unique talents more effectively is to let them switch tasks so that Chandra answers impromptu questions about hiring problems and Jerome edits the report. Understanding the personality types of group members helps you choose effective motivational strategies.

Table 4.4 Personality Types and Member Motivation

Type-Based Motivational Strategies	
Extrovert	Introvert <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage interaction. • Allow time for “talking out” ideas. • Provide frequent feedback.
Sensor	Intuitive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set clear and valued goals. • Provide thinking time before and during discussions. • Provide introverts more opportunities to speak.
Thinker	Feeler <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set realistic goals. • Keep meetings short and relevant. • Request real, practical information.
Judger	Perceiver <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an engaging goal. • Encourage visioning and creativity. • Encourage brainstorming.

GroupWork

Personality Types in Groups

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator focuses on how you perceive the world and make decisions. Unlike a ruler or a thermometer, the MBTI is not measuring something visible or physical; instead, it measures self-reported lifestyle as well as attitudinal and behavior preferences, not traits or aptitudes. When you complete and analyze your answers to the *Personality Type in Groups* questionnaire, keep in mind that you are the best judge of your type. Your MBTI results may not “fit” the real you. And, most important, no type is better than any other.

Part 1

Directions: On your own, read the two sets of descriptions for each pair of Myers-Briggs personality types. Select the individual phrases that best describe you. Note the personality type with the most selections—extrovert or introvert; sensing or intuition; thinking or feeling; judging or perceiving. Answer as you really are, not as you wish you were or wish you could be in the future.³³

Identify Your Traits

1. Are you an extrovert or an introvert?

Extrovert	Introvert
<input type="checkbox"/> I am outgoing, sociable, expressive.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am reserved, private, contained.
<input type="checkbox"/> I enjoy groups and discussions.	<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer one-to-one interactions.
<input type="checkbox"/> I talk first, think later.	<input type="checkbox"/> I think first, then talk.

<input type="checkbox"/> I can do many things at once.	<input type="checkbox"/> I focus on one thing at a time.
<input type="checkbox"/> I think out loud.	<input type="checkbox"/> I think to myself.
<input type="checkbox"/> Other people give me energy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Other people often exhaust me.
<input type="checkbox"/> I enjoy being the center of attention.	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't enjoy being the center of attention.
Total	Total

2. Are you a sensor or an intuitive?

Sensor	Intuitive
<input type="checkbox"/> I focus on details.	<input type="checkbox"/> I focus on the big picture.
<input type="checkbox"/> I am practical and realistic.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am theoretical.
<input type="checkbox"/> I like concrete information.	<input type="checkbox"/> I like abstract information.
<input type="checkbox"/> I like facts.	<input type="checkbox"/> I get bored with facts and details.
<input type="checkbox"/> I trust experience.	<input type="checkbox"/> I trust inspiration and intuition.
<input type="checkbox"/> I value common sense.	<input type="checkbox"/> I value creativity and innovation.
<input type="checkbox"/> I want clear, realistic goals.	<input type="checkbox"/> I want to pursue a vision.
Total	Total

3. Are you a thinker or a feeler?

Thinker	Feeler
<input type="checkbox"/> I am task-oriented.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am people-oriented.
<input type="checkbox"/> I am objective, firm, analytical.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am subjective, humane, caring.
<input type="checkbox"/> I enjoy arguing.	<input type="checkbox"/> I think arguing is disruptive.
<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer businesslike meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer social interactions in meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/> I value competence, reason, justice.	<input type="checkbox"/> I value relationships and harmony.
<input type="checkbox"/> I am direct and firm-minded.	<input type="checkbox"/> I am tactful and tender-hearted.
<input type="checkbox"/> I think with my head.	<input type="checkbox"/> I think with my heart.
Total	Total

4. Are you a judger or a perceiver?

Judger	Perceiver
<input type="checkbox"/> I value organization and structure.	<input type="checkbox"/> I value flexibility and spontaneity.
<input type="checkbox"/> I am in control and definite.	<input type="checkbox"/> I go with the flow.
<input type="checkbox"/> I like having deadlines.	<input type="checkbox"/> I dislike deadlines.
<input type="checkbox"/> I will work now, play later.	<input type="checkbox"/> I will play now, work later.
<input type="checkbox"/> I like standards and expectations.	<input type="checkbox"/> I feel constrained by rules.
<input type="checkbox"/> I adjust my schedule to complete work.	<input type="checkbox"/> I do work at the last minute.
<input type="checkbox"/> I plan ahead.	<input type="checkbox"/> I adapt as I go.
Total	Total

Summarize your scores by indicating the letter that best describes your personality traits and preferences. The four-letter combination is your MBTI personality.

E or I S or N T or F J or P

Part 2

When you have finished the questionnaire and identified your own personality traits, consider the following questions:

- How could the lack of one or two Myers-Briggs personality traits affect group effectiveness?
- Given your own personality traits, what challenges will you face working with the other members of your group, whose traits may be different from yours? (For example, will a perceiver and a judger be able to work collaboratively on projects with short deadlines?)
- How can you improve your effectiveness as a group in light of the personality traits of the individual members? (Example: As an extrovert, I should carefully observe and gently encourage introverts who may have difficulty contributing to group discussions.)

4.4: Cultural Dimensions

4.4 Describe how the paired characteristics of five cultural dimensions affect group communication

We owe a great deal to contemporary social scientists who have identified important dimensions of culture.³⁴ A **cultural dimension** is an aspect of culture that can be differentiated and measured relative to other cultures.³⁵

Several common dimensions are fundamental to understanding a culture. “Each dimension can be viewed as a continuum of choices that a culture must make” rather than either/or categories.³⁶ We also include a fifth dimension that applies across all other dimensions and that focuses on the relationships between culture and communication. Table 4.5 provides definitions, examples, behaviors, and methods for adapting to these cultural dimensions.

4.4.1: Individualism–Collectivism

Individualism–collectivism may be the most important factor distinguishing one culture from another.³⁷ **Individualism–collectivism** is a continuum of traits representing the degree to which a culture relies on and has allegiance to the self or the group and whether people see themselves as unique and independent or conforming and interdependent on one another.³⁸

Individualism is a cultural value or belief that the individual is important, that independence is worth pursuing, that personal achievement should be rewarded, and that individual uniqueness is important.³⁹ The United States is the most individualistic culture in the world. However, as much as 70 percent of the world’s population values interdependence or collectivism. **Collectivism** is a cultural value or belief in interdependence that places greater emphasis on the views, needs, and goals of the group than on the views,

Table 4.5 Cultural Dimensions of Group Members

Cultural Dimension	Description and Examples	Group Member Behavior	Recommended Adaptations
Individualist–Collectivist	Act independently or interdependently. Individualism: Value individual achievement and freedom; United States, Australia, Great Britain, Canada. Collectivism: Emphasize group identity and loyalty; Guatemala, Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela.	Individualistic members tend to work alone and seek credit for their own work. Collectivist members like to work in groups and try to help other group members.	Encourage collectivism in all members. Help individualistic members understand that they are part of a larger group that needs their input and collaboration to achieve a common goal.
Power Distance	Extent of equity or status differences among members. High Power Distance: Inequity between high- and low-status members; Malaysia, Slovakia, Guatemala, Panama. Low Power Distance: Equality and interdependence among group members; Austria, Israel, Denmark, New Zealand.	High power distance members try to take charge and make decisions. Low power distance members seek consultation and consensus.	Establish clear norms for member behavior. Determine the extent to which members will participate in decision making, how specific tasks will be assigned, how and by whom members will be evaluated, and who will serve as leader(s).
Gender Expectations	Concern for self and success and/or a focus on caring and sharing. Masculine Orientation: Assertive, decisive, dominant; Slovakia, Japan, Hungary, Austria, Venezuela. Feminine Orientation: Nurturing, cooperative; Sweden, Norway, Latvia, the Netherlands.	Masculine-oriented members focus on the task and personal success. Feminine-oriented members focus on member relations and respect for others.	Balance masculine and feminine expectations in order to achieve task and social goals. Do not forgo decisions or actions in order to achieve total cooperation and consensus.
Time Orientations	How people organize and value time. Short-Term Time Orientation: Adhere to plans, schedules, and deadlines; time is valuable; Pakistan, Nigeria, Philippines, Canada. Long-Term Time Orientation: Not obsessed with promptness or schedules; China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan.	Short-term time oriented members focus on one task at a time and work hard to meet deadlines. Long-term time oriented members are frequently late, do many things at once, and are easily distracted and tolerant of interruptions.	Encourage short-term time oriented members to take responsibility for time-sensitive tasks, while accepting that long-term time oriented members will vary their promptness based on the nature and importance of a situation or relationship.
High Context–Low Context	Different uses of verbal and nonverbal elements to communicate and interpret meaning. High Context: Messages are implied and context-sensitive; Japan, China, Greece, Mexico. Low Context: Messages are explicit, factual, and objective; Great Britain, United States, Scandinavia, Germany.	High-context members seek meaning from nonverbal cues and the nature of interpersonal relationships. Low-context members want facts and clear, direct, explicit verbal communication.	Give high-context members time to review information and react; demonstrate the value of going beyond “just facts” to low-context members. Interpret the meaning of both verbal and nonverbal messages as well as the nature of relationships.

needs, and goals of individuals. In collectivist societies, the interests of the group prevail over the interests of the individual, and there is a greater willingness to collaborate with other group members.⁴⁰ For example, once children have completed high school or higher education in the United States, many parents encourage them to strike out on their own—to pursue a career and find their own place to live. However, in many Asian countries, parents encourage their children to stay at home and work until they marry and, once they do, to work for the benefit of the immediate *and* extended family. Figure 4.8 compares the characteristics of individualistic and collectivist cultures.

At first, a collectivist perspective may appear ideally suited for group work. Yet, the opinions of individualistic members help groups recognize and adapt to a variety of useful perspectives. Despite the fact that the United States ranks highest in terms of individualism, not all Americans

are individualistic. For example, many African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino Americans embrace the traditions and values of collectivist societies.

The focus on individual achievement and personal rewards in the United States can make interaction with group members from collectivist cultures difficult. Group members from these cultures may view a highly individualistic communication style and behavior as selfish, arrogant, antagonistic, power-hungry, ruthless, and impatient. Interestingly, as poor nations gain wealth, they begin to shift toward greater individualism.⁴¹

4.4.2: Power Distance

Can you walk into your boss's office unannounced, or do you have to run a gauntlet of administrative assistants? Is it easy to make a personal appointment with

Figure 4.8 Characteristics of Individualistic and Collectivist Cultures⁴²

The following images highlight key characteristics of Individualistic and Collectivist cultures.





Individualistic Culture Characteristics

- "I" is important.
- Independence is worth pursuing.
- Personal achievement should be rewarded.
- Individual uniqueness is valued.



Collectivist Culture Characteristics

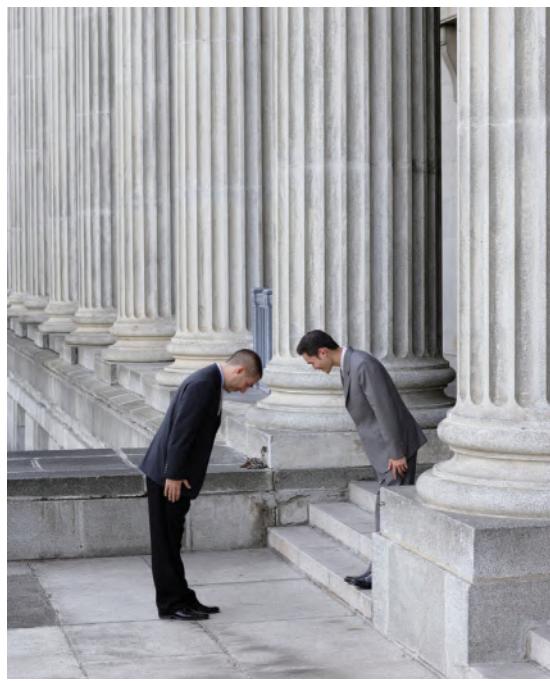
- "We" is important. Group needs are more important than those of individuals.
- The needs, beliefs, and goals of the "in-group" (e.g., family, community members, work team) are emphasized above those of the individual.
- There is greater willingness to cooperate with other groups.

the president of your college or university? Does our society truly believe in the sentiments expressed in the U.S. Declaration of Independence that all people "are created equal"? These questions are addressed by power distance. **Power distance** is a cultural dimension that reflects the physical and psychological distance between those who have power and those who do not have power in relationships, institutions, and organizations. It also represents "the extent to which the less powerful person in society accepts inequality in power and considers it normal."⁴³

High power distance is a cultural perspective that accepts major differences in power and assumes that all people are *not* created equal. In a high-power-distance culture, you dare not challenge authority. Parents, for example, may have total control over their children, and men may have total control over the women in their family. The government, corporate officers, and religious or legal authorities dictate the rules of behavior and enforce them.

Low power distance is a cultural perspective in which power distinctions are minimized. Supervisors work with subordinates; professors work with students; elected officials work with constituents. Despite the fact that the United States claims to be the greatest democracy on Earth and an equal opportunity society, it ranks sixteenth on the list of low-power-distance cultures—after countries such as Finland, Switzerland, Great Britain, Germany, Costa Rica, Australia, the Netherlands, and Canada.⁴⁴

Power distance has enormous implications for groups, particularly given the strong correlation between collectivism and high power distance and between individualism and low power distance. If you are individualistic and are strongly encouraged to express your own opinion, you are more willing to challenge group members and leaders. If, however, your culture is collectivist and your personal opinion is subordinate to the welfare of others, you are less likely to challenge the collective authority of a group or its leader.



When Japanese people bow to one another in greeting, the person with less power bends lower. In what ways do members of the U.S. culture show differences in power distance?

4.4.3: Gender Expectations

All of us—no matter what our culture—have expectations about gender roles. Obviously men cannot become pregnant. On average, women are not as physically strong as men. **Gender expectation** is a cultural dimension that describes the ways in which cultures define gender roles and the extent to which a culture values competition and assertiveness over harmony and nurturance. This cultural dimension acknowledges biological traits, but primarily focuses on social and psychological dimensions.

When first reading about this cultural dimension, many people mistakenly think we are describing cultures in which everyone is feminine (and even effeminate in behavior) or everyone is masculine (and even macho). These traits describe a societal perspective, *not* individual men or women. The United States is ranked fifteenth among nations in terms of masculine expectations.⁴⁵ **Masculine orientation** is a cultural perspective in which men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. Cultures with a masculine orientation esteem personal success, competition, assertiveness, and strength. Unselfishness and nurturing is often seen as a weakness or “women’s work.” At the more masculine end of the gender expectation continuum, women have fewer rights and privileges than men. In countries such as Japan and Austria and in Arab countries with large Muslim populations, men and women are viewed as inherently different, “and these differences require dissimilar expectations and treatments.”⁴⁶

In masculine-oriented cultures, men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, and women are supposed to be more nurturing, modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. **Feminine orientation** is characteristic of an egalitarian cultural perspective in which both men and women are nurturing, modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. In cultures with an egalitarian gender perspective such as Sweden and Norway, gender roles overlap: Men and women can be assertive and/or nurturing.⁴⁷

Think of the challenges groups face when there is a mix of masculine and feminine orientations. Members with masculine orientations may compete for leadership positions and exhibit highly assertive behavior. Members with more feminine orientations may be highly effective and supportive but never achieve a real voice or influence in the group. Later in this chapter, we take a closer look at the ways in which men and women view and work in groups.

4.4.4: Time Orientations

There are many ways of looking at time. **Time orientation** describes the extent to which a culture organizes and values time. In most parts of northern Europe and North America, time is a valuable commodity. We spend time, save time, waste time, lose time, gain time, and take time outs. As a result, we fill our days and nights with multiple commitments and live fast-paced lives. However, the pace of life in countries such as India, Kenya, and Argentina is driven less by a need to “get things done” than by a sense of participation in events that create their own rhythm.⁴⁸

Cultures differ in terms of whether they look forward to the future (long-term) rewards or whether they focus on past and present (short-term) goals. A **short-term time orientation** is a cultural perspective in which people are highly organized and value time. They may feel controlled by time, deadlines, multi-tasking chores, and to-do lists. A **long-term time orientation** is a cultural perspective in which people see time as flexible and able to suit their needs rather than the other way around.

Countries with short-term time orientations, such as Pakistan, Nigeria, the Philippines, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States, expect quick results from their efforts. They value leisure time and are more likely to spend than save what they earn. Countries with long-term time orientations such as China, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea value persistence, thriftiness, adaptability, and humility. The members of cultures with a long-term time orientation honor elders and value the ability to defer gratification of needs. When short-term and long-term time orientation members interact in groups, the results can be frustrating. Short-term time orientation members become distressed by how long-term time orientation members seem to disrespect or ignore schedules and deadlines. For long-term time

orientation members, schedules and commitments—particularly plans for the future—are not firm, and even important plans may change right up to the last minute.⁴⁹

If you have a short-term time orientation, you can try to modify and relax your concerns about time and scheduling when working with long-term time orientation members. If you have a long-term time orientation, do your best to respect and adapt to the needs of short-term time orientation members for careful scheduling and promptness.

4.4.5: High Context–Low Context

All communication occurs in a **context**, a physical and psychosocial environment in which a particular situation or event occurs. Context is the information that surrounds an event and clarifies its meaning.⁵⁰ In and of itself, context may hold more meaning than the words in a message. **High context–low context** is a cultural dimension that describes whether a culture relies more on nonverbal behavior or on words for the meaning of messages. In **high-context** cultures, gestures, silence, facial expressions, and the relationships among communicators are more reliable indicators of meaning. Very little meaning is expressed in words. In high-context cultures, such as China, Japan, and Greece, meaning is also conveyed through status (age, gender, education, family background, title, and affiliations) and through an individual's informal network of friends and associates.⁵¹ Things get done depending on the nature of relationships with others and attention to group process.⁵²

Low-context is a cultural perspective in which the meaning of messages is dependent on language. Members of low-context cultures tend to speak more, speak louder, and speak more rapidly than people from high-context cultures. As members of a low-context culture, North Americans tend to “Speak up,” “Spell it out,” “Tell it like it is,” and “Speak our mind.” In low-context cultures, “things get done by following procedures and paying attention to the goal.”⁵³ Table 4.6 contrasts several characteristics of high- and low-context cultures.

Table 4.6 Characteristics of High-Context and Low-Context Cultures⁵⁴

High-Context Culture	Low-Context Culture
Indirect and implied communication	Direct and clear communication
Rely on nonverbal meanings	Rely on verbal meanings
Reserved reactions	Reactions on the surface
Strong in-group bonds	Flexible group membership
High level of group commitment	Low level of group commitment
Time is flexible	Time is highly organized
Change is slow	Change is fast

Group members from high- and low-context cultures express and interpret messages differently. For example, suppose everyone knows that Allison and Philip have a

close personal relationship. During a group discussion, Allison scowls every time Philip expresses his opinion or makes a suggestion. However, when asked whether she agrees with Philip, she says yes. Group members with high-context perspectives would pay more attention to Allison's nonverbal behavior and decide that she may be angry with Philip and disapprove of his ideas. In contrast, members with low-context perspectives may only hear the “yes” and assume that Allison and Philip are in agreement.

Virtual Teams Cultural Dimensions and Communication Technology

Objective: Explain the ways in which each of the five cultural dimensions can significantly affect the success of virtual teams.

Not surprisingly, cultural dimensions affect the success of virtual teams significantly. In *Mastering Virtual Teams*, Deborah Duarte and Nancy Snyder use social psychologist Geert Hofstede's dimensions and anthropologist Edward T. Hall's research on context to explain how culture affects the way we use communication technology.⁵⁵ We have added a brief discussion of how the time orientation dimension affects virtual groups.

- **Individualism–Collectivism.** Members from collectivist cultures prefer face-to-face interactions. In contrast, individualistic communicators like having the screen to themselves as they present their ideas and opinions.
- **Power Distance.** Members from high-power-distance cultures communicate more freely when technologies are asynchronous (do *not* occur in real time) and when anonymous input is possible. In other words, when asynchronous technology conceals power relationships, members from high-power-distance cultures may be more willing to challenge one another.
- **Gender Expectations.** Members from cultures with a feminine orientation are more likely to use technology as a way of encouraging, supporting, and motivating others whereas members from cultures with a masculine orientation are more likely to see such nurturing behavior as a waste of precious meeting time.
- **Time Orientation.** Members with a short-term time orientation become frustrated by members with long-term time orientations who may be late to join an audioconference or a teleconference. At the same time, long-term time-oriented members may become distracted during an online meeting and sidetrack or disrupt the group by discussing unrelated issues.
- **High Context–Low Context.** People from high-context cultures prefer more information-rich technologies (e.g., videoconferences and, to some extent, audioconferences) as well as media that offer the feeling of social presence. People from low-context cultures prefer more asynchronous communication with the ability to “get it in writing” via email and other writing-only virtual media.

Group Assessment Cultural Context Inventory⁵⁶

High- and low-context cultures differ in terms of how people relate to and communicate with one another and how they treat space and time. Complete and analyze your answers to the Cultural Context Inventory. Note that very few people are totally high or low context communicators. Depending on the situation and the people involved, most of us have a combination of high and low context characteristics.

Directions: For each of the twenty statements in this inventory, indicate whether the extent to which you agree or disagree in terms of your tendencies, preferences, and behaviors when interacting with others. When you have scored your inventory, consider the following questions:

1. To what extent does your score reflect a preference for individual or group achievement?
2. Do you tend to show your emotions or hold back on your emotions when communicating in groups?
3. How well do you adapt to group members whose score is significantly different than yours?

Statement	Degree of Relevance				
	SD	D	S	A	SA
1. When communicating, I tend to use a lot of facial expressions, hand gestures, and body movements rather than to rely mostly on words.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. I pay more attention to the context of a conversation—who said what and under what circumstances—than I do to the words.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. When communicating, I tend to spell things out quickly and directly rather than talk around the point.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. In an interpersonal disagreement, I tend to be more emotional than logical and rational.	<input type="radio"/>				
5. I tend to have a small, close circle of friends rather than a large, but less close, circle of friends.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. When working with others, I prefer to get the job done first and socialize afterward rather than socialize first and then tackle the job.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. I would rather work in a group than by myself.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. I believe rewards should be given for individual accomplishments rather than for group accomplishments.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. I describe myself in terms of my accomplishments rather than in terms of my family and relationships.	<input type="radio"/>				
10. I prefer sharing space with others to having my own private space.	<input type="radio"/>				
11. I would rather work for someone who maintains authority and functions for the good of the group than work for someone who allows a lot of autonomy and individual decision making.	<input type="radio"/>				
12. I believe it is more important to be on time, than to let other concerns take priority.	<input type="radio"/>				
13. I prefer working on one thing at a time to working on a variety of things at once.	<input type="radio"/>				
14. I generally set a time schedule and keep to it rather than leave things unscheduled and go with the flow.	<input type="radio"/>				
15. I find it easier to work with someone who is fast and wants to see immediate results than to work with someone who is slow and wants to consider all the facts.	<input type="radio"/>				
16. In order to learn about something, I tend to consult many sources of information rather than go to the one best authority.	<input type="radio"/>				
17. In figuring out problems, I prefer focusing on the whole situation to focusing on specific parts or taking one step at a time.	<input type="radio"/>				
18. When tackling a new task, I would rather figure it out on my own by experimentation than follow someone else's example or demonstration.	<input type="radio"/>				
19. When making decisions, I consider my likes and dislikes, not just the facts.	<input type="radio"/>				
20. I prefer having tasks and procedures explicitly defined to having a general idea of what has to be done.	<input type="radio"/>				

Reset Submit

(continued)

Scoring: The purpose of this inventory is to assess your tendencies toward being high-context or low-context oriented. Transfer the numbers for each statement to the appropriate blank provided below. Then, add the numbers in each column to obtain your total score in the High Context column and your total score in the Low Context column.

High Context (HC)	Low Context (LC)
1. _____	2. _____
3. _____	4. _____
5. _____	6. _____
7. _____	8. _____
9. _____	10. _____
11. _____	12. _____
13. _____	14. _____
15. _____	16. _____
17. _____	18. _____
19. _____	20. _____
Totals _____	Totals _____

Note which of your total scores is higher—the High Context total or the Low Content total. To determine whether you have a high-context or low-context orientation, subtract your lower score from your higher score. Record the difference in the blank below:

_____ Higher Score minus _____ Lower Score = _____ Score Difference

Scoring Interpretation

A score difference between 0 to 3 means you have a bi-cultural orientation along the high/low context dimension.

A score close to 20 means you have a very strong preference for either the high or low context dimension.

4.5: Gender Dimensions

4.5 Explain how gender can affect group norms, roles, leadership, and goal achievement

Researchers who study gender differences claim that women and men are alike on most—but not all—psychological traits.⁵⁷ In other words, males and females are much more similar than different. Unfortunately, many people still believe there are major psychological differences between genders. These beliefs are learned perceptions based on outdated assumptions, traditional family roles, and the influence of various media. In cartoons, books, and films, knights in shining armor still save maidens in distress, and Mom knows best how to clean auto grease off Dad’s pants.

New and somewhat surprising research has challenged several traditional views about women and men, particularly how they affect a group’s collective intelligence as well as the amount of talk by men and women in group contexts.

4.5.1: Collective Intelligence

Collective intelligence in groups has three critical components related to the characteristics of its members:

- members communicate more and equally with one another,
- members are sensitive to one another’s feelings, and
- membership includes women.

Why, you may wonder, do groups with female members outperform all-male groups? One explanation for this finding is that women are consistently better on social sensitivity tests and at accurately reading group member emotions than men are.⁵⁸ However, keep in mind that any group can have collective intelligence when members—be they women or men—are high in social sensitivity.⁵⁹

4.5.2: Amount of Talk

Who talks more: women or men? Many people believe that women talk more than men do. Yet most women experience just the opposite, particularly when they’re working in groups. Social scientists Rodney Napier and Matti Gershenfeld explain this phenomenon:

Throughout history, women have been punished for talking too much or in the wrong way. . . . Yet study after study shows that it is men who talk more—at meetings, in mixed-group discussions held in classrooms where girls or young women sit next to boys or young men. . . . And not only did men speak for a longer time, but the women’s longest turns were shorter than the men’s shortest turns.⁶⁰

A study of college students found that the number of words uttered by males and females were virtually the same. Men actually “yakked slightly more than women, especially when interacting with spouses or strangers and when the topic was non-personal.” Women talked more with classmates, with parents and children, and in situations where the topic of conversation required disclosure of feelings.⁶¹

Research in group communication finds that some female members feel undervalued or even invisible when working with male group members. Women often complain that when they say something in a meeting, no one responds, yet a few minutes later a man makes the same suggestion and is praised for the quality of his input.⁶² Several new studies support this observation, including one that showed when women spoke up with ideas equal in value to those contributed by men, the women’s ideas were viewed less favorably. In addition, when women asserted themselves and spoke more than the men in a group, they were viewed as less competent.⁶³

Theory in Groups

Muted Group Theory

Objective: Describe the central claim of Muted Group Theory and how it applies to the ways in which group members deliberate.



According to Muted Group Theory, groups with power in a society tend to mute the voices of less powerful groups. What can less powerful groups, such as women and minority group members, do to counteract this tendency?

Cheris Kramarae's **Muted Group Theory** claims that power imbalances inhibit some female and minority group members from expressing themselves assertively and impede their ability to participate effectively in group work.⁶⁴ This noteworthy theory examines "the ways that the communication practices of dominant groups suppress, mute, or devalue the words, ideas, and discourses of subordinate groups."⁶⁵ When Kramarae uses the term *dominant groups*, she refers to a dominant group and a subordinate group within a *single* group. For example, she often describes women and minorities as subordinate groups within a larger group in which white males are the dominant group. Although members of subordinate groups may speak *and* have a lot to say, their messages are "often disrespected, and their knowledge often not considered sufficient for decision or policy making."⁶⁶

Kramarae helps explain why and how women's voices, in particular, are subdued or silenced. "Women in most if not all cultures are not as free or as able as dominant men are to say what they want to say, when and where they wish to say it, without ridicule or punishment."⁶⁷ However, we urge you to avoid making hasty generalizations about the role of women and minorities in groups. For example, in a group composed primarily of influential African American women, a less powerful white male may be muted. When black women and white women work together in groups, the white women may criticize and try to mute the more outspoken speaking style of black women.⁶⁸

Muted Group Theory has direct relevance to work in groups. Kramarae claims that subordinate groups (women and

other minority groups) "do not control language and speech in the same way men do."⁶⁹ For example, most researchers studying gender expectations use the phrase *masculine-feminine values*. Why not *feminine-masculine values*? Why do most U.S. women take their husband's surname when they get married, and why do children typically take their father's surname regardless of whether Mom kept her maiden name?

Regardless of whether you are a member of a less powerful subordinate group or are a member *with* power, several strategies can counteract the effects of Muted Group Theory and encourage interaction and contributions from *all* members (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7 Counteracting the Effects of Muted Group Theory

Strategy	Description	Example
Call attention to the silencing strategy.	If a member disrespects a subordinate group member, call out the person responsible for it.	"Fred, you've interrupted Kara three times in the last few minutes. Please let her finish talking. We want to hear what she has to say."
Identify the value of differences.	When members disagree, point out the importance of expressing diverse points of view.	"Our decision could have negative consequences, so it's very important that we hear everyone's point of view."
Be assertive.	Speak up and act in your own best interests without denying the rights and interests of others.	"I realize you may not have known that my husband and I are Christian Scientists. I think you owe me an apology, and I trust this won't happen again."
Resist stereotyping.	Avoid judgments based on erroneous generalizations or oversimplifying the characteristics of an entire group of people.	"Why are the women in this group always asked to take minutes? Let's practice an equal opportunity policy and ask the men do it, too."

4.6: Generational Dimensions

4.6 List specific strategies to enhance group communication among members of different generations

Once upon a time, we classified people on the basis of age by putting them into one of two categories: old and young. Today—probably because of marketing and advertising research—we catalogue, grade, and pigeonhole people of different generations based on their potential as buyers and voters. Labeling any group allows members to identify with their contemporaries and to view other generations with some level of suspicion and even disapproval. After all, how can "they" be as good and as smart as "we" are?

4.6.1: Four Generational Dimensions

Brief descriptions of four generational dimensions follow:⁷⁰

- **Traditionalists** are a U.S. generation born between 1900 and 1945. Two world wars and the Great Depression taught this generation how to live within limited means. Traditionalists are loyal, hardworking, financially conservative, and faithful to institutions.
- **Baby Boomers** are a U.S. generation born between 1946 and 1964. This generation grew up with television and experienced the Vietnam War. Many of them bravely challenged the status quo and are responsible for many of the civil rights we now take for granted. As a whole, this generation knows how to navigate political minefields in the workplace. Boomers often believe they are always right and are willing to work hard to get what they want. The term *workaholic* was coined to describe Baby Boomers.
- **Generation Xers** are a U.S. generation born between 1965 and 1980. They are technologically savvy because they were raised in the era of video games and personal computers. Because they witnessed increasing employment layoffs and challenges to the presidency, organized religion, and big corporations, they are often skeptical and distrustful of institutions. Generation Xers believe that work is not the most important thing in their lives, and value work/life balance.
- **Millennials** are a U.S. generation born between 1981 and 1999. Many younger Millennials are still in school, just graduating from college, or just completing postgraduate studies. This generation grew up with cell phones and personal computers. Generally, they are confident and have high self-esteem. Millennials are collaborators and favor teamwork, having functioned in groups in school, organized sports, and extracurricular activities from a very young age. They take on many activities at once and like keeping their career options open.

WRITING PROMPT

Generational Dimensions

How well do people you know match the characteristics of their respective generational dimensions? Provide examples.

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

[Submit](#)

4.6.2: Ensuring Successful Intergenerational Interactions

The mixing of generations in families, communities, college classrooms, and work settings adds diversity and potential difficulties to the challenge of communicating in groups. Of all of the generational mixes, the interaction of Baby Boomers with Generation Xers and Millennials may create the most problems. When a Baby Boomer explains to a subordinate that “Dressing appropriately is part of your job,” a Generation Xer may respond, “Why do you care what I wear if I do my job?” If a Millennial says, “You’re threatened by us because we know how to use technology better,” a Baby Boomer may fire back, “Who do you think invented the technology?”⁷¹

Let’s take a closer look at three generational dimensions—Baby Boomers, Generation Xers , and Millennials—and how they can learn to interact more effectively.⁷² If you belong to Generation X or are a Millennial and work in groups with Baby Boomers, you should

- Show respect to Baby Boomers and acknowledge that you have less experience and can learn from them.
- Communicate face to face rather than relying completely on email or text messages. Learn to play the political game in work groups—look for opportunities to advance without angering, disappointing, or alienating those in power. Baby Boomers are often diplomatic and can help Generation Xers and Millenials navigate politically charged group environments.

Table 4.8 A Timeline: Four Generational Dimensions

Start Date	End Date	Label	Description
1900	1945	Traditionalists	Experienced two world wars and great depression Loyal, hardworking, financially conservative, and faithful to institutions
1946	1964	Baby Boomers	Grew up with television and experienced the Vietnam War Challenged the status quo Workaholic
1965	1980	Generation Xers	Raised in the era of video games and personal computers Technologically savvy Value work/life balance
1981	1999	Millennials	Grew up with cell phones and personal computers Collaborators and favor teamwork Keep their career options open

- Learn the corporate history and culture. Nothing bothers Baby Boomers more than a new, young employee who wants to change things, with seemingly no thought given to what has gone on before.

As a Baby Boomer working with Generation Xers or Millennials, you should

- Get to the point. State your objectives clearly.
- Avoid micromanaging Generation Xers and Millennials who need more independence and freedom.
- Do not expect them to be workaholics. Generation Xers and Millennials—who value a healthy work/life balance—may not spend as many hours at work, but they’re still getting the job done.
- Be more flexible. Remind yourself that it’s okay for work to be fun. Generation Xers and Millennials tend to think that Baby Boomers are too intense and set in their ways; prove them wrong.

Many Baby Boomers see group work as a football game in which all members act together according to a plan, but the younger generations see group work more like a relay race: “I’ll give it all I’ve got—when and where I’m supposed to.”⁷³

Watch The Politics of Sociology

Watch the video clips from "The Politics of Sociology," which illustrates concepts in this chapter.

WRITING PROMPT

Dimensions of Diversity

1. Given the three layers of diversity (personality traits; internal dimensions; external dimensions) which specific dimensions were evident in the members of this group?
2. Describe the communicative behaviors of Helen and Georgia, the two women in the group. To what extent was there evidence of the inhibiting factors described in Muted Group Theory?
3. To what extent did gender, race, and generational factors affect the group discussion?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

4.7: Religious Dimensions

- 4.7 Explain the importance of understanding, respecting, and adapting to group members with different religious beliefs and practices**



The power of religious respect and cooperation are evident in this photo as Buddhist nuns join Catholic sisters and other religious leaders to mark a four-year ceasefire agreement between the Sri Lanka government and the Tamil rebels at an interreligious conference. How successful have the leaders and members of organized religions been in achieving intergroup cooperation and peace? Why or why not?

There are more than 4,000 religions in the world. Like most people, you may be familiar only with the “big” religions and perhaps one or two more “obscure” faiths. Even if you are familiar with more, you may still lack **religious literacy**—the knowledge of and ability to understand and discuss religions. Think about your own or different religions. Are you familiar with the religious terms, symbols, images, beliefs, practices, scripture, themes, and stories that are employed within a particular culture? Unfortunately, many Americans know very little about their *own* religion, let alone the religions of others.⁷⁴

Group Assessment Religious Knowledge Survey^{75,76}

By all measures and compared to other countries, Americans are deeply religious, but often uninformed about the beliefs and customs of other religions. Test your own knowledge about a few of the world's major religions by taking the brief *Religious Knowledge Survey*.

Directions: Test your knowledge of the world's major religions by completing this Religious Knowledge Quiz. Select the appropriate option depending on whether the statement is true, false, or you don't know.

Statement	True	False	I Don't Know
1. In Islam, Jesus, Abraham, and Mohammed are prophets.			
2. Judaism is an older religion than Buddhism.			
3. Islam is a monotheistic religion (belief in one God), just like Christianity and Judaism.			
4. A Christian Scientist believes that disease is a delusion that can be cured by prayer.			
5. Jews fast during Yom Kippur; Muslims fast during Ramadan.			
6. Jesus Christ was a Jew.			
7. Roman Catholics throughout the world outnumber all other Christians combined.			
8. Sunni Muslims compose about 90 percent of all adherents to Islam.			
9. Hindus believe in reincarnation.			
10. The Ten Commandments are the basis of Jewish laws.			
11. Mormonism is a Christian faith founded in the United States.			
12. Protestant reformer Martin Luther labeled the religious beliefs of Muslims, Jews, and Roman Catholics as false.			
13. One-third of the world's population is Christian.			
14. One-fifth of the world's population is Muslim.			
15. Hinduism is the oldest of the world's major religions, dating back more than 3,000 years.			

The independent Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life conducted a national survey of Americans asking questions about the Bible, Christianity, and other world religions as well as famous religious figures. On average, people answered only half the questions correctly, and many flubbed questions about their own religions (e.g., 53 percent of Protestants could not identify Martin Luther as the person who started the Protestant Reformation). Interestingly, the groups with the highest scores on religious knowledge questionnaires were atheists and agnostics, followed by two religious minorities, Jews and Mormons.⁷⁷

Stephen Prothero, a professor of religious studies, shares the following results from his surveys:⁷⁸

- 50 percent of survey respondents could not name even one of the four Gospels.
- Most Americans could not name the first book of the Hebrew Bible.
- Ten percent of the surveyed Americans thought that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife.

Interestingly, there has been a surprising decline in the number of Christians in recent years. The 2015 Pew Research Center's study, *America's Changing Religious Landscape*, brought disturbing news to many religious communities in the United States. Here are a few highlights:⁷⁹

- The percentage of adults (ages 18 and older) who describe themselves as Christians has dropped by

nearly 8 percentage points in just seven years, from 78.4% in an equally massive Pew Research survey in 2007 to 70.6% in 2014. That's a decline of 5 million adults.

- The evangelical Protestant share of the U.S. population also dropped, but at a much slower rate, falling by about 1 percentage point since 2007.
- The percentage of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated—describing themselves as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular”—has jumped more than 6 percentage points, from 16.1% to 22.8%.

Although a group's goal may have nothing to do with religion, members should be sensitive to the diverse and changing religious beliefs of their members. For example, Seventh-day Adventists and observant Jews celebrate the Sabbath on Saturdays. These members may resent being asked to do group work on a Saturday, or may even refuse. A Muslim group member who prays five times a day may want to be excused from meetings at worship times. The increasing number of non-Christians and atheists may resent using group time for other members' Christian holiday celebrations.⁸⁰ Groups can avoid such problems by asking and answering the following questions:

- How do the needs, attitudes, and practices of group members' religions affect our work?
- What adaptations should we make so we don't exclude members because of religious practices or beliefs?⁸¹

4.8: Adapting to Diversity

4.8 Apply specific communication strategies to understand and react appropriately to diversity in groups

In order to understand and react appropriately to group members' diverse perspectives, you must try to "see the world through their eyes." Putting yourself in another person's situation helps minimize miscommunication and prejudice. Of course, learning such strategies may require changes in long-standing habits of thought and action.

4.8.1: Be Mindful

Before explaining what mindfulness is, let's take a look at its opposite: mindlessness. **Mindlessness** occurs when you allow rigid categories and false distinctions to become habits of thought and behavior.⁸² If you engage in mindlessness, you are trapped in an inflexible, biased world in which your religion is always right and good; people from other cultures are inferior and untrustworthy; boys will always be boys, and girls will always be girls; and change is a terrible and scary thing.⁸³

Mindfulness, in contrast, is the ability to be fully aware of the present moment without forming opinions, taking sides, or making hasty judgments as you learn more about someone else.⁸⁴ When you are *mindful*, you recognize stereotypical thinking and prejudices and try to overcome them. Mindfulness gives you the freedom and motivation to understand, respect, and adapt to others.⁸⁵ Mindful communicators learn more about others and their cultures by being open to new information. Too often, we dismiss another person's belief or behavior as irrational or bizarre when more information about that belief or behavior would help us understand it. For example, a cow is livelihood to a rancher; a sacred animal to a Hindu; a collection of genes and proteins to a biologist; and a mistreated, living being to members of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals).⁸⁶ Once you learn why observant Muslims and Jews do not eat pork products or why Hindus will not eat the meat of sacred cows even under famine conditions, you may become more mindful and tolerant of their customs.

4.8.2: Adapt to Others

You probably feel most comfortable when you "fit in" with the people around you. To fit in, you may modify the way you talk to family members, friends, colleagues, authority

figures, and strangers. For example, two people may be from different areas of the country, one from Maine and the other from Alabama. When they go "home," their dialects, vocabulary, sentence structure, rate of speech, and even volume may change to accommodate their home culture. Yet, in professional settings, their speech may remain more formal in style and substance.

4.8.3: Actively Engage Others

Direct, face-to-face interaction with people from culturally diverse backgrounds benefits everyone. You and others may transform long-held negative beliefs about one another's cultures into positive opinions.

One of the most interesting and exciting ways to actively engage others is to travel—either within your home country or in a foreign country. A survey of students who studied abroad found a positive link to career success, a more tolerant worldview, and increased self-confidence. When questioned about their intercultural development and understanding, 98 percent reported that study abroad helped them to better understand their own cultural values and biases.⁸⁷

If you succeed in minimizing your level of anxiety and uncertainty when encountering others, you may discover new worlds with fascinating people who can enrich your life. Regardless of culture, nationality, gender, religion, age, and ability, all of us share the traits unique to the amazing human condition.

Ethics in Groups Practice the Platinum Rule

Objective: Explain the difference between the Golden Rule and the Platinum Rule in terms of their applicability to group member diversity.

The well-known Golden Rule—"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"—may not work in groups with diverse members. Every culture has a huge influence on a person's moral development and their standards of what's right or wrong.⁸⁸ So, why would you assume that you know what other people want, think, feel, or need without asking them? Intercultural communication scholars Judith Martin and Thomas Nakayama note that "ethical principles are often culture-bound, and intercultural conflicts arise from varying notions of what constitutes ethical behavior."⁸⁹

For example, someone from an individualistic culture may value truth and live by the principle "Honesty is the best policy." Telling another group member, "The presentation slides you prepared don't meet acceptable design principles" may be the truth. However, the same behavior may be seen as unethical in a collectivist culture because the importance

of saving face was ignored. **Face** is the positive image a person wishes to create or preserve that is also appropriate for a particular culture. Cultures that place a great deal of value on “saving face” discourage personal attacks and outcomes in which one person “loses face.” A statement such as, “I appreciate your efforts and now think Keisha should work with you to finalize our presentation slides” may not be the “whole truth and nothing but the truth,” but it allows a member the opportunity to maintain a positive image while still giving the group a chance to correct problems. Clearly, treating others as you would like others to treat you may not be appreciated or considered appropriate by someone with different cultural values.

A more culturally sensitive approach is to follow the **Platinum Rule**, which advises you to “Do unto others as they wish to have done to themselves.”⁹⁰ In other words, “Treat others the way they want to be treated.”⁹¹ Following the Golden Rule is easier but more ethnocentric: You only need to know how you prefer to be treated. Following the Platinum Rule requires enough understanding of a culture to recognize that another group member may have different preferences: It requires you to focus on the *other’s* needs and values apart from your own.

Skilled intercultural communicators use a variety of methods to understand and adapt to ethical differences among group members. They apply the Platinum Rule by practicing cosmopolitanism, a word derived from the Greek *kosmopolite*, meaning “citizen of the world.” **Cosmopolitanism** is the recognition that there are universal ethical values across cultures while also acknowledging variations in values and the manner in which they are applied.⁹² For example, and as previously noted by the Institute for Global Ethics, *fairness* is a universal value. However, what constitutes fair behavior may be perceived differently from culture to culture. The following strategies can help you follow the Platinum Rule and practice cosmopolitanism:

1. *Seek understanding.* Actively seek information about other cultures and engage with others who are different from

you. Accept differences with an open mind and avoid stereotyping.

2. *Recognize similar and differing values.* Various cultures share many fundamental ethical values. However, you should also recognize any key differences. What is unethical in one culture may be acceptable in another.
3. *Withhold judgment.* Learn about a culture before jumping to conclusions regarding its values and practices. A particular culture’s view of right and wrong can be fully understood only within the larger context of its history, religion, ethical standards, and so on.
4. *Practice tolerance.* The behaviors of group members from other cultures may make you feel uncomfortable or confused. However, tolerating or accommodating unfamiliar behavior shows respect for other group members and provides you an opportunity to learn about another’s culture.
5. *Disagree when appropriate.* Acknowledging ethical differences does not require silent acceptance of harmful or unjust behavior. For example, a group should not deny a leadership position to a female member merely to accommodate members from another culture who insist on more traditional roles for women. Group members have an ethical responsibility to speak out in the face of unjust behavior.

WRITING PROMPT

Practice the Platinum Rule

Which of the five strategies for following the Platinum Rule do you find most challenging? Explain your answer.

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Summary: Diversity in Groups

4.1: The Value of Group Diversity

- Culture is a learned set of shared experiences about beliefs, values, and norms that affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people; the members of co-cultures coexist within a predominant society yet remain connected to one another through their cultural heritage.

- Diversity, the quality of being different, exists in all groups and includes variables such as nationality, race, ethnicity, age, gender, occupation, physical ability, personality preferences, religion, marital and parental status, and work experience.
- Member diversity helps groups make better decisions because it adds perspectives that would otherwise be

absent. When groups are too much alike, they find it harder to keep learning because each member brings less new information to the discussion.

- Deep diversity describes member characteristics that are more difficult to observe, such as group members' knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the group task.

4.2: Obstacles to Understanding Others

- Ethnocentric group members offend others by implying that they represent a superior culture with superior values.
- Stereotypes are generalizations about a group of people that oversimplify their characteristics and result in erroneous judgment about the entire group of people.
- Prejudices are negative attitudes about other people based on faulty and inflexible stereotypes.
- Discrimination is acting out and expressing prejudice by excluding groups of people from the opportunities and rights granted to others.

4.3: Personality Dimensions

- In terms of the Big Five Personality Traits (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience), high levels of agreeableness and emotional stability are associated with group cohesiveness, whereas conscientiousness is associated with task performance.
- The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® examines the way we perceive the world around us and make judgments.
- Myers-Briggs categorizes personality traits in four categories with differing preferences: extrovert/introvert, sensor/intuitive, thinker/feeler, and judger/perceiver.

4.4: Cultural Dimensions

- As much as 70 percent of the world's population regards collectivism, or interdependence, as more important than individualism.
- High-power-distance cultures accept differences in power as normal; low-power-distance cultures prefer to minimize power distinctions.
- In masculine-orientation cultures, men are supposed to be assertive and tough, whereas women are expected to be more modest and tender. In feminine-orientation cultures, gender roles overlap.
- In short-term time-oriented cultures, events are scheduled as separate items and deadlines are emphasized.

In long-term time-oriented cultures, schedules are less important and many tasks are done at once.

- In high-context cultures, members are less dependent on words and rely on gestures, silence, and facial expressions because the relationships among communicators generate meaning. Low-context cultures depend more on language for meaning.
- Effective virtual teams understand and adapt to the ways in which culture affects members' use of and feelings about communication technology.

4.5: Gender Dimensions

- Group members should monitor the ways that men and women interpret events and express their opinions and adapt as needed to help achieve the common goal.
- In general, the presence of women in groups enhances the group's collective intelligence.
- Men tend to talk more often than women, and tend to interrupt women more frequently when they do talk.
- Muted Group Theory explains that those with power in a society "mute" the voices of less powerful groups.

4.6: Generational Dimensions

- Generational mixes of Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials present special challenges when working in groups.

4.7: Religious Dimensions

- Most people living in the United States know very little about their own religion, and much less about other religions.
- Religious literacy is the ability to understand and use the religious terms, symbols, images, beliefs, practices, scripture, heroes, themes, and stories that are employed within a culture.

4.8: Adapting to Diversity

- Groups that encourage intercultural communication strategies such as mindfulness, adaptation to others, and active engagement with others are more likely to be effective and more ethical when collaborating with members from different cultures.
- The Platinum Rule—"Do unto others as they would have you do unto them"—recognizes that there are culture-based variations in the ethical values and the manner in which they are applied.

SHARED WRITING
CASE STUDY: DIVERSITY DILEMMA

Use the information you have learned to answer the following questions about the case study that was presented at the beginning of the chapter:

How do you think the predominantly white male governing board will respond if Wanda and Wayne recommend a list of new board members, none of whom are white males? How would you respond?

Review and discuss the similarities and differences between your answer and those of at least two of your classmates.

► A minimum number of characters is required to post and earn points. After posting, your response can be viewed by your class and instructor, and you can participate in the class discussion.

Post

0 characters | 140 minimum

Chapter 4 Quiz: Diversity in Groups

Chapter 5

Group Leadership



Effective communication is the foundation of effective leadership.



Learning Objectives

- 5.1** List the characteristics of effective leadership
- 5.2** Contrast the strategies for becoming a leader and being a leader
- 5.3** Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the different types of leadership power
- 5.4** Compare the relative merits of the trait, styles, and situational leadership theories
- 5.5** Review the importance of each function in the 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness
- 5.6** Identify strategies for overcoming barriers to female and minority leadership

Case Study: The Leader in Sheep's Clothing

The People's Project is a nonprofit organization with the mission of serving displaced families within their local communities. The organization moves homeless families

that qualify for help into local People's Project housing. In addition, each family receives job counseling, skills training, child care, and assistance in looking for a permanent home.

For 20 years, the People's Project was directed by one of its founders, Bill Blessing. When Blessing announced his retirement, the board of trustees hired an energetic and

experienced nonprofit director named Will Dupree. From his first day at work, Dupree jumped right into the job. He met with residents of People's Project housing to listen to their needs and complaints. He scheduled meetings with community leaders and politicians to solidify their support. He delivered an eloquent speech at a local church that supported the People's Project. And when a fire left three families without shelter, he rolled up his sleeves and spent two days helping them move into People's Project housing. The board was thrilled, and the community was delighted with this new charismatic leader.

Back at the People's Project headquarters, the mood was very different. During his first week on the job, Dupree called a meeting of the senior staff, most of whom had been working for the People's Project for many years. He told them that, to the outside community, he would always be responsive, caring, and empowering. However, behind closed doors at the People's Project, he would be a tough, uncompromising director. "I don't want to be your friend," he said. "You will meet all deadlines and give 110 percent without complaining." Within a few days, they learned that Dupree was a man of his word. One afternoon at 4:30, he marched into a senior staff member's office and said, "I need a report by noon tomorrow on how the proposed zoning legislation will affect our buildings and those we're trying to acquire." The staff member worked past midnight to write the report, and came in early the next morning to make revisions. As requested, the report was sitting on Dupree's desk by noon. A day later, the staff member asked the director what he thought of the report. His response was "Oh, I've been busy—haven't read it yet." As similar incidents continued to occur, senior staff members became increasingly frustrated by and wary of their new director. His popularity outside headquarters was so high that they thought their hands were tied. But when Dupree started to have "favorites" among the staff members, several veteran employees decided that retirement or work elsewhere might be better and healthier options.

Although the People's Project had never been more successful, staff members faced a dilemma: They were strongly committed and loyal to the organization and its mission, but had serious misgivings about Dupree's character and his leadership.

Critical Thinking Questions

When you finish reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following critical thinking questions about this case study:

1. As a designated leader, how could Dupree adapt his leadership style to accommodate his veteran staff members more effectively?
2. According to Situational Leadership theories, is Dupree a task-motivated leader or a relationship-motivated leader? How well does his leadership style match the group's situational dimensions?
3. Given that many staff members are unhappy working for Dupree, what strategies could help them improve the group's situation?
4. How does Dupree measure up to the 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness?

5.1: What Is Leadership?

5.1 List the characteristics of effective leadership

If you use the word *leadership* to search any major online bookseller's site, you will discover thousands of books on that subject. Most of them are written by highly respected scholars and well-regarded business leaders, but some unusual titles demonstrate the popularity of this topic. Here are just a few:

- *Lincoln on Leadership*
- *Robert E. Lee on Leadership*
- *Leadership Secrets of Colin Powell*
- *Leadership Secrets of Hillary Clinton*
- *Jesus on Leadership*
- *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham*
- *Martin Luther King, Jr. on Leadership*
- *The Leadership Secrets of Santa Claus*

And before you chuckle too much over *The Leadership Secrets of Santa Claus*, consider how you could translate some of his "secrets" into useful leadership tips: Choose your reindeer wisely; make a list and check it twice; listen to the elves; find out who's naughty and who's nice; be good for goodness' sake.¹

Apparently, everyone has something to say about leadership. You do, too. You have observed leaders at work, voted for leaders at school and in public elections, and probably led a group at some point in your life. That group could have been a sports team, a study group, a work team, or a group of children left in your care.

All groups need leadership. Without leadership, a group may be nothing more than a collection of individuals, lacking the coordination and motivation to achieve a common goal. Quite simply, "there are no successful groups without leaders. . . . Leaders lead because groups demand it and rely on leaders to satisfy needs."²

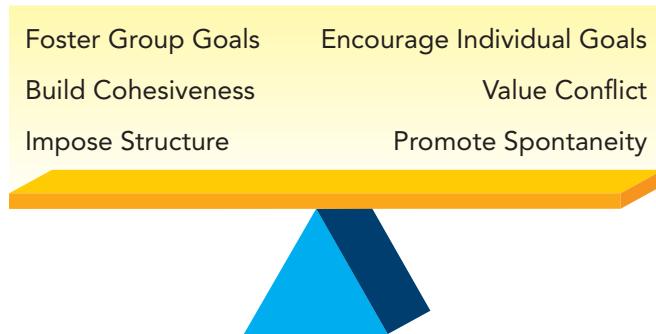
However, a leader is not the same thing as leadership. **Leadership** is the ability to make strategic decisions and use communication effectively to mobilize group members toward achieving a common goal. The term *mobilize* connotes several leadership competencies, including motivating, guiding, supporting, and focusing the attitudes and behaviors of group members. *Leader* is the title given to a person; *leadership* can refer to any member who is instrumental in mobilizing members to achieve the group's goal.

Another way to understand the nature of leadership is to contrast it with the functions of management. Managers concentrate on getting an assigned job done, but leaders focus on the group's ultimate direction and goal. "You manage things," wrote Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hopper, but "you lead people."³ Note how the employee in the following situation describes the difference between a manager and a leader:

Lee is the manager of our department, so he's technically our leader. He always follows procedures and meets deadlines for paperwork, so I guess he's a good manager. But we don't get much guidance from him. I think that managing and leading are somehow different. Allison supervises the other department. She inspires her workers. They're motivated and innovative, and they work closely with one another. We do our job, but they seem to be on a mission. I've always thought that working for Allison would be more rewarding and enjoyable.

Ronald Heifetz, director of the Leadership Education Project at Harvard's School of Government, describes the dialectic tensions inherent in leadership: Leaders must create a balance between the tensions required to motivate change and the need to avoid overwhelming followers.⁴ Effective leaders walk a fine line between *both* fostering interdependence *and* encouraging self-reliance, between *both* building cohesion *and* welcoming disagreement, and between *both* imposing structure *and* promoting spontaneity (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Balancing Leadership Tensions



Unfortunately, many leaders—whether you call them *boss*, *supervisor*, *chair*, *director*, *captain*, or by their first or last name—are the number one reason people quit their jobs.⁵ Here's a comment from an employee preparing to quit a stable, lucrative job posted in response to a blog about bad boss behaviors.⁶

[The boss] doesn't know what I do, doesn't want to know, but he suddenly pops in my office every time he sees a dip in monthly production and acts like I am not doing my job. . . . I try to explain and he doesn't want to hear. That is the most infuriating thing about him. You can discuss nothing with him. . . . I can't sleep and I . . . am miserable. Time to go. I think he is going to miss my work after I am gone.

Effective communication is the "mortar or glue" that unifies leadership competencies. The abilities to think clearly and act decisively as well as appropriate self-awareness and self-discipline are all critical leadership skills, but communication binds these building blocks together.⁷ Research by the American Society for Talent Development (ASTD) confirms the importance of communication, particularly for the Millennial Generation (those born between 1977 and 1997). When asked whether this generation is prepared for leadership, the majority of employers and 40 percent of Millennials responded *No*. Although technologically savvy, Millennials are not always socially savvy. To succeed as leaders, they need to work on developing competencies, such as "diplomacy, communication, listening, patience, and relationship building."⁸

Groups in Balance . . .

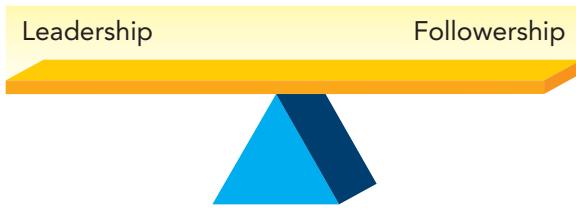
Value Both Leadership and Followership

Who wants to be a follower? In the United States—the most individualistic country in the world—we praise and value individual leaders. This admiration of leaders is not shared by all cultures. In collectivist cultures, standing out from the group is considered arrogant. Instead, loyal, hard-working followers are admired. In the United States, being a follower receives little praise. Garry Wills captured this perception in his book *Certain Trumpets: The Nature of Leaders*:

Talk about the nobility of leaders, the need for them, our reliance on them, raises the clear suspicion that followers are not so noble, not needed—that there is something demeaning about being a follower. In that view, leaders only rise by sinking others to subordinate roles.⁹

In effective groups, leaders and followers share ideas and opinions. They collaborate to achieve a common goal. Followers have a say about where they are being led. After all, without followers, there would be no one to lead.

The **leadership ↔ followership** dialectic is significant to group success. Effective leaders put their egos aside and bring out the leadership in others. Think of how many "ordinary" people came forward to take leadership roles during the horrific events of September 11, 2001. Office workers in the World Trade Center organized coworkers to carry injured colleagues down thousands of stairs. Local businesses and volunteers worked cooperatively to provide food and comfort to the hundreds of people involved in the rescue and recovery operation. Other businesses donated office space to companies whose operations had been destroyed when the towers collapsed.¹⁰ Mayor Rudy Giuliani was widely credited and praised for his leadership during the crisis, but there were hundreds of other extraordinary leaders and thousands of dedicated followers doing what was needed to help New York City recover from a monstrous attack.

Figure 5.2 Balancing Leadership and Followership

5.2: Becoming a Leader

5.2 Contrast the strategies for becoming a leader and being a leader

Anyone can become a leader. Abraham Lincoln, Harry Truman, and Barack Obama rose from humble beginnings and hardship to become U.S. presidents. Corporate executives have worked their way up from the sales force and the secretarial pool to become chief executive officers. Consider the following:

- Former Verizon CEO Ivan Seidenberg, the son of an electrical supply shop owner, started his business career as a telephone cable splicer's assistant.¹¹
- Sam Walton milked cows on the family farm and sold magazines in Oklahoma before he acquired his first variety store which eventually grew into Wal-Mart.¹²
- Oprah Winfrey, born to an unwed teenager and raised on her grandmother's farm in Kosciusko, Mississippi, became a CEO and the richest self-made woman in the United States.¹³

The path to a leadership position can be as easy as being in the right place at the right time, or being the only person willing to take on a difficult job. Becoming the leader of a group usually occurs in one of two ways: being chosen to lead or naturally emerging as a leader.

5.2.1: Designated Leaders

A **designated leader** is selected by group members or by an outside authority. You may be hired for a job that gives you authority over others. You may be promoted or elected to a leadership position. You may be assigned to chair a special work team or subcommittee. In all of these cases, the selection of the leader depends on an election or an appointment.

Sometimes, less-than-deserving people are appointed or elected to powerful leadership positions. Is it possible, then, for a designated leader to be an effective leader? Of course it is, particularly when a leader's abilities match the needs of the group and its goal.

Designated leaders face unique challenges. When a newly appointed leader enters a well-established group,

there can be a long and difficult period of adjustment for everyone. One student described this difficult process as follows:

For five summers, I worked as a counselor at a county day camp for underprivileged children. Anthony was our boss, and all of us liked him. We worked hard for Anthony because we knew he'd look the other way if we showed up late or left early on a Friday. As long as the kids were safe and supervised, he didn't bother us. But when Anthony was promoted into management at the county government office, we got Tyler. The first few weeks were awful. Tyler would dock us if we were late. No one could leave early. He demanded that we come up with more activities for the kids. After-work pool parties were banned. He even made us attend a counselors' meeting every morning, rather than once every couple of weeks. But, in the end, most of us had to admit that Tyler was a better director. The camp did more for the kids, and that was the point.

When group members elect or appoint a leader from within the group, the initial challenges can be just as difficult. If the person who once worked next to you becomes your boss, the adjustment can be problematic. Here, a business executive describes how difficult it was when she was promoted to vice president:

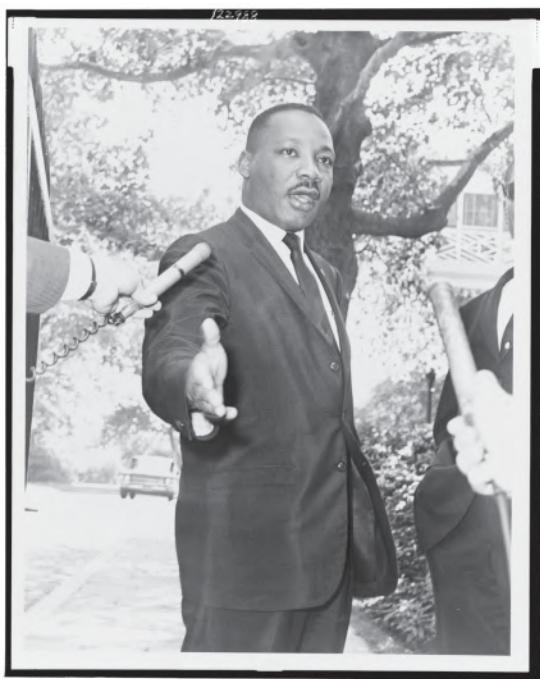
When I was promoted, I became responsible for making decisions that affected my colleagues, many of whom were close friends. I was given the authority to approve projects, recommend salary increases, and grant promotions. Colleagues who had always been open and honest with me were more cautious and careful about what they said. I had to deny requests from people I cared about, while approving requests from colleagues with whom I often disagreed. Even though I was the same person, I was treated differently, and as a result, I behaved differently.

Being plucked from a group in order to lead it changes the nature of your relationship with the other members of the group. Even though the members know you well, you still must earn their trust and respect as a leader. Here are three suggestions:

- Involve the group in decision making as much as possible.
- Discuss ground rules for interactions with friends while assuring them of your continued friendship.
- Share your concerns with group members and ask for their ideas and help in resolving problems.¹⁴

5.2.2: Emergent Leaders

Very often, the most effective leadership occurs when a leader emerges from a group rather than being promoted, elected, or appointed. The leaders of many political, religious, and community organizations emerge. An **emergent leader**



Martin Luther King, Jr. emerged as a leader. He went from being the pastor at a church in Montgomery, Alabama, and Atlanta, Georgia, to a civil rights activist . . . and the rest is history.

is a person who gradually achieves leadership by interacting with group members and contributing to the achievement of the group's goal. Emergent leaders do not have to spend time learning about the group, its goals, and its norms. They also have some assurance that the group wants them to be its leader.

5.2.3: Strategies for Becoming a Leader

Although there is no method guaranteeing that you will emerge or be designated as a group's leader, certain strategies can improve your chances. All of them require an approach that takes advantage of the opportunities for leadership without abusing its privileges (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3 Strategies for Becoming a Leader



TALK EARLY AND OFTEN (AND LISTEN TO OTHERS)

Research shows that the person who speaks first and most often is more likely to emerge as the group's leader.¹⁵ The number of contributions is even more important than the quality of those contributions. The quality of your contributions becomes more significant *after* you become a leader.

The link between participation and leadership "is the most consistent finding in small group leadership research. Participation demonstrates both your motivation to lead and your commitment to the group."¹⁶ Although talking early and often does not guarantee you a leadership position, failure to talk will keep you from being considered as a leader. Yet don't overdo it. If you talk too much, members may think that you are not interested in or willing to listen to their contributions. Although it's important to talk, it's just as important to demonstrate your willingness and ability to listen.

KNOW MORE THAN OTHERS (AND SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW) Leaders often emerge or are appointed because they are seen as experts—people who know more about a topic or task than other members. A potential leader who merely explains ideas and information more clearly than other group members may be perceived as knowing more.

Groups need well-informed leaders, but they do not need know-it-alls who see their own comments as most important. Effective leaders value everyone's contributions. Members who want to become leaders understand that they must demonstrate their expertise without intimidating other group members.

EXPRESS YOUR OPINION (AND WELCOME DISAGREEMENT) When groups have difficulty making decisions or solving problems, they appreciate someone who offers good ideas and informed opinions. Members often emerge as leaders when they help a group resolve problems. However, offering ideas and opinions is not the same as having them accepted. Use caution when discussing differences with other group members. Criticism may cause resentment and defensiveness. Bullying your way into a leadership position by rejecting the ideas and opinions of members can backfire. If you are unwilling to listen to alternatives or to collaborate, group members may not be willing to follow you. "Effective leaders welcome disagreement. They do not suppress conflict, they rise and face it."¹⁷

The strategies for *becoming* a leader are not necessarily the strategies needed for successful leadership. Although you may talk a lot, demonstrate superior knowledge, and assert your personal opinions in order to *become* a leader, you may find that the dialectic opposites—listening rather than talking, valuing the knowledge of others, and seeking a wide range of opinions—are equally necessary to *succeed* as a leader.

Group Assessment Are You Ready to Lead?¹⁸

Complete the *Are You Ready to Lead?* survey to gain insights into your attitudes about and behaviors as a leader. Keep in mind that this instrument is not a personality test, but a self-assessment that can help you develop and improve strategies and skills for becoming a highly effective leader.

Directions: Indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the statements, using the following scale:

1 = SD: strongly disagree; 2 = D: disagree; 3 = U: undecided; 4 = A: agree; 5 = SA: strongly agree.

Statement	Degree of Relevance				
	SD	D	U	A	SA
1. I enjoy having people count on me for ideas and suggestions.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. It's a good practice to ask people provocative questions about their work.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. It's easy for me to compliment others.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I like to cheer people up even when my own spirits are down.	<input type="radio"/>				
5. What my group accomplishes is more important than my personal glory.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. Many people imitate my ideas.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. Building team spirit is important to me.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. I would enjoy coaching other members of the group.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. It is important to me to recognize others for their accomplishments.	<input type="radio"/>				
10. I would enjoy entertaining visitors to my group even if it interfered with my completing a report.	<input type="radio"/>				
11. It would be fun to represent my group at an outside gathering.	<input type="radio"/>				
12. The problems of my teammates are my problems.	<input type="radio"/>				
13. Resolving conflict is an activity that I enjoy.	<input type="radio"/>				
14. I would cooperate with another group with which my group works even if I disagreed with the position taken by its members.	<input type="radio"/>				
15. I am an idea generator on the job.	<input type="radio"/>				
16. It's fun for me to bargain when I have the opportunity.	<input type="radio"/>				
17. Group members listen to me when I speak.	<input type="radio"/>				
18. People have often asked me to assume the leadership of an activity or a group.	<input type="radio"/>				
19. I've always been a convincing person.	<input type="radio"/>				

Reset Submit

Scoring and Interpretation: Calculate your total score by adding the numbers circled. A tentative interpretation of the scoring is as follows:

- 90–100 high readiness for the leadership role
- 60–89 moderate readiness for the leadership role
- 40–59 some uneasiness with the leadership role
- 39 or less low readiness for the leadership role

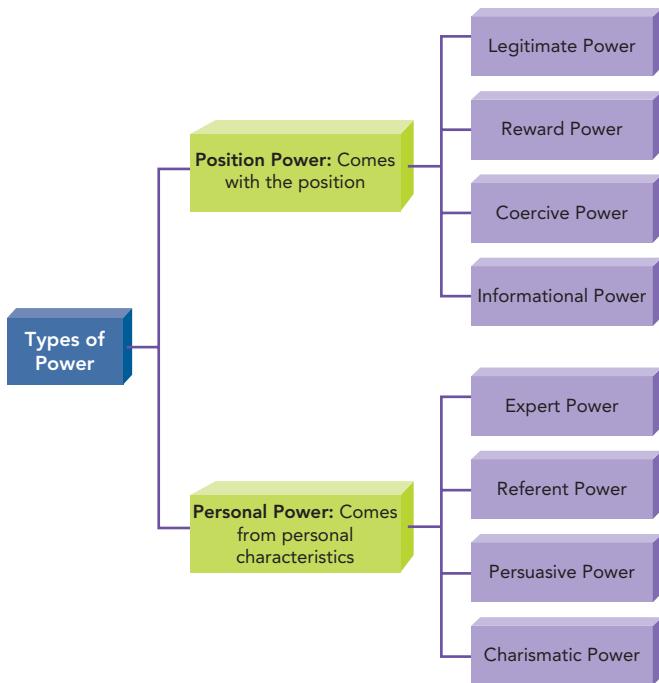
If you are already a successful leader and have a low score on this survey, you can ignore the results or reevaluate your leadership behavior in terms of improving your effectiveness. If you scored low and you are not yet a leader, study the statements carefully. Look for ways to change your approach and behavior so you can eventually answer more statements with a 4 or a 5.

5.3: Leadership and Power

5.3 Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the different types of leadership power

You cannot fully understand the dynamics of leadership unless you also understand the dynamics of power. In the context of group communication, **power** is the ability and/

or authority to influence members, shape decisions, and control resources through a variety of means. Leadership experts Warren Bennis and Bruce Nanus claim that power is “the quality without which leaders cannot lead.”¹⁹ In the hands of a just and wise leader, power is a positive force; in the hands of an unjust or foolish leader, power can be a destructive and corrupting force.

Figure 5.4 Types of Power

5.3.1: Types of Power

Many researchers study power and its relationship to group leadership. Here, we combine the work of two sets of researchers. John French and Bertram Raven classify power into five categories: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, expert power, and referent power. Psychologists Gary Yukl and Cecilia Fable add three additional types of power: informational power, persuasive power, and charisma. Yukl and Fable note that if you combine French and Raven's five categories with their three categories, you end up with two basic types of power,²⁰ which we call *position power* and *personal power* (Figure 5.4). **Position power** is authority derived from a member's job responsibilities or official status within an organization. **Personal power** is authority that stems from an individual's character, competence, and earned status. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 show the four types of power in each of these two categories.

Table 5.1 Position Power: Comes with the Position

Type	Description	Example
Legitimate Power	Relies on the authority of a job title or duty	"I have the authority to lead."
Reward Power	Relies on the ability to give out resources valued by members	"I can reward you."
Coercive Power	Relies on the ability to deal out sanctions and punishments	"I can punish you."
Informational Power	Relies on the control and transmission of needed information	"I have the information you need."

Table 5.2 Personal Power: Comes from Personal Characteristics

Type	Description	Example
Expert Power	Relies on expertise and credentials	"I have the knowledge and skills we need."
Referent Power	Relies on members' respect for and experience with the leader	"I've earned your respect and trust."
Persuasive Power	Relies on effective and strategic communication skills	"I know how to persuade and encourage others."
Charismatic Power	Relies on a leader's character, competence, and vitality	"I have the energy, will, and passion to make things happen."

5.3.2: The Power of Power

What kind of power is best? The answer depends on many factors, including the type of group, the situation or organization, member characteristics, and the group's goal. For example, reward power works best in groups in which the leader controls something that members value. It is less effective when the so-called rewards are insignificant or trivial.

Research examining French and Raven's five categories of power (reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, and referent) concludes that reward power, legitimate power, and coercive power are the least effective. "They either have no influence or a negative influence both on how people act at work and on job satisfaction. Expert power and referent power tend to produce positive outcomes."²¹

In the extreme, highly coercive leaders can range from the "abusive tyrant who yells at and humiliates people to the manipulative sociopath. At their worst, leaders who rely on coercive power have no idea how destructive they are—or they simply don't care."²² However, coercive power can be "effective when those subject to this form of power are aware of expectations and are warned in advance about the penalties for failure to comply. Leaders using coercive power must consistently carry out threatened punishments."²³ In contrast, *referent power* (a form of personal power) is influential because it is recognized and conferred by the group rather than by an outside source.

Most group leaders employ several types of power, depending on the needs of the group and the situation. Some leaders may have the power to reward, coerce, and persuade as well as legitimate, expert, informational, referent, and/or charismatic power. Leaders of other groups may depend on only one or two types of power. Regardless of type or number, the more power a leader has, the more carefully its use should be balanced with the needs of the group. If you exert too much power, your group may lose

its energy and enthusiasm. If you don't exert enough power, your group may flounder and fail.

Ethics in Groups Leadership Integrity

I Objective: Explain the importance of leadership integrity.

Leadership integrity is the consistency between a leader's words and deeds and a perception that the leader and members share common values and goals.²⁴ Leaders with integrity are honest, have strong moral principles, and do the *right* thing consistently, regardless of circumstances. Reliability, decency, respectfulness, and trustworthiness are at the hallmarks of integrity.²⁵ Worldwide surveys of business professionals identify integrity and honesty as the characteristics they most admire in a leader.²⁶

Leaders without integrity are often referred to as "hypocrites" or as "two-faced."²⁷ They may talk the talk, but don't walk the walk. Leaders with integrity honor their commitments and keep their promises. They practice what they preach, regardless of emotional or social pressure. For example, if a good friend in your group asks to chair a committee and you've already promised that position to another member, you should keep your promise even if it might jeopardize your friendship.

Consider the ways in which political candidates develop and even change their positions based on the outcomes of polls and pressure from major donors and special interest groups. Without integrity, leadership can become an ego trip—or, even worse, a power trip. Warren Bennis and Joan Goldsmith use the metaphor of effective leadership as a stool with three legs—"ambition, competence, and integrity—[which] must remain in balance if the leader is to be a constructive force." If one of these leadership legs is missing, the group may fall over (or fall apart). A leader with too much ambition and/or not enough competence or integrity risks becoming a destructive force, pursuing selfish goals rather than goals that benefit the group.²⁸

The Center for Business Ethics at Bentley College poses five questions that can help you decide the extent to which your leadership behaviors—or those of leaders you follow—are ethical or unethical.²⁹ All of these questions assess whether leadership integrity is demonstrated consistently, regardless of circumstances.

- *Is it right?* Does the leader conform to universally accepted principles of right and wrong, such as, "Thou shalt not steal"?
- *Is it fair?* Would the leader overlook a competent person in order to promote a less competent relative or friend?
- *Who gets hurt?* Does the leader try to do the greatest good for the greatest number of people?
- *Who hears about it?* Would the leader be comfortable if the details of decisions or actions were made public in the media or through email? What would the leader tell a child to do in similar circumstances?
- *How does it smell?* If a reasonable person with good common sense were to look at the leader's decision or action, would it "smell" suspicious or bad? Would it seem wrong?

Watch The Politics of Sociology



Watch the video "The Politics of Sociology," which illustrates concepts in this section of the chapter.

WRITING PROMPT

Leadership Integrity

As the group's designated leader, what could Steve, the department chair, have done to help the faculty collaborate more effectively in this very important discussion? What kinds of power could or should he have used to influence members, shape decisions, manage member participation, and avoid nonproductive arguments?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

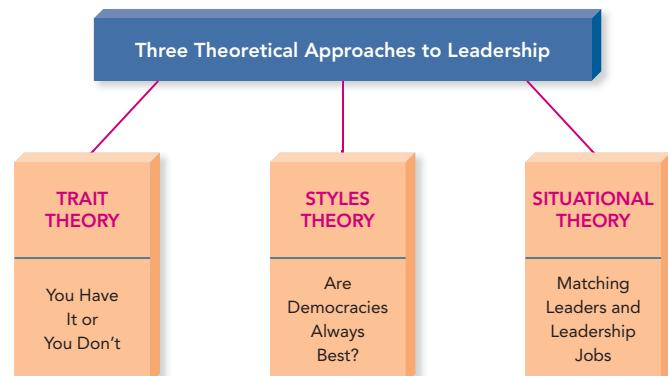
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5.4: Leadership Theories

5.4 Compare the relative merits of the trait, styles, and situational leadership theories

In *Leadership*, Warren Bennis and Bruce Nanus point out that "no clear and unequivocal understanding exists as to what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders, and perhaps more important, what distinguishes effective leaders from ineffective leaders."³⁰ Despite such inconclusive results, there is something to learn from most leadership theories. This chapter examines several theoretical approaches to leadership, including trait theory, styles theory, situational theory, and others (Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5 Leadership Theories



5.4.1: Trait Leadership Theory

In 1841, Thomas Carlyle's book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic History* led to what we now call Trait Leadership Theory.³¹ Often referred to as "The Great Man" theory, this theory is based on the assumption that leaders are born, not made. **Trait Leadership Theory** is an approach to leadership that identifies physical, behavioral, personality, competency, and attitudinal traits that characterize successful leadership across a variety of situations.

Think of the leaders you admire. What traits do they have? Do they possess self-confidence, humility, trustworthiness, high tolerance of frustration, warmth, humor, enthusiasm, extroversion, assertiveness, emotional stability, adaptability, farsightedness, and openness to new experiences?³² Although most of us would gladly follow a leader with these qualities, there is no guarantee that having these traits will make you a good leader. In fact, many effective leaders only exhibit a few of these traits. For example, Harriet Tubman, an illiterate runaway slave, did little talking but led hundreds of people from bondage in the South to freedom in the North. Bill Gates, an introverted computer geek, became one of the richest men on earth as head of Microsoft, a company that all but dictates how we use personal computers.

According to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®, a specific set of traits characterizes "life's natural leaders." These "extroverted thinkers" use reasoning ability to influence and direct those around them.³³ They are usually enthusiastic, decisive, confident, organized, logical, and argumentative. They love to lead, enjoy debating challenging questions, use their ingenuity and logic to develop new ideas and strategies, and provide others with plans and structures to help them work toward a common goal.³⁴ Although they often assume or win leadership positions, extroverted thinkers may *not always* be effective leaders because they may intimidate or overpower others. They also may be insensitive to the personal feelings and needs of group members. Although many extroverted thinkers become leaders, they may need to develop a less intense, more balanced approach in order to succeed as leaders.

Since its inception in the late 19th century, Trait Leadership Theory has gone well beyond a leader's physical characteristics, basic nature, and obvious skills. Contemporary researchers have expanded the list of traits to include a wider range of leadership traits, including a strong desire to lead, intelligence, problem-solving skills, expertise, social sensitivity, and most of all, superior communication skills.³⁵

5.4.2: Styles Leadership Theory

As a way of expanding the trait approach to the study of leadership, **Styles Leadership Theory** is an approach to leadership that identifies three distinct leadership styles: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. Just as actors

work in different styles—tough or gentle, comic or tragic—different styles are attributed to leaders. Early attempts to describe different leadership styles yielded the three categories mentioned here, which form a continuum of leadership control. Autocratic leaders exert a great deal of control, democratic leaders employ a moderate amount of control, and laissez-faire leaders maintain the least control.³⁶

AUTOCRATIC LEADERS An **autocratic leader** uses power and authority to strictly control the direction and outcome of group work. They make many of the group's decisions, establish goals with little or no input from others, expect followers to obey orders, take personal credit for group success, and tend to use reward power and coercive power. Autocratic leaders are more likely to dominate discussions and are less likely to listen to others.

Dr. Sandy Faber, a well-known astronomer, wrote about her experience leading a group of six astronomers who developed a new theory about the expansion of the universe. An unfortunate back injury made her take a new look at her autocratic leadership style. Rather than directing and controlling the group process, she had to lie on a portable cot when she met with the research team. She discovered that leading a group from a cot was almost impossible. But from that position, she also learned a valuable lesson about leadership:

It was the best thing that could have happened to us. The resultant power vacuum allowed each of us to quietly find our own best way to contribute. I now think that in small groups of able and motivated individuals, giving orders or setting up a well-defined hierarchy may generate more friction than it is designed to cure.³⁷

Although many people assume that democratic leadership is always best, an autocratic style may be more effective under certain circumstances. During a serious crisis, there may not be enough time to discuss issues or consider the wishes of members. Autocratic leaders may produce more accurate solutions if they are more knowledgeable or skilled than other members. Certainly, a military combat leader can't stop when under fire to consult everyone in the group.³⁸ In such cases, a group may be thankful that an autocratic leader is fully in charge.

DEMOCRATIC LEADERS A **democratic leader** promotes the interests of group members and practices social equality. As the name implies, democratic leaders behave quite differently than autocratic leaders. Democratic leaders share decision making with the group, promote collaboration, focus on group morale as well as the task, give the group credit for success, and tend to rely on referent power and expert power to motivate members.

There are, however, potential drawbacks to democratic leadership. Democratic collaboration takes time and can be unmanageable in large groups. Also, by failing to take charge in a crisis or to curb a discussion when decisions need to be

finalized, democratic leaders may be perceived as weak or indecisive by their followers. That said, the benefits of democratic leadership far outweigh the costs. In groups with democratic leadership, members are usually more satisfied with the group experience, more loyal to the leader, and more productive in the long run. Members often fear or distrust an autocratic leader, but they usually enjoy working with a democratic leader.³⁹

LAISSÉZ-FAIRE LEADERS *Laissez-faire* is a French phrase that roughly means “to let people do as they choose.” A **laissez-faire leader** lets the group take charge of most decisions and actions. Group members set their own goals, create their own work schedules and procedures, and may dislike interference or advice from their leader. In mature and highly productive groups, a laissez-faire leader may be a perfect match for the group. Such a laid-back leadership style can generate a climate in which open communication is encouraged and rewarded. Unfortunately, laissez-faire leaders do little or nothing to help a group when it needs decisive leadership. Figure 5.6 illustrates the continuum of leadership styles.

Figure 5.6 The Leadership Styles Continuum



Although Trait Leadership Theory and Styles Leadership Theory are not as popular or accepted as they were in the past, they greatly influenced the development of subsequent theories that have advanced our knowledge about and understanding of leadership.⁴⁰

Groups in Balance . . . Cultivate the Two Sides of “Great” Leadership

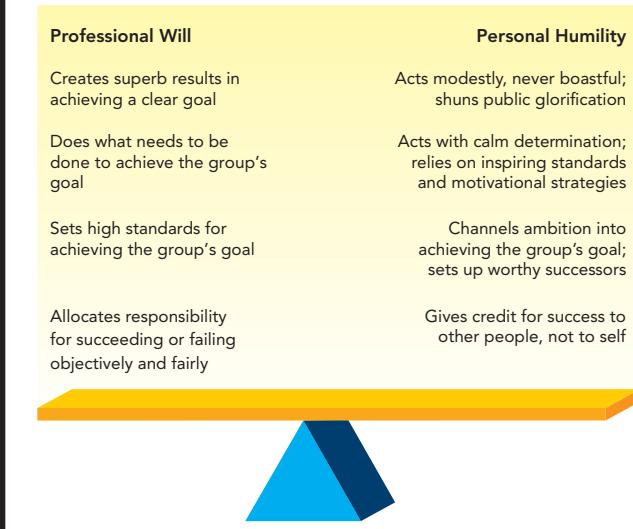
In *Leadership without Easy Answers*, Ronald Heifetz describes effective leaders as people who walk a razor’s edge (ouch!). He offers this example: If you challenge group members too quickly with too much to do, they will resist your leadership and resent the chaos your expectations create for them. If you challenge members too slowly with too little, they may blame you for their lack of motivation and progress. Effective leaders stay balanced on the edge by adapting to the group, its members, and changing situations.⁴¹

Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*, assembled a research team with the goal of comparing the attributes of “good” and “great” companies in similar industries, as well as those of companies that had tried to move from “good” to “great” status but failed. In terms of leadership, he found that the great leaders of

great companies balanced two dimensions: professional will and personal humility.⁴²

Collins contends that, to lead your group to greatness, you must be willing to keep your ego in check for the sake of the group’s well-being and common goal. Those who aren’t willing to do this are not well-suited to this type of leadership. “For these people, work will always be first and foremost about what they *get*—fame, fortune, adulation, power, whatever—and not what they *build*, create, and contribute.”⁴³ Notice how the two sides of leadership—professional will and personal humility—balance one another in Figure 5.7.⁴⁴

Figure 5.7 Balancing the Two Sides of Leadership



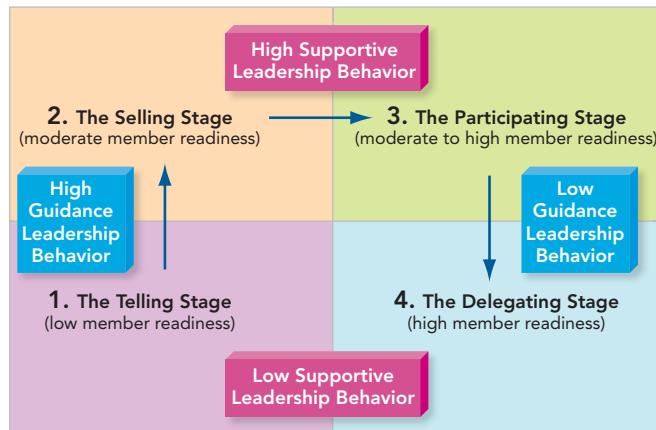
5.4.3: Situational Leadership Theory

We now know that a single trait or style of effective leadership does not work for every group and every situation. Harvard University’s Richard Hackman explains that effective leadership “involves inventing and competently executing whatever actions are most likely to create and sustain” an effective group.⁴⁵ Situational Leadership Theory describes the actions needed by a particular leader to achieve a particular group’s goal in a particular situation.

According to **Situational Leadership Theory**, effective leaders choose leadership strategies that appropriately match their group and the circumstances in which they work together. Most of us do this in our daily interactions with other people. We may be extra patient with nervous colleagues on their first few days at a new job. We check up on some group members more than others because we know they’ll forget meeting times and deadlines.⁴⁶ In this section, we examine two models that share the assumptions of Situational Leadership Theory: the Hersey–Blanchard Situational Leadership Model and Fiedler’s Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness.

HERSEY-BLANCHARD SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP® MODEL The Hersey–Blanchard Situational Leadership Model links specific leadership styles to the readiness of group members.⁴⁷ **Member readiness** is the extent to which group members are willing and able to work together in order to achieve a common goal. Willingness is characterized by confidence, commitment, and motivation; ability relies on knowledge, expertise, and skill. As member readiness increases, leaders should rely more on relationship behaviors and less on task behaviors. The type and level of member readiness dictates the type and level of effective leader behavior. The following summary of guidelines based on the Hersey–Blanchard Situational Leadership Model is illustrated in Figure 5.8:⁴⁸

Figure 5.8 The Hersey–Blanchard Situational Leadership Model



WRITING PROMPT

The Hersey–Blanchard Situational Leadership Model

Explain which of the four stages require(s) high member readiness, and why.

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

FIEDLER'S CONTINGENCY MODEL OF LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS Management expert Fred Fiedler developed one of the most influential approaches to situational leadership. **Fiedler's Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness** contends that effective leadership occurs only when there is an ideal match between the leader's style and the group's situation.⁴⁹ Fiedler characterizes leadership styles as being either task motivated or relationship motivated. **Task-motivated leaders** derive

major satisfaction in getting things done and doing them well. **Relationship-motivated leaders** derive major satisfaction from positive interpersonal relationships with group members.⁵⁰ Notice the dialectic tensions between these two leadership styles in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Task-Motivated Leaders and Relationship-Motivated Leaders

Leadership Style	Leader Motivation	Leader Behavior
Task-Motivated Leaders	Want the job done even if it results in not getting along with other members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May appear efficient and strong • May ignore group morale • May confront disruptive members • May do the work of other members because of dissatisfaction with work quality or quantity
Relationship-Motivated Leaders	Want to get along with other members even if it results in not getting the job done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May ignore task requirements • May tolerate disruptive members • May appear inefficient and weak • May do the work of other members to avoid asking them to do more

THREE FACTORS THAT AFFECT LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS



Fiedler proposed that highly effective leadership occurs only when there is an ideal match between the leader's style and the group's work situation. Successful coaches, managers, volunteer coordinators, college presidents, and military officers often match their leadership style to the nature of the group's situation and goal.

Once you have determined your leadership style, you can analyze how well your style matches your group's situation. According to Fiedler, leadership effectiveness in a

GroupWork The Least-Preferred-Coworker Scale⁵¹

Fiedler claims that very few leaders are *both* task motivated and relationship motivated. Most leaders are motivated by only one style. Before learning more about Fiedler's Contingency Model, complete *The Least-Preferred Coworker Scale*.

Directions: We have all worked better with some people than with others at one time or another. Think of the one person in your life with whom you have worked least well, a person who might have caused you difficulty in doing a job or completing a task. Select someone with whom you currently have a relationship, have worked recently, or have interacted in the past. This person must be the single individual with whom you have had the most difficulty getting a job done, the person with whom you would least want to work in the future.

On the following scale, describe this person by selecting the number that best represents your perception of this person. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not omit any items, and select a single number for each item.

Statement	Degree of Relevance							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Pleasant / Unpleasant	<input type="radio"/>							
2. Friendly / Unfriendly	<input type="radio"/>							
3. Rejecting / Accepting	<input type="radio"/>							
4. Tense / Relaxed	<input type="radio"/>							
5. Distant / Close	<input type="radio"/>							
6. Cold / Warm	<input type="radio"/>							
7. Supportive / Hostile	<input type="radio"/>							
8. Boring / Interesting	<input type="radio"/>							
9. Quarrelsome / Harmonious	<input type="radio"/>							
10. Gloomy / Cheerful	<input type="radio"/>							
11. Open / Guarded	<input type="radio"/>							
12. Backbiting / Loyal	<input type="radio"/>							
13. Untrustworthy / Trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>							
14. Considerate / Inconsiderate	<input type="radio"/>							
15. Nasty / Nice	<input type="radio"/>							
16. Agreeable / Disagreeable	<input type="radio"/>							
17. Insincere / Sincere	<input type="radio"/>							
18. Kind / Unkind	<input type="radio"/>							

Reset
 Submit

Scoring: Obtain your Least-Preferred-Coworker (LPC) score by adding up the 18 numbers you selected. Your score should be somewhere between 18 and 144.

Relationship-Motivated Leader. If your score is 73 or more, you derive satisfaction from good relationships with group members. You are most successful when a situation has just enough uncertainty to challenge you: moderate leader-member relationships, moderate task structure, and moderate power.

Task-Motivated Leader. If your score is 64 or less, you derive satisfaction from getting things done. You are most successful when a situation has clear guidelines or no guidelines at all: excellent or poor leader-member relationships, highly structured or unstructured tasks, and high or low power.

Relationship- and Task-Motivated Leader. If your score is between 65 and 72, you may be flexible enough to function in both leadership styles.

given situation is determined by “three primary factors that control the amount of influence a leader has over followers.” These situational factors are (1) leader-member relations, (2) task structure, and (3) leader power.

- *Leader-member relations*

Leader-member relations describes the extent to which a leader gets along with group members.

Because **leader-member relations** can be positive, neutral, or negative, they affect the way an effective leader mobilizes a group toward achieving a common goal. A strong and positive leader-member relationship is characterized by loyalty, friendliness, trust, and respect. Fiedler claims that leader-member relations “are the most important single aspect of situational control.”⁵²

- *Task structure*

Task structure describes the degree to which a group's task is structured or unstructured, well-organized, or disorganized. Whereas highly structured tasks have clear goals, specified procedures for achieving the goal, and measurable outcomes, unstructured tasks can be accomplished in a variety of ways with a variety of outcomes. Building a bridge and performing brain surgery are highly structured tasks. Planning and managing the celebration of a college's 100th anniversary, however, requires creativity, flexibility, and resourcefulness. To determine the degree of task structure, ask yourself the following questions: Is the goal clearly stated? Are there standard procedures for achieving the goal or are there many ways to do this? Are there well-established criteria for measuring success or can a variety of outcomes be successful?

- *Leader power*

The third situational factor is **leader power**, the extent to which a leader has the ability to influence members, shape decisions, and control resources through a variety of means. Although leaders can be granted position power (derived from job responsibilities or official status) and/or earn personal power (derived from the leader's character, competence, and earned status), effective leadership is based on members' willingness to accept the leader's right to lead. Fiedler sees power as the least important of the three situational factors. He notes that, no matter how much power you have, it may not be enough "to prevent sabotage . . . or to evoke more than grudging effort from an uncooperative group."⁵³

MATCHING LEADERSHIP STYLES TO THE SITUATION

Fiedler's research suggests that there are ideal matches between a leader's style and a group situation. As shown in Figure 5.9, a **task-motivated leader** derives major satisfaction from getting things done. This type of leader per-

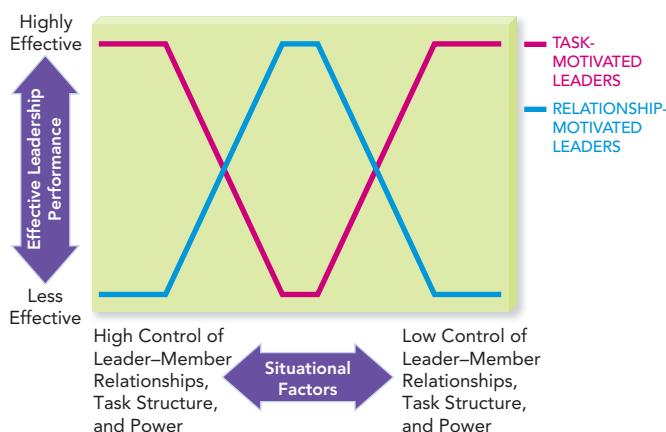
forms well in extremes—when the leader has a great deal of control, can devote time to developing good relationships with group members, and when the group's task is clear. Task-motivated leaders are also effective when the situation comes with little control, poor leader-member relationships, or an unstructured task. In this second extreme, a task-motivated leader performed well by being tough and commanding in order to complete the task at hand. Task-motivated leaders do well in extreme situations because their primary motivation is to take charge and get the job done.

Relationship-motivated leaders are most effective when there is a moderate level of situational factors. There is just enough uncertainty to challenge them without increasing their stress or losing sight of the group's goal. When they face highly structured tasks with uncooperative groups of followers relationship-motivated leaders use diplomacy and work with group members to improve leader-member relationships. If there are good leader-member relationships but an unstructured task, relationship-motivated leaders may rely on the resources of the group to develop a rational plan of action. Relationship-motivated leaders depend on the group to help them adapt to situational factors. Rather than relying on a leader to take charge of or modify the situation, the group collaborates with its leader to find ways of adapting to situational factors.

Fiedler understood that your leadership style, be it task or relationship motivated, is part of who you are and very difficult to change. Thus, if you face a situation that does not match your leadership style, you may be more successful if you can re-engineer the task's situational factors.⁵⁴

- Improve leader relations by spending more time with group members and providing positive feedback.
- Meet informally with a few group members at a time to get to know them better and give them the opportunity to know you better.
- Modify the task structure by working with members to come up with a practical plan or set of procedures they support.
- Divide a task into smaller, easier-to-achieve subunits, or collaborate with and encourage group members to develop a structured, organizational plan for doing the work.
- Modify your power by asking members to participate in decision making and problem solving, or assert your power by demonstrating your expertise and ability to make effective decisions in a crisis. If you have a great deal of power and run the risk of intimidating group members, you may want to delegate some of your duties and power to capable group members.⁵⁵

Figure 5.9 Fiedler's Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness



Theory in Groups

An Abundance of Leadership Theories

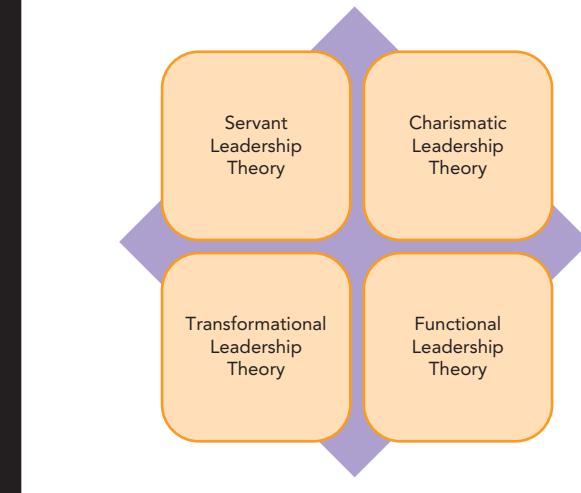
Objective: Evaluate the role of communication skills in the context of Servant, Charismatic, Transformational, and Functional Leadership Theories.

Contemporary theorists and researchers have gone well beyond trait, styles, and situational approaches in search of new explanations and models of effective leadership. Sometimes it seems as though there are as many theories about leadership as there are leadership theorists. The following are four other theories you may encounter as you learn more about leadership and observe how excellent (and not-so-excellent) leaders lead:

- **Servant Leadership Theory** focuses on how leaders serve the needs of followers by motivating them to collaborate with one another in pursuit of a common goal. Servant leaders display many of the communication strategies and skills we emphasize in this textbook: listening, empathy, persuasion, and team building. A servant leader is ready, willing, and able to work alongside group members. High in integrity, servant leaders model leadership behavior. They consistently walk the walk, practice what they preach, keep their promises, and display personal humility.
- **Charismatic Leadership Theory** focuses on leaders who exhibit a special dynamism, captivating charm and/or visionary appeal that inspires loyalty to the leader and arouses enthusiasm for a group's common goal. Charismatic leaders often possess referent power, expert power, and the ability to get members excited and highly involved in the task.⁵⁶ Michael Hackman and Craig Johnson, two well-known leadership experts, write, “We believe that *charisma is the product of communication*”⁵⁷ (italics in original). Hackman and Johnson identify Steve Jobs, the former Apple CEO, as a self-confident and visionary charismatic leader with extraordinary communication skills.⁵⁸ Researchers have even isolated specific vocal qualities in Jobs’ natural “charismatic executive voice,” such as a “varied tonal range” and an “abrupt increasing and decreasing vocal pitch.”⁵⁹
- **Transformational Leadership Theory** focuses on how leaders inspire group members, embrace change, and achieve vision-based goals. When the CEO of a large consulting firm was asked about her managerial hiring practices, she responded that she looks “for transformational leadership—leaders who actually drive transformation rather than just reacting to it.”⁶⁰ Transformational leaders rely on their personal energy, persuasiveness, and integrity to make a shared vision come true. They are also highly creative, interactive, visionary, empowering, and passionate.⁶¹ Unfortunately, leaders without these innate traits may never reach the heights of transformational leadership.
- **Functional Leadership Theory** focuses on the communicative behavior of leaders and group members that enable a group to achieve its common goal. Functional

leadership is not the sole responsibility of the leader; it is a job, not a person. Thus, anyone in the group can assume leadership functions such as those comprised in a variety of group roles: **coordinator, information provider, opinion provider, questioner, clarifier, analyzer, implementer, harmonizer, motivator, supporter, gatekeeper, or team builder.**⁶²

Figure 5.10 Additional Leadership Theories



All of the theories in this section rightfully assume that there are no simple or right ways that work in every situation or with every group. They differ in terms of the factors that shape leadership choices. For example, the Hersey–Blanchard model tells a leader what to do in four different types of situations, regardless of whether the leader has the aptitude or skill to do what the situation calls for. The Fiedler model is more complex. It explains that an effective leader’s style and skills must match the nature of the group and the situation. In other words, leaders who are very effective in one kind of situation and with particular types of groups may be less successful in another situation and with other types of group members.

One central principle is common to *all* of the theories in this section: The ability to understand and select appropriate communication strategies and to communicate skillfully are critical components of effective leadership.

5.5: The 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness

5.5 Review the importance of each function in the 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness

Given the millions of words about leadership published by scholars, management gurus, and popular press writers, you may have difficulty sorting out the dos and don’ts of effective leadership. To help you understand and apply the

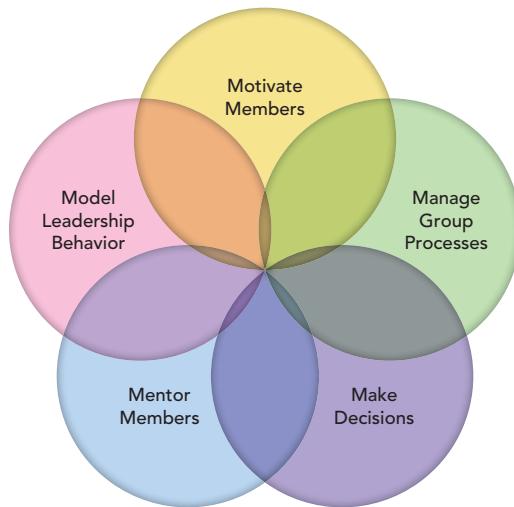
contributions made by these various approaches, we offer an integrated model of leadership effectiveness that focuses on specific *communication* strategies and skills that may vary for a particular group in a particular context.

As shown in Figure 5.11, the **5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness** identifies five interdependent leadership functions:

1. Model leadership,
2. Motivate members,
3. Manage group process,
4. Make decisions, and
5. Mentor members.

These strategies incorporate the features of several theories and provide a set of critical leadership behaviors.⁶³

Figure 5.11 The 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness



5.5.1: Model Leadership Behavior

Effective leaders project an image of confidence, competence, trustworthiness, and optimism. They provide a model of leadership behavior *and* member effectiveness while building a climate of mutual trust between the leader and group members. Yet no matter how much you may *want* to be a model leader, only your followers can grant you that honor. In *The Leadership Secrets of Colin Powell*, the author quotes Powell's view on modeling behavior:

The leader sets an example. Whether in the Army or in civilian life, the other people in an organization take their cue from the leader—not from what the leader says but what the leader does.⁶⁴

We recommend the following strategies for modeling effective leadership:

1. *Exhibit exemplary participant behavior.* Demonstrate the value of adhering to constructive group norms, challenging nonproductive norms, and assuming essential group roles.

2. *Publicly champion your group and its goals.* In addition to praising group members directly, praise them to others outside the group.
3. *Speak and listen effectively and confidently.* In addition to speaking well, listen to group members as you would have them listen to you.
4. *Behave consistently, conscientiously, and assertively.* Think about how you would want to be treated and make sure to follow your own golden rule.
5. *Demonstrate competence and integrity.* Roll up your sleeves and take on difficult tasks. Stick with the task and the group until the goal is achieved. Honor your commitments and keep your promises. Do the right thing—and do it consistently.

5.5.2: Motivate Members

Motivation provides the inspiration, incentives, and reasons that move group members to work together to achieve a common goal. Without motivation, members may know what they need to do and even how to do it, but lack the will and energy to get it done. Effective leaders tap into essential intrinsic motivators to promote a **sense of meaningfulness**, a **sense of choice**, a **sense of competence**, and a **sense of progress**.

Mike Krzyzewski ("Coach K"), the highly successful men's basketball coach at Duke University, believes that motivating team members is the key to his success.

As a coach, leader, and teacher, my primary task is motivation. How do I get a group motivated, not only to be their individual best but also to become better as a team?⁶⁵

Motivating leaders guide, develop, support, defend, and inspire group members. They develop relationships that "match the personal needs and expectations of followers."⁶⁶ Effective leaders use carrots, not sticks, to motivate members. Four leadership skills are central to motivating members:

1. *Seek members' commitment to the group's common goal.* Even if it takes extra time and effort, make sure members genuinely support a clear and elevated goal.
2. *Appropriately reward the group and its members.* You can be firm as long as you are fair in recognizing and rewarding outstanding group work.
3. *Help solve interpersonal problems and conflicts.* Use appropriate, validated communication strategies and skills to resolve conflicts constructively.
4. *Adapt tasks and assignments to members' abilities and expectations.* Don't try to fit the "square peg" member into a "round hole" role. Use group members' talents to enhance group productivity and member satisfaction.

5.5.3: Manage Group Process

From the perspective of group survival, managing group process is a critical function of leadership.⁶⁷ A group cannot be effective if it is disorganized, lacks sufficient information to solve problems, or is unable to make important decisions. Four leadership skills can enhance your ability to manage group process:

1. *Organize and fully prepare for group meetings and work sessions.* You may take more time to prepare for a meeting in order to effectively lead it.
2. *Understand and adapt to members' strengths and weaknesses.* Capitalize on member strengths and help other members overcome or minimize their weaknesses.
3. *Help solve task-related problems and procedural problems.* When group members are working productively, help them organize their tasks and adjust timetables, and secure the necessary resources.
4. *Monitor group interaction and intervene to improve group performance.* If you see a problem developing, intervene and assist members before it becomes a crisis.

5.5.4: Make Decisions

Effective leaders make appropriate, timely, and responsible decisions. Too often, we hear disgruntled group members talk about their leader's inability to make critical decisions and act decisively. A high school teacher described this fatal leadership flaw as follows:

Everyone agrees that our principal is a "nice guy" who wants everyone to like him. He doesn't want to "rock the boat" or "make waves." As a result, he doesn't make decisions or take decisive action when it's most needed. He listens patiently to a request or to both sides of a dispute, but that's all he does. Our school comes to a standstill because he won't "bite the bullet." The teachers have lost respect for him, students and their parents know that they'll get what they want if they yell loudly or long enough, and the superintendent often intervenes to fix the problem.

When you assume a leadership role, you must accept the fact that some of your decisions will be unpopular, and some may even turn out to be wrong. You still have to make them, however, "for if you are seen as chronically indecisive, people won't let you lead them."⁶⁸ One company executive noted that as much as you may value collaborative consensus, "sometimes you just need to make a decision."⁶⁹ The following strategies can help you determine when and how to intervene and make a decision:

1. *Make sure that everyone shares and comprehends the information needed to make quality decisions.* Explain your decision-making criteria to the group.
2. *If appropriate, discuss your pending decision and solicit feedback from members.* As long as members don't

interpret your "out-loud" ideas as an order, the entire group will benefit by discussing proposed options. If a leader says, "I wonder if we should . . .," the group should not necessarily assume the leader is telling the group to do that.

3. *Listen to members' opinions, arguments, and suggestions.* When you listen effectively, you may discover that group members need only a little help to make a decision or solve a problem on their own.
4. *Explain the rationale for an impending intended decision.* When you are about to make a decision, let your group know. They will not only be prepared for the outcome, but may help you make an even better decision.

5.5.5: Mentor Members

Most successful leaders share stories about significant mentors who helped them mature and move ahead. The word *mentor* comes from ancient Greece. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Mentor was the tutor and adviser to the hero Odysseus's son. Thus, the word **mentor** has come to mean a person who teaches and gives advice to a less experienced and often younger *mentee*—that is, the person being mentored. In his book *Great Leadership*, Anthony Bell urges would-be leaders to find a mentor, because a good "mentor will challenge you to ask (and answer) the tough questions."⁷⁰

Good leaders are very busy people, particularly if they model leadership, motivate members, manage group process, and make decisions. *Great* leaders find the time and energy to mentor others. They know that effective mentoring does more than teach someone how to do a job—it also motivates that person to set high standards, seek advice when needed, and develop the skills characteristic of an excellent leader.

Effective mentors cultivate high-quality leader-member relationships in which mentees develop a strong "commitment to the organization, give it more energy and time, take on greater responsibility," and produce "positive outcomes such as strong teamwork and performance beyond job requirements."⁷¹ The following strategies can help a leader decide when and how to mentor group members:

1. *Be ready and willing to mentor every group member.* Although you cannot be a full-time mentor for everyone, you should be open to requests for advice. Eventually, you may develop close relationships with a few mentees who share your vision.
2. *Encourage and invite others to lead.* Look for situations in which group members can assume leadership responsibilities. Ask them to chair a meeting, take responsibility for a group project, or implement a group's decision. And make sure they know you're there as backup.
3. *Inspire optimism.* When problems or setbacks occur, do not blame the group or its members. Instead, convert the situation into a teachable moment and make sure

members learn to accept personal responsibility for a problem and its consequences.⁷²

Effective mentors create appropriate balance and boundaries. They know when to intervene and when to back off. A mentor is neither a psychiatric counselor nor a group member's best friend. At some point, even the best mentors must let their mentees succeed or fail on their own.

Figure 5.12 The 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness in Action

While you read about each leader, think about which Ms best exemplify their leadership.

 Pope Francis	<p>Pope Francis's achievements go well beyond his popularity. Although he listens and takes advice from others, he is not afraid to ignore advice that runs counter to his faith and the goals of the Church.</p>
 Bono	<p>Bono is a U2 rock star and activist who has become one of the world's most influential humanitarians and leaders. His Global Fund has committed \$19 billion to fight AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria in 144 countries.</p>
 Aung San Suu Kyi	<p>Aung San Suu Kyi, an opposition political leader in Myanmar (formerly Burma), was placed under house arrest by the government for 15 years until 2010. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, and in November 2015, her National League for Democracy (NLD) party won a majority in parliament, ending a half century of dominance by the military.</p>
 Geoffrey Canada	<p>Geoffrey Canada is an American educator and social activist. He has been president of the Harlem Children's Zone, an organization that states its goal is to increase high school and college graduation rates among Harlem students; has served as the chairman of Children's Defense Fund's board of directors; and was featured in the 2010 documentary film "Waiting for Superman."</p>

WRITING PROMPT

The 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness

To what extent do these leaders exemplify the behaviors described in the 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness? Select two other well-known leaders and identify these leaders do not exemplify one or more of the 5Ms in the 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness.

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

[Submit](#)

5.5.6: Balancing the 5 Ms of Leadership Effectiveness

The 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness is not a to-do list, but a catalog of leadership strategies and skills you can call on when needed. In some cases, you may model leadership behavior without paying much attention to motivating an already motivated group or focusing on group process and procedures when the existing ones work well. Both the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Model and Fiedler's Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness emphasize that effective leaders choose strategies appropriate for a particular group in a particular context. If, for example, you face a group with an unclear or unstructured task, you may spend time managing the group process. If motivated group members are unable to work because they lack knowledge or skills, the obvious course of action is to tell them what they need to know, explain how to do a job, mentor members in need, and praise good work.

Effective leadership is a matter of balancing the complex and often contradictory tensions that arise in groups. Understanding the nature of the task and the group as well as your own attributes and experiences can help you choose the most effective strategies and skills for helping a group achieve its common goal.

Watch The Politics of Sociology



Watch the video clip from "The Politics of Sociology," which illustrates concepts in this section of the chapter.

WRITING PROMPT**Balancing the 5Ms of Leadership Effectiveness**

1. The 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness described in the textbook includes modeling leadership behavior, motivating members, managing group process, making decisions, and mentoring members. Using this model, how effective is the leadership in this group?
2. How well did the group's leader (Steve), demonstrate effective leadership skills? What could he have done, if anything, to improve his leadership?
3. To what extent did any of the faculty members assume a leadership function?

The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

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Virtual Teams

Sharing Virtual Leadership Functions

Objective: Recommend strategies for addressing the unique leadership challenges in virtual teams.

Virtual teams need strong leadership. According to Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps, the authors of *Virtual Teams*, "each member of a virtual team must adopt a leadership perspective."⁷³ Why? Consider the added responsibilities required of someone who leads a virtual team—be it a teleconference, an email discussion, or an intercontinental video conference. Virtual team leaders are often required to explain technical procedures and instructions, adapt to differences in time and place, and motivate members to participate actively in the group process? Add these requirements to the research finding that face-to-face groups were "generally more cohesive, more accepting of a group's decisions, and exhibited a greater amount of synergy than did virtual teams."⁷⁴

When participants live in different locations or time zones, arranging a virtual meeting can be more difficult than calling a regular meeting in a conference room down the hall. To prepare members for a virtual meeting, effective leaders must:

- Develop and send a detailed agenda to all members well in advance.
- Make sure that the technology required for the conference is up and running.
- Lead the discussion in which participants may neither see nor hear one another in real time.

Effective virtual teams manage these added tasks by *sharing* leadership roles rather than by assuming that one superhuman leader can handle all of these challenges.

We strongly recommend applying the 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness to improving the five interdependent leadership functions. When virtual teams first "meet,"

they often depend on a leader to model appropriate behavior for other group members. Motivating a virtual team can be more difficult than motivating participants in a face-to-face discussion because unmotivated members can easily ignore messages or respond infrequently. When this happens, a group is vulnerable to miscommunication, poor quality of work, missed deadlines, frustration, inefficiencies, and a lack of cohesion.

Managing group process may necessitate training in the use of specialized software as well as making decisions about when the virtual team will "meet," the rules of interaction, and the criteria for group decision making. In addition, leaders can mentor members who are apprehensive about interacting in a virtual environment or members who lack the technical skills needed to keep up with the group.

5.6: Diversity and Leadership

5.6 Identify strategies for overcoming barriers to female and minority leadership

Effective leaders employ a variety of strategies to help them understand, respect, and adapt to member diversity. In terms of leadership, these challenges become more complex and demanding for both leaders and group members. For example, why are most of the celebrated leaders in the United States white males? Is it because white males are the nation's "founding fathers" and the traditional model for the leaders who followed? Is it because prejudices barred and continue to bar "others" from assuming leaders? Is it because homogeneous groups prefer to work with similar members? Whatever the answers to these questions, the fact remains that the most influential positions in government and corporate institutions in the United States are held by white males. The same is true in many community, work, and service groups.

In this section, we examine leadership diversity at two levels. First, we focus on the barriers that often prevent women from becoming and succeeding as leaders; second, we address the challenge of leading multicultural groups.

5.6.1: Gender and Leadership

In early studies of leadership, there was an unwritten prerequisite for becoming a leader: Be a man. Even today, despite the achievements of exceptional women leaders, some people still question the ability of women to serve in leadership positions.

Numerous research studies conclude that, in general, men are viewed as more capable leaders and "are rewarded more highly than women—just having a male name is more likely to get you the job. If you are a mother, your chances of getting the job are reduced by 70%."⁷⁵ Research



Researchers conclude that women are less likely to be selected as leaders and that the same leadership behavior is often evaluated more positively when attributed to a male than a female.

studies also conclude that women are still less likely to be selected as leaders, and the same leadership behavior is often evaluated more positively when attributed to a male than a female.⁷⁶

Even when women talk early and often, are well prepared and always present at meetings, and offer valuable ideas and opinions, a man who has done the same things is more likely to emerge as a leader. “Even though male and female leaders may act the same, there is a tendency for women to be perceived more negatively or to have to act differently to gain leadership.”⁷⁷ A recent study examining 14 million reviews posted on *RateMyProfessors.com* demonstrates this unconscious bias. In general, male professors were much more likely to be described as a *star* or *genius*. Female professors were disproportionately described as *nasty, ugly, bossy, and disorganized*. If, by chance, you find yourself agreeing with these assessments, it’s time for some serious introspection. In a follow-up study of online classes, researchers assigned female names to the male instructors and male names to the female instructors. Students rated the female instructors with male names more positively.⁷⁸

Negative, biased perceptions make it difficult for women to assume and succeed in leadership positions. If their behavior is similar to that of male leaders, they are perceived as unfeminine. If they act “like a lady,” they are viewed as weak or ineffective. One professional woman described this dilemma as follows:

I was thrilled when my boss evaluated me as “articulate, hard-working, mature in her judgment, and a skillful diplomat.” What disturbed me were some of the evaluations from those I supervise or work with as colleagues. Although they had a lot of good things to say, a few of them described me as “pushy,” “brusque,” “impatient,” “a disregard for social niceties,” and “hard-driving.” What am I supposed to do? My boss thinks I’m energetic and creative, while other people see the same behavior as pushy and aggressive.

Fortunately, there is good news about the future of female leadership. German chancellor Angela Merkel, the East German-raised politician with a doctorate in physical chemistry, is considered the most powerful woman on the planet.⁷⁹ Some argue that, after the president of the United States, the most influential U.S. leader whose decisions directly affect the daily lives of every American is Janet Yellen, chair of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. Aung San Suu Kyi, after 15 years of house arrest in Myanmar (formerly Burma) and leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) party, won a majority in parliament, ending half a century of dominance by the military. As we write this chapter, an unprecedented 20 of the 100 U.S. senators are women. Female leaders have come a long way in recent years but still have a lot more to do as they seek equality with male leaders.

Leadership is a difficult task for both women and men. Effective leaders exhibit a balance of gender characteristics. They can be *both* demanding and nurturing; independent and collaborative; logically objective and emotionally intelligent. In the best groups, effective leaders “narrow the gender gap by combining the talents traditionally thought of as masculine and feminine to create a well-balanced leadership style.”⁸⁰ Rather than focusing on the differences between female leaders and male leaders, it is better to ask whether a leader is effective, regardless of gender.

GLASS CEILING Despite evidence showing only slight differences between men and women in leadership roles, negative beliefs about female leaders persist.⁸¹ Perhaps nothing explains this better than the familiar concept of the glass ceiling and a newer concept—the glass cliff. The **glass ceiling** describes a seemingly invisible barrier that prevents women from moving up into senior management and leadership positions. As of 2015, there has never been a female president or vice president of the United States even though there are 25 female heads of state among the countries belonging to the United Nations.⁸² Of the top 500 companies in the United States in 2015, only 23 women—4.6 percent—are Chief Executive Officers.⁸³

GLASS CLIFF More recently, the glass cliff has become a way of describing the terrible fall of many women who *do* become leaders. The **glass cliff** is a phenomenon in which women are more likely to rise to positions of organizational leadership in times of crisis, and men are more likely to achieve or take over those positions in prosperous times.⁸⁴ As one researcher put it when describing the resignation of Secret Service Director Julia Pierson in 2014, “Time and again, women are put in charge only when there’s a mess, and if they can’t engineer a quick cleanup, they’re shoved out the door.”⁸⁵ And if a woman does succeed in cleaning up “a mess,” she is often followed or replaced by a male leader. After getting the car out of the ditch, repairing it, and putting it back on the road, the female leader is often

replaced by a male leader who takes the keys, gets behind the steering wheel, and drives away on a clear highway.

Will women revert to yearning for glass slippers rather than hitting glass ceilings and falling off glass cliffs? Absolutely not. Fortunately, women can use several strategies to earn, succeed in, and keep leadership positions. One is to include more women in the group. Not only do more female members help deter outright sexism, they also make a group smarter as demonstrated in the research on collective intelligence.⁸⁶

5.6.2: Leading Multicultural Groups



An effective team leader must understand, respect, and adapt to the diversity of every group member.

A significant amount of the research on leadership diversity focuses on gender issues because the two traditional genders—female and male—are more available, easier to study, and less politically charged than studying leadership in terms of sexual orientations (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual). The task of studying the thousands of cultures and co-cultures throughout the world is even more overwhelming.

INCLUDE UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS Like females, African Americans are poorly represented among influential public and corporate leaders in the United States. Certainly, the election of Barack Obama put an end to the idea that the President of the United States is a “for whites only” office. As of 2016, there have been 1,963 members of the United States Senate, but only nine have been African American. In 2016, there were only five African American chief executive officers leading one percent of the nation’s 500 largest companies—down from a peak of seven CEOs in 2007. These “numbers are especially startling, given that 13.2% of the U.S. population is African American.”⁸⁷

Increasing the number of leaders from underrepresented cultural groups is an important and praiseworthy goal that unfortunately will not be achieved easily or

quickly. We believe that the place to begin this process is increasing the sensitivity, supportiveness, and skill of all leaders. Management scholar Andrew DuBrin claims that successful leaders—regardless of gender, culture, or socioeconomic status—must have “the skills and attitudes to relate effectively to and motivate people across race, gender, age, social attitudes, and lifestyles.”⁸⁸ If you lack such skills, you run the risk of alienating and offending some group members while unfairly favoring and rewarding others. For example, if you strongly and publicly advocate group goals, you may upset members from high-context cultures who would be less direct. Your way of modeling leadership behavior may not reflect *their* view of a model leader.

CONSIDER CULTURAL DIFFERENCES People from Western cultures (the United States, Canada, and Europe) often assume that all group members are motivated by personal achievement and status, but the same motivational strategies may not work for group members with cultural backgrounds grounded in **collectivism**, in which loyalty to the group is more important than personal achievement or material gain.⁸⁹

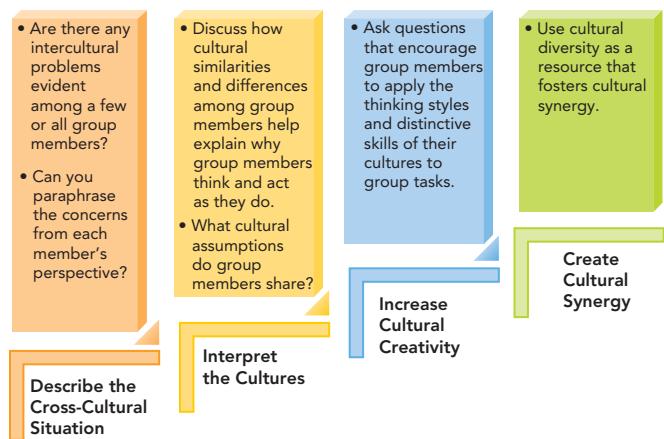
The decision-making style of a leader may not match that of all members in a culturally diverse group. Members from a **low-power distance** culture will not welcome an authoritarian leader who takes control of all decision making. Conversely, a leader who prefers a more democratic approach to decision making may frustrate members who come from **high-power distance** cultures, in which leaders make most decisions with little input from group members.

PROMOTE CULTURAL SYNERGY A large study project, Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE), examined leadership attributes in a variety of cultures to determine which ones are associated with outstanding leaders. Their results show that some leadership traits are universal regardless of culture, but others are valued only in some cultures.⁹⁰ For example, most people want their leaders to be trustworthy, just, honest, and decisive.⁹¹ These characteristics also represent the key components of **leadership integrity** described in the Ethics in Groups feature earlier in this chapter. Balancing the needs of culturally diverse group members may be difficult, but it is essential for effective leadership and for making the non-discriminatory path to leadership available to everyone.

Researcher Nancy Adler offers the concept of *cultural synergy* as “an approach to managing the impact of diversity” in or among organizations. We have modified her definition to focus on the role of group leadership in this process. As we see it, **cultural synergy** is a leadership goal and approach that brings culturally diverse members together to create a more productive and supportive communication climate based on the combined strengths, perspectives, and skills of members. To achieve cultural

synergy group members become mindful, culturally aware, and competent intercultural communicators. Adler recommends a four-step method that helps both the leader and members form a stronger and more collaborative group.⁹²

Figure 5.13 How to Achieve Cultural Synergy



WRITING PROMPT

Promote Cultural Synergy

A work group decides it needs more time to discuss several critical issues related to recommending a solution to a problem that must be presented on Monday morning. The chair suggests that members stay late at work on Friday and, if needed, get together on Saturday morning to resolve the issues and make a decision. A Muslim member objects because he will be at the Mosque on Friday night as does a Jewish member who does not work on the Jewish Sabbath—from Friday at sundown until Saturday at sundown. Both members want to contribute and be part of the decision-making process.

How would you help this group move through Adler's four steps in order to achieve group synergy and have a set of recommendations ready to present on Monday morning?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

Summary: Group Leadership

5.1: What Is Leadership?

- Leadership is the ability to make strategic decisions and use communication effectively to mobilize group members toward achieving a common goal.
- Successful leaders effectively manage many dialectic tensions, especially the dialectics of individual goals ↔ group goals, conflict ↔ cohesion, and structure ↔ spontaneity.
- Groups in balance value *both* leadership *and* follower-ship by understanding that without the input and willingness of followers, it would be impossible to lead.

5.2: Becoming a Leader

- Designated leaders are selected by group members or by an outside authority. Emergent leaders gradually achieve leadership by interacting with group members and contributing to the achievement of the group's goal.
- Strategies for becoming a leader include talking early and often, knowing more than others, and expressing your opinion. At the same time, aspiring leaders should listen to others, share information, and welcome disagreement.

- Once you become a leader, you will find it advantageous to listen rather than talk, rely on the knowledge of others, and seek a wide range of opinions from group members.

5.3: Leadership and Power

- Power is the ability and/or authority of leaders to influence members, shape decisions, and control resources through a variety of means.
- Power associated with the position of leadership can be categorized as legitimate power, informational power, coercive power, or reward power.
- Power associated with the personal characteristics of the leader can be categorized as referent power, expert power, persuasive power, or charismatic power.
- Leaders with integrity consistently do what is right and ethical, regardless of the circumstances.

5.4: Leadership Theories

- Trait Leadership Theory identifies the key characteristics and behaviors of effective leaders.
- Styles Leadership Theory identifies three distinct styles: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire.

- The Hersey–Blanchard Situational Leadership Model links specific leadership styles to the readiness of group members. The more willing and able a group is to work together, the more a leader should rely on relationship behaviors (and less on task behaviors).
- Fiedler's Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness contends that effective leadership occurs only when there is an ideal match between the leader's style and the group's situation.
- Effective leaders balance two leadership dimensions: professional will and personal humility.
- Four additional leadership theories—Servant Leadership Theory, Charismatic Leadership Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Functional Leadership Theory—focus on distinct communication strategies and skills that are central to leadership effectiveness.

5.5: The 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness

- The 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness identifies five interdependent leadership functions: (1) Model leadership, (2) Motivate members, (3) Manage group process, (4) Make decisions, and (5) Mentor members.
- The additional responsibilities of virtual team leaders enlarge the scope of the 5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness by delegating some procedural, technical, and leadership tasks.

5.6: Diversity and Leadership

- In general, women are less likely to be selected as leaders, and the same leadership behavior is often evaluated more positively when attributed to a man rather than to a woman.

- Barriers such as the glass ceiling and the glass cliff will persist until women are recognized and appreciated as leaders with the ability to enhance a group's productivity and collective intelligence.
- Negative stereotypes about leaders from underrepresented groups make it more difficult for such members to gain leadership positions.
- Cultural synergy—the process of bringing differences in cultural dimensions together in order to form a strong group of collaborative members—is best achieved through a four-step process: define the situation, interpret the culture, increase cultural creativity, and create cultural synergy.

SHARED WRITING CASE STUDY: THE LEADER IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

Use the information you have learned to answer the following question about the case study that was presented at the beginning of the chapter:

As a designated leader, can Dupree adapt his leadership style more effectively to accommodate his veteran staff members?

Review and discuss the similarities and differences between your answer and those of at least two of your classmates.

► A minimum number of characters is required to post and earn points. After posting, your response can be viewed by your class and instructor, and you can participate in the class discussion.

Post

0 characters | 140 minimum

Chapter 5 Quiz: Group Leadership

Chapter 6

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication in Groups



Effective verbal and nonverbal skills promote group productivity and a supportive communication climate.



Learning Objectives

- 6.1** Identify the differences between verbal communication and nonverbal communication
- 6.2** Give examples of the six dimensions of effective team talk
- 6.3** Identify specific language-based obstacles to effective communication
- 6.4** Recommend appropriate responses to gender-influenced and culture-based differences in language use
- 6.5** Examine the challenges of interpreting nonverbal messages and adapting your own nonverbal behavior appropriately
- 6.6** Analyze the effects of room arrangements and different zones of interpersonal space on group communication
- 6.7** Summarize specific methods for adapting to gender and cultural differences in nonverbal behavior
- 6.8** Contrast the pairs of behaviors that influence the group communication climate

Case Study: How to Sink the Mayflower

The minute Joan Archer walked into the conference room, she knew she'd have a fight on her hands. Administrators from each state college were finding seats along the sides of a long conference table. Sitting at the far end of the table was Dr. Barton Mayflower III, a representative from the state Board of Higher Education and the person most likely to cause problems. He had the large picture windows at his back to make sure the sun was not shining in his eyes.

Joan looked at the table. There were empty seats along the sides, but no one had chosen the seat at the other end of the table. Realizing that she had to be seen and heard by everyone at this meeting, she planted herself in the unoccupied end seat.

The group was meeting to discuss and recommend a policy for accepting college credits from students transferring from one state college to another. As chair of the committee charged with drafting a policy, Joan had written most of the document herself. Given the difficulty of scheduling face-to-face meetings, the five-person committee had interacted only through conference calls and email. Two of the members made almost no contributions. The other two had faithfully read her draft and suggested changes. Fortunately, everyone on the committee had endorsed the draft policy and had asked Joan to present it at the statewide meeting.

Barton Mayflower called the meeting to order. As usual, he wore a well-cut dark suit with a starched white shirt and silk tie. His gray hair was meticulously groomed and his shoes shined. The delegates had always deferred to his leadership and guidance. Without looking at Joan or addressing her by name, he used his "I'm in charge" voice and asked that the chair of the policy committee present her report.

Joan stood. She put a stack of neatly stapled reports in front of her, made eye contact with group members around the table, and smiled. Although the sun was in her eyes, the group could see her quite well without straining their eyes. She began her presentation with these words:

"Beth, Aaron, Walter, Alicia, and I are pleased to share this report with you. If nothing else, we can now involve *all* of you in making this policy stronger and better. All of us fully endorse this policy—the vote was unanimous. The committee has asked me to present the report on their behalf. I think you'll see that we've addressed your concerns and come up with a plan that will help our students move from one college to another while ensuring that we maintain high academic standards. And please remember that if we don't come up with an acceptable policy, the state

legislature will write it for us—and that's the last thing any of us want. Right? Right!"

As she spoke, Joan could see the four committee members basking in her praise. Barton Mayflower scowled. He could see that the rest of the delegates were buying into the policy even though Joan hadn't begun to describe its content. Much to his chagrin, no one saw his annoyance because they were looking at and listening to Joan.

Critical Thinking Questions

When you finish reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following questions about this case study:

1. How did Joan use the seating arrangement to her advantage?
2. In what ways did Joan use the principles of team talk to address the group?
3. How did Joan's physical behavior enhance her credibility and competence?
4. What signs did Barton Mayflower notice that told him he had little hope of derailing Joan and her committee?

6.1: Two Essential Tools

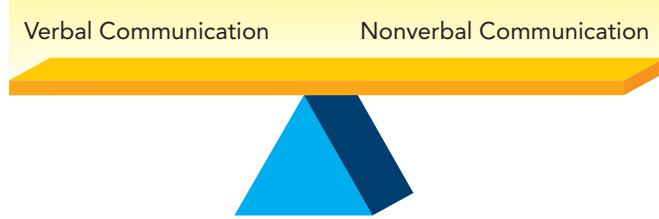
6.1 Identify the differences between verbal communication and nonverbal communication

Every group member uses verbal and nonverbal communication to create messages that generate meaning. **Verbal communication** is the way in which the words in a language are used to generate meaning.¹ Interaction may be "face to face, fax to fax, over the phone, or through electronic mail, but regardless of the channel used, groups do their work through language."² Without language, you cannot have a group discussion; you cannot follow an agenda, take minutes, read a report, or interact effectively with other group members. Linguists Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman note, "Whatever else people do when they come together—whether they play, fight, make love, or make automobiles, they talk. We live in a world of language."³

The other essential communication medium, nonverbal communication, is just as important as language. **Nonverbal communication** is the use of message components other than words to generate meaning. Without the nonverbal component, it is difficult to interpret the meaning of spoken language. Tone of voice, directness of eye contact, and physical proximity of group members can reveal at least as much about their thoughts and feelings as the words they speak. Some researchers claim that we convey as much as two-thirds of our meaning through nonverbal behavior.⁴ Generally, verbal messages express the literal content of messages, while nonverbal messages express the emotional meaning.⁵

In dialectic terms, effective group members rely on *both* verbal *and* nonverbal communication to generate meaning (Figure 6.1). For example, people in **high-context** cultures put more emphasis on nonverbal codes and interpersonal relationships to generate and interpret meaning. In **low-context** cultures, most people rely on words to generate and interpret the meaning of a message.

Figure 6.1 Balancing Verbal and Nonverbal Communication



6.2: Team Talk

6.2 Give examples of the six dimensions of effective team talk

Sociologist Anne Donnellon coined the term **team talk** to describe the language group members should use when working together in pursuit of a common goal. “The types of words, sentences, and patterns of speech” reveal how group members “think and feel about each other and about their task.”⁶ Language also “creates thoughts, feelings, and behaviors” in group members, which affect the ways in which the group “uses power, manages conflict, and negotiates” solutions.⁷ As we see it, team talk is the means we use to achieve group goals, the stimulus we use to build group relationships, and the evidence we use to assess group work.

6.2.1: The Dimensions of Team Talk

Donnellon strongly urges group members to listen carefully for words, sentences, and patterns of speech used repeatedly during discussions and meetings. By listening to and analyzing how the group uses language, members can identify how such language fits into six dimensions of team talk and discover how the group’s language fosters or inhibits success. Table 6.1 illustrates six dimensions of team talk and provides examples of successful and unsuccessful language use.

Now that you have reviewed the dimensions, let’s consider some examples of successful and unsuccessful language use (Table 6.2).

Table 6.1 The Dimensions of Team Talk⁸

Term	Definition
Identification Talk	Use plural rather than singular pronouns. Members use plural pronouns rather than singular ones when talking about the group and its work.
Interdependence Talk	Use collective language such as <i>we</i> and <i>our</i>. Members use language that acknowledges shared needs, solicits opinions, and expresses the need for collaboration.
Balanced Power Differentiation Talk	Use considerate and equitable language. Members talk to one another on equal terms.
Social Equality Talk	Use casual, informal language. Members use casual language, nicknames, slang. Members express empathy and liking and avoid titles.
Conflict Management Talk	Use collaborative, nonjudgmental language. Members express interest in solving problems, use a nonthreatening tone and nonjudgmental language, and paraphrase others.
Negotiation Talk	Use exploratory and problem-solving language. Members ask “What if?” questions, propose objective criteria for solutions, and summarize areas of agreement.

Table 6.2 Examples of Successful and Unsuccessful Team Talk

Team Talk Dimensions	Unsuccessful Examples	Successful Examples
1. Identification Talk	“I don’t think you should quit until you’ve finished.” “I’m pleased the discussion took so little time.”	“Let’s keep working on this until we’re ready for lunch.” “We’ve finished this in record time.”
2. Interdependence Talk	“Emilia and I can develop this plan without input from the group.” “If there’s no agreement here, the group must vote.”	“If we can develop a clear plan, our work will be much easier. What do you all think?” “What changes to the plan should we make?”
3. Balanced Power Differentiation Talk	“Stop and tell me what’s happened so far.” “I don’t like this. If Fred can’t do it, we’ll give it to someone else.”	“I’m sorry. My other meeting ran overtime. How I can catch up?” “Fred, would you tell me a bit more about that?”
4. Social Equality Talk	“The secretary should review our report thus far.” “Mr. Nunez, contact Dr. Ford after the meeting.” “Ladies and gentlemen, . . . ”	“Jason, try to find out where Marie stands on this.” “Hey, guys!”
5. Conflict Management Talk	“How many of you think that Joshua is right?” “We’re not getting anywhere, so I’ll take it up with Dr. Lenski after the meeting.”	“Could we back up and look at this from a different angle?” “Let me make sure I understand this. . . .”
6. Negotiation Talk	“We’ve always done it this way.” “You might as well change your mind; can’t you see you’re outnumbered?”	“What if we wrote up a justification for the cost?” “Does this meet our standard?”

Once group members analyze the nature of team talk, they can take steps to modify the way they interact and work with one another. The following recommendations can produce a stronger and more collaborative group that uses team talk effectively:

- Use the plural pronouns *we*, *us*, and *our* when referring to the group and its work.
- Express shared rather than individual needs: “We need to . . .” rather than “I want . . .”
- If you are in a leadership position, don’t talk more, interrupt more, or ask more questions than other members.

- Speak in a specific and active voice: “I haven’t finished the report due next week” rather than an abstract and passive voice: “The task hasn’t been completed.”
- Ask group members to address you by your first name or nickname.
- Encourage group members to express disagreement and listen patiently to dissenters.
- Ask more “What if?” questions and make fewer “We can’t do it” statements.
- When in doubt, rephrase or ask questions about what someone else has said to ensure understanding.

Group Assessment Auditing Team Talk

The ways in which group members use language are important indicators of how well members work together to achieve a common goal. Team talk promotes group cohesion and contributes to effective conflict management, problem-solving, and positive relationships among group members. Complete the *Auditing Team Talk* assessment to determine the extent to which your group engages in team talk.

Directions: Rate how well the members of your group engage in productive team talk by evaluating the degree to which members engage in the following behaviors. Use the following scale:

1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; and 5 = Always.

Statement	Degree of Relevance				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Do members use plural pronouns (we, us) rather than singular ones (I, me)?	<input type="radio"/>				
2. Do members use language that acknowledges shared needs?	<input type="radio"/>				
3. Do members solicit and respect one another’s opinions?	<input type="radio"/>				
4. Do members express a commitment to collaborating with one another?	<input type="radio"/>				
5. Do members talk to one another on equal terms?	<input type="radio"/>				
6. Do members use casual language or slang?	<input type="radio"/>				
7. Do members use each other’s first names or nicknames?	<input type="radio"/>				
8. Do members express empathy or liking for one another?	<input type="radio"/>				
9. Do members express interest in solving problems within the group?	<input type="radio"/>				
10. Do members use a nonthreatening tone and nonjudgmental language?	<input type="radio"/>				
11. Do members paraphrase one another?	<input type="radio"/>				
12. Do members ask “what if” questions?	<input type="radio"/>				
13. Do members propose objective criteria for solutions?	<input type="radio"/>				
14. Do members summarize areas of agreement?	<input type="radio"/>				
15. Do members show respect for dissenting opinions?	<input type="radio"/>				

Reset Submit

Scoring: Analyze your perceptions of your group’s team talk by adding the numbers you selected. Your total score should range between 15 and 75. The more times you selected 4 or 5 as your answer to an item, the more likely it is that your group engages in productive team talk. The more times you selected 1 or 2 in response to an item, the more likely the way in which they use language inhibits the progress and success of your group.

15–45 The group engages in very little team talk and should work on creating a more collaborative work environment.

46–60 The group uses some team talk but could work on improving communication within the group.

61–75 The group effectively engages in team talk to promote a collaborative and productive work environment.

6.2.2: Use *I*, *You*, and *We* Language Appropriately

The ways in which group members use personal pronouns say a great deal about member attitudes and communication skills. Pronouns such as *I*, *You*, and *We* can be appropriate, responsible, and beneficial to group work. When used inappropriately, the same pronouns can discourage members and disrupt the group process.

When you use the word *I* appropriately, you take responsibility for your own feelings and actions: *I* feel great; *I* am a straight-A student; *I* am worried about the team's work on this project.

When you use the word *I* to brag and show off or to put yourself above other members, you appear highly self-centered and oblivious to the talents and needs of other members.

Unfortunately, some members avoid *I* language when it is most important. Instead of taking responsibility by using *I*, they shift responsibility from themselves to others by using the word *you*. Sometimes, the word *you* is implied, as in

- "Stop telling me what to do."
- "What a stupid thing to do."

You language may express judgments about others. When the judgments are positive—"You did a great job" or "We know we can trust and depend on you!"—there's rarely a problem. Group members appreciate praise and the positive climate that comes with it.

When *you* is used to accuse, blame, or criticize, it can arouse defensiveness and anger. Consider the following statements:

- "You make me angry."
- "You drive too fast."

Less accusatory approaches might include

- "I'm upset."
- "I'd feel more comfortable if we drove slower."

Successful teams use the plural pronouns *we* and *you* when talking to one another.⁹ Plural pronouns are inclusive. They imply that members are interdependent. The use of *we* suggests that the group depends on everyone rather than on a single member.

Plural pronouns also share credit for team achievements.¹⁰ Members committed to collaboration say *we*, *us*, and *our* when talking about the group and its work. When members say *you*, as a plural pronoun they are usually addressing the whole group.

6.3: Language Challenges

6.3 Identify specific language-based obstacles to effective communication

Although words have great power, they also pose challenges. As Mark Twain, the great American humorist, observed,

The difference between the almost right words and the right words is really a large matter—'tis the difference between the lightening bug and the lightening.¹¹

Mike Krzyzewski, Duke University's basketball coach, also recognizes the power of language:

I believe that my work is as much about words as it is about basketball. Choosing the right words is no less important to the outcome of a game than choosing the right players and strategies for the court.¹²

Group members can avoid many misunderstandings by overcoming language-based obstacles to communication. Among the most common language difficulties are abstract words, bypassing, offensive language, and jargon (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 Common Language Challenges



6.3.1: Abstract Words

You can minimize the misinterpretation of words by recognizing the ways in which different levels of meaning affect communication. The more abstract your language is the more likely group members will interpret its meaning other than the way you intended. An **abstract word** refers to an idea or concept that cannot be perceived by the five senses. Words such as *fairness*, *freedom*, and *love* do not have the same meaning for everyone. Reliance on abstract words increases the chances of misunderstanding. A **concrete word** refers to a specific thing

that is perceived with one of the senses—something you can see, hear, touch, smell, or taste. Concrete words narrow the number of possible meanings and decrease the likelihood of misinterpretation.

Avoid using overly abstract words when working in groups. Use words that refer directly to observable objects, people, or behavior. For example, saying, “Greg’s behavior was disruptive” could imply many things. Did he yell at a group member, use profanity, or refuse to participate? Instead, use concrete words that clearly identify the problem, such as, “Greg arrived 15 minutes late to the meeting,” or “Greg interrupted the speaker three times during her presentation.”

6.3.2: Bypassing

When group members use different meanings for the same words and phrases, they run the risk of bypassing and “miss each other with their meanings.”¹³ **Bypassing** is the miscommunication that occurs when people have different meanings for the same words or phrases. An entire group project may falter or fail if there are differences in the interpretation of a single word or phrase. Keep in mind that meanings are in people not in words. Note the problems created by the following example of bypassing:

At a routine staff meeting, a vice president tells her managers, “Survey the members of your department to find out whether they are satisfied with the new conference call system.” During the following week, the vice president receives a copy of a memo from one manager requesting that everyone in his department fill out a two-page questionnaire about the conference call system. The vice president telephones the manager and asks, “What’s this questionnaire all about?” The manager replies, “I thought you said I have to survey everyone in my department.”

What the vice president had in mind was for the manager to informally ask staff members for their initial impressions rather than ask for a detailed analysis of the new system. Although the manager heard the vice president’s words, the communicators “missed” each other’s meaning.

“Communicators who habitually look for meanings in the people using words, rather than in the words themselves, are much less prone to bypass or to be bypassed.”¹⁴ In short, what’s important is not what words mean to you, but what group members mean when they use or hear the same words.

6.3.3: Exclusionary Language

Exclusionary language demeans, inappropriately excludes, or stereotypes people. For example, sexist language may



Members of the Westboro Baptist Church often protest at events with signs displaying offensive and exclusionary language. Such language is unethical, hurtful to others, and escalates conflict.

alienate and offend both male and female group members. Referring to women as “girls” implies that women are childlike and not capable of adult thought and responsibilities. Avoid words that specify the gender of individuals in particular roles or occupations. Instead, use words that refer to both men and women. For example, instead of referring to the *chairman*, use the term *chair* or *chairperson*.

Poorly chosen words can perpetuate discrimination. Avoid language that stereotypes people based on their culture, race, religion, age, physical ability, sexual orientation, or lifestyle.

Words such as *cripple*, *old lady*, *nigger*, *trailer trash*, and *faggot* are offensive and degrading. Is it okay to use such words if none of your group members would be targeted by them? Absolutely not! This type of language can offend and alienate everyone in a group.

A member of an insurance investigation team recounted the following experience:

We were meeting to discuss ways to recognize fraudulent claims. At one point, another member said, “I’m working on a claim involving a carload of wetbacks.” I couldn’t believe he used that term. He obviously didn’t know that my husband is Latino. I was insulted. Other group members were offended, too.

6.3.4: Jargon

Jargon is the specialized or technical language of a profession. Groups use jargon as “verbal shorthand that allows members to communicate with each other clearly, efficiently, and quickly.”¹⁵ In some groups and in some settings, such as at a meeting of doctors, attorneys, information technology professionals, or accountants, the ability to use

jargon properly is a sign of team membership. It helps a team accomplish its work quickly and efficiently. For example, imagine how it would slow down a surgical team if every medical term and procedure had to be expressed in full Standard English instead of using short and concise jargon!

Even though jargon can be useful and efficient, it can also make ideas difficult to understand and, in some cases, can conceal the truth. Members who are unfamiliar with a group's jargon are easily intimidated and frustrated. Consider the experience of the vice president of a large corporation:

When I first joined the company, I had to learn the lingo of the various groups in which I worked. I remember attending my first CMG meeting (I didn't even know what that meant at the time) and listening to people talk about red files and green files. Do we color-code files? No. Rather, the terms *red file* and *green file* refer to different pricing structures for our products. I also discovered that the same term might be used differently from one group to another. For instance, in some meetings IP refers to Internet provider. As an attorney, I use the term to refer to intellectual property. I'm now familiar with the language of our company, but I know how confusing it can be when you're new to the team.

Some group members may use unnecessary jargon to impress colleagues or a leader with their specialized knowledge. Others use jargon when they have nothing to say. They just string together nonsense and hope no one notices their lack of content.¹⁶ Such tactics usually fail to inform others and often result in misunderstandings and resentment. Use jargon only when you are sure that all the members of your group will understand it. If some of the jargon or technical terms of a field are important, take time to explain those words to new members.

Ethics in Groups

Sticks and Stones May Break Your Bones, but Words Can Hurt Forever

Objective: Demonstrate appropriate strategies for responding to abusive language.

When assaulted by abusive language, group members may become angry, discouraged, and withdrawn, or even be provoked into shouting matches with their attacker. Abusive language has the "immediate result of spoiling relationships (and productivity based on such relationships), and the long-term effect of ruining morale, teamwork, and loyalty."¹⁷

Here are several characteristics of verbal abuse:

- *Tone of voice:* Harsh, sarcastic, angry, belittling
- *Content:* Sexual references, racial slurs, cruel comments about someone's appearance
- *Language choice:* Foul, obscene, or accusatory words
- *Nonverbal cues:* Insulting facial expressions, gross gestures, threatening movements
- *Speaking volume:* Loud, screaming voice or hissed messages¹⁸

Ethical communicators *both* take responsibility for what they say *and* take action when others use abusive language.

Have you ever been in a discussion where someone used inappropriate or offensive language? What did you do in this situation? Several strategies can help you avoid or confront verbal abuse:

1. *Express your objections.* At the first sign of verbal abuse, calmly explain that you are offended by someone's use of offensive language, but are willing to continue the discussion if the language becomes less intolerant.
2. *Ask for repetition.* Ask the person to repeat what he or she has just said, as in, "Please repeat that. I want to make sure I heard what you said."
3. *Step back.* When someone is verbally abusive, step back a few steps, as if to say that you will talk about the problem, but that you won't put up with yelling and insults. If the abuse continues, walk away.
4. *Quote the law.* When a discussion becomes abusive, quote the law or group norms: "That kind of language is inappropriate in this group," or, "That word violates the company's civility policy."
5. *Take a time out.* Say "Time out" when a discussion becomes uncomfortable or abusive. Follow that with, "Let's take a minute to calm down before we continue."
6. *Practice what you preach.* If you take action against others, make sure that you avoid all forms of verbal abuse:
 - Do not raise your voice.
 - Do not swear.
 - Do not call members insulting names.
 - Do not use sarcasm to hurt others.

7. *Listen.* Listen more than you speak when you're upset, particularly if you're so mad that you're afraid of what you might say. As you listen, try to calm down physically and mentally.¹⁹

If you are angry or unaware of the negative impact your words have on others, remember the Golden Rule: *How would you feel if other people used the same words to describe you and what you do?*

WRITING PROMPT**Sticks and Stones May Break Your Bones, but Words Can Hurt Forever**

Think about a group situation you have experienced or witnessed— involving verbal abuse. Which of the seven techniques were used or not used? Which techniques could have been helpful in mediating the difficult situation?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

6.4: Language Differences

6.4 Recommend appropriate responses to gender-influenced and culture-based differences in language use



Speakers at the United Nations present their remarks using one of the organization's six official languages: English, Spanish, Chinese, French, Russian, or Arabic. Interpreters then translate their remarks into the other five languages.

Group member diversity influences how we use and listen to language. Although there is nothing right or wrong about the different ways in which people use language, these differences can create misunderstandings among group members.

6.4.1: Language and Gender

Some researchers suggest that men and women use language differently. They claim that women tend to use language to reinforce relationships and promote cooperation, whereas men tend to use language to exchange information or content.²⁰

In terms of traditional gender roles, male speech is generally more direct and forceful, whereas women may speak more tentatively.²¹ Female speech is more likely to contain qualifiers and tag questions.²² A **qualifier** is a word

that conveys uncertainty or timidity, such as *maybe* and *perhaps*. A **tag question** is a brief question added to the end of a statement. For instance, "It may be time to move on to our next point, don't you think so?" is a tentative statement with a qualifier and a tag question. This style does not necessarily represent a lack of confidence. Instead, it can be a cooperative approach that encourages others to respond. Unfortunately, listeners may interpret such word choices as signs of insecurity, incompetence, powerlessness, and lack of intelligence.

Rather than stereotyping men and women, we see these differences as tendencies rather than characteristics. One style of communication is no better than another; the two are simply different. As Dana Ivy writes in *GenderSpeak*, "What's going on here is that, in general, women and men use communication for different purposes."²³ Furthermore, research on gender and communication reveals far more similarities than differences in women's and men's use of language. Every group member should monitor and adapt to the different ways in which women and men express their opinions. Ideally, group members speak and respond to one another "in the most effective manner possible, unencumbered by what is expected or stereotypical for each sex."²⁴

6.4.2: Language and Culture

Twenty-one percent of the U.S. population speaks a language other than English at home, resulting in more than 300 different languages spoken in the United States.²⁵ Spanish is the most common non-English language, with more than 37 million Spanish speakers in the United States.²⁶ While the majority of people who speak a language other than English at home are also fluent in English,²⁷ many speak with an accent.

An **accent** is the sound of one language imposed on another language. For example, a person from Japan may speak English with a Japanese accent in which an *l* sounds more like an *r*. Unfortunately, non-native English speakers are often perceived as less influential and less competent in spite of their expertise and knowledge.²⁸ Group members should exercise patience, listen respectfully, and avoid stereotyping a member who speaks English with an accent.

For most groups, a single language is the medium of interaction, even though members from different backgrounds, generations, and geographic areas may speak the same language quite differently. A **dialect** is the distinct regional and cultural variations in vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, and style that distinguishes speakers from different ethnic groups, geographic areas, and social classes. For example, a New Yorker and a Texan speak different dialects of American English. All of us have dialects depending on where we come from,

where we live, the types of people and friends with whom we associate, and how we want to be perceived by others. In the United States, there are Southern dialects, New England dialects, and Brooklyn dialects, among others.

In the United States, Standard American English is the most commonly accepted dialect spoken by as much as 60 percent of the U.S. population. If, however, you enjoy *pizzer and beah* instead of *pizza and beer*, you may be from Massachusetts. If you say, "Ah nevah go theyuh," you could be from Alabama or parts of Texas. Unfortunately, studies repeatedly find that "most nonstandard dialects of English are frequently accorded less status and are often considered inappropriate or unacceptable in education, business, and government."²⁹ The implications of such research are clear: Group members who do not use Standard American English in business and academic settings may be viewed as less articulate or less competent. In other words, the dialect you speak at home may not be the best way to communicate in a business meeting. Because dialects have the potential to influence the perceptions of group members, many speakers use codeswitching to avoid negative stereotypes related to language.

Codeswitching refers to the ability to shift from the dialect of your own culture and adopt the dialect of another cultural group. Many African Americans switch their linguistic codes depending on the culture and gender of others in a group.³⁰ They may speak one way among white people or in business settings (Standard English) and quite differently at home (Black English). Linguist John McWhorter notes that many middle-class African Americans typically speak both Black English and Standard English, switching constantly between the two, often in the same sentence.³¹ As a result, many African Americans are competent in two sophisticated dialects of English.³² The same is true in immigrant families whose members may use the "old country" language or a simplified version of English in private, while they use Standard English in public.

The ways in which you use language can also affect how others judge you and your ability to communicate. Communication scholar Carley Dodd concludes that:

- (1) people judge others by their speech,
- (2) upward mobility and social aspirations influence whether people change their speech to the accepted norms,
- (3) general American speech is most accepted by the majority of the American culture, and
- (4) people should be aware of these prejudices and attempt to look beyond the surface.³³

Mindful group members understand, respect, and adapt to the accents and dialectics of others. They also appreciate how challenging it may be for such members to communicate when their speech is different from the majority of speakers.

Theory in Groups

The Whorf Hypothesis

Objective: Explain the Whorf Hypothesis and its implications for intercultural communication.

One of the most significant and controversial language theories attempts to explain why people from different cultures speak and interpret messages differently from one another. Linguist Edward Sapir and his student, Benjamin Whorf, spent decades studying the relationship among language, culture, and thought. Whorf's most controversial theory contends that the characteristics of a language *determine* how we see, experience, and interpret the world around us. For example, if we don't have a word for *red*, we won't be able to see red or separate it from other colors we do see.

Benjamin Whorf observed that the Hopi Indians of Arizona make no distinction in their language among past, present, and future tenses. In English, we understand the grammatical differences between "I saw the girl," "I see the girl," and "I will see the girl." The Hopi do not make such clear distinctions in their words. Whorf concluded that therefore they must perceive the world very differently. He also noted that the Hopi have a single word, *masa'ytaka*, for everything that flies, from insects to airplanes. Does that mean the Hopi cannot think about tomorrow and cannot see the differences between an airplane and a fly? Originally, many linguists believed that the answer was yes. Now linguists understand that the Hopi do think about tomorrow but perceive it quite differently than those of us who have the word *tomorrow*. Language does not determine everything we think. At the same time, it does influence the way we perceive others and the world around us.³⁴

Like many controversial theories, the Whorf Hypothesis (also referred to as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis) has been accepted, rejected, resurrected, and amended—several times. Today, most linguists accept a more moderate version of the **Whorf Hypothesis**: Language is influential in "shaping how people think and experience the world," which in turn influences how the speakers of a language come to think, act, and behave.³⁵ For example, in English, terms that end with *man*, such as *chairman*, *fireman*, and *policeman*, may lead us to view certain roles and jobs as only appropriate for men. Substituting words such as *chairperson*, *firefighter*, and *police officer* may change perceptions about who can work in these careers. Interestingly, in Finland there is only one pronoun for the words *he* and *she*, which avoids the tendency to link certain behaviors or jobs to either men or women. During the tense negotiations during the financial crisis in Greece, Germany adopted an uncompromising position and demanded that the Greeks greatly reduce their debt and institute harsh austerity measures. This hardline stance was explained, in part, by an economic historian who noted that the German word for debt, *schuld*, also means "moral fault or blame."³⁶ The Whorf Hypothesis is still alive and well all over the world.

6.5: Nonverbal Communication

6.5 Examine the challenges of interpreting nonverbal messages and adapting your own nonverbal behavior appropriately



Every group member relies on verbal and nonverbal messages to generate meaning. What messages might the facial expressions and body language of the two front-facing members be communicating to the third member?

Nonverbal communication refers to the behavioral elements of messages other than spoken words. Your appearance, posture, and facial expressions send messages. Some research suggests that nonverbal behavior accounts for between 60 and 70 percent of all meaning.³⁷ That is, people base their understanding of what you mean not only on what you say, but also on how you use nonverbal cues. Group members often rely more on your nonverbal behavior than your words to interpret meaning. Thus, nonverbal communication “is arguably one of the most powerful methods of communication.”³⁸

Group communication researcher Robert Cathcart and his colleagues note that “groups provide a rich source of nonverbal messages because so many behaviors occur simultaneously.”³⁹ Unfortunately, we often put more thought into choosing the best words than into selecting the most appropriate behavior for conveying our ideas. Group members send messages through their personal appearance as well as through their facial, vocal, and physical expression. When all of these nonverbal elements are combined, they add enormous complexity and subtlety to group interaction.

Groups in Balance . . . Speak “Silently”

The well-known phrase *Silence is golden* may be based on a Swiss saying, *Sprechen ist silbern, Schweigen ist golden*, which means “Speech is silver; silence is golden.” This metaphor

suggests that although speech is important, silence may be even more significant. The power of silence is recognized and embraced in many cultures:

- Those who know do not speak. Those who speak do not know. (*Tao Te Ching*)
- Silence is also speech. (African proverb)
- Silence is a friend who will not betray. (Confucius)
- A loud voice shows an empty head. (Finnish proverb)

Understanding the communicative value of silence is important for several reasons. We use silence to communicate many things: to establish interpersonal distance, to put our thoughts together, to show respect for another person, or to modify others’ behaviors.⁴⁰ When you work in groups, your silence may communicate a lot more than speech. If you are a talkative extrovert, silence gives you time to think and gives introverts a chance to speak. If someone’s nasty tone during a heated discussion bothers you, silence can communicate your unwillingness to join the fray. Silence can also signal agreement, particularly when a group has talked an issue to death. Your silence might say, “We’ve said it all; now let’s vote or move on to another issue.” Finally, remember that members from collectivist cultures assign great meaning to silence. “Listening” to their silence can tell you more than any words.

6.5.1: Personal Appearance

When group members meet for the first time, they know very little about one another beyond what they see. Physical appearance influences first impressions. Based on members’ physical appearance, we draw conclusions about their “credibility, sociability, ability to work with others, and so forth.”⁴¹ For better or worse, we tend to see attractive people as friendlier and as more credible than those who are less attractive.

Even the clothes you wear send messages to other group members. Nonverbal communication scholar Peter Andersen maintains that “effective small group members should view clothes and hair styles as an important silent statement made to the group. Dress that is appropriate is perhaps most important.”⁴² Casual attire is more acceptable in informal groups, whereas a professional appearance is expected in most business settings and important group presentations. Your appearance should communicate that you respect the group and take its work seriously.

6.5.2: Facial Expression and Eye Contact

Your face can produce more than a thousand different expressions.⁴³ The facial expressions of group members let you know if they are interested in, agree with, or understand what you have said. Research suggests that smiling may even influence a group member’s ability to emerge as

a leader.⁴⁴ Facial expressions supplement and complement the verbal messages of group members.⁴⁵ Good listeners look at a speaker's facial expressions in order to comprehend the full message.

Of all your facial features, your eyes are the most revealing. Generally, North Americans perceive eye contact as an indicator of attitude. People who maintain eye contact are perceived as more sincere and more trustworthy.⁴⁶ Lack of eye contact is frequently perceived as signifying inattentiveness, indifference, nervousness, or dishonesty. However, it's important to realize that perceptions about eye contact vary in different cultures; we discuss these cultural variations later in this chapter.

Eye contact influences interaction in groups. A seating arrangement that allows group members to face one another and establish eye contact helps maintain interaction. Eye contact also tells others when you want to speak. Returning eye contact to a group leader indicates that you are ready to respond, whereas avoiding eye contact is typically perceived as an attempt to avoid interaction. Establishing eye contact with other members can promote interaction and virtually oblige group involvement.⁴⁷

6.5.3: Vocal Expression

Vocal expression is variations in pitch, volume, speaking rate, and word stress. It is the *way* you say a word rather than the word itself. Four vocal qualities—pitch, volume, rate, and word stress—add meaning, emphasis, and authority to your voice. **Pitch** refers to how high or low the voice sounds. Variations in pitch can communicate a range of emotions. For example, a low pitch may suggest sadness, higher pitches may express anger or surprise, and an even pitch may convey interest.⁴⁸ **Volume** refers to the loudness of the voice. A loud voice can imply anger, excitement, or dominance. Group members speaking quietly may signal that information is confidential. **Rate** refers to the speed at which a person speaks in terms of words per minute. A group may be bored by or stop listening to a member who speaks too slowly or in a monotone voice. A speaking rate that is too fast makes it difficult to understand the message. Adjust your pitch, volume, and rate to the group setting and type of activity. **Word stress** refers to the "degree of prominence given to a syllable within a word or a word within a phrase or sentence."⁴⁹

Notice the differences in meaning when using pitch, volume, rate, and/or word stress to emphasize a particular meaning of the italicized word in the same sentence:

- Is *this* the report you want me to read? (Meaning: Are you asking me to read this report rather than the one we discussed yesterday?)
- Is this the report you want *me* to read? (Meaning: Am I the only one who should read this report?)

- Is this the report you want me to *read*? (Meaning: Are you asking me to read the report rather than listening to and relying on the summary?)

Although the same words are used in all three sentences, the meaning of each question can be quite different.

6.5.4: Physical Expression

Kinesics is the study of body movement and physical expression. Gestures are one of the most animated forms of kinesics. They can emphasize or stress parts of a message, reveal discomfort with the group situation, or convey a message without the use of words. For example, Jeff points to his watch to let the chairperson know that they will soon run out of time. At the end of a discussion, a thumbs-up gesture from group members signals that they are satisfied with the group's progress. Many people have difficulty expressing their thoughts without using gestures. Why else would we gesture when we are speaking on the phone? Research suggests that gesturing helps ease the mental effort when communication is difficult.⁵⁰ Gesturing may also influence perceptions of leadership. People who use animated gestures are often perceived as more credible and as having more leadership potential.⁵¹

Even your posture can convey moods and emotions. For example, if you slouch back in your chair, others may interpret your posture as lack of interest or dislike for the group. However, sitting upright and leaning forward communicate interest and are signs of attentive listening. Research links body movement to perceptions of leadership. Group members who lean forward and assume a relaxed posture are more likely to emerge as group leaders and to be viewed as attractive by other group members.⁵²

One of the most potent forms of physical expression is touch. Touch can convey a wide range of meanings. In groups, members often use brief touch to express encouragement, support, or happiness. Peter Andersen points out that "touch in a small group may establish greater teamwork, solidarity, or sharing."⁵³ Keep in mind that the use and meaning of touch may differ depending on the situation or type of group. For example, church group or support group members engage in more touch than do colleagues in a professional business meeting. Some work settings may even discourage touch among coworkers beyond a handshake.

Some group members are more comfortable with touch than others. At one end of a continuum are touch avoiders; at the other end are touch approachers. Misunderstandings can occur between these two kinds of people. **Touch approachers** are comfortable being touched and initiating touch with others. **Touch avoiders** are less comfortable being touched and touching others. Approachers may view avoiders as cold and unfriendly; avoiders may perceive approachers as invasive and rude. It is important to remember that gender and culture influence touch avoidance. Women are

more likely to avoid opposite-sex touch, whereas men often avoid same-sex touch. In particular, Far Eastern women exhibit more touch avoidance than people from other cultures.⁵⁴ Make sure you know the members of your group very well before hugging them or putting your arm around their shoulder. A handshake is usually the safest option.

Virtual Teams Expressing Emotions Online

Objective: Interpret common examples of textspeak and explain the challenges of expressing emotions via technology.



Emoticons function as nonverbal cues in computer-mediated communication. However, research suggests that virtual group members are more likely to rely on words than on emoticons to determine meaning. In your opinion, do emoticons effectively clarify the meaning of a message or do they distract the reader?

When groups meet face to face, members can listen to other members' tone of voice and can observe their nonverbal behavior. However, most virtual groups rely on technologies that don't allow the members to hear or see one another. Participants can't see the facial expressions, head nods, gestures, or posture of other group members.

To compensate for the lack of nonverbal communication many people use textspeak and emoticons to function in place of nonverbal cues. **Textspeak** is a brief form of written communication that uses abbreviations, acronyms, initials, and emoticons to shorten a message and/or convey emotion. For example, LOL (laughing out loud), OMG (oh my gosh), and JK (just kidding) are examples of textspeak commonly seen in text messages.

Emoticons are a grouping of typographical characters used to express emotion when communicating via technology. For example, ☺, :-), ;-, :-(, and :-D are commonly used emoticons that convey smiles, winks, frowns, and laughing.

In theory, textspeak and emoticons serve as substitutes for nonverbal behavior. However, research suggests that emoticons have little or no effect on the interpretation of a typed message.⁵⁵ Thus, virtual group members are more likely to rely on your words than on your emoticons when interpreting the intention of your message. Linguist John McWhorter points out that emoticons are limited in how much they can communicate. "You have to know what you're talking about, what happened, when, and so on. Emoticons don't do that."⁵⁶

Although textspeak has become more common in business settings, it may also be perceived as unprofessional. Before using textspeak in a work situation "make sure it's appropriate for 'u' to be that informal."⁵⁷ In their book *Rules of the Net*, Thomas Mandel and Gerard Van der Leun offer the following suggestion: "Nothing—especially the symbols on the top row of your keyboard—can substitute for a clear idea simply expressed. Avoid :-) and all associated emoticons as you would avoid clichés—for example, like the plague."⁵⁸ Generally, we advise you to avoid emoticons in professional contexts. However, if using emoticons is a norm within your group, ☺ away.

Watch Virtual Misunderstanding



Watch the video clips from "Virtual Misunderstanding," which illustrates concepts in this chapter.

WRITING PROMPT

Virtual Misunderstanding

1. In a teleconference, participants must rely on what they hear because they cannot see one another. What did the tone of voice used by Eva (Project Manager), Ellen (Staff Writer) and Charlie (Designer) tell you about them, their attitude, and their professionalism?
2. To what extent did language challenges (abstract words, bypassing, offensive language, and jargon) lead to misunderstandings among group members? For example, how did you react to Eva's use of the word guys to refer to both Ellen and Charlie?
3. During the teleconference Charlie is heard but never seen in the video. How does the lack of visible nonverbal elements affect your impressions of Charlie and his comments? If everyone in the group had been able to see Ellen, would her behavior have changed? Why or why not?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

6.6: The Nonverbal Environment

6.6 Analyze the effects of room arrangements and different zones of interpersonal space on group communication



Seating arrangements can affect group interaction in significant ways. For example, arrangements that bring people closer together and permit direct eye contact among all members promote group interaction.

Nonverbal communication extends beyond the behavior of group members—it also includes the group's environment. Two important aspects of a group's nonverbal environment are the arrangement of space and perceptions of personal space.

6.6.1: Arrangement of Space

Seating arrangements can affect group interaction in significant ways. Arrangements that physically separate group members make group interaction difficult. Arrangements that bring people closer together and permit direct eye contact among all members promote group interaction. Group members arranged in a circle or around a table can interact with one another more easily.

Your choice of seating position in groups has a direct effect on interaction and influence.⁵⁹ Several studies note that group members prefer corner-to-corner or side-by-side seating for cooperative activities.⁶⁰ Such an arrangement allows them to be close enough to share materials. Members who anticipate competition or disagreement often choose seats across from each other.⁶¹

A member's seating position often reflects the person's official position and amount of power. Group leaders are more likely to choose (or be assigned) a seat at the head of a table. Task-oriented leaders are attracted to the head of a table, while the middle position at the side of a table attracts more socially oriented leaders—members who are more concerned about group relationships and encourag-

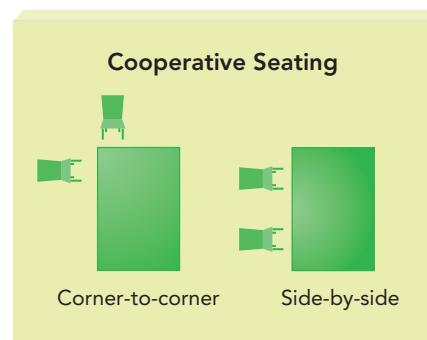
ing everyone to participate.⁶² These two locations put the leader in a position to see and be seen by everyone in the group. Choosing one of the centrally located positions as depicted in Figure 6.3 also makes it easier for a member to gain speaking opportunities.

Even the arrangement of a room or the shape of a conference table sends a message to group members. A long, rectangular table gives a group's leader a special place of prominence at its head. A round table allows all members to sit in equally important positions. The Paris Peace Talks that helped end the war in Vietnam bogged down for eight months until delegates from South Vietnam, the National Liberation Front, and the United States agreed to a round table as the setting for negotiation. When the leaders of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia met at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio in 1995, the United States made sure that each party had equal seating space around a modest but perfectly round table. The arrangement of space is not a trivial matter when the success of a group is so consequential.

In addition to seating arrangement, the décor and atmosphere of a room can have a direct influence on a

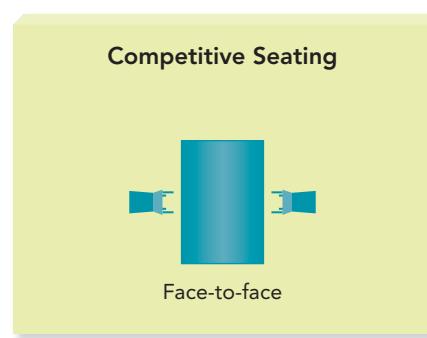
Figure 6.3 Seating Arrangements

This figure shows four seating arrangements and includes descriptions and the pluses and minuses of using each one.



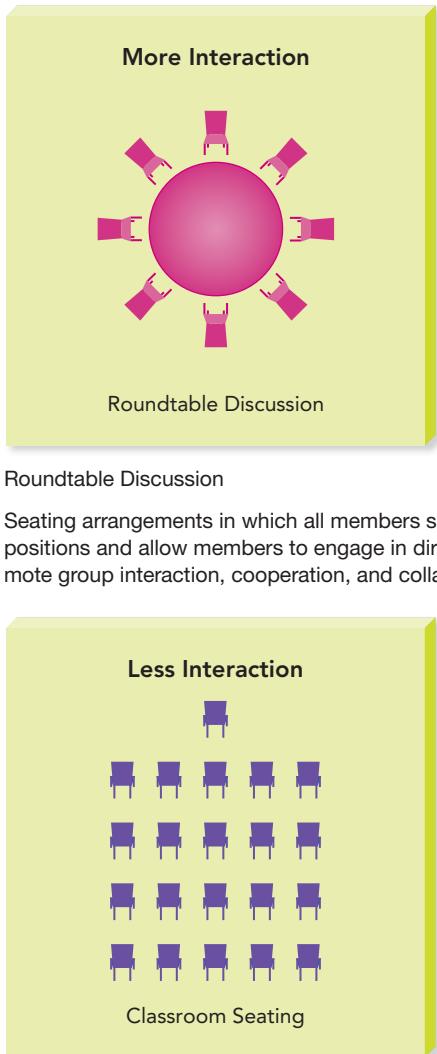
Cooperative Seating

Seating arrangements in which members sit side-by-side promote more interaction, cooperation, and collaboration.



Competitive Seating

Seating arrangements in which members sit across from each other, especially when separated by a physical barrier such as a table, can provoke competition rather than cooperation and collaboration.

Figure 6.3 (Continued)

Classroom Seating

Seating arrangements that make direct eye contact among group members difficult or impossible inhibit group interaction, cooperation, and collaboration.

group and its work. Spaces that are too warm, too cold, or too crowded can discourage interaction. A room that is too hot may even promote aggressive behavior. Low levels of lighting encourage social conversation, whereas higher lighting levels encourage task-oriented activities. At the same time, poor lighting may contribute to negative moods.⁶³

A New England advertising agency learned the importance of nonverbal environments when heated arguments and even a fistfight broke out during meetings in which representative consumers were brought together to evaluate a new product or an advertising message.⁶⁴ Facilitators reported that regardless of the discussion topic, no one ever seemed happy in these meetings. Participants were grumpy, negative, and resistant to new ideas. Eventually, the company determined that the problem was the room itself: It was cramped, poorly ventilated, and forbidding—

a cross between a hospital room and a police interrogation room. The solution: a total redesign and redecoration. The company expanded the room and gave it long, gently curved walls. Soft, indirect light filtered in through curved windows. Participants could choose to sit in armchairs or on small couches surrounding circular coffee tables. The results were better than expected. There were no more fist-fights; instead, group members became much more cooperative and positive.

WRITING PROMPT

Arrangement of Space

Which type of seating arrangement would be ideal for a group of seven people discussing new social media strategies for a company? Explain why.

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

6.6.2: Perceptions of Personal Space

Groups and their members may function quite differently depending on how they perceive the space around them as well as the people and objects within that space. The ways in which we protect and defend our space, invade the space of others, “put distance between ourselves and others, and avoid using certain spaces” represent a human need to “stake out space to call our own.”⁶⁵ In the study of groups, two important spatial variables are territoriality and space distances.

TERRITORIALITY **Territoriality** is the sense of personal ownership attached to a particular space. For instance, in most classrooms, students sit in the same place every day. If you have ever walked into a classroom and found another person in “your” seat, you may have felt that your territory was violated. Objects acting as territorial markers often designate ownership of space. Placing a coat or books on a chair lets others know that the space is taken. As a group develops, members often establish their individual territories and view members who fail to respect others’ territory as violating a group norm. Many group members will sit in the same place near the same people during every meeting.

SPACE DISTANCES Anthropologist Edward T. Hall used the term **proxemics** to describe the study of how we perceive and use space within the context of a culture. He is best known for his descriptions of the personal spaces that surround individuals. From a communication perspective, we call these varying spaces **zones of interaction**, the variable psychological space surrounding each person that expands or contracts in different contexts. The spaces have been described as an invisible “bubble” that surrounds you

and that becomes larger or smaller in different situations and with different people. For example, you may feel more comfortable with a family member standing very close to you during a conversation, but prefer more distance between you and a public speaker when sitting in the audience. Hall identifies four zones of interaction used by most North Americans as shown in Figure 6.4.⁶⁶

Figure 6.4 Zones of Interaction

Zone	Distance	Purpose and Context	Communication Characteristics
INTIMATE	0-1.5 ft.	Loving, comforting, protecting, fighting	Minimal talk, can smell and touch the other, little eye contact
PERSONAL	1.5-4 feet	Conversations with intimates, friends, acquaintances	Touch possible, more eye contact and visual details
SOCIAL	4-12 feet	Impersonal, business, and social gatherings	More formal tone, loses some visual detail, eye contact likely
PUBLIC	12+ feet	Lectures, concerts, plays, speeches, ceremonies	Subtle details lost, only obvious details noticed

- **Intimate distance** is the zone of interaction ranging from touching to approximately 18 inches apart, which is typically reserved for interaction with close friends, some family members, and lovers. Unless you develop a very close relationship with a fellow group member, you will rarely interact with other members in this very private zone. Peter Andersen notes that “at such close distances group members will feel inhibited from interacting and will make an attempt to restore their personal space bubble by moving back even if that means leaving the group.”⁶⁷
- **Personal distance** is the zone of interaction ranging from approximately 18 inches to 4 feet apart, which is typically used for routine interactions with friends, acquaintances, and many business associates. The average distance during a conversation in this zone is an arm’s length away from the other person. Members of most well-established groups interact with one another at this distance because it allows them to feel close enough to engage in discussion but far enough away to be comfortable. This distance is sometimes referred to as the *business zone*, and is typical for interactions in the work place with colleagues who are familiar with one another, or when coworkers engage in personal or casual conversations.⁶⁸
- **Social distance** is the zone of interaction ranging from approximately 4 to 12 feet, which is typically used for

interactions with new acquaintances and strangers. Groups in which members use the outer limits of this zone may find it difficult to interact with others and literally feel “distanced” from the group.

- **Public distance** is the zone of interaction extending beyond 12 feet, typically used for large audiences. Speakers use this distance for lectures and presentations. In interpersonal settings, people perceive this large distance between communicators as impersonal and relatively anonymous. Groups are unlikely to use this zone unless they are making a presentation to a large audience.

In general, we are comfortable with less distance in informal situations and with people we know well and like, whereas we prefer greater personal distance in more formal settings and/or with people who are less familiar to us. Keep in mind that the range of distances described here is typical of North Americans. Not surprisingly, cultural and co-cultural norms about these spaces vary widely.

6.7: Nonverbal Differences

6.7 Summarize specific methods for adapting to gender and cultural differences in nonverbal behavior



When shaking hands with President Park Geun-hye of Korea, Bill Gates did not realize that putting his other hand in his pocket is considered rude in many Asian countries, signifying that one person is purposefully expressing superiority to the other.

Group member diversity affects the way we use and listen to language. The same is true for the way we use nonverbal communication. If you understand, respect, and adapt to the different ways in which members express themselves nonverbally, you and your group will be able to avoid misunderstandings and help one another achieve your group’s common goal.

6.7.1: Nonverbal Communication and Gender

As with the use of verbal communication, there are differences in the ways that men and women use nonverbal communication. The stereotypical belief is that women are nonverbally more “expressive, involved, warm” and better at interpreting nonverbal messages.⁶⁹ But are these stereotypes accurate? Communication scholar Judith Hall surveyed the research and identified the following differences in the ways in which women and men use nonverbal communication.⁷⁰

Women tend to

- Use more facial expression
- Smile more
- Use more eye contact
- Use more expressive movements
- Touch others more (especially other women)
- Notice nonverbal behavior more

Men tend to

- Use more expansive movements
- Appear more relaxed
- Appear less involved
- Touch others less (especially other men)
- Shake hands more
- Use a larger personal distance

Judith Hall concluded that these stereotypes “are overwhelmingly correct in substance.”⁷¹ Research continues to confirm that women are more sensitive to nonverbal communication and more accurately interpret the meaning of nonverbal behaviors across various contexts.⁷² Of course, there are many men and women who do not exhibit stereotypical nonverbal behavior. Ultimately, group members must understand, respect, and adapt to the nonverbal differences of both male and female group members.

6.7.2: Nonverbal Communication and Culture

When we interact with group members from different cultural backgrounds, interpreting their nonverbal behavior may be as difficult as translating an unfamiliar foreign language. The multiple meanings of nonverbal communication in other cultures can be illustrated by focusing on two elements: personal space and eye contact.

Research on how we use the space around us reveals that our preferences are culture-specific. Generally, people from North America, northern Europe, Asia, Pakistan, and India prefer more distance during interactions than do people from southern Europe, Latin America, and Arab countries that use less space than North Americans do.⁷³

Some Americans feel uncomfortable when traveling to countries in which people “invade” their space. A hug and then a kiss on each cheek in Italy or a forehead-to-forehead greeting from a New Zealand Maori can at first be a shock and cause travelers to feel uneasy or to back away.

Cultural differences also are evident when measuring the amount and directness of eye contact. Americans, British, Canadians, and eastern Europeans tend to prefer direct eye contact.⁷⁴ However, many other cultures avoid eye contact. For example, “direct eye contact is a taboo or an insult in many Asian cultures.”⁷⁵ Similarly, African Americans may avoid direct eye contact as a sign of respect. As a result, if a white North American supervisor criticizes an employee who comes from one of these cultures, the employee may respond by looking downward rather than looking at the supervisor. In some cases, the employee’s response may offend the supervisor, who interprets it as inattention or defiance.

There is a danger, however, of stereotyping people from different backgrounds and cultures on the basis of their nonverbal behavior. You may meet a Latino, Arab, or Greek group member who is not comfortable with less personal space than a North American. Asian or African American employees may look directly at a white supervisor with respect. When interpreting nonverbal behavior, then, it is important to try to understand, respect, and adapt to individual differences rather than assuming that all people from a particular culture behave alike.

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What is Nonverbally Normal?⁷⁶

Every culture sees certain nonverbal behaviors as acceptable and normal. When people from different cultures interact, “normal” behaviors may seem inappropriate and strange. Group members who understand, respect, and adapt to the different ways in which members express themselves nonverbally will be able to avoid misunderstandings and help one another achieve the group’s common goal.

Directions: Read the following 12 scenarios. Think about the response that best expresses your reaction—very common, common, neutral, unusual, very unusual. Then consider where this scenario would be normal.

Scenario

- 1 A man wearing a skirt in public
- 2 Two women holding hands in a park
- 3 A woman breastfeeding her child in public
- 4 Talking with someone who does not look you in the eye
- 5 A woman refusing to shake hands with a man
- 6 A family taking a communal bath
- 7 Interacting with senior professors on a first-name basis

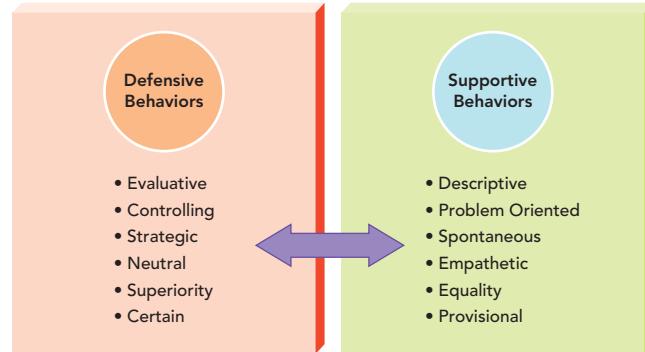
(continued)

- 8 Praying to many gods
- 9 A man wearing Bermuda shorts to a fine restaurant
- 10 Eating a formal meal without utensils
- 11 A man who stands so close you can smell his breath
- 12 People who will not eat the food in your home

Answers to *Where would this be normal?*

1. Scotland
2. Many major cities and small villages throughout the world
3. Some U.S. and European cities, non-Muslim African countries
4. Parts of Africa and Asia
5. Muslim and Orthodox Jewish women
6. Japan
7. Varies—United States, Australia
8. India, Asia
9. Varies—Bermuda, English Caribbean, northern Australia
10. Several African cultures
11. Several Arab cultures
12. Orthodox Jews in non-kosher homes

Figure 6.5 Gibb's Six Pairs of Communication Behaviors



A **supportive climate** is a communication environment in which members feel free to share their opinions and feelings. Synergy occurs only when a group functions in a supportive climate. Table 6.3 describes the behaviors of each climate in pairs, one the opposite of the other, with defensive behaviors on the left and supportive behaviors on the right.

Table 6.3 Gibb's Defensive and Supportive Group Behaviors

Defensive Behaviors	Supportive Behaviors
Evaluative: Making judgmental and critical statements about a situation or another person	Descriptive: Stating facts about a situation or another person and using appropriate "I" and "we" language
Examples: "Why did you insult Sharon like that?" "Explain yourself!" "What you did was terrible."	Examples: "When we heard what you said to Sharon, we were really embarrassed for her." "I'm sorry you did that."
Controlling: Dominating a situation or imposing a decision on others	Problem Oriented: Seeking mutually agreeable solutions
Examples: "Give me that report, and I'll make it better." "Since I'm paying for the vacation, we're going to the resort I like rather than the spa you like."	Examples: "Okay. Let's see what we can do to get that report finished to specifications." "Let's talk and figure out how both of us can enjoy our vacation."
Strategic: Manipulating others and concealing hidden agendas or personal motives	Spontaneous: Being straightforward, direct, open, and honest
Examples: "Frankie's going to Florida over spring break." "Remember when I helped you rearrange your office?"	Examples: "I'd like to go to Florida with Frankie over spring break." "Would you help me move some heavy boxes?"
Neutral: Appearing withdrawn, detached, indifferent, and unwilling to take a position	Empathetic: Expressing acceptance, understanding, and caring of others and their feelings
Examples: "You can't win them all." "Life's a gamble." "It doesn't matter to me." "Whatever."	Examples: "I can't believe she did that. No wonder you're upset." "It sounds as though you're having a hard time deciding."

(continued)

6.8: Creating a Supportive Communication Climate

6.8 Contrast the pairs of behaviors that influence the group communication climate

The way we use and react to language and nonverbal communication establishes a unique group atmosphere, or climate. Specifically, a group's **communication climate** is the atmosphere characterized by group members' degree of comfort or discomfort when interacting with one another. In some groups, the climate is warm and supportive, and members like and trust one another as they work toward a common goal. In chillier group climates, defensiveness and tension pollute the atmosphere, one where members may feel threatened by and suspicious of one another.

6.8.1: Defensive and Supportive Behaviors

In 1961, sociologist Jack Gibb identified six pairs of communication behaviors that influence whether a group's climate is defensive or supportive (Figure 6.5).⁷⁷

A **defensive climate** is a communication environment that triggers the instinct for self-protection in reaction to verbal criticism and dominance. Even though such reactions are natural, they hinder productive group interaction. When the group climate is defensive, members devote attention to defending themselves and defeating perceived opponents.

Defensive Behaviors	Supportive Behaviors
Superiority: Promoting resentment and jealousy by implying that your experience and opinions are better than others	Equality: Making sure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute
Examples: “Hey—I’ve done this a million times—let me have it. I’ll finish in no time.” “Is this the best you could do?”	Examples: “If you don’t mind, I’d like to explain how. I’ve handled this before. It may help.” “Let’s tackle this problem together.”
Certain: Expressing inflexible positions and refusing to consider the ideas and opinions of others	Provisional: Offering tentative suggestions but also accepting ideas from others
Examples: “I can’t see any other way of doing this that makes sense.” “There’s no point in discussing this any further.”	Examples: “We have a lot of options here—which one makes the most sense?” “I feel strongly about this, but I would like to hear what you think.”

Avoid taking an either/or approach to Gibb’s six pairs of supportive and defensive behaviors. The paired communication behaviors are not strictly classified as “good” or “bad” behaviors. Rather, they represent dialectic tensions. There may be times when you *should* express yourself in evaluative, controlling, strategic, neutral, superior, or certain terms. For example, you may behave strategically when you have important and strong personal motives. You may express certainty when your expertise is well recognized and a critical decision must be made. And you may respond neutrally when the issue is of little consequence to you or others.

Take one more look at Gibb’s six pairs of communication behaviors in Table 6.3. Every one of these behaviors can be expressed verbally and nonverbally. Now observe how Table 6.4 depicts verbal and nonverbal differences between defensive and supportive behaviors.

Table 6.4 Nonverbal Examples of Defensive and Supportive Behaviors

Defensive	Supportive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She rolls her eyes or audibly sighs when other members make suggestions. She often intimidates others by standing and looking down at them or by interrupting them when they speak. If group members need help, she looks the other way or concentrates on her own work. Everything about her—the way she walks, dresses, stands, and speaks—conveys her conviction that she is right and better than other group members. Most members dislike her because she seems cold, arrogant, and impatient. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He always listens carefully to other members and speaks kindly even when he disagrees. He avoids bragging about his own accomplishments but is quick to smile and applaud the group and its efforts. When other members need help, he stops what he’s doing to listen and, if possible, helps them. He smiles, leans forward, nods his head, maintains eye contact, and is physically close to others. Most members like and respect him, largely because he radiates honesty, warmth, and openness.

According to Martin Remland’s review of nonverbal group behavior, nonverbal response styles are contagious.⁷⁸ He also notes that the more cohesive the group is, the more uniform their style of emotional expression.⁷⁹ Now ask yourself this question: Which kind of “contagion” is better for your group—nonverbal behavior that creates a supportive climate, or nonverbal behavior that leads to a defensive climate? Not surprisingly, defensive climates spread negative emotions and increase stress and burnout. However, supportive climates increase the expression of positive emotions and promote group productivity, member satisfaction, and genuine cooperation.⁸⁰

6.8.2: Immediacy in Groups

In general, we tend to avoid or are cautious around group members who are cold, unfriendly, or hostile. In contrast, we feel more comfortable with group members who are warm and friendly. Researchers have identified a concept called **immediacy**, the degree to which a person seems approachable and likable.⁸¹

Research has identified various nonverbal behaviors that contribute to positive impressions and promote immediacy. Leaning forward, smiling, nodding your head, being vocally expressive, engaging in appropriate touch, gesturing, using more eye contact, and having a relaxed open body position are all behaviors that promote immediacy and may make others more comfortable approaching you.⁸² Verbal communication can also contribute to immediacy. Instead of using *you* or *I*, use the pronouns *us* or *we*. Respond to other group members with encouraging and supportive statements such as, “That’s a great idea,” or “Wow, I can see you put a lot of effort into this report.”⁸³

The concept of immediacy applies directly to group interaction. When group members are physically comfortable with one another, they work in a more supportive climate. Just think of the opposite behaviors and you’ll see why members become more defensive in the absence of immediacy behaviors. Rather than leaning forward and closer in an open position, nonimmediate members lean back, sit farther away, and cross their arms or hunch over. Rather than facing members directly and establishing eye contact, nonimmediate members sit sideways and rarely make eye contact. Rather than smiling at others, nonimmediate members have no expression or even scowl. If you find yourself leaning back, sitting in a rigid posture, or looking at everything but the members of your group during a discussion, it may be time to change your nonverbal behavior to mannerisms and actions that communicate greater physical closeness to or liking of others. Once you take on a more relaxed posture and smile, you may even find yourself enjoying the group experience and the company of members.

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How Immediate Are You?

Immediacy refers to the degree to which a person seems approachable and likable. Researchers have identified various verbal and nonverbal behaviors that contribute to positive impressions and promote immediacy. Not surprisingly, the concept of immediacy applies

directly to group interaction. When group members engage in more immediate communication behavior with one another, they create a more supportive and productive environment for group work.

Directions: Use the following scale to rate whether you frequently, sometimes, or rarely/never use the ten communication behaviors listed below. In other words, to what extent do you use immediacy strategies when you communicate in groups?

Do you ...	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely or Never
1. Use humor when interacting with group members			
2. Willingly engage in conversations and discussions			
3. Use inclusive language such as "we" and "us"			
4. Offer constructive feedback to group members			
5. Seek feedback from group members			
6. Smile while participating in a group discussion			
7. Establish direct eye contact with group members			
8. Speak expressively			
9. Have a relaxed posture and natural movement			
10. Comfortably stand and sit close to group members			
11. Gesture when you talk to people			
12. Touch other people on their shoulder or arm when talking to them			

How often did you select Frequently ____; Sometimes ____; and Rarely or Never____?

The more you selected *frequently* and *sometimes*, the more you are and would be seen as an immediate (approachable and

likable) group member. The more you selected *sometimes* and *rarely*, the less likely you are or seem to be an immediate group member.

Summary: Verbal and Nonverbal Communication in Groups

6.1: Two Essential Tools

- Whereas verbal communication focuses on how you use words and language, nonverbal communication refers to message components other than words that generate meaning.
- In dialectic terms, effective group members rely on *both* verbal *and* nonverbal communication to generate meaning. When verbal and nonverbal messages contradict one another, a group can become confused and defensive.

- Effective team talk uses plural pronouns as well as collective, considerate, casual, collaborative, and exploratory language.

6.2: Team Talk

- Team talk is the means used to achieve group goals, the stimulus to build group relationships, and the evidence used to assess group work.

6.3: Language Challenges

- Use specific, understandable concrete words rather than less tangible, abstract words.
- Avoiding bypassing and exclusionary language and minimizing jargon can improve group understanding.
- Ethical communicators take responsibility for what they say and take action when others use abusive language.

6.4: Language Differences

- Some women tend to use a more tentative language style, whereas men's language tends to be more direct and to the point.

- Codeswitching refers to the ability to change from the dialect of your own cultural setting and adopt the language of the majority in particular situations.
- According to the Whorf Hypothesis, language is influential in shaping how people think and experience the world, which in turn influences how the speakers of a language come to think, act, and behave.

6.5: Nonverbal Communication

- Nonverbal communication can convey as much or more meaning than do words.
- Effective group members understand the communicative value of silence.
- Group members send messages through their personal appearance as well as through their facial, vocal, and physical expressions.
- Eye contact can significantly influence group interaction.
- Vocal characteristics include pitch, volume, rate, and word stress.
- Physical expression includes gestures, posture, and touch.
- Members are more likely to rely on words rather than textspeak or emoticons when interpreting messages in virtual groups.

6.6: The Nonverbal Environment

- Group seating arrangements can promote or discourage communication. Leaders tend to sit in centrally located positions.
- Territoriality refers to a sense of ownership of a particular space.
- Proxemics refers to the study of how we perceive and use personal space, particularly in terms of the four zones of interaction: intimate, personal, social, and public.

6.7: Nonverbal Differences

- Women tend to be more nonverbally expressive and are generally more accurate in interpreting nonverbal behavior.

- When interpreting nonverbal behavior, try to understand, respect, and adapt to individual differences rather than assuming that all people from a particular culture behave alike.

6.8: Creating a Supportive Communication Climate

- Jack Gibb identifies six pairs of defensive and supportive communication behaviors: evaluative versus descriptive, controlling versus problem oriented, strategic versus spontaneous, neutral versus empathetic, superiority versus equality, certain versus provisional.
- Group members in supportive climates exhibit immediacy—behaviors that promote perceptions of approachability or the likability of others.

SHARED WRITING CASE STUDY: HOW TO SINK THE MAYFLOWER

Use the information you have learned to answer the following question about the case study that was presented at the beginning of the chapter:

How effectively did Joan use team talk and nonverbal messages when she addressed the group?

Review and discuss the similarities and differences between your answer and those of at least two of your classmates.

► A minimum number of characters is required to post and earn points. After posting, your response can be viewed by your class and instructor, and you can participate in the class discussion.

Post

0 characters | 140 minimum

Chapter 6 Quiz: Verbal and Nonverbal Communication in Groups

Chapter 7

Listening and Responding in Groups



Successful group members listen effectively and respond appropriately and constructively.



Learning Objectives

- 7.1** Identify the effects of listening strengths and weaknesses on group effectiveness
- 7.2** Compare the six major components of the HURIER listening model
- 7.3** Explain how each of six listening strategies can enhance a group's ability to achieve its common goal
- 7.4** Summarize how differences in gender, personality, culture, and hearing ability affect interactions among group members

Case Study: That's Not What I Said

A junior-level marketing class has been divided into four project teams. Each team must research and prepare a mar-

keting proposal for a small business in the community. The members of Group 4 are Lilly, Wendy, Michael, John, and Peter.

Today, Group 4 is holding its eighth meeting at the usual time and place: 2:00 p.m. in Library Study Room 303B. Members are worried because they haven't finished

the research portion of the project and the due date for their marketing project and group presentation is three weeks away. It's now 2:15, and everyone is there except Lilly.

"Hi!" shouts a bright-eyed Lilly as she rushes into the room.

"Lilly," says John crisply, "before you get carried away with something else, please tell us that you brought the research we need in order to finish this part of the project report. At our last meeting, you said you'd have it done before today or, at the latest, would give it to us at today's meeting."

The other group members nod as John speaks. They are impressed with how well he is addressing what has become a growing problem.

"Guess what?" Lilly throws her books down on the table and leans forward. "Jack is coming to visit this weekend! He didn't think he could get away until Thanksgiving break, but he just called—that's why I'm late—to say he got two days off. He's leaving in the morning to drive down!"

"That's great, Lilly," nods Peter, acknowledging Lilly's excitement and happiness. "But could we talk about your good news after the meeting? We have a lot to do today."

Lilly laughs. "Yeah, I know. Work, work, work and no play makes us dull boys and girls. You guys are worse task masters than our professor."

Michael looks up and takes out his earbuds. "What? Is there a problem here?"

Everyone rolls their eyes. "Go back to dreamland!" snaps Peter.

"Lilly," says Wendy in a hopeful tone, "we need to go through your research and see whether we're ready to move ahead with our marketing plan."

"I'm just so excited," says a grinning Lilly. "Just two more days 'til he's here."

"Excuse me," John interrupts, "but what about the research? I didn't get an email from you with it attached. Did anyone? You said you'd have it by today. Come on, Lilly, this isn't the first time you've let us down."

Lilly is no longer smiling. "That's not what I said. What I said was that I'd *try* to get it done by today. Look, it's not that big a deal. We can go ahead and work on the marketing plan with or without this research because there's nothing in it we don't already know. I'm still tweaking the data and I didn't have time to finish the graphics. We can add the research later and then adjust the report."

Michael, who's been paying attention now that he's turned off his iPhone, can no longer sit still. "Damn it, Lilly, you haven't been part of this group since day one. We're always waiting for you to show up. And when you take on a task, you either don't do it or finish it late. What's up with you? Don't you care?"

"Of course I care," Lilly retorts.

"Now we know Lilly had some health problems early in the semester and we agreed to make some allowances for her," Peter reminds the group. "Certainly everyone knows that Lilly often comes up with some great ideas."

John throws up his hands, "Does that mean we have to make allowances when Jack shows up for two days of sex?"

The rest of the members cringe, fearing that he may have gone too far. "Out of line. Out of line," murmurs Michael in an audible whisper.

Lilly stands glaring at the group. "Well," she says, "if that's how all of you feel, I guess you don't need my work. Oh—and thanks for ruining my day." With that, Lilly picks up her books and strides out of the room.

The remaining group members look at one another in frustration and begin talking about whether they should suck it up and do Lilly's work or ask the professor if they can "fire" Lilly.

Critical Thinking Questions

When you finish reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following critical thinking questions about this case study:

1. What role did hearing play in the case study?
2. To what extent did members effectively hear, understand, remember, interpret, evaluate, and respond to one another's statements and questions?
3. Which members, if any, demonstrated good listening skills?
4. What group roles and related listening skills could group members have used to resolve the problem and get their work done?

7.1: The Challenge of Listening in Groups

7.1 Identify the effects of listening strengths and weaknesses on group effectiveness

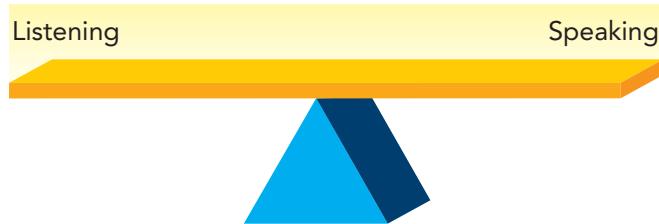
How well do you listen? Most students answer this question with a confident "Very well!" or "I always pay attention." Nevertheless, most students—like most people—overestimate how well they listen. Here are some questions to help you rethink your answer:

- Do you make yourself listen even when the topic or a group member is boring or difficult to understand?
- Do you listen respectfully and objectively when you don't agree with a group member?
- Do you ask questions if you don't understand what someone says?
- Can you summarize the main points of a discussion after a meeting?

If you answered *yes* to all or most of these questions, you are probably an effective listener and valued group member. If you answered *no* or *sometimes* to many of the questions, you have a lot to learn about listening.

Effective listening in a two-person conversation is challenging, but listening in groups is even more challenging because there are multiple speakers, perspectives, and goals. In a group, you *both* listen *and* respond to unexpected news, unusual ideas, and conflicting points of view. Instead of concentrating on what *one* person says and does, you must pay attention to *everyone*. In a group discussion, a short daydream or a side conversation can result in missed information, misunderstood instructions, or inappropriate reactions. In addition, the social pressure to listen is not as strong in groups as it would be in a two-person conversation. If one group member doesn't listen or respond, others usually will. Consequently, group members may not listen well because they count on others to listen for them. In short, it is especially important to balance listening and speaking in groups (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1 Balancing Listening and Speaking



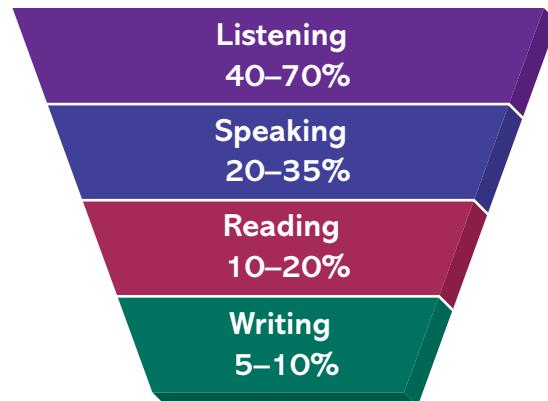
7.1.1: The Nature of Listening

Listening is the ability to understand, analyze, respect, and respond appropriately to the meaning of another person's spoken and nonverbal messages. Initially, listening may appear to be as simple and natural as breathing, but in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Although most of us can *hear*, we often fail to *listen* to what others say. Hearing is relatively easy (unless there is a genetic, developmental, or environmental impediment) and requires only physical ability, whereas effective listening requires knowledge, skills, and motivation. Listening is hard work "when potential distractions are leaping into your ears every fifty-thousandths of a second—and pathways to your brain are just waiting to interrupt your focus."¹ Listening—just like speaking, reading, and writing—is a complex process that goes beyond "You speak, I listen."

Listening is our number-one communication activity. A study that accounted for Internet and social media use among college students found that listening occupies more than half of their communicating time.² In the corpo-

rate world, managers may devote more than 60 percent of their workday listening to others.³ Chief executives may spend as much as 75 percent of their communicating time listening.⁴ Percentages vary from study to study, but Figure 7.2 shows how most of us divide up our daily communicating time.⁵

Figure 7.2 Time Spent Communicating



7.1.2: The Need for Better Listening

Despite the enormous amount of time we spend listening, most of us are not very good listeners. In fact, we tend to think we're better listeners than we really are. Several studies report that immediately after listening to a short talk, most of us cannot accurately report 50 percent of what was said. Without training, we listen at only 25 percent efficiency;⁶ of that 25 percent, most of what we remember is a distorted or inaccurate recollection.⁷

Surveys of business leaders often point to listening as the communication skill most lacking in new employees.⁸ Fortune 500 company managers report that "poor listening performance is ranked as a serious problem during meetings, performance appraisals, and superior–subordinate communication."⁹

Effective leaders engage in listening more than talking and ask more than they tell.¹⁰ Skillful listening is also a critical component of managing conflict, succeeding as a leader, and creating a positive work climate.¹¹ When asked why teams fail, a successful aerospace leader declared: "The worst failing is a team leader who's a nonlistener. A guy who doesn't listen to his people—and that doesn't mean listening to them and doing whatever the hell he wants to do—can make a lot of mistakes."¹² Peter Nulty, an editor for *Fortune* magazine, agrees: "Of all the skills of leadership, listening is the most valuable—and one of the least understood." He adds that great leaders "never stop listening. That's how they get word before anyone else of unseen problems and opportunities."¹³

Group Assessment Student Listening Inventory

In traditional face-to-face classes, students spend most of their time listening to the instructors and other students. Even online, students may listen to mediated instruction rather than reading text. Unfortunately, most students cannot focus their attention on any lecture—no matter how brilliant—for more than 18 minutes. Complete the *Student Listening Inventory*¹⁴ to better understand how well you listen to learn.

Directions: This inventory helps identify your listening strengths and weaknesses. In order to provide a consistent situation and experience, we use the context of a college classroom. The word “Speaker” can mean the instructor or another student. Also, remember that most of us overestimate how well we listen. Give some serious and realistic thought to each statement before responding.

Use the following scale to indicate how often you engage in these listening behaviors:

1 = Almost never, 2 = Not often, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = More often than not, 5 = Almost always.

Statement	Degree of Relevance				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. When someone is speaking to me, I purposely block out distractions, such as side conversations and personal problems.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. I ask questions when I don't understand something a speaker has said.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. When a speaker uses words I don't know, I jot them down and look them up later.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I assess a speaker's credibility while listening.	<input type="radio"/>				
5. I paraphrase and/or summarize a speaker's main ideas in my head as I listen.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. I concentrate on a speaker's main ideas rather than the specific details.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. I try to understand people who speak both directly and indirectly.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. Before reaching a conclusion, I try to confirm fully with the speaker my understanding of the message.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. I fully concentrate when a speaker is explaining a complex idea.	<input type="radio"/>				
10. When listening, I devote my full attention to a speaker's message.	<input type="radio"/>				
11. I apply what I know about cultural differences when listening to someone from another culture.	<input type="radio"/>				
12. I watch a speaker's facial expressions and body language for meaning.	<input type="radio"/>				
13. I give positive nonverbal feedback to speakers—nods, eye contact, vocalized agreement.	<input type="radio"/>				
14. When listening to a speaker, I establish eye contact and stop doing nonrelated tasks.	<input type="radio"/>				
15. I avoid tuning out speakers when I disagree with or dislike their message.	<input type="radio"/>				
16. When I have an emotional response to a speaker or the message, I try to set aside my feelings and continue listening to the message.	<input type="radio"/>				
17. I try to match my nonverbal responses to my verbal responses.	<input type="radio"/>				
18. When someone begins speaking, I focus my attention on the message.	<input type="radio"/>				
19. I try to understand how past experiences influence the ways in which I interpret a message.	<input type="radio"/>				
20. I attempt to eliminate outside interruptions and distractions.	<input type="radio"/>				
21. When I listen, I look at the speaker, maintain some eye contact, and focus on the message.	<input type="radio"/>				
22. I avoid tuning out messages that are complex, complicated, and challenging.	<input type="radio"/>				
23. I try to understand the other person's point of view when it is different from mine.	<input type="radio"/>				
24. I try to be nonjudgmental and noncritical when I listen.	<input type="radio"/>				
25. As appropriate, I self-disclose personal information similar to the information the other person shares with me.	<input type="radio"/>				

Reset Submit

(continued)

Scoring: Add up your scores for all of the questions. Use the following general guidelines to assess how well you think you listen. Please note that your score only represents your *perceptions* about your listening behavior and skills.

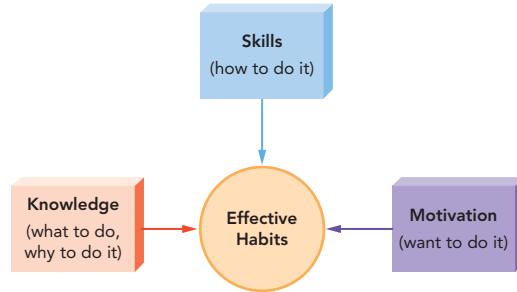
Score	Interpretation
0–62	You perceive yourself to be a poor classroom listener. Attention to all of the items on the inventory could improve your listening effectiveness.
63–86	You perceive yourself to be an adequate listener in the classroom. Learning more about listening and listening skills could improve your overall effectiveness as a communicator.
87–111	You perceive yourself to be a good listener in the classroom, but you could still improve your listening skills.
112–125	You perceive yourself to be an outstanding classroom listener.

7.1.3: The Habits of Listeners

You know what a **habit** is: It's something you do so frequently and have done for so long that you no longer think about why and how you do it. Most people have a lot of good habits (e.g., brushing their teeth, exercising regularly, saying "Please" and "Thank you") and some bad habits (e.g., biting their nails, cracking knuckles, smoking). Habits are difficult to break. People who exercise regularly may feel restless, anxious, or even ill if they stop exercising—as do people who try to stop smoking.

Effective listening can become an enduring habit—something that becomes second nature to you. Stephen R. Covey, the author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, maintains that habits require *knowledge, skills, and desire*. We prefer the term *motivation* to *desire* when describing the characteristics of a habit (Figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3 Effective Habits



Three interrelated components must be present for effective listening to become an enduring habit:¹⁵

1. **Knowledge.** I may be ineffective when interacting with my work associates, my friends, my spouse, or my children because I constantly tell them what I think, but I never really listen to them. Unless I understand the principles, importance, and functions of listening, I may not even *know* I need to listen.
2. **Skills.** Even if I know that I should listen to others, I may not have the skills. I must learn how to listen comprehensively, analytically, and empathically.
3. **Motivation.** Knowing I need to listen and knowing how to listen are not enough. Unless I *want* to listen, it won't become a natural, lifelong practice.

Highly effective listeners let go of what's on their mind long enough to hear what's on the other person's mind.

Effective listening does not mean that you know exactly what another person thinks or feels; instead, it is a genuine willingness and openness to listen and discover.¹⁶

In this chapter, we provide guiding principles of good listening (knowledge) and explain how to listen (skills). Yet we know that desire to listen (motivation) must come from you. Effective listening relies as much on your attitude as on your knowledge and skills.

Unfortunately—for lack of knowledge, skills, and/or motivation—many group members have poor listening habits that prevent their group from achieving its common goal.

Examine the list of poor listening habits in Table 7.1 and ask yourself two questions:

- Do I ever do this?
- Do members of a group to which I belong do this?

Notice that the options do not include "always" and "never" because none of us is a perfect listener 100 percent of the time.

Table 7.1 Poor Listening Habits¹⁷

What follows is a list of poor listening habits. How frequently do you or group members use these poor listening habits? Try to answer with an Often, Sometimes, or Rarely as you read each one.

Poor Listening Habits	How frequently do you or group members use these poor listening habits?
	Often Sometimes Rarely
Pseudo listening. Faking attention or pretending to listen, particularly when your mind is elsewhere, you are bored, or you think it pleases a member	Often Sometimes Rarely
Selective Listening. Listening only to messages with which you agree; avoiding listening to complex or highly technical information; listening for faults in what other members say	Often Sometimes Rarely
Superficial Listening. Paying more attention to how members look and speak rather than to what they say; drawing conclusions about what members mean or claim before they have finished talking	Often Sometimes Rarely
Defensive Listening. Assuming that critical remarks made by other group members are personal attacks; focusing on how to respond to or challenge members rather than listening objectively	Often Sometimes Rarely
Disruptive Listening. Interrupting members, exaggerating negative non-verbal responses, and/or withholding your attention while others are speaking	Often Sometimes Rarely

If you answered with an honest *rarely* to most of the above questions, you are probably a good listener and valued group member. If you answered *Often* or *Sometimes* to several of these questions, you face the challenge of trying to break these counterproductive listening habits. The same criteria would apply if you were assessing a group member's listening habits. Accordingly, we devote the remainder of this chapter to the challenge of improving listening in groups.¹⁸

7.2: The Listening Process

7.2 Compare the six major components of the HURIER listening model

Communication researchers, cognitive scientists, and neurologists describe listening as a complex process. In communication studies, we view listening as two inseparable kinds of behavior: uncontrolled and controlled. Automatic, uncontrolled listening is the universal processing your brain uses to accept input and then transfer and store that input, possibly for future use. Mindful, controlled listening is the purposeful act of applying specific listening strategies and skills that help you hear, understand, remember, interpret, evaluate, and appropriately respond to the meaning of another person's spoken and nonverbal messages.¹⁹ There isn't much you can do about the automatic, uncontrolled mechanics of listening; however, what you *can* do is learn how to control your behavior as you mindfully listen to others.

The fundamental nature of effective listening is best described by using the listening model presented in the

"Theory in Groups" feature. Like any model—be it a paper airplane or detailed architectural plans—a listening model gives you a way of understanding the complex interactions of elements in the listening process.

Theory in Groups The HURIER Listening Model

Objective: Describe how, according to the HURIER listening model, listening filters, purpose, and context affect the listening process in groups.

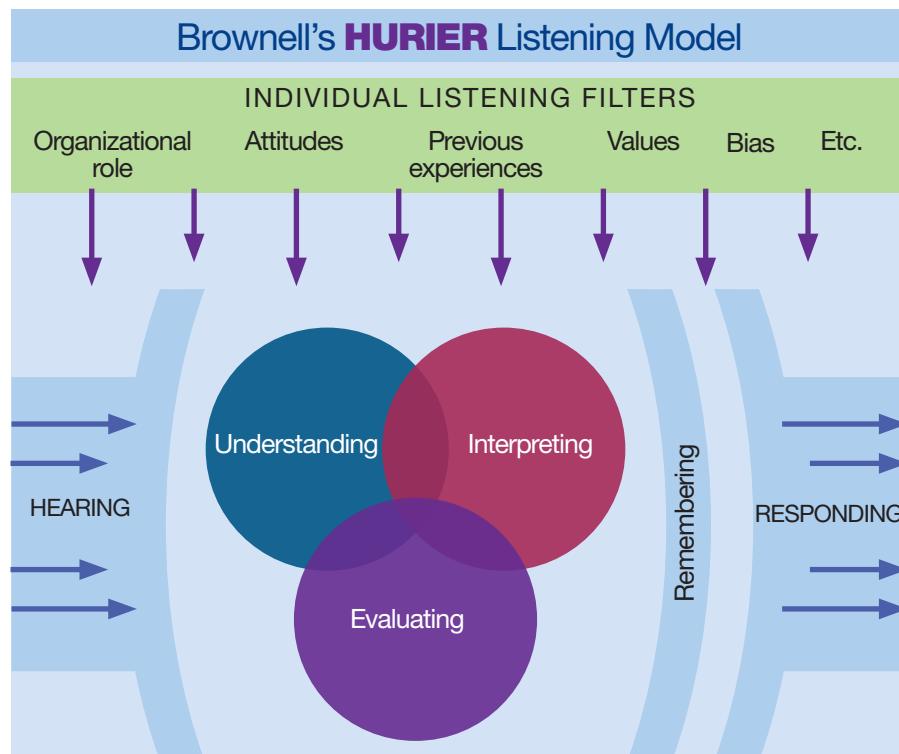
Judi Brownell, a leading listening researcher, designed a listening model that²⁰

- identifies the basic components of the listening process.
- demonstrates how these basic components relate to and affect one another.
- explains the strengths and weaknesses of a person's listening behavior.
- applies contemporary research to how the listening process operates.

The **HURIER Listening Model** distinguishes six interrelated components of the listening process. Each of the letters in HURIER represents one of six components: **H**earing, **U**nderstanding, **R**emembering, **I**nterpreting, **E**valuating, and **R**esponding. Brownell links each of these components to appropriate listening attitudes, relevant listening principles, and methods for improving your listening skills (Figure 7.4).²¹

The HURIER Model recognizes you are constantly influenced by **listening filters**, which are "internal and external

Figure 7.4 Brownell's HURIER Listening Model



factors that color your perceptions and subsequent interpretations" of the messages you hear.²² Listening filters include your role in the group as well as your attitudes, values, biases, and previous experiences.²³ For example, a group's leader who functions as a **coordinator** or **gatekeeper** may listen quite differently than a member who typically assumes the roles of **analyzer** or **opinion provider**. If you frequently argue with a particular member or dislike his or her opinions, you are more likely to listen to that person quite differently than you would to a member who shares your views.

The HURIER Model recognizes that how you listen becomes more or less important depending on both your purpose and the nature of the communication context.²⁴ For example, when you're listening to a group member or a guest who's a topic expert, you may listen conscientiously to learn as much as you can. In contrast, you may listen more critically when a less-informed member presents a questionable proposal for solving a problem. If your group is working in a hot, noisy room in the late afternoon, contextual factors may make it difficult for members to devote their full attention and energy to listening.

The HURIER Model is a useful guide for understanding listening in groups because it takes into account the group's goal, the interdependence of group members, and the task and social dimensions that affect how group members work with one another.

Table 7.2 identifies, defines, and provides sample statements of the six key components in the HURIER Listening Model.

Table 7.2 Components of Listening

Types of Listening	Definition	Example
Hearing	The ability to make clear distinctions among the sounds and words in a language	I sometimes have trouble hearing a soft-spoken person, particularly if there's background noise.
Understanding	The ability to accurately grasp the meaning of someone's spoken and nonverbal messages	When you say "Wait," do you mean we should wait a few more minutes or wait until Carrie gets here?
Remembering	The ability to store, retain, and recall information that has been heard	Hi George, I remember you were having trouble with your printer. Did you fix it or get a new one?
Interpreting	The ability to empathize with another person's feelings	It must be frustrating to have such an unsympathetic instructor.
Evaluating	The ability to analyze and make a judgment about the validity of a message	I see two reasons why that proposal will be difficult to implement. They are . . .
Responding	The ability to respond in a way that indicates full understanding of a message	You seem to be saying that it's not a good time to confront Chris. Am I right?

7.2.1: Listening to Hear

Listening to hear is the ability to make clear, aural distinctions among the sounds and words in a language and is the "prerequisite to all listening."²⁵

In describing hearing ability, science writer Seth Horowitz explains, "You and every other vertebrate . . . have been doing it for hundreds of millions of years. It is your life line, your alarm system, your way to escape danger and pass on your genes."²⁶

Answering the following questions can help you understand why listening to hear is the gateway to effective listening.

- Can you make clear, aural distinctions among the sounds and words you hear?
- Do you often ask group members to repeat what they have said or misunderstand what they have said because you did not hear them accurately?
- Do you notice nonverbal messages expressed in members' facial expressions, gestures, posture, movement, and vocal sounds (e.g., sighs, groans, laughter, gasps)?

7.2.2: Listening to Understand



For most college students, listening to understand is their primary source of learning.

Listening to understand is the ability to focus on accurately grasping the meaning of spoken and nonverbal messages; it is also known as *comprehensive listening*. After all, if you don't understand what someone means, how can you respond in a reasonable way?

For example, Geneva makes the following suggestion to a group of students: "Let's have a party on the last day of class." Someone who is primarily listening to understand may wonder whether Geneva means that:

1. We should have a party instead of an exam.
2. We should ask the instructor whether we can have a party.
3. We should have a party after the exam.

Misinterpreting the meaning of Geneva's comment could result in an inappropriate response. Answering the

following questions can help you focus on several characteristics of effective comprehensive listening.

- Do you understand the meaning of words spoken by another person?
- Do you generally interpret nonverbal behavior accurately?
- Can you accurately identify the precise meaning of a speaker's message?

Groups in Balance . . .

Ask Questions to Enhance Comprehension

Asking good questions can enhance listening comprehension.²⁷ The listening strategies that follow constitute a blueprint for determining what a person means.

1. *Have a plan.* Make sure your questions are clear and appropriate so they will not be misunderstood or waste time.
2. *Keep the questions simple.* Ask one question at a time and make sure it's relevant to the discussion.
3. *Ask nonthreatening questions.* Avoid questions that begin with "Why didn't you . . .?" or "How could you . . .?" because they can create a **defensive climate** in the group and among members. There's a big difference between "Who screwed up?" and "Why did we miss the deadline?"
4. *Ask permission.* If a topic is sensitive, explain why you are asking the question and ask permission before continuing. "You say you're fearful about sharing this report with Tom. Would you mind helping me understand why you're so apprehensive?"
5. *Avoid biased or manipulative questions.* Tricking someone into giving you the answer you want can erode trust and group cohesion. "Will you vote for this proposal, or are you going to stall and quibble to prevent us from voting?" and "Does anyone here have some better ideas?"
6. *Wait for the answer.* In addition to asking good questions, make sure you respond appropriately. After you ask a question, give group members time to think and then wait for the answer.

7.2.3: Listening to Remember

How good is your memory? How well do you store, retain, and recall information? Do you ever forget what you're talking about during a discussion? Can you remember a person's name or a phone number even before you have a chance to write it down? Occasionally, everyone experiences memory problems.

Listening to remember is the ability to accurately recall what you hear. As we noted earlier in this chapter, most people cannot recall 50 percent of what they hear immedi-

ately after hearing it. At the same time, your ability to remember directly affects how well you listen.

When we ask students or colleagues, "How good is your memory?" they often answer, "It depends." For example, if you're very interested in what someone's saying, you're more likely to remember the conversation, discussion, or presentation. However, if you're under a lot of stress or preoccupied with personal problems, you may not remember anything. Here are just a few suggestions that, with practice, can improve how well you listen to remember:

- **Repeat**

Repeat an important idea or information right after you hear it; say it aloud if you can. For example, if you've just learned that your group report is due on the 22nd, say this date several times ("Let's see how many meetings we need to have before the 22nd" and "We'll need to have our first draft done a week ahead of time—22 minus 7 is 15"). If you're in a situation where it's not appropriate to do this aloud, repeat the information in your mind several times.

- **Associate**

Associate a word, phrase, or idea with something that describes it. For example, when you meet someone whose name you want to remember, associate the name with the context in which you met the person (Steve in biology class) or with a word beginning with the same letter that describes the person (Blonde Brenda).

- **Visualize**

Visualize a word, phrase, or idea. For example, when a patient was told she might need to take calcium channel blockers, she visualized a swimmer trying to cross an English Channel filled with floating calcium pills.

- **Use mnemonics**

A **mnemonic** is a memory aid based on something simple, such as a pattern or rhyme. For example, the acronym HURIER in Brownell's Model of Listening is a mnemonic that represents the first letter of each of the six listening components. Many people remember which months of the year have 30 days with the poem that begins "Thirty days hath September . . ." In fact, by rearranging these four methods of improving your memory, you might be able to remember them more easily as MARV (mnemonics, associate, repeat, visualize).

7.2.4: Listening to Interpret

Listening to interpret is the ability to recognize, empathize, and respond appropriately to someone else's situation or feelings. This type of listening does not demand that you feel the exact same emotions or "walk in their shoes." Rather, it focuses on how well you interpret what others feel and why they feel that way. Your response should

demonstrate that you care and want to help. Listening to interpret involves putting *your* emotions and *your* agenda on hold in order to identify with others.²⁸

By not listening to interpret, you may overlook the most important part of a message. Even if you understand every word a person says, you can still miss anger, enthusiasm, or frustration in a group member's voice. As an empathic listener, you don't have to agree with or feel the same way as other group members, but you do have to try to understand the type and intensity of feelings that those members are experiencing. For example, during an after-class discussion about having a party on the last day of class, Kim exclaims: "A class party would be a waste of time!" An empathic listener may wonder whether Kim means that (1) she has more important things to do during exam week, (2) she doesn't think the class or the instructor deserves a party, or (3) she doesn't want to attend such a party. Empathic listening is difficult, but it also is "the pinnacle of listening" because it demands "fine skill and exquisite tuning into another's mood and feeling."²⁹

Answering the following questions can help you understand the scope of empathic listening:

- Do you show interest and concern about other group members?
- Does your nonverbal behavior communicate friendliness and trust?
- Do you avoid highly critical reactions to others?
- Do you avoid talking about your own experiences and feelings when someone else is describing theirs?³⁰

7.2.5: Listening to Evaluate

Listening to evaluate is the ability to analyze critically and make objective judgments about the validity of a message. A **valid** message is logically sound and factually accurate.

Evaluative listeners understand why they accept or reject another member's ideas and suggestions. They make judgments based on their answers to the following questions: Is the group member right or wrong? Logical or illogical? Biased or unbiased? Skilled evaluative listeners are open-minded, putting aside their own biases or prejudices when analyzing the validity of a message.

Russell makes the following proposal: "We can really impress Professor Hawkins if everyone chips in and gives him a gift at the party." An evaluative listener might think:

1. the instructor could misinterpret the gift as an effort to raise the group's grade,
2. some class members may not want to contribute, or
3. there may not be enough time to collect money and buy an appropriate gift.

Recognizing that a group member is trying to influence or persuade—rather than merely inform—is the first step in improving your evaluative listening. Answering the following questions can help you assess how well you listen to evaluate:³¹

1. Do you recognize persuasive strategies?
2. Can you tell when a group member appeals to your emotions and/or to your critical thinking ability?
3. Do you know how to assess the quality and validity of arguments and evidence?

7.2.6: Listening to Respond

Listening to respond is the ability to react appropriately to others in a way that indicates comprehension or appreciation of a message. Although responding may seem odd in a list of listening components and skills, group members will "make judgments about the quality of your listening largely based" on how you respond.³² You may ask a question, provide support, offer advice, or share your opinion in a response. You may frown, smile, laugh, shrug, or look confused. In the most effective groups, members listen to hear, understand, remember, interpret, evaluate, and "listen" to one another's nonverbal cues before responding. Use the following guidelines to improve how well you listen to respond by providing constructive feedback and reacting appropriately to what others say:

- Focus on behavior (not the person).
- Describe the behavior (don't judge it).
- Provide factual observations (not assumptions).
- Choose an appropriate time and place to respond (don't ignore the circumstances).
- Provide supportive feedback to help others (not to meet your own needs).³³

THE NATURE OF PARAPHRASING Fortunately, there is a critical responding skill that can help you more fully listen to and understand someone else's meaning. **Paraphrasing** is a form of feedback that uses different words to restate what others say in a way that indicates you understand them. When you paraphrase, you go beyond the words you hear to accurately identify the feelings and underlying meanings that accompany the words. Too often, we jump to conclusions and incorrectly assume that we know what a speaker means and feels.

Depending on the people involved, the circumstances, and the setting, paraphrasing has many useful functions, such as:

- ensuring comprehension before evaluation
- reassuring others that you want to understand them
- clearing up confusion and asking for clarification
- summarizing lengthy comments

Table 7.3 Types of Paraphrasing

Type of Paraphrasing	Recommended Technique	Statement to Be Paraphrased	Effective Parphrase Example	Ineffective Parphrase Examples
Parphrase Content	Find new words to express the same meaning. Paraphrase, don't parrot.	Marina: "I never seem to get anywhere on time, and I don't know why."	"What I'm hearing is that you've tried to figure out why you're often late but can't. Is that what you're saying?"	You: "Ah, so you don't know why you never seem to get anywhere on time?" Marina: "Yeah, that's what I just said."
Parphrase Depth	Match the emotions to the speaker's meaning. Avoid responding lightly to a serious problem and vice versa.	Marina: "People, including my boss, bug me about being late, and sometimes I can tell that they're pretty angry."	"When you say that people are angry, you sound as though it's become serious enough to put your job at risk or damage your relationships with your boss and coworkers; is that right?"	You: "In other words, you worry that other people are upset by your lateness."
Parphrase Meaning	Do not add unintended meaning or complete the person's sentence.	Marina: "I really don't know . . ."	"Let me make sure I understand what you're saying. Is it that you don't know why you're always late, or that you wish you had a better idea of how to manage your time?"	You: ". . . how to manage your time?" Marina: ". . . what to do."
Parphrase Language	Use simple language to ensure accuracy.	Marina: "I never seem to get anywhere on time and I don't know why."	"It sounds as though being late has become a big problem at work and you're looking for ways to fix it. Right?"	You: "Ahh, your importunate perplexities about punctuality are inextricably linked." Marina: "Huh?"

- helping others uncover their own thoughts and feelings
- providing a safe and supportive communication climate
- encouraging others to reach their own conclusions³⁴

Paraphrasing is a form of feedback—a listening check—that asks, “Am I right? Is this what you mean?” Paraphrasing is not repeating what a person says; it requires finding *new* words to describe what you have heard. If you want to clarify someone’s meaning, you might say, “When you said you were not going to the conference, did you mean that you want one of us to go instead?” If you want to make sure that you understand a person’s feelings, you might say, “I know you said you approve, but I sense that you’re not happy with the outcome—am I way off?” If you are summarizing someone’s comments, you might respond to a speaker’s lengthy list of reasons to stick with the status quo by responding, “What you seem to be saying is that it’s not the best time to change this policy, right?”

THE COMPLEXITIES OF PARAPHRASING Paraphrasing is difficult. Not only are you putting aside your own interests and opinions, you are also finding *new* words that best match someone else’s meaning. Paraphrasing is another way of saying, “I want to listen to what you have to say, and I want to fully understand what you mean.” If you paraphrase accurately, the other person will appreciate your concern and support. And if you don’t get the paraphrase right, your feedback provides another opportunity for the speaker to explain. Table 7.3 shows how a paraphrase can vary in four critical ways: content, depth, meaning, and language.³⁵

GroupWork

Practice Paraphrasing

The art of paraphrasing is difficult to learn and master. When paraphrasing, use new words to accurately rephrase what someone has said. Skilled paraphrasing requires undivided attention to the meaning of the verbal, vocal, and nonverbal components of a message.³⁶ Carefully read the directions and analyze the sample before completing the Practice Paraphrasing activity.

Directions: Read the four statements made by group members and write the response you would make that best paraphrases their meaning. As a guide, we recommend that you include at least three components in your paraphrase:

1. State your interest in understanding the other person; examples include “I sense that . . .”, “If I understand you correctly, you . . .”, and “It sounds as if you. . .”
2. Interpret the other person’s emotion or feeling, but make sure you find alternatives to the words being used. For example, if a person says, “I’m angry,” you will need to decide whether this means that the person is annoyed, irritated, disgusted, or furious. Try to find a word that matches the person’s meaning and emotion.
3. Describe the situation, event, or facts in your own words.

Sample Situation and Paraphrase:

Group Member: I get really frustrated when André yells at one of us during a meeting.

Paraphrase: You’re saying that André shouts at you or another group member, and that this upsets you a great deal. Am I right?

(continued)

- 1. Group Member:** I have the worst luck with laptops. Every single one I've used has had problems. Just when the warranty runs out, something goes wrong and I have to spend a lot of money to get it fixed. The laptop I have now has crashed twice, and each time I lost most of my documents. I've tried to find out if I'm doing something wrong, but I've never been able to get an answer. Why me? I must be cursed or something.
-
-
-

- 2. Group Member:** I hope Anita doesn't react too strongly to Chris and Manuel's concerns about the scope of our project at today's meeting. She can be very emotional when she feels strongly about something she really believes in.
-
-
-

- 3. Group Member:** I dislike saying *no* to anyone in our group who asks for help, but if I agree to help everyone who asks me, then I have to rush or stay up late to get my own work done. I want to help, but I also want to do my own job—and do it well.
-
-
-

- 4. Group Member:** How on Earth are we going to get an A on this assignment if we can't even find time to meet?
-
-
-

There is an unfortunate tendency to focus on the contributions and importance of group members who talk more than those who listen. "This unbalanced emphasis, especially as it actually affects persons in real discussions, could be an important cause of the problems that speaking is supposed to cure."³⁷ In other words, if you only focus on what *you* intend to say in a group discussion, you can't give your full attention to what others say. Several key listening strategies and skills can help you listen to hear, understand, remember, interpret, and evaluate what other group members say. They can also help you frame appropriate responses.

7.3.1: Use Your Extra Thought Speed

Most people talk at about 125 to 150 words per minute. There is good evidence that if thoughts were measured in words per minute, we'd find that most of us can think at three to four times the rate at which we speak.³⁸ Thus, we have about four hundred extra words of spare thinking time during every minute a person is talking to us.

Thought speed is the speed (in words per minute) at which most people can think compared to the speed at which they speak. Listening researcher Ralph Nichols asks the obvious question: "What do we do with our excess thinking time while someone is speaking?"³⁹ Poor listeners use their extra thought speed to daydream, to plan how to confront the speaker, to take unnecessary notes, or to engage in side conversations (which is increasingly being done through electronic means such as texting, instant messaging, and emailing). Most people do not use their extra thought speed efficiently or productively. When listening, use your thought speed intentionally and methodically to

- make sure you can hear what group members say.
- understand the intended meaning of a member's message.
- identify and summarize key ideas.
- interpret statements by members who express strong emotions.
- analyze and evaluate the validity of arguments.
- interpret the meaning of nonverbal behavior.
- determine the most appropriate way to respond.

7.3: Key Listening Strategies and Skills

7.3 Explain how each of six listening strategies can enhance a group's ability to achieve its common goal

You will spend the vast majority of your time in groups listening to others. Even during a half-hour meeting of five people, it is unlikely that any member will talk more than a total of ten minutes—unless that member wants to be accused of dominating the discussion.

7.3.2: Apply the Golden Listening Rule

The **Golden Listening Rule** is easy to remember: Listen to others as you would have them listen to you.

Unfortunately, this rule can be difficult to follow. Like the more familiar Golden Rule, it asks you to set aside your own needs in order to meet those of another.

The Golden Listening Rule is not so much a "rule" as it is a positive listening attitude. If you aren't motivated, you

won't listen. The best listeners put aside what *they* think in order to understand what's on someone else's mind. They transform listening into an enduring habit by understanding the importance of good listening, learning effective listening skills, and—perhaps most important of all—*wanting* to listen. After all, if you aren't willing to stop talking, you won't be able to listen.

An appropriate listening attitude does not mean that you know exactly what the speaker thinks or feels. Rather, it requires a strong motivation to listen and learn. The six positive listening attitudes in Table 7.4 stand opposite their six negative counterparts.⁴⁰

Table 7.4 Positive and Negative Listening Attitudes

How Positive Is Your Listening Attitude?	
Positive Listening Attitudes	Negative Listening Attitudes
Interested	Uninterested
Responsible	Irresponsible
Group-centered	Self-centered
Patient	Impatient
Equal	Superior
Open-minded	Closed-minded

7.3.3: “Listen” to Nonverbal Behavior

Speakers do not communicate all of their meaning through words. Often, you can understand others by observing their nonverbal behavior. A change in vocal tone or volume may be another way of saying, “Listen up—this is very important.” Sustained eye contact may be a member’s way of saying, “I’m talking to you!” Facial expressions can reveal whether a thought is painful, joyous, exciting, serious, or boring. Even gestures can express an excitement that words cannot convey.

It is easy to misinterpret nonverbal behavior. Effective listeners verbally confirm their interpretations of nonverbal communication. A question as simple as, “Do your nods indicate a *yes* vote?” can ensure that everyone is on the same nonverbal wavelength. If, as research indicates, more than half of a speaker’s meaning is conveyed nonverbally,⁴¹ you will miss a lot of important information if you fail to “listen” to nonverbal behavior.

Correctly interpreting nonverbal responses can tell you just as much as or even more than spoken words. The nonverbal reactions of listeners (i.e., smiles, frowns, eye contact, and gestures) can also help you adjust what you say while you are speaking.

7.3.4: Minimize Distractions

Distractions take many forms in group settings.⁴² Frequent interruptions, uncomfortable room temperature and/or

seating, or noisy and annoying outside activities are all environmental distractions. Distractions also occur when members speak too softly, too rapidly, or too slowly; when someone speaks in a monotone or with an unfamiliar accent; or when a member has unusual or annoying mannerisms. It is difficult to listen when other members are fidgeting, doodling, tapping their pencils, texting, or openly reading or writing something unrelated to the discussion.

When a distraction is environmental, you can get up and shut the door, open the window, or turn on more lights. When another member’s behavior is distracting, you can try to minimize or stop the disruption. If members speak too softly, have side conversations, or use unreadable visual aids, a conscientious listener will ask them to speak up, postpone their side conversations, or move closer for a better view.

7.3.5: Listen Before You Leap

One of the most-often-quoted pieces of listening advice comes from pioneer listening researcher Ralph Nichols: “We must always withhold evaluation until our comprehension is complete.”⁴³ Good listeners make sure that they understand a speaker before they respond.

Has a friend ever told you to count to ten when you became angry? This is also good advice when you listen. Counting to ten involves more than Nichols’ withholding evaluation until comprehension is complete. You may comprehend a speaker perfectly but be infuriated or offended by what you hear. If an insensitive leader opens a meeting by ordering, “One of you girls take minutes,” it may take a count to 20 to collect your thoughts before you can respond to this sexist comment in a professional manner (“Dave, did you mean to ask a volunteer to take minutes today?”). If a group member tells an offensive joke, you may have multiple reactions—anger at the speaker and disappointment with those who laugh. Listening before you leap gives you time to adjust your reaction in a way that will help, rather than disrupt a group discussion further.

7.3.6: Take Relevant Notes

Given that most of us only listen at 25 percent efficiency, why not take notes and write down important facts and big ideas? Research has found that note takers recall messages in more detail than non-note takers.⁴⁴ The inclination to take notes is understandable. After all, that’s what we do in a classroom when an instructor lectures. Taking notes makes a great deal of sense, but *only* if it is done skillfully.

There are several reasons why note taking is less than ideal in a group. If you are like most listeners, only one-



The ability to take useful notes depends on how well you listen and how wisely you decide which ideas and information should go in your notes. When you study the notes you have taken in class, during a meeting, or while following someone's verbal directions, how helpful are they in remembering what was said?

fourth of what is said may end up in your notes. Even if you copy every word you hear, your notes will not include the nonverbal cues that often tell you more about what a person means and feels. And if you spend all your time taking notes, when will you put aside your pen or laptop and participate fully?

Trying to "robotically" write down every word defeats the purpose of note taking. Striving to "get it all down" may interfere with your ability to accurately hear, understand, remember, interpret, evaluate, and respond to what you hear. Listening expert Ralph Nichols summarized the dilemma of balancing note taking and listening when he concluded that "there is some evidence to indicate that the volume of notes taken and their value to the taker are inversely related."⁴⁵

Thus, the challenge for a group member is this: How do I take brief, meaningful notes during a group discussion? If a group member takes minutes in a meeting, you can rely on those minutes as the official record of what took place. But here, too, there are potential problems. What if the recorder is a poor listener? What if you need the notes immediately and can't wait for the official minutes to be distributed and approved? Suppose you want more personalized meeting notes that also record your assignments? In such cases, minutes may not be enough.

Flexibility is the key to taking useful and personalized meeting notes. Good listeners adjust their note-taking system to the group's agenda or impose a note-taking pattern on a disorganized discussion. In some cases, margin notes on an agenda may be sufficient. If you attend a lot of meetings, you may find it helpful to use a brief notetaking form—such as the one in Figure 7.5—to record key details, information, and actions.

Figure 7.5 Sample Form for Meeting Notes

Meeting Notes	
Group:	Goal/Topic:
Date and Time:	Place:
Members Attending:	
Members Absent:	
Vital Information	
1. 2. 3.	
Decisions Reached	
1. 2. 3.	
Personal To-Do List	Date Due
1. 2. 3.	
Date/Time/Place of Next Meeting:	

Virtual Teams Listening Online

Objective: Summarize the recommendations for adapting the HURIER Model's six components to the virtual team experience.

Effective listening in virtual teams requires adapting to different contexts and media. In a sophisticated videoconference, this adaptation is relatively easy—you can see and hear group members sitting at a conference table in another place almost as clearly as you can see and hear colleagues sitting in the same room. In an email exchange, however, you can neither see nor hear participants or collaborate in real time, but you still must "listen" to their messages.

Ironically, it may be easier to "listen" to group members in some virtual meetings than in a face-to-face setting. In a face-to-face discussion, you hear what members say and respond immediately. Members can see you grimace, smile, or roll your eyes. In an email discussion, you have more time to "listen" to others and can control the content and style of your responses.

The downside of virtual meetings is that it is easier to fake listening in voice- or text-only meetings. You can pretend to participate in a Webex presentation by occasionally typing a comment. During a teleconference, you can stop listening and work on other tasks, checking in and responding with an "I agree" or "Good job" to feign participation. Although it's also possible to fake listening in a face-to-face discussion, your physical presence makes it difficult to "be elsewhere."

How then can you listen well online? A recent study found that “listeners” who provided voice responses during an online discussion were rated by group members as good listeners who also made the “talker” feel good. The researchers concluded that a listener can be just as helpful on the phone as in person.⁴⁶

Even if you are reading rather than hearing a message, do your best to understand, remember, interpret, evaluate, and appropriately respond to it. When you listen online, you are doing much more than sending and receiving messages. You are demonstrating “to others that they matter; we are, in essence, stopping, encouraging, and planting seeds of kindness and optimism.”⁴⁷ You are letting others know that you comprehend and value their messages. The following recommendations will help you adapt the HURIER Model to the virtual team experience:

1. **Understand.** Pay attention to the ways in which members use common online devices such as emoticons in the form of smiley faces or other symbols; textspeak such as LOL, BTW, OMG, or ALL CAPITAL LETTERS; **bold** letters; or **highlighting** to emphasize a phrase or show an emotion. Avoid the overuse of punctuation marks, such as exclamation points or a mixed series of question marks or exclamation points, such as “!?!?” When it’s your turn to contribute, limit the use of these common online devices.
2. **Remember.** Depending on the importance of a message in text-only form, you may want to save or copy it as an electronic document. Face-to-face listeners do not have that luxury unless they record and transcribe what is said in a meeting.
3. **Interpret.** Consider whether a choice of words indicates a particular frame of mind or emotion. Are the words dull and ordinary, or highly expressive and emotional? Are there more positive words than negative words? Is the person asking for help, advice, sympathy, or agreement—either directly or indirectly? Answering these questions can help you frame a responsible and empathic response.
4. **Evaluate.** Engage your critical thinking skills when reading an online message. Are the facts valid? Are the conclusions reasonable? And don’t be afraid of your emotional responses. If something doesn’t “smell right” (not literally) about what you’re reading, you may want to look again for an error or flaw in the message.
5. **Respond.** Listening to understand, remember, interpret, and evaluate prepares you to respond. If you don’t understand someone’s meaning, ask that person for more of an explanation. If you’re not sure whether you need to remember the message, ask a question about its importance. If you sense that the other member needs emotional support or is having difficulty phrasing an idea or argument, paraphrase what their message means to you, beginning with a phrase, such as, “Let me put this in my own words to make sure I understand what you’re saying.” And if you question the validity of someone’s message, explain why.

When responding to a text message, you have much more time to think about, develop, and write an appropriate response. Also, make sure that you “listen” before you leap by

withholding evaluation until comprehension is complete. Many people enjoy sharing mediated messages by texting because it’s so much like talking. Now think about your responses to mediated messages: They’re so much like listening.

Watch Virtual Misunderstanding



Watch the video clip from “Virtual Misunderstanding,” which illustrates concepts in this chapter.

WRITING PROMPT

Listening Online

1. How well did each member listen to hear, understand, remember, interpret, evaluate, and respond appropriately one another during the discussion?
2. Charlie says that he thought the group did not need anything more from him. Paraphrase Charlie’s reasons for not responding to Ellen’s emails and for not doing the required work.
3. Which, if any, of the following poor listening habits (pseudolistening, selective listening, superficial listening, defensive listening, disruptive listening) were evident in this discussion? Which member exhibited the poorest listening habits?
4. How well did Eva, the project manager, demonstrate effective listening skills?

The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

7.4: Listening to Differences

7.4 Summarize how differences in gender, personality, culture, and hearing ability affect interactions among group members

In addition to different cultures, backgrounds, perceptions, and values, group members differ in the ways they listen. In a group setting, different listening abilities and styles can be an asset. For instance, if you have difficulty analyzing an argument, another group member can take on the task of listening to evaluate. If other members focus only on words rather than the nonverbal expression of emotions, assign yourself the job of listening to interpret.

7.4.1: Gender Differences

Listening behavior sometimes differs between male and female members. Men may direct more focus to the content of a message when they listen, but women may focus more on the relationships among speakers.⁴⁸ In other words, men tend to listen to understand and evaluate, and women are more likely to listen to interpret.

If it is true that “males tend to hear the facts while females are more aware of the mood of the communication,” a group is fortunate to have *both* kinds of listeners contributing to the group process.⁴⁹ As more women and men cross the barriers of traditional, gender-specific roles and jobs, the distinctions in listening abilities may not be as clear cut as they were in the past. Like most gender issues, our socialization and implicit biases affect our expectations about the way men and women listen.

7.4.2: Personality Differences

The **Big Five Personality Traits**—extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience—can affect how group members listen to one another. Wouldn’t you prefer to work with members who listen conscientiously and agreeably rather than carelessly and disagreeably? Certainly, an emotionally unstable member can disrupt and permanently damage the ability of a group to achieve its common goal.

The **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®** predicts that **introverts** will be better at listening to understand and interpret than **extroverts**, who are eager to speak even when they haven’t taken the time to fully understand what others have said or how they feel. **Sensors** may listen for facts and figures, paying a lot of attention to and remembering details; **intuitives** listen for key ideas and overarching themes, and may easily become bored easily and stop listening. **Thinkers** are often effective at listening to evaluate, in contrast to **feelers**, who are more likely to be effective at listening to interpret. **Judgers** may drive the group to reach a decision, whereas **perceivers** take the time to appreciate what they hear without leaping to immediate conclusions.⁵⁰

7.4.3: Cultural Differences

Cultural differences have significant effects on the ways in which group members listen and respond to one another. One study concludes that international students view U.S. students as less willing and less patient listeners than students from African, Asian, South American, or European cultures.⁵¹

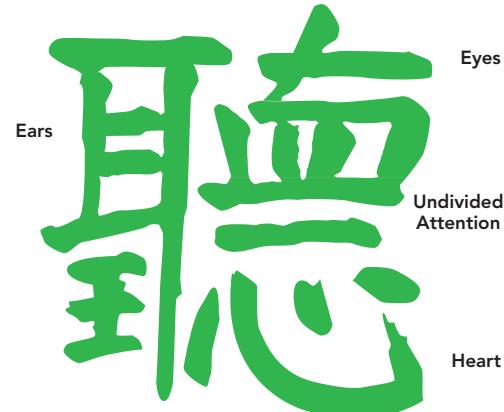
English is a speaker-responsible, **low-context** language in which the speaker structures the message and relies primarily on words to provide meaning. In contrast, Japanese is a listener-responsible, **high-context** language in which speakers indirectly indicate what they want the listener to know and rely on nonverbal communication and an under-

standing of the relationship between the speaker and the listener to interpret meaning.⁵² Thus, English-speaking listeners may believe that Japanese speakers are leaving out important information or being evasive; Japanese listeners may think that English speakers are overexplaining or talking down to them. Such misunderstandings and perceived discourtesies are the result of speaking and listening differences rather than substantive disagreement.

Groups in Balance . . . Learn the Art of High-Context Listening

Group members from **high-context** cultures go well beyond a person’s words to interpret meaning. High-context communicators also pay close attention to nonverbal cues when they listen. For example, the Chinese symbol for *listening* includes characters for eyes, ears, and heart, as well as full attention (Figure 7.6).

Figure 7.6 Chinese Symbol for Listening



For the Chinese, “it is impossible to listen . . . without using the eyes because you need to look for nonverbal communication. You certainly must listen with ears” because Chinese is a tonal language in which intonation determines meaning. “Finally, you listen with your heart because” you must sense the “emotional undertones expressed by the speaker.” In Korean, *nunchi* means “communicating through your eyes.” “Koreans believe that the environment supplies most of the information that we seek, so there is little need to speak.”⁵³

7.4.4: Hearing Ability Differences

According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, about 36 million U.S. adults report some degree of hearing loss. Given that hearing loss is usually gradual and cumulative throughout life, older adults have greater hearing losses than children and young adults. However, “approximately 15 percent (26 million) of Americans between the ages of 20 and 69 have high



Deaf communicators speak and listen using sign language and speech reading. They attentively watch one another's nonverbal gestures, facial expressions, and the words formed by their mouths.

frequency hearing loss due to exposure to loud sounds or noise at work or in leisure activities.⁵⁴ Researchers at Gallaudet University claim that between 2 and 4 people of every 1,000 in the United States are "functionally deaf"; more than half of them became deaf relatively late in life.⁵⁵

Adapting to members who have difficulty hearing requires a lot more than speaking in a loud voice. In addition to using an appropriate volume, articulate your words clearly. Reduce background noise by closing doors to hallway sounds or turning off noisy equipment. Make eye contact and begin your message by speaking the person's name so that he or she knows to pay attention to you. In addition, make sure you are facing the person who has difficulty hearing while you are speaking; in this way, your facial expressions, gestures, and other body language will help convey your message.⁵⁶

If a member of your group is deaf, keep in mind that not all deaf people are alike. Most, but not all, deaf people are skilled lipreaders. Jamie Berke, a deaf contributor to *About.com*, writes: "Lipreading (speechreading) is a skill that I could not live without. However, it does not replace written or visual communication. Even the best lipreaders can miss a good bit because only about 30–40 percent of speech is visible. Many letters and words look the same on the lips, which can cause misunderstanding. For example, p(all), b(all), and m(all) all look the same."⁵⁷ Here are some recommendations for speaking to someone who lipreads:

- Remember that the deaf person needs to *see* you to read your lips—don't turn your back to the person or put yourself in a setting where it's difficult to see you.
- Do not exaggerate your speech or talk too loudly. Exaggeration makes it harder to lipread.
- It can be difficult or impossible to read the lips of a man with a mustache.
- Using appropriate facial expressions and gestures can help the deaf person make sense of what you're trying to say.⁵⁸

If a deaf group member attends meetings with an interpreter who can translate your words into sign language, do not talk to the interpreter. Look directly at the deaf member when you speak. If you look only at the interpreter, the deaf member may not be able to read your lips or see your facial expressions and gestures. Even worse, looking at the interpreter ignores the deaf person and implies that she or he is invisible.

Ethics in Groups

Self-Centered Listening Sabotages Success

Objective: Explain how the behaviors of self-centered listeners fail to uphold several principles in the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication.

Successful groups are watchful and prepared to deal with **self-centered listeners**, group members who pursue their personal goals by listening and responding in ways that disrupt group progress and demoralize members. Although self-centered listeners may be excellent comprehensive and analytical listeners, their listening strategies can be counterproductive and unethical. They may purposely and persistently exploit poor habits to help them get what they want. Self-centered listeners may engage in **pseudolistening**, **selective listening**, **superficial listening**, **defensive listening**, and/or **disruptive listening** as a means of achieving their personal goals.

Several types of disruptive members—**dominator**, **obstructionist**, **attacker**, **egoist**, **support seeker**, and **nonparticipant**—can prevent a group from collaborating effectively, efficiently, and harmoniously. These same behaviors are all too evident in self-centered listeners.

Dominators, obstructionists, and attackers may be skilled listeners who purposely ignore what they hear, or they may only listen to evaluate in order to expose weaknesses in the comments made by other group members. Egoists—who only want others to listen to and admire them—are often incapable of comprehending or appreciating comments that have nothing to do with them. Support seekers—who want others to listen only to their problems—may be so preoccupied with their personal need for attention that they don't listen to anything that is said. Nonparticipants may avoid listening to anything that would require them to contribute or take on work. Unethical listening can take one or more of several forms that only serve the interests of self-centered listeners:

- Listening behavior that shows no respect for the opinions of others
- Listening for the purpose of criticizing the ideas of others
- Listening for personal information that can be used to humiliate or criticize others
- Faking listening in order to gain the favor of high-status members

Ethical listening is as important as ethical speaking, particularly because we spend most of our communicating time listening. Ethical listeners have a responsibility to hear, understand, remember, interpret, evaluate, and respond appropriately to messages that have personal, professional, political, and moral consequences for themselves and others.

Disruptive, self-centered listeners violate several principles in the **National Communication Association Credo for Ethical Communication**.⁵⁹ They have no interest in trying to “understand and respect” group members “before evaluating and responding to their messages.” Not only do they “fail to promote communication climates of caring and understanding,” they do the opposite and take advantage of others to

achieve self-centered goals. Conscientious group members should apply and enforce a third principle in the credo: Condemn member behavior “that degrades individuals . . . through distortion and intimidation [as well as] . . . and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.”

Judi Brownell, creator of the HURIER Listening Model, contends that ethical listening “is not a passive activity; as a listener, you choose what to listen to and what to do with what you hear.” In this sense, self-centered listening is unethical because it prevents a group from achieving its goals and from building member “relationships that are healthy and productive.”⁶⁰ Ethical listeners ask themselves, “Would I want this done to me?”

Summary: Listening and Responding in Groups

7.1: The Challenge of Listening in Groups

- Listening is the ability to understand, analyze, respect, and respond appropriately to the meaning of another person’s spoken and nonverbal messages.
- Although listening is our number-one communication activity, most people cannot accurately report 50 percent of what they hear after listening to a short talk.
- Most highly effective leaders are also effective listeners.
- Good listening habits require knowledge, skills, and motivation.
- Poor listening habits include pseudolistening, selective listening, superficial listening, defensive listening, and disruptive listening.

7.2: The Listening Process

- There are six components of listening, each of which calls on unique listening skills. Listening to hear, understand, remember, interpret, evaluate, and respond are represented in Brownell’s HURIER Listening Model.
- Paraphrasing is a form of feedback that uses different words to restate what others say in a way that indicates understanding.

7.3: Key Listening Strategies and Skills

- Several key strategies can improve how well you listen in groups: (1) use your extra thought speed, (2) apply the golden listening rule, (3) “listen” to nonverbal

behavior, (4) minimize distractions, (5) listen before you leap, and (6) take relevant notes.

7.4: Listening Differences

- Differences in gender, personality, culture, and hearing ability can have a significant effect on how well group members listen to one another.
- Unethical, self-centered listening can destroy group morale and prevent a group from achieving its common goal.

SHARED WRITING CASE STUDY: THAT'S NOT WHAT I SAID

Use the information you have learned to answer the following questions about the case study that was presented at the beginning of the chapter.

Which group members demonstrated effective listening skills? How could other members improve their listening skills?

Review and discuss the similarities and differences between your answer and those of at least two of your classmates.

► A minimum number of characters is required to post and earn points. After posting, your response can be viewed by your class and instructor, and you can participate in the class discussion.

Post

0 characters | 140 minimum

Chapter 7 Quiz: Listening and Responding in Groups

Chapter 8

Conflict and Cohesion in Groups



Successful groups balance the need for constructive conflict and the need to work as a cohesive team.



Learning Objectives

- 8.1** Differentiate task, personal, and procedural conflict
- 8.2** Summarize strategies that promote constructive conflict and discourage destructive conflict in groups
- 8.3** Identify the conditions in which each of the five traditional conflict styles may be appropriate
- 8.4** Summarize four major strategies for analyzing and resolving group conflict
- 8.5** Analyze how different cultural and gender perspectives may influence interpersonal and group conflict
- 8.6** Describe strategies that promote the four major types of group cohesion

Case Study: Sociology in Trouble

Five faculty members in a college sociology department follow up a brainstorming session with a meeting to discuss the course offerings for the next semester. Steve, the department chair, thanks everyone for the work they have just completed. He then asks the tired faculty members to address an important issue: Which courses should they eliminate, and which new courses should they add to the curriculum? “We need,” he says, “to balance the integrity of our department and our offerings with the need to bring in more students and the need to have a strong curriculum.” Although faculty members nod their heads, they don’t seem to have much enthusiasm for the task.

Trevor declares, “We don’t want enrollment to dictate—you know—what our offerings . . .” Before he finishes his sentence, Helen interrupts. “Here we go, here we go. Trevor, you need to look at the enrollment numbers!” The group senses that Trevor seems more interested in preserving his own low-enrollment courses than developing new ones that attract more students. The faculty has dealt with this issue before. Should they allow professors to protect their smaller courses, or should they cut these courses? Should they offer more popular courses to improve their numbers, even if it means cutting time-honored sociology courses?

Art interrupts the interaction by telling everyone that he has an exciting idea for a new course, “The Sociology of Time.” He explains that the course would look at time as a commodity that people use for various sociological purposes. The group has mixed reactions. Trevor questions whether the course is rigorous enough, and whether the topic is worthy of a separate course. Georgia just nods her head at everything group members say. Helen supports Art’s proposed new course. Steve reminds everyone that if they add new courses, they must eliminate others. Group members suggest cutting Trevor’s “Culture of Consumerism” course. He strongly opposes this move. Helen raises her voice and declares that the enrollment numbers speak for themselves. Finally, Georgia suggests, “We can do this without an argument happening.” Helen accuses Trevor of living in the past. At this point, the chair intervenes again and reminds his colleagues that they need to look at the bigger goal, rather than picking apart an individual course.

The lines of conflict are drawn. Art wants his new course on “The Sociology of Time” approved; Trevor opposes it on academic grounds. He also doesn’t want the department to cut his “Culture of Consumerism” course. The chair again reminds everyone that if they add new courses to attract more students, they must cut existing

courses. Helen seems very aggravated—maybe she’s heard all these arguments before, maybe she has a grudge against Trevor for something he did in the past, maybe she wants to stay in the department chair’s favor, or maybe she’s just tired. Georgia seems drained by all the agitation and simply wants it to stop.

Critical Thinking Questions

When you finish reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following critical thinking questions about this case study:

1. What are the individual conflict styles of Steve, Trevor, Helen, Georgia, and Art? How could the group move toward a more collaborative group conflict style?
2. To what extent do group members’ responses to conflict reflect diversity factors, such as gender, culture, ethnicity, seniority, age, and personality traits?
3. Which conflict management strategies have the potential to resolve the sociology department’s conflict in this situation?
4. Based on this meeting, how cohesive does the sociology department appear to be? What strategies could the department members use to enhance group cohesiveness?
5. Which dialectic tensions are most evident in this group, and what could be done to achieve a *both/and* resolution to these tensions?

8.1: Conflict in Groups

8.1 Differentiate task, personal, and procedural conflict

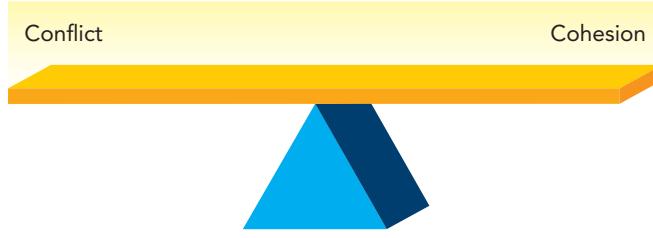
The first major term in the title of this chapter is **conflict**, the disagreement and disharmony that occur in groups when differences arise regarding goals, ideas, behavior, roles, or group procedures. Regardless of how you feel about member disagreements, conflict is inescapable and even necessary in most groups. The second major term in the title of this chapter is **cohesion**, which is the mutual attraction and teamwork that hold the members of a group together. Cohesive groups are unified, loyal to one another, and committed to achieving a common goal. Later in this chapter, we examine strategies for enhancing group cohesion without closing the door to new ideas or avoiding constructive conflict.

Effective groups balance the **conflict ↔ cohesion** dialectic. Group members with different perspectives and opinions can promote critical thinking and creative problem solving, but “too many differences, or one difference that is so strong it dominates group resources, can overwhelm the group” and its ability to achieve a common goal.¹

In a summary of research examining the links between conflict and cohesion, communication researcher

John Gastil observes that cohesive groups gain a boost in effectiveness, but conflict—particularly when it is personal—can have the opposite effect.² Conflict management requires “a delicate balancing act, like that of a tightrope walker, or a rock climber who must find just the right handholds.”³ In terms of resolving this dialectic tension, groups must find ways to balance constructive conflict with productive cohesiveness. In short, highly effective groups are *both* cohesive *and* willing to engage in conflict (Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1 Balancing Conflict and Cohesion



Many people believe that effective groups never have conflicts. Quite the reverse is true: Conflict in groups is inevitable. Unfortunately, some groups try to avoid or suppress conflict because they believe that effective groups are conflict-free. Here, too, researchers claim the opposite. “Many effective teams look more like battlefields. . . . Teams with vastly competent members embrace conflict as the price of synergy and set good idea against good idea to arrive at the best idea.”⁴ In the best of groups, conflict is expected, confronted, and effectively resolved.

Too often, group members associate conflict with fighting, anger, hostility, and negative consequences. However, when treated as an expression of legitimate differences, conflict can improve group problem solving, promote cohesiveness, increase group knowledge, enhance creativity, and promote the group’s common goal. As a way of understanding the nature of conflict in groups, we examine three types of group conflict: task, personal, and procedural.⁵

8.1.1: Task Conflict

Task conflict is disagreement among group members about issues, ideas, actions, or goals. For example, a debate among members of a hiring committee about the strengths and weaknesses of their top two applicants is task conflict, because it focuses on the group’s goal of selecting the best person for the job. Task conflict in a group is inevitable, and provides an opportunity to resolve misunderstandings, to engage in creative problem solving, and to make effective decisions.

When a group cannot negotiate a *both/and* approach to the **individual goals ↔ group goals** dialectic, **hidden agendas** emerge. When members’ hidden agendas become more important than a group’s stated goal, the result can be group frustration, unresolved conflict, and failure. Dean Barnlund and Franklyn Haiman, two pioneers in the study of group communication, described hidden agendas as arising when “there are a significant number of private motives, either conscious or unconscious, lurking beneath the surface and influencing the course of the discussion in subtle, indirect ways.”⁶ Conflicts become serious problems when the members’ hidden goals conflict with the group’s goal.

8.1.2: Personal Conflict

Personal conflict is disagreement among group members related to differences in personalities and communication styles, and conflicting core values and beliefs. Personal conflict also occurs when members do not feel appreciated, feel threatened by the group, or struggle for power. Personal conflict is more difficult to resolve than task conflict because it involves people’s feelings and the way members relate to one another.

In *The Group in Society*, John Gastil notes that when a personal relationship between two group members turns sour, the entire group may suffer, particularly if the conflict is characterized by insults, acts of revenge, or loss of time on task.

“This often leads to avoidance. The parties in the conflict begin to seek ways to do their work without having to interact—a serious problem for groups undertaking collaborative tasks. From there, the conflict can spread quickly and change a two-member rift into a group-wide fault line, with members taking sides in the conflict.”⁷

Task conflict and personal conflict may occur at the same time. For example, imagine that students Dee and Charles are members of the student activities budget committee. Dee advocates an increase in student fees to fund more activities. Charles disagrees; he suggests using existing funds more efficiently rather than placing a larger financial burden on students. At this point, the conflict is task-oriented; it focuses on issues. However, when Charles rolls his eyes and says to Dee, “Only a fool believes higher fees are the answer,” not only does Dee disagree with Charles on the issues, but she is also hurt and becomes angry. The conflict has gone beyond the nature of the task; it has become personal.

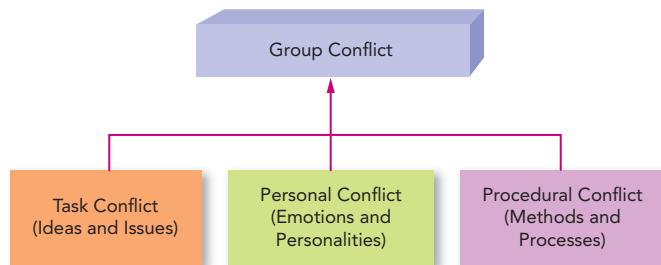
8.1.3: Procedural Conflict

Procedural conflict is disagreement among group members about the methods, processes, or policies the group

should use. For example, some group members may want to begin a discussion by suggesting solutions to a problem, but others may want to gather information first. Some members may want to vote using secret ballots; others may want a show of hands.

Procedural conflict is an opportunity to discuss policies and processes that help the group accomplish its common goal. Successful groups minimize and are better able to manage both task conflict and personal conflict by developing clear policies and procedures. Agreement on decision-making and problem-solving procedures can ensure that all viewpoints are considered carefully. Policies that discourage impolite or disrespectful behavior allow group members to avoid destructive personal conflict.

Figure 8.2 Sources of Group Conflict



8.2: Constructive and Destructive Conflict

8.2 Summarize strategies that promote constructive conflict and discourage destructive conflict in groups

All groups, no matter how conscientious or well mannered, experience conflict. In and of itself, conflict is neither good nor bad; however, the way in which a group expresses and deals with conflict may be either constructive or destructive.

Constructive conflict is an approach to disagreement in which group members express differences in ways that value everyone's contributions and promote the group's goal. Kenneth Cloke and Joan Goldsmith of the Center for Dispute Resolution explain that we all have a choice about how to deal with conflict: We can treat it as dialectic experiences "that imprison us or lead us on a journey, as a battle that embitters us or as an opportunity for learning. Our choices between these contrasting attitudes and approaches will shape the way the conflict unfolds."⁸

Destructive conflict is disagreement that is expressed through behaviors that create hostility and prevent the group from achieving its goals. Complaining, personal

GroupWork

Conflict Awareness Log⁹

Conflict is inevitable when working in groups. Group members who fully engage in the effort to achieve a common goal are likely to disagree with one another. Rather than seeking ways to avoid such conflict, ask yourself, "How can I better respond to conflict when it occurs?" The Conflict Awareness Log is an opportunity to assess your reactions in previous conflict situations and develop strategies for better managing conflict in the future.

Directions: Recall two memorable conflict situations in which you did not behave in a way that helped minimize or resolve the conflict. Complete the following *Conflict Awareness Log* to help you identify effective strategies to use in the future when you are called on to minimize or resolve conflict in groups.

- In column 1, briefly describe the incident.
- In column 2, explain your actions or the reason(s) for your unhelpful behavior.
- In column 3, describe what you wish you had said or done to help resolve the situation.

Incident Example	Unhelpful Behavior	Helpful Behavior
Example: Our group was preparing a customer service training presentation. I agreed to take the lead on preparing the team's PowerPoint slides, but Jim submitted an entire PowerPoint show to the group two days before my deadline for getting a draft of the slides to the group.	Example: I was angry with Jim for hijacking my portion of the group project. His PowerPoint slides were no better than mine. I said nothing and let Jim take over that part of the task. I felt unappreciated and didn't want to contribute to any other group projects.	Example: I wish I had spoken up and suggested that Jim work with me on the PowerPoint slides. I think I could have made a real contribution to the group if I hadn't given in to the situation or become so angry.
Incident 1		
Incident 2		

insults, conflict avoidance, and loud arguments or threats contribute to destructive conflict.¹⁰ The quality of group decision making deteriorates when members are inflexible and not open to other views. Destructive conflict has the potential to disable a group permanently. Table 8.1 characterizes the differences between destructive and constructive conflict.

Table 8.1 Constructive and Destructive Conflict

Constructive Conflict	Destructive Conflict
Focused on issues, tasks, and group goals	Focused on interpersonal differences
Respectful	Disrespectful
Supportive	Defensive
Flexible	Inflexible
Collaborative	Competitive
Cooperative	Uncooperative
Committed to the group and its goal	Indifferent to the group and its goal

Groups that promote constructive conflict abide by the following principles:¹¹

- Members work with one another to achieve a mutually satisfying resolution of conflict. “We can work this out. After all, we’re all after the same thing.”
- Lower-status group members are free to disagree with higher-status members. “I know she’s the CEO, but I think there are some disadvantages to the approach she suggests.”
- Disagreement does not result in punishment. “I’m not afraid of being criticized or reprimanded if I disagree with powerful members.”
- The group agrees on the approaches to conflict resolution and decision making. “Our group lets every member speak, so I know my ideas will be heard.”
- Members can disagree and still respect one another. “The group may not like my idea, but members would never personally attack me for expressing my opinion.”

Watch Helping Annie



Watch the video clip from “Helping Annie,” which illustrates concepts in this chapter.

WRITING PROMPT

Constructive and Destructive Conflict

1. To what extent was there task, personal, and/or procedural conflict in this group?
2. Compare the ways in which group members used constructive and/or destructive conflict behavior. Was interrupting the psychiatrist a positive or negative strategy?
3. How did differences in status, gender, and personal involvement affect the nature of this conflict?
4. What kind of resolution, if any, was reached about how to help Annie by the end of the video?

The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

Virtual Teams Conflict in Cyberspace

Objective: Identify the unique obstacles to resolving conflicts faced by virtual teams as well as strategies for overcoming them.

Have you ever received emails or text messages that were not intended for you and that you found disturbing to read? Have you ever fired off an angry email or text, only to regret it later? The efficiency of texts, email, and messaging features makes it easy to forward messages without reading them carefully, to reply while you’re still angry, and to send a message to many people without knowing if they will interpret it the same way.

The time, distance, and possible anonymity that separate members of virtual teams may increase conflict. Unfortunately, some group members feel less obligated to behave politely when the interaction isn’t face to face. As a result, virtual teams tend to communicate more negative and insulting messages than face-to-face groups do.¹² In addition, virtual team members are more likely to withdraw from an online discussion that involves conflict, especially if they don’t have established relationships with other members.¹³ However, just because someone is less likely to challenge or reprimand you in a virtual team is no reason to abandon civil behavior. Psychotherapist Kali Munroe notes that “conflict can get blown out of proportion online. What may begin as a small difference of opinion, or misunderstanding, becomes a major issue very quickly.”¹⁴

Not responding properly to conflict in a virtual team significantly interferes with the group’s ability to solve problems.¹⁵ Some technologies are better suited for dealing with conflict than others. For example, audio-only (e.g., telephone) and data-only (e.g., email, text) technologies are less effective for resolving conflict than videoconferencing, which in turn is less effective than face-to-face interaction. Virtual team members

must be extra vigilant when conflict threatens to derail group progress and damage group morale.

The following strategies may help overcome some of the obstacles to resolving conflict in virtual teams, provided that you also take into account the nature and importance of the issues, the characteristics and attitudes of the people involved, and the particular type of media you are using:

- Don't respond immediately. Read and process a message several times before responding.
- Assume that others mean well unless you have a history of difficulty with a particular member.
- If you aren't sure what a member means in a message, ask for clarification.
- Use "I" statements rather than "you" statements, as the latter can be interpreted as accusatory.
- Find a topic, idea, or perspective that team members agree with or have in common.
- Try not to take a message personally.

how these styles are positioned in two dimensions: "Concern for Own Goals" and "Concern for Group Goals." These two dimensions recognize the dialectic nature of various conflict styles. The ideal conflict style—the collaborating conflict style—sees a *both/and* approach to conflict resolution.¹⁸

8.3.1: Avoiding Conflict Style

An **avoiding conflict style** is a passive and nonconfrontational approach to disagreement. Members use an avoiding conflict style when they are unable or unwilling to accomplish their own goals or contribute to achieving the group's goal. In some cases, members who care about the group and its goals may avoid conflict because they are uncomfortable with or unskilled at asserting themselves. Group members who use this conflict style may change the subject, avoid bringing up a controversial issue, and even deny that a conflict exists. Avoiding conflict in groups is usually counterproductive, because it fails to address a problem and can increase group tensions. Ignoring or avoiding conflict does not make it go away.

In some circumstances, however, the avoiding conflict style can be appropriate, specifically when

- the issue is not that important to you.
- you need time to collect your thoughts or control your emotions.
- other group members are addressing the problem effectively.
- there is little or no likelihood of achieving collaboration or an acceptable compromise.
- the consequences of confrontation are too risky.

8.3.2: Accommodating Conflict Style

Group members using the **accommodating conflict style** give in to other members at the expense of their own goals. Accommodators have a genuine desire to get along with other members. They believe that giving in to others serves the needs of the group, even when the group could benefit from further discussion. However, a group member who always approaches conflict by accommodating others may be perceived as less powerful and less influential.

An accommodating conflict style may be appropriate when

- the issue is very important to others but not very important to you.
- it is more important to preserve group harmony than to resolve the issue.
- you are unlikely to succeed in persuading the group to adopt your position.
- you realize you are wrong or you have changed your mind.

8.3: Conflict Styles

8.3 Identify the conditions in which each of the five traditional conflict styles may be appropriate

A significant body of research indicates that all of us have individual conflict styles we tend to use regardless of the situation.¹⁶ Some people will move heaven and earth to avoid conflict of any kind, but others enjoy a competitive atmosphere and the exultation of "winning."

There are five traditional conflict styles: avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, and collaborating.¹⁷ These styles reflect the tension between seeking *personal* goals and working cooperatively to achieve the *group's* goal. For example, if you are motivated to achieve your own goals, you may use a competing conflict style. If you are dedicated to achieving the group's goals, you may use an accommodating conflict style or a collaborating conflict style. Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann identify five conflict-handling styles (Figure 8.3). Note

Figure 8.3 Conflict Styles



Groups in Balance . . .

Know How to Apologize and When to Forgive

An apology can go a long way toward defusing tension and opening the door to constructive conflict resolution. An **apology** is a statement that expresses regret for saying or doing something wrong. Research suggests that appropriate apologies can improve relationships, restore trust, minimize anger, and reduce antagonism.¹⁹ Apologies may even deter lawsuits. One study found that 40 percent of medical malpractice plaintiffs would not have filed a lawsuit if they had received an apology with an explanation. In addition, plaintiffs who received a full apology were more likely to accept a settlement offer and avoid a lawsuit altogether.²⁰

In spite of the importance and simplicity of an apology, we often find it difficult to say, “I’m sorry.” When you apologize, you take responsibility for your behavior and the consequences of your actions. Although you may feel you’ve lost some pride, a willingness to own up to your actions can earn the respect of other group members and help build trust.

Have you encountered a situation where you had to apologize for your behavior? What strategy did you adopt?

Here are some suggestions for making an effective apology:²¹

1. *Take responsibility for your actions with a simple “I” statement. “I’m sorry.”*
2. *Clearly identify the behavior that was wrong without blaming others. “I failed to put all of the group members’ names on the final report.”*
3. *Acknowledge how others might feel or how they were affected. “I understand that most of you are probably annoyed with me.”*
4. *Acknowledge that you could have acted differently. “I should have asked the group about this first. Everyone provided valuable input and should have been acknowledged.”*
5. *Express regret. “I’m angry with myself for not thinking ahead.”*
6. *Describe how you will correct the situation and follow through. “I’ll send an email out tomorrow acknowledging that your names should have been included on the report.”*
7. *Request, but don’t demand, forgiveness. “This group is important to me. I hope you will forgive me.”*

When an apology is insincere or fails to apply most of these suggestions, it is unlikely to restore trust or gain forgiveness; rather, the supposed apology may be interpreted as an attempt to justify unacceptable behavior, put the blame on others, make excuses, or ignore how a behavior negatively affects others.²²

Forgiveness is the process of letting go of feelings of revenge and a desire to retaliate.²³ Forgiveness does not obligate you to like the other person, forget what happened, or

release the other person from the consequences of bad behavior.²⁴ However, forgiving someone can help group members move beyond conflict and focus on their common goal. Consider the following guidelines when extending forgiveness to another group member:²⁵

- Recognize that forgiveness is a process that takes time.
- Acknowledge how others hurt or upset you.
- Allow yourself to feel angry.
- Empathize with others as humans who are flawed and make mistakes.
- Recognize that others may not change their actions, but you can choose how to respond to future behavior.
- When a sincere apology is offered, accept it.
- Behave in a manner that suggests you have forgiven the other group member or members.

WRITING PROMPT

Know How to Apologize and When to Forgive

Following an argument, Anna says to her friend, “I’m sorry that I did not include you, but you can’t expect me to remember everyone! Can’t we just get past this? I need to get to class.” Is this an effective apology? Why or why not?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

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8.3.3: Competing Conflict Style

The **competing conflict style** is an approach to disagreement in which members are more focused on achieving their personal goals than on collaborating with others to achieve a common goal. Competitive members want to win; they argue that their ideas are superior to alternatives suggested by others. When used inappropriately, the competing conflict style generates hostility, ridicule, and personal attacks against group members. Approaching conflict competitively tends to divide group members into “winners” and “losers.” Ultimately, this may damage the relationships among group members and prevent the group from achieving its common goal.

However, in certain group situations the competing conflict style may be appropriate, such as when

- you have strong beliefs about an important issue.
- the group must act immediately on a time-sensitive issue or in an emergency.
- the consequences of the group’s decision may be very serious or even harmful.
- you believe that the group may be acting unethically or illegally.

8.3.4: Compromising Conflict Style

The **compromising conflict style** is an approach to disagreement in which group members concede some goals in order to achieve other more important goals. Compromising is a middle-ground approach. Group members who approach conflict through compromise argue that it is a fair method of resolving problems because everyone loses equally. However, there are disadvantages to relying on a compromise to resolve conflict. Some members are unlikely to strongly or enthusiastically support a group decision reached through compromise if they feel forced to “give up something they value. With the satisfaction of achieving some goals comes the bitterness of having to give up others.”²⁶

The compromising conflict style works best when

- other methods of resolving the conflict are not working.
- the members have reached an impasse or gridlock, and are no longer progressing toward a reasonable solution.
- the group does not have enough time to explore more collaborative solutions.

8.3.5: Collaborating Conflict Style

The **collaborating conflict style** is an approach to disagreement that seeks solutions that satisfy all group members and that also helps achieve the common goal(s). This style takes a *both/and* approach, in which *both* the goals of individual members *and* the group’s common goals are met. Instead of arguing over who is right or wrong, a collaborative group seeks creative solutions that satisfy everyone’s interests and needs. The collaborating conflict style promotes synergy and resolves the dialectic tension between competition and cooperation. It also involves trying to find a win-win solution that helps the group make progress toward achieving its common goal.

There are two barriers to collaboration, however. First, it requires a lot of the group’s time and energy, and some issues may not be important enough to justify this investment. Second, avoiders and accommodators can prevent a group from truly collaborating. Successful collaboration requires that all group members participate fully.

Groups should use a collaborating conflict style when

- they want a solution that satisfies all group members.
- they need new and creative ideas.
- they need a commitment to the final decision from every group member.
- they have enough time to commit to creative problem solving.

Research suggests that using a collaborating conflict style to resolve problems is ideal and results in numerous benefits, including greater understanding of others’ viewpoints, increased likelihood of achieving consensus, more innovative solutions, and better quality decisions.²⁷ The collaborative process may prompt some members to rethink their positions or revise their goals as they “gain insight into their own interests and conclude that what they originally thought they wanted was not what they really need.”²⁸ Use the following guidelines for resolving problems using the collaborating conflict style:²⁹

- Focus on issues, not on personalities.
- Take flexible positions on issues and ideas.
- Express respect for other members’ viewpoints and ideas.
- Acknowledge not only the weaknesses but also the strengths of *others’* ideas.
- Acknowledge not only the strengths but also the weaknesses of *your own* ideas.
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a range of options.
- Treat all members equally, regardless of status and power differences.
- Use sound reasoning and valid evidence in support of possible solutions.

8.3.6: Choosing a Conflict Style



Elected officials in Amsterdam, New York, negotiate with other municipalities to bring water service from one town to another. Successful groups use various conflict styles. Which style or styles does this group appear to be using: avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, and/or collaborating?

Successful groups use various conflict styles to respond to different types and levels of conflict. Although individuals may be predisposed to a particular style, effective group members choose the one that is most appropriate for a particular group in a particular situation. As situations

Group Assessment How Do You Respond to Conflict?

Ideally, group members respond to disagreements by selecting an appropriate and effective approach to conflict resolution in a particular situation—avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, or collaborating. However, individuals tend to have a preferred style that they are more comfortable using when responding to conflict. The *How Do You Respond to Conflict?* assessment helps you identify your preferred conflict style or styles.

The following 20 statements express a variety of ways in which people respond to conflict. Consider each message separately and decide how closely it resembles your attitudes and behavior in a conflict situation, even if the language is not exactly the way you would express yourself. Use the following numerical scale to select the rating that best matches your approach to conflict. Choose only one rating for each statement.

5 = I always do this. 4 = I usually do this. 3 = I sometimes do this. 2 = I rarely do this. 1 = I never do this.

Statement	Degree of Relevance				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1. I try to change the subject.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. I play down the differences so the conflict doesn't become too serious.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I don't hold back in a conflict, particularly when I have something I really want to say.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I try to find a trade-off that everyone can agree to.	<input type="radio"/>				
5. I try to look at a conflict objectively rather than taking it personally.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. I avoid contact with other people when I know there's a serious conflict brewing.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. I'm willing to change my position to resolve a conflict and let others have what they want.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. I fight hard when an issue is very important to me and others are unlikely to agree.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. I understand that you can't get everything you want when resolving a conflict.	<input type="radio"/>				
10. I try to minimize status differences and defensiveness in order to resolve a conflict.	<input type="radio"/>				
11. I put off or delay dealing with the conflict.	<input type="radio"/>				
12. I rarely disclose much about how I feel during a conflict, particularly if it's negative.	<input type="radio"/>				
13. I like having enough power to control a conflict situation.	<input type="radio"/>				
14. I like to work on hammering out a deal among conflicting parties.	<input type="radio"/>				
15. I believe that all conflicts have potential for positive resolution.	<input type="radio"/>				
16. I give in to the other person's demands in most cases.	<input type="radio"/>				
17. I'd rather keep a friend than win an argument.	<input type="radio"/>				
18. I don't like wasting time in arguments when I know what we should do.	<input type="radio"/>				
19. I'm willing to give in on some issues but not on others.	<input type="radio"/>				
20. I look for solutions that meet everyone's needs.	<input type="radio"/>				

Reset
 Submit

Conflict Style	Avoiding	Accommodating	Competing	Compromising	Collaborating
Item Scores	1. =	2. =	3. =	4. =	5. =
	6. =	7. =	8. =	9. =	10. =
	11. =	12. =	13. =	14. =	15. =
	16. =	17. =	18. =	19. =	20. =
Total Scores					

Your scores identify which conflict style or styles you use most often. There are no right or wrong responses. Depending on the issues, the others involved, and the situation's context, you may use different conflict styles. The conflict style or styles with the highest total scores reflect your behavioral preferences in conflict situations.

change, so may the approach. Consider the following example of a jury:

During the first hour of deliberation, the jury engaged in a heated debate over a controversial, yet central, issue in the case. Tyrone was conspicuously silent throughout this discussion. Jury members asked his opinion several times. Each time, he indicated that he agreed with the arguments that Pam presented. On a later issue, Tyrone became a central participant. He argued vehemently that one of the defendants was not guilty. He said, "I'm just not going to give in here. It's not right for the man to go to jail over this." Eventually, one of the jurors suggested that Tyrone reexamine a key document presented as evidence of the defendant's guilt. Tyrone was quiet for a few minutes and carefully reviewed the document. He then looked up at the group and said, "Well, this changes everything for me. I guess he really was a part of the conspiracy."

Tyrone used several approaches to deal with conflict in the group. First, he avoided it altogether; he simply had nothing to add to the discussion (avoiding conflict style). Tyrone then became competitive when he thought that the defendant might be unjustly imprisoned (competing conflict style). He changed his mind, however, when a review of the evidence convinced him that he had been wrong (accommodating conflict style). When selecting a conflict style, consider the following questions:

- How important is the issue to you?
- How important is the issue to other members?
- How important is it to maintain positive relationships with group members?
- How much time does the group have to address the issue?
- How fully do group members trust one another?³¹

Selecting an appropriate conflict style requires an understanding and analysis of the group's goal, member characteristics and perspectives, and the nature of the conflict situation. For instance, if group members do not trust one another, the compromising conflict style is less appropriate; but if the issue is very important to everyone and there is plenty of time to discuss it, the collaborating conflict style is ideal. Effective groups do not rely on a single conflict style; instead, members balance their preferred conflict styles with the needs of the group.

8.4: Conflict Management Strategies

8.4 Summarize four major strategies for analyzing and resolving group conflict

Groups that use appropriate conflict styles are more likely to resolve disagreements. Sometimes, however, a group

must set aside the task, personal, or procedural issues under discussion and address the causes of the conflict directly. Figure 8.4 summarizes four effective strategies for analyzing and resolving conflicts.

Figure 8.4 Conflict Management Strategies



8.4.1: The 4Rs Method

To choose the most appropriate conflict management method, members must fully understand the group's disagreement. The **4Rs Method of Conflict Management** is a four-step process (reasons, reactions, results, resolution) for analyzing the nature of a disagreement and selecting an appropriate conflict management strategy. All of the steps are accompanied by relevant questions for analyzing the group's conflict.³²

- **Reasons.** What are the reasons or causes of the conflict? Is this a task, a personal, and/or a procedural conflict? Do most group members agree with the identified reasons for conflict?
- **Reactions.** How are group members reacting to one another? Are group members' reactions constructive or destructive? How should group members modify their behaviors in order to engage in constructive conflict?
- **Results.** What are the potential consequences of the current approach to the conflict? Is the conflict serious enough to jeopardize member relationships or the group's ability to achieve its common goal?
- **Resolution.** What are the best available methods for resolving the conflict? Which method best matches the nature of the group and its conflict?

Analyzing and understanding the nature of the disagreement can promote constructive conflict resolution. The 4Rs Method provides a way of thinking about conflict and selecting an appropriate approach to conflict management. Although it may be difficult to begin this kind of discussion, a better understanding of the problem's causes

and effects can prompt a group to resolve the issue more quickly and effectively.

Watch The Politics of Sociology



Watch the video clip from "The Politics of Sociology," which illustrates concepts in this section of the chapter.

WRITING PROMPT

The 4Rs Method of Conflict Resolution

1. Which conflict styles are evident among the members of this group?
2. What, if any, were the hidden agendas that triggered the conflict?
3. Use the 4Rs Method of Conflict Management (reasons, reactions, results, resolution) to analyze how the group could have moved toward resolving the conflict.
4. To what extent did Steve, the chair of the department, help Trevor, Helen, Art, and Georgia minimize or resolve the conflict?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

Theory in Groups

Attribution Theory and Member Motives

Objective: Explain how attribution theory may influence the way group members interpret the motives of others in a conflict situation.

Attribution theory, the brainchild of psychologist Fritz Heider, applies to all kinds of human interaction, including groups.³³ When you make an attribution about a group member's behavior, you are speculating about the causes of that behavior—attributing the behavior to one or more causes. **Attribution theory** claims that we tend to interpret behavior in terms of its causes.

For example, suppose Kim says, "I propose we meet Thursdays at 3:30 P.M. rather than Mondays at 10:00 A.M."

You may attribute her statement to one of several motives, thinking that:

1. She proposed this because she knows only Melinda can't attend at that hour. What's she got against Melinda? That's mean, self-centered, and heartless.
2. She proposed this because she knows only Melinda can't attend at that hour. That was an ingenious way of getting rid of a highly disruptive member who causes most of our problems. She's very clever, group-centered, and goal-focused.
3. She proposed this because she knows only Melinda can't attend at that hour. That's certainly better than the 10 A.M. hour, when three other members can't attend. She's found the best option for the most members.

Even though we know that we shouldn't make snap judgments about why people behave in a certain way, we often do exactly that. This response has a name: **fundamental attribution error**, the tendency to identify someone's internal characteristics, attitudes, or motives to explain a particular behavior, rather than considering the facts of the situation. For example, "It's Melinda's fault we didn't finish the project on time," or, "How could we expect to finish when three members couldn't attend the 10 A.M. meetings?" Perhaps Melinda didn't finish on time because the instructions weren't clear and because she wasn't given adequate time to complete the task. Perhaps the three absent members did not have the knowledge or skills to help the group.

Subsequent research uses attribution theory and the fundamental attribution error to examine group conflict. For example, here are three attributions that could prompt anger among group members:

- What other members do seems to constrain what I want to do.
- What other members do seems intended to harm me or others.
- What other members do seems abnormal or illegitimate.³⁴

All these attributions may be erroneous; in fact, members may not be trying to restrain a member, do harm, or behave illegitimately. One of the most significant types of attribution error is the **self-serving bias**, a tendency to blame negative consequences on external forces and attribute positive consequences to our own behavior.³⁵ According to the self-serving bias, if your group has problems, it's *their* fault, not yours. However, if your group succeeds, it's because of the great contributions you made.

At the same time, other group members may be thinking the same thing: "It's not my fault we're having problems; it's everyone else's fault," or, "If I hadn't stepped in and done such-and-such, we never would have reached our goal." Because fundamental attribution errors and the self-serving bias occur all the time, group members should watch for and openly discuss them when they arise.

8.4.2: The A-E-I-O-U Model

Jerry Wisinski's A-E-I-O-U Model focuses on what he calls **positive intentionality**—the assumption that other people are not trying to cause conflict.³⁶ In other words, every group member must want to resolve the conflict. The **A-E-I-O-U Model** is an approach to conflict resolution that involves five steps: Assume that others mean well; Express your feelings; Identify your goal; clarify expected Outcomes; and achieve mutual Understanding. If you sense that some members are not willing to resolve a conflict or have hidden agendas, the A-E-I-O-U Model may not work. If your group is working on an important project that is behind schedule and group members are blaming one another for the problem, ask them to put aside the *blame game* in order to analyze objectively why the group is behind schedule.

The five steps in the A-E-I-O-U model in Table 8.2 provide a constructive approach to managing conflict.³⁷

Table 8.2 A-E-I-O-U Model

Description	Example
A Assume that others mean well.	"I know that all of us want this project to succeed."
E Express your feelings.	"Like most of you, I'm frustrated because it seems we're not putting in the work that's needed."
I Identify your goal.	"All of us need to work late for the next couple of days in order to finish this project on time."
O Outcomes you expect are made clear.	"I hope everyone is committed to doing whatever it takes to complete the project successfully and on time."
U Understanding on a mutual basis is achieved.	"It sounds like we're all in agreement. We'll stay late tonight and tomorrow and then evaluate our progress."

8.4.3: Cooperative Negotiation

Negotiation is often seen as a competitive process resulting in compromise, with group members conceding some issues in order to achieve agreement on other points. **Cooperative negotiation** is a more collaborative approach to bargaining that involves identifying common interests in order to find a mutually beneficial solution or resolution to conflict.³⁸ Group members are as concerned with achieving others' goals as with meeting their own needs. Cooperative negotiation does not require group members to sacrifice what they want, but they must be flexible and open to other options for achieving both their individual goals and the group's common goal. Group members may be more willing to engage in cooperative negotiation if they believe that they will be no worse off—and might even be better off—by the end of the process. Table 8.3 provides guidelines for engaging in cooperative negotiation.³⁹

Table 8.3 Elements of Cooperative Negotiation

Guideline	Description
Separate the people from the problem.	Blaming or attacking other members will not resolve conflict. Set aside your feelings for another person and focus on the problem that must be addressed.
Focus on common interests.	Explain your goals and seek to understand the goals of others. Identify common needs and interests, not a position or specific point of disagreement.
Share important information.	Share critical information that may contribute to a fair outcome. Withholding such information is unethical and derails negotiation.
Offer concessions.	Give in on aspects of a position. When a group member makes some concessions, other members are more likely to engage in cooperative behavior.
Explore a variety of possible solutions.	Consider multiple options before deciding what to do. Be creative, flexible, and open to alternatives that are mutually beneficial to all members.
Use objective criteria.	Establish fair and objective criteria for evaluating and choosing a solution or course of action. Objective criteria ensure that a group has a common basis for decision making.

When group members focus solely on defending their own positions, the result is winners and losers. When members focus on group interests, options, and fair criteria, the entire group wins. However, even cooperative negotiation can become deadlocked when members fail to recognize or appreciate the needs of others and are unwilling to make concessions. The following strategies can help avoid or resolve a deadlock:⁴⁰

- Limit the scope of the problem by dividing it into manageable parts.
- Minimize defensive behavior by having members explain or paraphrase the other side's position.
- Summarize areas of agreement to promote cooperation.
- Take a break to relieve group tensions.
- Ask for more information to avoid inaccurate assumptions.

Clearly, group members must balance a variety of needs during negotiation. They must be willing to cooperate with one another while attempting to meet as many of their own needs as possible. They must openly communicate what they are willing to concede, yet not sacrifice more than is necessary. Members must balance the need to gain their own short-term goals against the benefits of mutually desirable long-term conflict resolution and the achievement of the group's common goal.

8.4.4: Anger Management

Anger is the most common negative emotion associated with conflict.⁴¹ **Anger** is an emotional response to unmet expectations that ranges from minor irritation to intense rage. Always take time to analyze why you are angry.

Remember that anger is a reaction to unmet expectations: You expect others to be honest, and they're not; or, you expect others to treat you with respect, and they don't.

Uncontrolled anger prevents group members from engaging in constructive conflict resolution. Effective groups and group members understand the importance of skillfully engaging in **anger management**, the process of applying appropriate communication strategies for dealing with and expressing personal anger while treating others who are angry with understanding and respect.

Some people see anger as a destructive emotion that should always be suppressed: Hold It In. Others believe in fully expressing their anger regardless of the consequences: Let It Out! Both of these extreme views about anger can be counterproductive to conflict resolution. Use the following guidelines to engage in appropriate anger management.⁴²

- *Understand the reasons for your anger.* Make sure your anger is justified. Try to understand the motives of other group members. Did they intend to mistreat you, or was it an innocent mistake?
- *Calmly express your anger and the action that was wrong.* Use clear "I" messages that avoid provoking defensiveness. For example, "I am angry the group didn't tell me that our meeting time was rescheduled."
- *Create a constructive climate for conflict resolution.* Avoid raising your voice, threatening others, or name calling. Aggressive behavior only fuels anger and escalates conflict.
- *Listen to others.* Listening can clarify misunderstandings and provide opportunities to resolve the problems that led to angry feelings in the first place.

Even if you succeed in understanding your own anger and expressing it, you have only resolved your own feelings; responding appropriately to others' anger is the other half of the anger management equation. If another group member expresses anger toward you, consider any or all of the following strategies:⁴³

- *Acknowledge the other person's feelings of anger.* "I can see how upset you are."
- *Identify the issue or behavior that is the source of the anger.* "I don't believe I promised to write the entire report by myself."
- *Assess the intensity of the anger and the importance of the issue.* "I know it's critical that we have a well-written report to accompany our presentation."
- *Encourage constructive approaches to addressing the source of anger.* "Why don't we discuss assembling a team of group members to work on the report with me?"
- *Make a positive statement about the relationship.* "I enjoy working with this group and hope we can sort this out together."

Effective anger management requires that you know how to manage and express your angry feelings while treating others with respect. Appropriately expressing and dealing with anger among group members prevents minor issues from escalating into major problems, and promotes constructive conflict resolution.

WRITING PROMPT

Anger Management

Think about the last time someone got angry at you during an argument. How would the five anger management strategies described have helped you resolve the conflict?

The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Ethics in Groups

The Group and the Doctrine of the Mean

Objective: Provide examples of how following the doctrine of the mean can help resolve dialectic tensions and conflict in groups.

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle equates *ethics* with *virtue* (goodness, moral excellence, righteousness, and integrity). Aristotle explains that virtue can be destroyed by too little or too much of certain behaviors. For example, someone who runs away is a coward, whereas someone who fears nothing is reckless. The virtue of bravery is the *mean*, an appropriate point between two extremes. Aristotle offered his doctrine of the mean as a practical way of looking at ethical behavior.⁴⁴ The **doctrine of the mean** is an ethical virtue based on moderation and a response somewhere between the two extremes of expressing mild annoyance and spewing uncontrolled rage. Thus, according to the doctrine of the mean, if a group member says something that angers you, find an appropriate response somewhere between screaming angrily at the other person and simply giving in. It may be much more appropriate and productive to state your disagreement in a strong but reasoned tone. Aristotle maintained that anyone can become angry—that's easy. But to be angry at the right things, with the right people, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—is worthy of praise.⁴⁵ For Aristotle, being brutally honest in all situations is not an ethical virtue, because your honesty may do more harm than good.⁴⁶

In examining the nature and consequences of group conflict, Aristotle's doctrine of the mean represents a desirable balance of two dialectic extremes. Table 8.4 illustrates dialectic tensions and the doctrine of the mean for three of Aristotle's virtues.⁴⁷

Table 8.4 Dialectic Tensions and the Doctrine of the Mean

Dialectic Tension	Doctrine of the Mean
Cowardice ↔ Recklessness	Bravery
Shyness ↔ Shamelessness	Humbleness
Boastfulness ↔ Understatement	Truthfulness

8.5: Conflict and Member Diversity

8.5 Analyze how different cultural and gender perspectives may influence interpersonal and group conflict

Conflict becomes more complex in diverse groups. Differences in cultural and gender perspectives may result in misunderstandings, prejudices, and unintentionally offensive behavior. Organizations and companies that fail to understand, respect, and adapt to such differences are likely to have more strikes and lawsuits, low morale among workers, less productivity, and a higher turnover of employees.⁴⁸

8.5.1: Cultural Responses to Conflict

The cultural values of individual members greatly influence the degree to which they feel comfortable with conflict, what they focus on during conflict, and how conflict is resolved. For example, group members from the United States may focus on the issues and practicalities of a solution; in contrast, Mexican or Japanese members may devote more attention to cultivating personal relationships and building trust.⁴⁹

Members from **collectivist** cultures value cooperation, and are less likely to express disagreement than members from **individualistic** cultures. For example, research suggests that many Japanese prefer to use avoiding or accommodating conflict styles. Members from Arab, Turkish, and Jordanian cultures generally prefer cooperative approaches to conflict resolution rather than competition.⁵⁰ Whereas people from Japanese, German, Mexican, and Brazilian cultures tend to value group cooperation, people from the United States, Britain, Sweden, and France are generally more comfortable expressing differences.⁵¹ Chinese group members may feel uncomfortable with adversarial approaches to conflict.⁵² They may remain silent, postpone a discussion, or change the subject when they disagree with someone.⁵³ However, some scholars suggest that the perception of a preference among the Chinese for conflict avoidance is influenced by a Western bias in conflict research.⁵⁴ For example, in a study that interviewed Chinese managers,

the Chinese described their approach as “a proactive retreat for the purpose of advancing” and “pursuing by making a detour” rather than conflict avoidance.⁵⁵

Cultural differences may be regional rather than international. For example, Franco-Canadians are often more cooperative in negotiating a conflict than Anglo-Canadians, who are slower to agree to a resolution.⁵⁶ With these generalizations in mind, it’s important to remember that many individuals may not approach conflict according to their cultural norms. Other factors, such as age, status, or group role, may be just as influential as cultural background in determining how a group member approaches conflict.⁵⁷ In describing the challenges of managing conflict in diverse groups, one Chinese manager declared that each person has “different perspectives, different priorities, different backgrounds, and different interests, and therefore I am exhausted.”⁵⁸

Groups in Balance . . . Let Members Save Face

Collectivist cultures place a high value on face, or the ability to avoid embarrassment. From a cultural perspective, **face** is the positive image a person tries to create or preserve. Cultures that place a great deal of value on “saving face” discourage personal attacks and outcomes in which one person “loses.” Losing face can result in feelings of shame, guilt, or embarrassment. A member who loses face during conflict may withdraw from the group, deny responsibility for an action, or blame others.⁵⁹ Following are some strategies that will help you allow other group members to save face during conflict:⁶⁰

- Understand and acknowledge the validity of others’ perspectives.
- Allow others to explain, and accept what they say as being honest and accurate.
- Allow others to change their position on issues.
- Acknowledge the importance of others.

The **individualism-collectivism** cultural dimension strongly influences how group members communicate. Not surprisingly, this dimension also explains how members define and respond to conflict. For example, collectivist members may merge concerns related to issues and relationships, making conflict more personal. As Myron Lustig and Jolene Koester write in their book *Intercultural Competence*, “To shout and scream publicly, thus displaying the conflict to others, threatens everyone’s face to such an extreme degree that such behavior is usually avoided at all costs [in collectivist cultures].” In individualistic cultures, group members may express their anger about an issue and then joke and socialize with others once the disagreement is over. “It is almost as if once the conflict is resolved, it is completely forgotten.”⁶¹

8.5.2: Gender Responses to Conflict

Researchers have devoted a great deal of time and attention to investigating gender differences in conflict situations. Their conclusion is that there is less difference in the way that women and men respond to conflict than you might think, at least with regard to conflict styles. Studies in the late 1990s claimed that women were more likely to avoid conflict or to leave a group when there was continuous conflict.⁶² Deborah Tannen claimed that women were more likely to address conflict privately rather than in front of the entire group.⁶³ However, as Ann Nicotera and Laura Dorsey conclude in their 2006 study, “conflict style is not driven by biological sex, regardless of how many studies try to find the effect; it’s simply not there.”⁶⁴

That said, there *are* differences in how people may *expect* women to think and behave in a conflict situation. Women are often expected to value relationships and to be nice and supportive when they encounter conflict, and men are expected to be more assertive and focus on the task. And when women use competition conflict styles, “there is some evidence that they are evaluated more negatively than are men who compete.”⁶⁵

8.6: Group Cohesion

8.6 Describe strategies that promote four major types of group cohesion

Working in groups requires **cohesion**. A shorthand term for solidarity and loyalty to a group and its members, cohesion embodies the ability “to stick together, to work for the good of all, to make the group’s goal one’s own, [and] to help one another.”⁶⁶ One for all and all for one!

Cohesive groups feel committed and unified; members develop a sense of teamwork and pride in the group’s accomplishments. Research suggests that cohesive groups outperform less cohesive groups. When a cohesive group has a high level of “interpersonal liking, task commitment, and/or group pride,” there can be a 5 to 10 percent gain in efficiency.⁶⁷

Most people prefer and like working in a cohesive group. Such groups are “alluring, for they seem to offer their members advantages that no humdrum, uninvolved group can.”⁶⁸

Table 8.5 summarizes the five major types of group cohesion.

Table 8.5 Types of Group Cohesion⁶⁹

Type of Cohesion	Definition	Example
Social Cohesion	Group unity that results when members like each other	“My group members are my friends.”
Task Cohesion	Group unity that results when group members are committed to a common goal	“We’re all working together to accomplish the same thing.”
Collective Cohesion	Group unity that results when group members identify with a group and feel a sense of belonging	“There is no ‘I’ in the word team!”
Emotional Cohesion	Group unity that results when group members experience positive emotions while interacting with other members	“I enjoy working with the people in this group.”
Structural Cohesion	Group unity that results when group members embrace clear norms and well-defined roles	“We operate as easily and smoothly as a well-oiled machine.”

8.6.1: Enhancing Group Cohesion



Members of cohesive groups are committed to a common goal and proud of group accomplishments.

Some groups become cohesive with very little effort, either by chance or because members are chosen carefully. Members of such groups bond with one another almost magically in pursuit of a worthy goal. Other groups may wait forever for the magic to happen, because they don’t realize that achieving group cohesion requires determination and work. Fortunately, several strategies can be used singly or combined to help a group become more cohesive:⁷⁰

- **Establish a group identity and traditions.** Members of a cohesive group use terms such as *we* and *our* instead

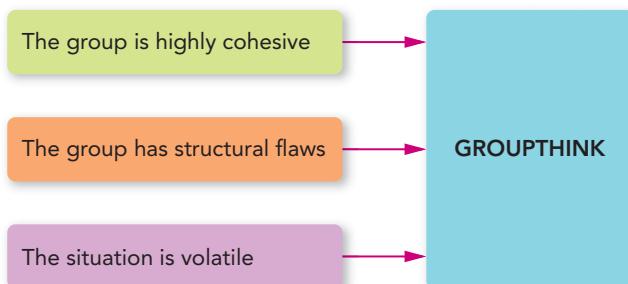
of *I* and *my*. Some groups create more obvious signs of identity, such as a group name, logo, or motto. Many groups develop rituals and ceremonies to reinforce their traditions.

- **Emphasize teamwork.** Members of a cohesive group believe that their combined contributions are essential to the group's success. Group members feel responsibility for and take pride in both the work that they do and the work of other members. Instead of individual members taking credit for success, a cohesive group emphasizes the group's accomplishments.
- **Recognize and reward contributions.** Some group members become so involved in their own work that they don't praise others for their contributions; other members are quick to criticize. Cohesive groups establish a supportive climate in which members continually thank others for their efforts. Groups may also reward member contributions more formally with celebrations, letters of appreciation, certificates, and gifts.
- **Respect group members.** When members of a group have strong interpersonal relationships, they become more sensitive to one another's needs. Treating members with respect, showing concern for their personal needs, and appreciating diversity all promote a climate of acceptance.

8.6.2: Groupthink

Too much of a good thing has its drawbacks. Although group cohesiveness benefits groups in many ways, too much of it can result in a phenomenon that Yale University psychologist Irving Janis identified as groupthink, "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action. . . . Groupthink refers to a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from in-group pressure"⁷¹ (Figure 8.5).

Figure 8.5 Groupthink May Occur When . . .



Janis identified three major factors that contribute to groupthink:

- *The group is highly cohesive.* As a result, members may overestimate their competence and perceptions of rightness. To maintain cohesiveness and total consensus, members may discourage disagreement.
- *The group has structural flaws.* Such flaws "inhibit the flow of information and promote carelessness in the application of decision-making procedures."⁷² For example, the leader or a few members may have too much power and influence, or the group's procedures may limit access to outside or contrary information.
- *The situation is volatile.* When a group must make a high-stakes decision, stress levels are high. Members may rush to make a decision (that turns out to be flawed), and they may close ranks and shut out other reasonable options.⁷³

The **homogeneous ↔ heterogeneous** dialectic is particularly important when dealing with groupthink. The more members have in common, the more cohesive they may become. However, they also run the risk of being "more insulated from outside opinions, and therefore more convinced that the group's judgment on important issues must be right."⁷⁴

SYMPTOMS OF GROUPTHINK Irving Janis developed the theory of groupthink after recognizing patterns in what he called "policymaking fiascoes." He suggested that groupthink was a significant factor in several major political policy decisions with adverse consequences, including the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, the escalation of the Vietnam War in the 1960s, and the 1972 Watergate burglary and subsequent cover-up.⁷⁵ Groupthink may also have contributed to the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger*⁷⁶ in 1986 and the U.S. decision to invade Iraq in 2003.⁷⁷

Unfortunately, groupthink occurs well beyond the groups that decide to invade other countries, cover up politically motivated break-ins, and send crews to space stations on a cold morning. There is good evidence that groupthink may be, at least in part, responsible for more recent fiascos. For example, economists—as well as banks, investment firms, corporations, and government agencies—missed the ominous signs and seriousness of the 2008 financial crisis and then boldly and mistakenly over-predicted the U.S. economy's strength and speed of recovery.⁷⁸ Then there are the ways in which the cover-up of child-sexual abuse committed by Jerry Sandusky, a retired assistant football coach at Penn State

University, led to groupthink and tragic consequences. The reactions of a highly cohesive group of university administrators, the athletic director, a much-revered football coach, and others created a situation ripe for groupthink. “How” asked writers in *Time Magazine*, “could these intelligent and dedicated men have failed so dramatically to defend young children, while going overboard to protect their public image, their football, their Jerry, their JoePa?”⁷⁹



Jerry Sandusky, former Pennsylvania State University assistant football coach, was convicted of sexual abuse following a highly publicized trial.

After analyzing many of these policy decisions, Janis identified the eight symptoms of groupthink summarized in Table 8.6.⁸⁰

PREVENTING GROUPTHINK The best way to deal with groupthink is to prevent it from happening in the first place. For example, when commenting on the raid of Osama bin Laden’s compound in May 2011, President Barack Obama told a reporter that he encourages all White House team members to speak their minds and express any doubts they may have when a decision is to be made.⁸¹ The president met with senior intelligence, military, and diplomatic teams in the Situation Room days before the raid to review several options. His advisers were divided about which option to

Table 8.6 Groupthink

Groupthink Symptom	Description	Expression of Groupthink
Invulnerability	Is overly confident; willing to take big risks	“We’re right. We’ve done this many times, and nothing’s gone wrong.”
Rationalization	Makes excuses; discounts warnings	“What does Lewis know? He’s been here only three weeks.”
Morality	Ignores ethical and moral consequences	“Sometimes the end justifies the means.”
Stereotyping Outsiders	Considers opposition too weak and stupid to make real trouble	“Let’s not worry about the subcommittee—they can’t even get their own act together.”
Self-Censorship	Doubts his or her own reservations; unwilling to disagree or dissent	“I guess there’s no harm in going along with the group—I’m the only one who disagrees.”
Pressure on Dissent	Pressures members to agree	“Why are you trying to hold this up? You’ll ruin the project.”
Illusion of Unanimity	Believes everyone agrees	“Hearing no objections, the motion passes.”
Mindguarding	Shields members from adverse information or opposition	“Rhea wanted to come to this meeting, but I told her that wasn’t necessary.”

choose. Obama encouraged them to speak their minds openly and freely express their doubts (a strategy for avoiding groupthink). In the end, it was the President who made the decision.



President Obama and his national security team watch a live video of the mission to capture Osama bin Laden.

The following list provides practical ways to minimize the potential for groupthink.⁸² Choose the methods that are most appropriate for your particular group and its goal:

- Ask each member to serve in the role of critical evaluator. Consider having members take turns

serving as a *devil's advocate*, someone who argues against a proposal or takes an opposite side in an argument in order to provoke discussion, test the quality of an argument, or subject a plan to thorough examination.

- The group leader should, at least initially, remain neutral and avoid expressing a preference or strong opinion before other members have expressed their thoughts and feelings.
- If possible, ask more than one group member to work on the same problem independently.
- Discuss the group's progress with someone outside the group. Report that feedback to the entire group.
- Periodically invite an expert to join your meeting and encourage constructive criticism.

- Discuss the potential negative consequences of any decision or action.
- Follow a formal decision-making procedure that encourages expression of disagreement and evaluation of ideas.
- Ask questions, offer reasons for positions, and demand justifications from others.
- Before finalizing the decision, give members a second chance to express doubts.

In the short term, groupthink decisions are easier—the group finishes early and doesn't have to deal with conflict. However, such decisions are often misguided and may result in serious harm. Spending the time and energy to work through differences results in better decisions without sacrificing group cohesiveness.

Summary: Conflict and Cohesion in Groups

8.1: Conflict in Groups

- Conflict is the disagreement and disharmony that occur in groups when members express differences regarding group goals, member behavior and roles, and group procedures.
- There are three types of conflict: task (disagreement over information, ideas, and issues), personal (interpersonal disagreement), and procedural (disagreement over processes).

8.2: Constructive and Destructive Conflict

- Constructive conflict results when group members express differences in ways that value everyone's contributions and promote the group's goals.
- Destructive conflict results when group members engage in behaviors that create hostility and prevent the group from achieving its goals.
- The time, distance, and anonymity that separate members of virtual teams may increase the potential for conflict.

8.3: Conflict Styles

- Each of the five conflict styles—avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, and collaborating—reflects the individual goals ↔ group goals dialectic tension.

- Effective groups choose conflict styles appropriate for their members and the particular situation. A group's conflict style may change as the situation changes.
- Apologizing when appropriate and forgiving other members for mistakes can contribute to constructive conflict resolution.

8.4: Conflict Management Strategies

- The 4Rs Method is a four-step process for analyzing the nature of a disagreement and selecting an appropriate conflict management strategy. The four steps require members to ask questions about Reasons, Reactions, Results, and Resolutions.
- According to Attribution Theory, we tend to interpret behavior in terms of its causes.
- The A-E-I-O-U Model is a five-step approach to conflict resolution in which concerns are expressed and alternatives proposed in a supportive and constructive manner.
- Cooperative negotiation is a collaborative approach to bargaining that involves identifying common interests in order to find a mutually beneficial resolution to a conflict.
- Effective anger management requires that you know how to manage and appropriately express your angry feelings while treating others with respect.

- The doctrine of the mean is a principle of ethical behavior based on moderation, and an appropriate response somewhere between two extremes.

8.5: Conflict and Member Diversity

- The cultural values of individual group members influence their degree of comfort with conflict and how it is resolved.
- Men and women from similar cultures do not differ significantly in terms of conflict strategies and styles. However, they may differ in terms of their expectations of one another in conflict situations.

8.6: Group Cohesion

- The five major types of group cohesion are social cohesion, task cohesion, collective cohesion, emotional cohesion, and structural cohesion.
- Groups can promote cohesion by establishing a group identity and group traditions, emphasizing teamwork, recognizing and rewarding contributions, and respecting individual members' needs.
- Groupthink occurs when group members value consensus so highly that they fail to think critically about their decisions. Highly cohesive groups have a greater risk of succumbing to groupthink.

SHARED WRITING

CASE STUDY: SOCIOLOGY IN TROUBLE

Use the information you have learned to answer the following question about the case study that was presented at the beginning of the chapter:

Which conflict management strategy or strategies could have helped resolve the sociology department's conflict in this situation? Who should initiative or employ these strategies?

Review and discuss the similarities and differences between your answer and those of at least two of your classmates.



A minimum number of characters is required to post and earn points. After posting, your response can be viewed by your class and instructor, and you can participate in the class discussion.

Post

0 characters | 140 minimum

Chapter 8 Quiz: Conflict and Cohesion in Groups

Chapter 9

Decision Making and Problem Solving in Groups



Highly effective groups have a clear goal, quality content, structured procedures, a commitment to deliberation, and a collaborative communication climate.



Learning Objectives

- 9.1** List the five prerequisites for group decision making and problem solving
- 9.2** Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of various decision-making methods and decision-making styles
- 9.3** Compare the key elements of Brainstorming, the Nominal Group Technique, the DOT method, and the Progressive Problem Solving Method
- 9.4** Describe strategies that enhance creative thinking and innovation in group problem solving
- 9.5** Explain how politics, preexisting preferences, power, and organizational culture can affect group decision making and problem solving

Case Study: No More Horsing Around

Horseback-riding stable owners in the county meet to develop a joint plan for attracting more customers, particularly in light of a recent economic downturn. Three group members own prestigious private stables that board and train horses for their owners. Four members own open-to-the public stables that rent horses by the hour and offer riding lessons. Sally—who owns one of the public stables—agrees to chair the group's meetings.

All seven group members are competent, hardworking, and interested in increasing business at their stables. At the first meeting, they agree to seek consensus when making decisions; *all* members must be satisfied with the final group decision. They also talk about the need for a promotional campaign to increase their business.

At the second meeting, Sally works diligently to encourage equal participation by everyone in the group. Within a short time, however, things are not going well. Tension runs high because the private stable owners and the public stable owners see the problem quite differently. The three members who own private stables are very forceful and insistent. Perhaps because these members are wealthy and highly respected among horse professionals, the rest of the group lets them do most of the talking. The private owners want to place full-color ads in specialized horse publications, while the public owners are more interested in getting free publicity about their stables and in funding a few small ads in public outlets. Even though they constitute a majority, the public stable owners feel powerless; they resent the unspoken power and influence of the other three members.

In an attempt to broaden the scope of the discussion, Sally distributes a list of questions she believes the group should talk about and answer:

- How serious is our decline in business?
- Why do we have fewer customers?
- How have stables in other counties responded to the problem?
- What limitations do we face in addressing this problem (lack of finances, lack of public relations expertise)?
- What should we do?

The three private stable owners jump to the last question. One of them says, "We know the answers to these questions. We need a good PR campaign. So let's stop talking about other things and decide how to do this—as soon as possible." Rhett, the owner of a public stable, responds quickly with, "Whoa, there. The last thing I want to do is spend a lot of money on fancy-pants ads that none of my customers will see."

Sally interrupts and beseeches the group to slow down before deciding what to do. She tries to include everyone in the discussion by turning the meeting into a brainstorming session. Sally explains brainstorming "rules" and asks the group to think creatively about ways to increase business. If nothing else, the brainstorming session succeeds in reducing tensions between the two factions.

Critical Thinking Questions

When you finish reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following critical thinking questions about this case study:

1. How, if at all, would you change the wording or list of Sally's five agenda questions?
2. Was choosing consensus as the decision-making method appropriate for this group? Why or why not?
3. Which dialectic tensions are likely to affect the group's ability to achieve its goal?
4. How well did the group select and use a structured, problem-solving procedure or a creative, problem-solving method?
5. How did politics, preexisting preferences, power, and/or organizational culture affect the group's ability to make decisions and solve problems?

9.1: Understanding Group Decision Making and Problem Solving

9.1 List the five prerequisites for group decision making and problem solving

You make hundreds of decisions and resolve many problems every day. You decide when to get up in the morning, what to wear, when to leave for class or work, and with whom you spend your leisure time. Many factors influence how you make these decisions—your culture, age, family, education, social status, and religion, as well as your dreams, fears, beliefs, values, interpersonal needs, and personal preferences.¹ Now take five people, put them in a room, and ask them to make a *group* decision. As difficult as it can be to make personal decisions, the challenge is multiplied many times over in groups.²

Fortunately, and in large part because of the many differences among members, effective groups have the potential to make excellent decisions because more minds are at work on the problem. Groups have the potential to accomplish more and perform better than individuals working alone. So, although the road may be paved with challenges, group decision making and problem solving can be highly satisfying, creative, and effective.

Although the terms *decision making* and *problem solving* are often used interchangeably, their meanings differ.

Decision making is the act of making a judgment, choosing an option, or reaching a conclusion. In a group setting, decision making results in a position, opinion, judgment, or action. For example, hiring committees, juries, and families engage in decision making when they decide which applicant is best, whether the accused is guilty, and whom to invite to a wedding, respectively. Management expert Peter Drucker put it simply: “A decision is a judgment. It is a choice between alternatives.”³

Most groups make decisions, but not all groups solve problems. **Problem solving** is a complex *process* in which groups make *multiple* decisions as they analyze a problem and develop a plan for solving the problem or reducing its harmful effects. For instance, if student enrollment has declined significantly, a college faces a serious problem that must be analyzed and dealt with if the institution hopes to survive. Fortunately, decision-making and problem-solving strategies can help a group “make up its mind” and resolve a problem (Table 9.1).

Table 9.1 Decision Making and Problem Solving

Decision Making	A Judgment: The group chooses an alternative	Guilty or not guilty Hire or not hire Spend or save Voting or consensus seeking
	Asks who, what, where, and when	Whom should we invite? What should we discuss? Where should we meet? When should we meet?
Problem Solving	A Process: The group studies a problem and develops an achievable plan	Analyze the problem Develop options Debate the pros and cons Select and implement a solution
	Asks why and how	Why don't more students vote in student government elections? How should we publicize and persuade students to vote?

Now think about what groups must do when they make *collective* decisions. Should they use logic, trust their instincts, rely on majority rule, or pass it on to a higher authority? As hard as it is to make a *personal* decision, the difficulties of *group* decision making are multiplied many times. When, however, a task is complex and the answers or solutions are unclear, groups make better decisions than individuals working alone. In this chapter, we examine the many ways in which groups address the challenges of making decisions and solving problems.

However, before taking on such challenges, five prerequisites should be in place: a clear goal, quality content, structured procedures, commitment to deliberation, and a collaborative communication climate.

9.1.1: Clear Goal

Effective groups have a clear, common goal that everyone understands and supports. One strategy for understanding the nature of the group’s goal is to word it as a question, as explained in the following *Theory in Groups* feature. The question format helps a group decide whether it should accept, reject, or suspend judgment about an idea, belief, or proposal.

Theory in Groups

Asking Single and Subordinate Questions

Objective: Create a single question about a topic that lends itself to group decision making, as well as related sub questions of fact, conjecture, value, and policy.

Frank LaFasto and Carl Larson’s thorough study of problem-solving groups led them to propose an approach that requires groups to ask “What is the *single question*, the answer to which all group members should know” in order to achieve a common goal.⁴ The **Single Question Format** is a problem-solving approach that focuses group analysis on answering a single, agreed-upon question in order to arrive at a solution. After creating a single question for the group’s overall goal, members should analyze the question and identify (a) the central issues raised by the single question, (b) the information and expert opinions needed as the basis for well-founded decisions, and (c) the criteria for selecting a reasonable solution.

In addition to generating a single, agreed-upon question, classify the group’s single question and any sub questions as question of fact, conjecture, value, or policy. Categorizing these questions can help group members clarify what they need to know, discuss, and do in order to answer their single question and achieve their common goal. In order to explain the purposes of and differences among these four types of sub questions, we offer a hypothetical example. Suppose a group of friends will be traveling to Colorado in a few months. Their Single Question is: *Should we purchase and sample legal marijuana when we’re in Colorado?*

Questions of Fact

Questions of fact ask whether something is true or false, whether an event did or did not occur, or whether something caused this or that. A conscientious group uses questions of fact to investigate what is true and not true, whether the facts are consistent, and the cause or causes of a situation using the best information available. The group traveling to Colorado may ask: “Are all of the marijuana ‘dispensaries’ legal?” “Can we smoke marijuana in our car, in public, or in a hotel room?” A question such as “How do proportions of the two major chemicals in marijuana—tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD)—affect users?” calls for an

informed understanding of the nature, percentage, and different effects of these ingredients. When a group confronts questions of fact, it must seek and evaluate the best information available.

Questions of Conjecture

Questions of conjecture ask whether something will happen. They examine the possibility of something happening in the future using legitimate facts, valid data, and expert opinions to reach the most probable conclusion.⁵ Group members in our example may ask themselves: “Will we have negative reactions to using marijuana?” and/or “Will marijuana be legalized in most states within a few years?” Unlike a question of fact, only the future holds the answer to this type of question. Instead of focusing on what *is*, the group does its best to predict the future. If a group waits until the future arrives, it may be too late to make a good decision or solve a problem.

Questions of Value

Questions of value ask whether something is worthwhile: Is it good or bad; right or wrong; moral or immoral; best, average, or worst? Questions of value are difficult to answer because they depend on the attitudes, beliefs, and values of group members. In many cases, the answer to a question of value may be, “It depends.” Does the sale of legal marijuana in Colorado benefit or harm the state and its citizens? The answer depends on how legalization affects different people and groups. Is legal marijuana justifiable for patients with medical conditions or for recreational users who give up illegal drugs? Does legalization harm recreational users who may become less competent workers, drivers, students, and parents?

Questions of Policy

Questions of policy ask whether and how a specific course of action should be implemented to address a problem.

Questions of policy ask: “What should we do about a particular problem?” Here are some questions of policy from our Colorado example: “What changes, if any, should Colorado make to its marijuana laws?” “Should legal marijuana use be expanded and permitted in certain public settings?” “Should stricter safety regulations be instituted to ensure the responsible growth, strength, detailed labeling, and sale of legal marijuana?” Policy questions often require answers to subquestions of fact, conjecture, and value.

Use All Four Types of Questions

Problem-solving groups rarely focus on one type of question. Dennis Gouran, a pioneer in group communication research, notes: “A fascinating aspect of many policy discussions is that in trying to determine the most suitable course of action, group members must deal with the other . . . kinds of questions.”⁶ For example, the group in the hypothetical example might start with questions of fact and conjecture: “What restrictions are there about where and when it is legal to use marijuana in Colorado?” “How much do various marijuana products cost?” Then the discussion could move to questions of value: “Will our use of marijuana be viewed negatively by our friends (or parents, teachers, boss, coworkers)?” “Is it wrong to use a drug that is illegal in other states and disapproved of by people we know?” Finally, the group should be prepared to conclude with a question of policy: “Should we purchase and sample legal marijuana when we go to Colorado?”

In many cases, a group must address all four types of questions to make a rational decision or solve a complex problem. When preparing for a group meeting or discussion, make sure you are prepared to share accurate and relevant facts, make informed projections, support your opinions with strong arguments, and offer logical and realistic solutions to a problem.

Table 9.2 Identify the Questions of Fact, Conjecture, Value, and Policy

Directions: The following activity offers examples of questions of fact, conjecture, value, or policy. Can you correctly identify each type?

Questions	Question of Fact	Question of Conjecture	Question of Value	Question of Policy
1. What are the causes of climate change?				
2. Is a community college a better place than a prestigious university to begin higher education?				
3. Will company sales increase next quarter?				
4. Which political party's candidate should we support for president of the United States in the next election?				
5. Where does the United States rank among industrialized nations in terms of literacy, infant mortality, and life expectancy?				
6. What should be done to reduce the number of killings of young African American males by white police officers?				
7. What is the probability that an avowed atheist will be elected as President of the United States in the next 20 years?				
8. Does the government have the <i>moral</i> right to institute strict gun control, legalize or ban abortions, and enforce childhood vaccinations?				

Answers: 1. Fact, 2. Value, 3. Conjecture, 4. Policy, 5. Fact, 6. Policy, 7. Conjecture, 8. Value

WRITING PROMPT

Asking Single and Subordinate Questions

What is the single question faced by a group deciding whether to organize a neighborhood cleanup on Earth Day? What are the subordinate questions of fact, conjecture, value, and policy?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

9.1.2: Quality Content

Well-informed groups are more likely to make good decisions. The amount and accuracy of information available to a group are critical factors in predicting its success. The key to becoming a well-informed group lies in the ability of members to collect, share, and analyze the information needed to achieve the group's goal. When a group lacks relevant and valid information, effective decision making and problem solving become difficult, or even impossible.

Group communication scholar Randy Hirokawa writes that a group's "ability to gather and retain a wide range of information is the single most important determinant of high-quality decision making."⁷ During the early stages of group development or at an introductory group meeting, members should discuss, in general terms, how to become better informed about the topic or problem they will address. Here are just a few suggestions on how to begin this process:

- *Assess the group's current knowledge.* What do members believe they know, and what don't they know?
- *Identify areas needing research.* Ask members to suggest areas in which research is needed.
- *Assign research responsibilities.* If possible, delegate responsibilities for research based on member expertise and interests.
- *Set initial research deadlines.* Set a reasonable deadline for finding, assessing, and sharing valid information from credible sources.
- *Determine how to share and analyze information effectively.* Depending on the group, significant information can be shared during a meeting or exchanged electronically.

9.1.3: Structured Procedures

Groups need clear procedures that specify how they will make decisions and solve problems. Group communication scholar Marshall Scott Poole claims that structured procedures are "the heart of group work [and] the most powerful tools we have to improve the conduct of meetings."⁸

There are, however, many different problem-solving procedures, including complex, theory-based problem-solving models as well as creative decision-making methods designed for tasks such as idea generation, assessing options, and solution implementation. Effective groups maintain a balance between independent, creative thinking and structured, coordinated work.⁹

9.1.4: Commitment to Deliberation

Effective decision making and problem solving require a commitment by all members to be well prepared and willing to tackle challenging tasks, to meet the needs of members, and to balance competing tensions. Put another way, group members are committed to engaging in constructive **deliberation**, a collective group process that calls for thoughtful arguments, critical listening, civility, and informed decision making.¹⁰

Before your group embarks on a decision-making and problem-solving journey, make sure that all members are ready, willing, and able to deliberate. Your group should share a strong commitment to the following:

- sharing and weighing ideas, information, and opinions carefully and fairly
- balancing different positions based on supporting evidence
- allowing all participants equitable speaking opportunities
- encouraging active listening by all participants, particularly when there is disagreement
- understanding, respecting, and adapting to differences among participants' diverse ways of thinking, speaking, and listening¹¹

Knowing what deliberation is—and what it should do—will not accomplish anything unless group members apply its principles. Although most juries deliberate fairly and intelligently, some juries seem unable to evaluate evidence and argue thoughtfully, to listen to one another comprehensively and analytically, and to bridge differences among jurors. Even a small, self-contained work group can spend hours talking, but fail to accomplish anything because its members are not committed to constructive deliberation.

9.1.5: Collaborative Communication Climate

A group with a clear goal, quality content, a structured process, and a commitment to deliberation can fail if it does not build and maintain a collaborative communication climate. Group communication scholars strongly agree that "communication is the instrument by which members or groups, with varying degrees of success, reach decisions

and generate solutions to problems.”¹² However, if the communication climate of a group is hostile, defensive, apathetic, ruthlessly competitive, and/or inconsiderate, group morale and productivity will quickly decline.

Groups are more likely to thrive if they work in a supportive climate in which members agree upon a list of “We will” statements designed to foster open discussion and participation. For example:

- We will listen to *all* points of view.
- We will ask for facts as well as opinions.
- We will be tough on issues but not on one another.
- We will openly identify and put aside our personal biases and agendas.

If a group fails to create a collaborative climate for discussion, the process could deteriorate into unending conflicts and flawed decision making. The rest of this chapter goes beyond these prerequisites and offers theories, strategies, and skills that enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of group deliberation, especially in the face of decision-making and problem-solving challenges.

Watch Helping Annie



Watch the video clip from “Helping Annie,” which illustrates concepts in this section of the chapter.

WRITING PROMPT

Collaborative Communication Climate

1. To what extent are the five prerequisites for effective group decision making and problem solving (clear goal, quality content, structured procedures, commitment to deliberation, and a collaborative communication climate) evident in this group?
2. What strategies could one or more members have used to improve the way in which the group tried to achieve the goal of helping Annie?
3. How well did the group engage in constructive deliberation in terms of the following qualities: using thoughtful arguments, critical listening, civility, and informed decision making?

The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

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9.2: Group Decision Making

9.2 Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of various decision-making methods and decision-making styles

There are many advantages to making decisions and solving problems in groups. Sheer numbers enable a group to generate more ideas than a single person working alone. Even more important, a group is better equipped to find rational and workable solutions to complex problems. As a rule, group decision making generates more ideas and information, tests and validates more arguments, and produces better solutions to complex problems.¹³

The **structure ↔ spontaneity** dialectic recognizes that structured procedures help groups balance participation, resolve conflicts, organize discussions, and empower members. They also help groups solve problems. If a group becomes obsessed with procedures, however, it loses the benefits of spontaneity and creativity. Every group must strive for a balance between structure and spontaneity (Figure 9.1). Group communication scholar Marshall Scott Poole notes: “Too much independence may shatter group cohesion and encourage members to sacrifice group goals to their individual needs. . . . Too much structured work . . . is likely to regiment group thinking and stifle novel ideas.”¹⁴

Figure 9.1 Balancing Structure and Spontaneity



9.2.1: Decision-Making Methods

There are many ways to make group decisions. A group can let the majority have its way, reach a decision that everyone can live with, or leave the final decision to someone else. Effective groups match the virtues of each method to the needs and purpose of the group and its task.

VOTING Voting is the easiest and most obvious way to make a group decision. No other method is more efficient and decisive. Nevertheless, voting may not be the best way to make important decisions. When a group votes, some members win, but others lose.

A majority vote requires that more than half the members vote in favor of a proposal. When a group makes a major decision, there may not be enough support

to implement the decision if only 51 percent of the members agree on it. The 49 percent who lose may resent working on a project they dislike. Some groups use a two-thirds vote rather than majority rule.

In a **two-thirds vote**, at least twice as many group members vote in favor of a proposal as those who vote to oppose it. A two-thirds vote ensures that a significant number of group members support the decision.

Voting works best when

- a group is pressed for time.
- the issue is not highly controversial.
- a group is too large to use any other decision-making method.
- there is no other way to break a deadlock.
- a group's constitution or rules require voting on certain types of decisions.

CONSENSUS Because voting has built-in disadvantages, many groups rely on consensus to make decisions. A **consensus** decision is one "that all members have a part in shaping and that all find at least minimally acceptable as a means of accomplishing some mutual goal."¹⁵ Consensus does not mean 100 percent agreement; rather, it reflects a sincere effort and willingness to make an acceptable decision that helps the group achieve its common goal.

When reached, consensus can unite and energize a group. Not only does consensus avoid a disruptive win/lose vote, but it also presents a united front to outsiders. Table 9.3 lists guidelines for seeking consensus.

Table 9.3 Guidelines for Achieving Group Consensus

Do This	Don't Do This
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen carefully to and respect other members' point of view. • Try to be logical rather than emotional. • If there is a deadlock, work to find the next best alternative that is acceptable to all. • Make sure that members not only agree but also will be committed to the final decision. • Get everyone involved in the discussion. • Welcome differences of opinion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't be stubborn and argue only for your own position. • Don't change your mind to avoid conflict or reach a quick decision. • Don't give in, especially if you have a crucial piece of information or insight to share. • Don't agree to a decision or solution you can't possibly support. • Don't use "easy" or arbitrary ways to reach a solution, such as flipping a coin, letting the majority rule, or trading one decision for another.

Consensus does not work well for all groups. Imagine how difficult it would be to achieve genuine consensus if a leader had so much power that group members were unwilling to disagree or express their honest opinions. Consensus works best when members have equal status, or where there is a supportive climate in which everyone feels comfortable expressing their views.

Groups in Balance . . .

Avoid False Consensus

Many groups fall short of achieving their common goal because they believe the group *must* reach consensus on *all* decisions. The problem of false consensus haunts every decision-making group. **False consensus** occurs when members give in to group pressure or an external authority and accept a decision that they do not like or support. Rather than achieving consensus, the group has agreed to a decision masquerading as consensus.¹⁶

In addition, the all-or-nothing approach to consensus "gives each member veto power over the progress of the whole group." To avoid an impasse, members may "give up and give in" or seek a flawed compromise. When this happens, the group falls short of success as "it mindlessly pursues 100% agreement."¹⁷

In *The Discipline of Teams*, Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith observe that members who pursue complete consensus often act as though disagreement and conflict are bad for the group. Nothing could be further from the reality of effective group performance.

"Without disagreement, teams rarely generate the best, most creative solutions to the challenges at hand. They compromise . . . rather than developing a solution that incorporates the best of two or more opposing views. . . . The challenge for teams is to learn from disagreement and find energy in constructive conflict, not get ruined by it."¹⁸

AUTHORITY RULE Sometimes groups use **authority rule**, in which a single person within the group or an outside authority makes final decisions for the group. Groups using this method gather information and recommend decisions to another person or to a larger group. For example, an association's nominating committee may consider potential candidates and recommend a slate of officers to the association. A hiring committee may screen dozens of job applications and submit the top three to the person making the hiring decision.

Authority rule can have detrimental effects on a group. If a leader or an outside authority ignores or reverses group recommendations, members may become demoralized, resentful, or nonproductive on future projects. Even within a group, a strong leader or authority figure may use the group and its members only to give the appearance of collaborative decision making. The group thus becomes a rubber stamp and surrenders its will to authority rule.

9.2.2: Decision-Making Styles

The way you make decisions may be very different from other group members. Two related personality traits from the **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**—**thinker** and **feeler**—focus on how we make decisions. *Thinkers* are task-oriented

members who use logic when making decisions, whereas *feelers* are people-oriented members who want everyone to get along, even if it means compromising to avoid interpersonal problems. When thinkers and feelers work together, misunderstandings often occur. However, when thinkers

and feelers appreciate their differences as decision makers, they become an unbeatable team. Thinkers make decisions and move the group forward, while feelers make sure the group is working harmoniously.

GroupWork What Is Your Decision-Making Style?¹⁹

Most of us rely on one or two ways of making decisions. Some people list the pros and cons of potential decisions; others rely on their instincts and make quick decisions. In order to avoid having to make decisions, someone may just go along with the decision of another person or the whole group. Before learning more about the variety of approaches to decision making, complete the *What Is Your Decision-Making Style?* survey and identify the primary way or ways in which you make decisions.

Directions: For each of the following statements, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree by selecting a number based on the following scale:

1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree

There are no right or wrong answers. Respond to the statements as honestly as you can. Think carefully before choosing option 3 (Undecided)—it may suggest that you cannot make decisions.

Statement	Degree of Relevance				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. When I have to make an important decision, I usually seek the opinions of others.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. I tend to put off decisions on issues that make me uncomfortable.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I make decisions in a logical and systematic way.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. When making a decision, I usually trust feelings or gut instincts.	<input type="radio"/>				
5. When making a decision, I generally consider the advantages and disadvantages of many alternatives.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. I often avoid making important decisions until I absolutely have to.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. I often make impulsive decisions.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. When making a decision, I rely on my instincts.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. It is easier for me to make important decisions when I know others approve or support them.	<input type="radio"/>				
10. I make decisions very quickly.	<input type="radio"/>				

↻ Reset
✓ Submit

Scoring: To determine your score in each category, add the total of your responses to specific items for each type of decision making. Your higher scores identify your preferred decision-making style(s).

Answers to items 3 and 5 = _____ Rational Decision Maker

Answers to items 4 and 8 = _____ Intuitive Decision Maker

Answers to items 1 and 9 = _____ Dependent Decision Maker

Answers to items 2 and 6 = _____ Avoidant Decision Maker

Answers to items 7 and 10 = _____ Spontaneous Decision Maker

In *Decision Making Style*, Suzanne Scott and Reginald Bruce take a detailed look at various decision-making styles.²⁰ They describe five styles, all of which have the potential to improve or impair group decision making:

- **Rational Decision Maker.** “I’ve carefully considered all the issues.” Rational decision makers carefully weigh information and options before making a decision. They use logical reasoning to reach and justify their conclusions. However, they must be careful not to analyze a problem so long that they never make a decision.
- **Intuitive Decision Maker.** “It just feels like it’s the right thing to do.” Intuitive decision makers make

decisions based on instincts and feelings. They may not always be able to articulate specific reasons for decisions, but know that their decisions “feel” right.

- **Dependent Decision Maker.** “If you think it’s okay, then I’ll do it.” Dependent decision makers seek the advice and opinions of others before making a decision. They feel uncomfortable making decisions that others may disapprove of or oppose. They may even make a decision they aren’t happy with just to please others.
- **Avoidant Decision Maker.** “I just can’t deal with this right now.” Avoidant decision makers are uncomfortable and reluctant when asked to make decisions. As a

result, they may not think about a problem at all, or they delay making a final decision until the very last minute.

- **Spontaneous Decision Maker.** “Let’s do it now and worry about the consequences later.” Spontaneous decision makers make quick decisions impulsively and on the spur of the moment. Sometimes their instincts and decisions are right on target. However, more often than not they make impulsive decisions they later regret.

Consider the ways in which different decision-making styles could improve or impair group decision making. For example, what would happen if half of the group were rational decision makers and the other half were intuitive decision makers? Also, consider the potential pitfalls of having only one type of decision-making style in a group, such as dependent or avoidant decision makers. Effective groups respect, adapt to, and benefit from members’ different decision-making styles.

WRITING PROMPT

What Is Your Decision-Making Style?

Is your score on the *Decision-Making Style* survey consistent with how you perceive your decision-making style? Do you use different decision-making styles in different situations? Explain your answers.

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

9.3: Group Problem Solving

9.3 Compare the key elements of Brainstorming, the Nominal Group Technique, the DOT method, and the Progressive Problem Solving Method

Structured procedures are “the heart of group work [and] the most powerful tools we have” for improving the quality of group work.²¹ Even a simple procedure, such as constructing and following a short agenda, enhances meeting productivity. Time and effort spent on developing and using a well-planned, structured procedure has many benefits:

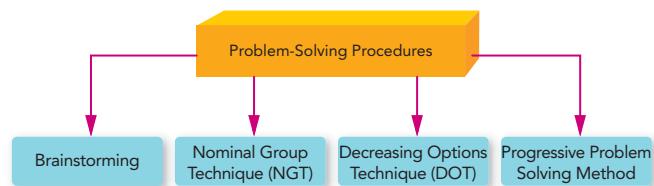
- *Balanced participation.* Procedures can minimize the impact of powerful leaders or members by making it difficult for them to dominate a group’s discussion.
- *Conflict resolution.* Procedures often incorporate guidelines for managing conflict, resolving disagreements, and building genuine consensus.
- *Organization.* Procedures require members to follow a clear organizational pattern and focus on the same thing

at the same time. Procedures also ensure that group members do not skip or ignore major discussion items.

- *Group empowerment.* Procedures provide a sense of control. “This happens when members know they have followed a procedure well, managed conflict successfully, given all members an equal opportunity to participate, and as a result have made a good decision.”²²

Although there are many problem-solving methods, there is no “best” model or magic formula that ensures effective problem solving. However, as groups gain experience and succeed as problem solvers, they learn that some procedures work better than others depending on the problem, the context, and the characteristics and talents of members. In other cases, groups modify problem-solving techniques to meet their tasks and social needs. Next we present four problem-solving methods: Brainstorming, the Nominal Group Technique (NGT), the Decreasing Options Technique (DOT), and the Progressive Problem Solving Method, with advice about when and how to use each of them (Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2 Problem-Solving Procedures



All four of these methods can be used independently or in combination with one another depending on the nature of the task; the size and expertise of the group; and the need for maximizing input, creativity, and analysis from all group members. In order to understand both the similarities and the differences among these procedures, let’s follow a hypothetical example that illustrates how these methods facilitate group problem solving.

Fallingstar State College

For three consecutive years, Fallingstar State College has experienced declining enrollment and no increase in funding from the state. To balance the budget, the college has had to raise tuition every year. There are no prospects for more state funding in the near future. Even with significant tuition increases, overall college revenue is down. The College Planning Council, composed of representative vice presidents, deans, faculty members, staff employees, and students, has been charged with answering the following question: Given the severe budget constraints and declining enrollment, how can the college preserve high-quality instruction and student services?

Although the Fallingstar example does not offer many details, it helps demonstrate the ways in which a group may use a variety of structured procedures to solve problems.

9.3.1: Brainstorming

In 1953, Alex Osborn introduced the concept of brainstorming in a now-classic text entitled *Applied Imagination*.²³ **Brainstorming** is a structured problem-solving procedure that encourages group members to generate as many ideas as possible in a non-evaluative atmosphere. It assumes that postponing the evaluation of ideas enhances both the quantity and quality of member input. More than 70 percent of businesspeople use brainstorming.²⁴ Unfortunately, many groups fail to use brainstorming effectively.

BRAINSTORMING PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

Brainstorming is based on two key principles:

1. deferring judgment improves the quality of input, and
2. the quantity of ideas and output breeds quality.

The idea that quantity breeds quality comes from the notions that the first ideas we come up with are usually the most obvious, and that truly creative ideas emerge only after we have gotten the obvious suggestions out. The guidelines in Table 9.4 present six strategies and related skills for an effective brainstorming session.

Table 9.4 Brainstorming Guidelines²⁵

Sharpen the focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with a clear question or statement of the problem. • Give members a few minutes to think about possible ideas before brainstorming begins
Display ideas for all to see	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign someone to write down the group's ideas. • Post the ideas where everyone can see them.
Number the ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbering can motivate a group, e.g., "Let's try to list 20 to 30 ideas." • Numbering makes it easier to jump back and forth among ideas.
Encourage creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announce that wild and crazy ideas are welcome. • Announce that quantity is more important than quality.
Emphasize input, prohibit put-downs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the ideas coming. • Evaluate the ideas only <i>after</i> brainstorming is over.
Build and jump	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on, modify, or combine ideas offered by others to create new ideas.

In the case of Fallingstar State College, the planning council could use brainstorming to identify areas for potential budget cuts that also preserve high-quality instruction. Administrators might suggest reducing the number of part-time employees in areas where work-study students could fill the positions. A student might point to the imbalance in administrators and administrative assistants compared to the number of full-time faculty as a place to look for reductions in staff. If nothing else, this brainstorming session would create a wide range of suggestions for consideration.



Brainstorming is based on two key principles: (1) Deferring judgment improves the quality of input, and (2) the quantity of ideas and output breeds quality. In many situations, brainstorming can be chaotic and messy, but effective in generating many good ideas.

WHEN TO USE BRAINSTORMING Brainstorming is a great way to tackle open-ended, unclear, or broad problems. If you're looking for lots of ideas, it is a very useful technique. But if you need a formal plan of action or you have a critical problem to solve that requires a single "right" answer, you may be better off trying another method. There are several group circumstances and tasks for which brainstorming is inappropriate. Do not use brainstorming:

- **In a crisis.** If the group needs to make decisions quickly or is required by an organization to follow a leader's orders.
- **To repair.** If the group knows what went wrong and how to fix it, organize a repair team.
- **For planning.** If the group knows exactly what it has to do to reach its goal, hold a planning session to map out details.

Even under the best of circumstances, several factors can derail a brainstorming session.²⁶ For example, if dominant members speak first and at length, they may influence and limit the direction and content of subsequent input and ideas. In an effort to be more democratic, some brainstorming groups require members to speak in turn. However, this approach can prevent a group from building momentum and will probably result in fewer ideas. If all members are trying to write down every idea, they may become so focused on note taking that they neglect to contribute. Instead, one person should record and post the ideas contributed by all of the group members.

Finally, brainstorming can be counterproductive. For example, the comments of a powerful member or "the boss" may influence and limit the development and direction of ideas. In some cases, group members may not participate in

group brainstorming if they are introverts, experience high levels of communication apprehension, become distracted by member comments, or leave it to others to come up with good ideas.²⁷ Studies also show that people who use brainstorming rules when working alone came up with more and better ideas than they would have contributed when working in groups.²⁸

In addition to the traditional brainstorming process, groups can employ the principles of brainstorming using online techniques called *electronic brainstorming*, *brainwriting*, and *brainnetting*. Online brainstorming products, such as *Stormboard*, *MindManager*, and *Teamput*, hype their software, and inevitably will be replaced with “new and improved” products.

Some studies have found that online brainstorming produces “more high quality ideas and have a higher average of creative ideas per person, as well as resulting in higher levels of satisfaction with the ideas.”²⁹

The following reasons help explain why online brainstorming is often superior to face-to-face brainstorming:

1. Group members have more opportunities to contribute. In face-to-face meetings, brainstorming can become unmanageable when the number of members reaches ten and beyond.
2. Group members who dominate a face-to-face discussion will not deter others from participating because everyone submits suggestions online. No one can dominate when everyone contributes simultaneously.
3. Group members can truly feel anonymous and not feel intimidated by others.
4. Group members can write down suggestions in advance to be better prepared for the brainstorming session, or pause during a session to think through additional and more creative ideas.

Although brainstorming is popular, its effectiveness depends on the nature of the group and its members. If a group is self-conscious and sensitive to implied criticism, brainstorming can fail. If a group is comfortable with a freewheeling process, brainstorming can enhance creativity and produce many worthwhile ideas.

WRITING PROMPT

Brainstorming

1. Should a group faced with solving the problem of a leaky roof use brainstorming? Why or why not?
2. Why, in some situations, is virtual (online or networked computers) brainstorming superior to in-person brainstorming?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

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9.3.2: Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

Andre L. Delbecq and Andrew H. Van de Ven developed the Nominal Group Technique as a way of maximizing participation in problem-solving and program-planning groups while minimizing some of the interpersonal problems associated with group interaction.³⁰ The term *nominal* means “existing in name only”; thus, a *nominal group* is a collection of people who, at first, work *individually* rather than collectively. The **Nominal Group Technique (NGT)** combines aspects of silent voting with limited discussion to help a group build consensus and arrive at a decision.³¹

NGT PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES A Nominal Group Technique session has two phases: an idea-generation phase (Phase 1) and an evaluation/voting phase (Phase 2). During Phase 1, group members assemble and write down their ideas without interacting with one another. During Phase 2—the second, evaluative phase—group members discuss the recorded ideas face-to-face or online and then vote for the ideas they like the best. By tabulating the votes, the group can rank the ideas in order of preference (Table 9.5).

Table 9.5 NGT Phases³²

PHASE 1: IDEA GENERATION	
Step No.	Task Description
1.	Each group member generates and records ideas and suggestions on paper.
2.	When members have finished writing their individual ideas, a structured sharing of ideas takes place. Individual members, in turn, present one idea from their written lists.
3.	A recorder writes the ideas on a board or flip chart (or posts ideas using computer projections) in full view of other members. There is no discussion at this point—only the recording of member ideas.
4.	Round-robin listing continues until all members have no further ideas to share.
PHASE 2: IDEA EVALUATION AND VOTING	
Step No.	Task Description
1.	Members discuss each idea before independent voting.
2.	Members may clarify or state their support or nonsupport for each listed item.
3.	Members vote by ranking or rating ideas privately, in writing.
4.	The group decision is the mathematically pooled outcome of the individual votes.

Returning to the case of the Fallingstar College Planning Council, members could use Phase 1 of NGT to generate a list of possible causes of declining enrollment or a list of possible solutions. The listing of ideas in an NGT session is different from brainstorming because each member works alone to generate ideas.

NGT works particularly well when individual judgments and expertise are valued. In Phase 2, after planning council members examine a consolidated list of possible

causes, they should discuss each cause and justify why these are real and significant causes. Once that discussion concludes, the group would rate or rank the causes as a way of determining the most probable causes of the problem.

Groups use NGT to rank job applicants, determine which of many possible solutions receives the most support, establish budget priorities, and reach consensus on the major causes of a problem. The highly structured NGT process guarantees equal participation during the idea generation phase and provides opportunities for discussion and critical evaluation in the second phase. NGT can also be useful when dealing with a sensitive or controversial topic on which contrary opinions or a myriad of details could paralyze the discussion.³³

An NGT session requires a great deal of time and a skilled moderator to make it work efficiently and effectively. Given NGT's highly structured format, it is difficult to adjust or modify suggested items, and this may frustrate group members who prefer spontaneous interaction. At the same time, NGT can curb members who dominate or block the ideas and comments of others.

Like brainstorming, computer-networked and online technology adds a highly efficient and effective medium for conducting NGT sessions.³⁴ Given that Phase 1 of NGT requires group members to write down their ideas without interacting with one another, the Internet is a perfect medium. Following are the steps for Phase 1:

1. Members write their ideas and/or suggestions using compatible computer software prior to the NGT session.
2. Members join the NGT group online; the facilitator requests that members post their ideas on a central site.
3. The facilitator consolidates the items that seem alike into a master list in consultation with the members, and posts the resulting list for all to see.
4. Members are invited to comment on the master list or ask questions about items that are unclear.
5. Members vote by assigning a 5 to the best or most important idea, a 4 to the next best item, etc.
6. The facilitator adds up the points to determine the group's most favored ideas. If needed, the group may have a "comment period" to discuss the results and their implications.

A mediated NGT session gives all members an equal opportunity to contribute and to do so anonymously. And by taking time to write their ideas or suggestions ahead before the session begins, members often come up with better and more creative ideas.

WHEN TO USE NGT Despite the fact that NGT is more labor intensive and subject to a few problems, researchers comparing the effectiveness of brainstorming and NGT conclude that when it comes to generating numerous and creative ideas, NGT works best. An article in the *Encyclopedia of*

Creativity claims that the number of ideas generated in a period of time using NGT almost always exceeds the number generated from group brainstorming; furthermore, the quality of ideas resulting from brainstorming usually fails to match the quality of ideas resulting from NGT.³⁵ Another researcher maintains that brainstorming "doesn't work because sharing ideas one at a time, by talking no less, is incredibly inefficient." He poses this question: "Why do we need to talk in the first place?" Why not generate those ideas, simultaneously, in writing?³⁶ Such conclusions may be explained in several ways:³⁷

- Because members of a brainstorming group must wait their turn before speaking (rather than write down ideas simultaneously in advance), thinking becomes disrupted and production of ideas slows.
- Because of the fear of being evaluated by others, members of a brainstorming group may withhold sharing their ideas, even if the group has been told to defer judgment.
- Not all brainstorming group members perform equally. Some may loaf or coast along, letting others do all the thinking and talking.
- Typically, when one or two group members in a brainstorming session contribute more than other members, be it face-to-face or online, the status of the high contributors increases. This new hierarchy tends to discourage others from speaking.
- Extroverted group members produce significantly more unique and diverse ideas than introverted group members, regardless of whether members engage in face-to-face or computer-mediated communication.³⁸

NGT avoids most of these problems because members have time to think and write during the idea-generating process. Group members who want to avoid such problems may decide to work at networked computers to generate a master list of ideas simultaneously and anonymously.³⁹

Although NGT may be more effective in generating a large quantity of high-quality ideas in most circumstances, brainstorming does have its advantages: It can enhance group morale, create a supportive communication climate, and is easy for any group to set up and do.

9.3.3: Decreasing Options Technique (DOT)

When a group generates dozens of ideas, recommendations, or potential solutions, the number of suggestions can overwhelm a group and discourage members from participating. Valuable meeting time can be consumed by discussing every idea, regardless of its merit or relevance. The **Decreasing Options Technique (DOT)** is a procedure that helps groups reduce and refine a large number of suggestions into a manageable number of options⁴⁰ (Table 9.6).

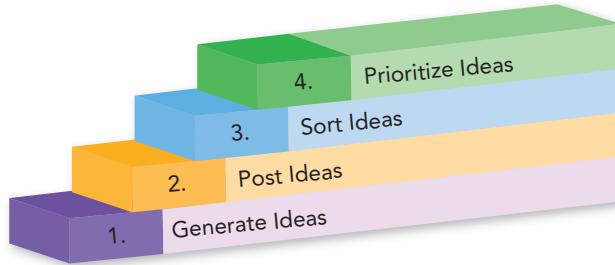
Table 9.6 Criteria for Using the Decreasing Options Technique (DOT)

When to Use the DOT Method

- When the group is so large that the open discussion of individual ideas is unworkable.
- When a significant number of competing ideas are generated that must be evaluated.
- When members want equal opportunities for input.
- When dominant members do not exert too much influence.
- When there is not enough time to discuss all the ideas.

In our work as professional facilitators, we have used this technique to assist small and large groups facing a variety of problem-solving tasks, such as creating an ethics credo for a professional association or drafting a vision statement for a local college. The DOT method works best when a group needs to sort through a multitude of ideas and options. In addition to what we call the DOT method, there are other versions with names such as Dot Voting, Multi-Voting, and the cleverly named Dotmocracy.⁴¹ All these methods have a similar goal: to measure levels of agreement among a large number of people (Figure 9.3).

Figure 9.3 Steps in the DOT Method



The Decreasing Options Technique (DOT) helps groups reduce, refine, and prioritize ideas.

STEPS IN THE DOT METHOD

Generate Individual Ideas The beginning of the DOT process is much like Phase 1 in NGT—each group member generates and records ideas or suggestions related to a specific topic on paper. Ideas can be single words or full-sentence

suggestions. Groups can generate and submit ideas before the group meets or work alone on this task at the beginning of a meeting. For example, when creating an ethics credo for a professional association, participants contributed words such as *honesty, respect, and truthfulness*.⁴² In the hypothetical case of Fallingstar State College, each planning committee member could generate and record ideas for generating more funds for the college. Those ideas could range from hiring a professional development officer to overseeing and improving Foundation and grant proposal writing to seeking additional state funding and increasing student fees.

Post Ideas for All to See Each idea should be written on a separate sheet of paper in large, easy-to-read letters—only one idea per page. These pages are posted on the walls of the group's meeting room for all to see and consider. Postings should be displayed only after all members have finished writing their ideas on separate sheets of paper.

Sort Ideas Not surprisingly, many group members will contribute similar or overlapping ideas. When this happens, sort the ideas and post similar ideas close to one another. For example, when facilitating the development of a vision statement for a local college, we posted phrases such as *academic excellence, quality education, and high-quality instruction* near one another. In the case of our fictitious Fallingstar State College, ideas focused on raising fees for student activities, library charges, and parking would be placed together on the wall. After everyone is comfortable with how the postings are sorted, give a title to each grouping of ideas. In the vision statement session just described, the term *quality education* was used as an umbrella phrase for nearly a dozen similar concepts. The Fallingstar suggestions could be clustered in a category simply named *increase fees*.

Prioritize Ideas At this point, individual members decide which of the displayed ideas are most important. Which words *best* reflect the vision we have for the local college? Which concepts *must* be included in our association's ethics credo? Which suggestions *best* produce budget cuts or raise funds without jeopardizing the quality of education at Fallingstar State College, and which recommendations *must* be included in the report to the college president and board of trustees?

In order to prioritize ideas efficiently, every member receives a limited number of sticker dots. They use their stickers to “dot” the most important ideas or options. In the local college example, each member of the vision statement group was given 10 dots and asked to dot the most important concepts from among the 20 phrases posted on the walls. After everyone has finished walking around the room and posting dots, the most important ideas usually become very obvious. Some ideas will be covered with dots, others will be speckled with only three or four, and some will remain blank. After a brief review of the outcome, the group can eliminate some ideas, decide whether marginal ideas

should be included, and end up with a limited and manageable number of options to consider and discuss.

ADVANTAGES OF THE DOT METHOD Perhaps the greatest advantage of DOT is its most obvious feature: It is visual. In his book *Visual Meetings*, David Sibbet notes that adding a visual component to group decision making and problem solving enhances both the efficiency and effectiveness of group work. Two of the factors that support his claim are directly applicable to the reason the DOT method succeeds:

1. Participation and engagement explode when group members' contributions are posted for all to see.
2. Groups get smarter when they can see the big picture that allows for comparisons and pattern finding.⁴³

When a group generates dozens of ideas, valuable meeting time is consumed by discussing every idea, regardless of its merit or relevance. The DOT method reduces the quantity of ideas to a manageable number. Despite its advantages, DOT may not be appropriate in some circumstances. A group may decide to generate ideas in an extended brainstorming or NGT session to increase the quantity and improve the quality of ideas. When a simple dot does not provide enough information about why it was affixed to a particular idea, members may write questions, suggestions, and clarifications on the dotted sheets or explain why they did not dot an idea on a particular sheet.

Although these examples describe face-to-face interactions, the DOT strategy also works very well in virtual environments. Individual members of virtual teams can generate and post ideas anonymously in a formatted online space. The task of sorting ideas can be tackled by the entire group or by two or three members. Instead of distributing a limited number of colored dots, virtual team members can be restricted to voting for a limited number of ideas. Whether all group members are in the same building or spread out across the world, a virtual team can follow the same DOT method procedure using email or networked software designed for interactive group work.

9.3.4: The Progressive Problem-Solving Method

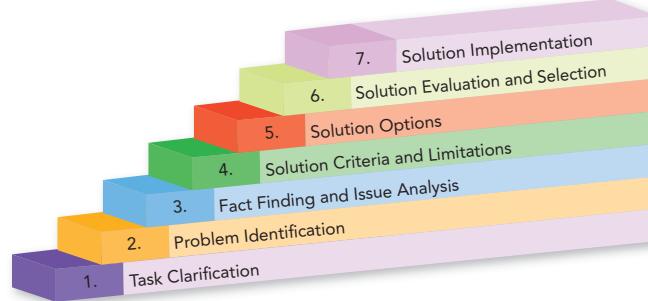
The founding father of problem-solving procedures is John Dewey, a U.S. philosopher and educator. In 1910, he wrote *How We Think*, in which he described a set of practical steps that a rational person should follow when solving a problem.⁴⁴ These guidelines are known collectively as the **Reflective Thinking Process**, a problem-solving approach that focuses on understanding a problem before developing and selecting a solution.

The **Progressive Problem Solving Method** is a procedure that guides a group through a series of systematic problem-solving steps, beginning with task clarification,

problem identification, fact-finding, and issues analysis, and followed by solution criteria, limitations, options, evaluation, selection, and implementation.

The Progressive Problem Solving Method integrates major steps in Dewey's Reflective Thinking Process as well as procedures from several other problem-solving steps into a single model⁴⁵ (Figure 9.4).

Figure 9.4 Progressive Problem Solving Method



TASK CLARIFICATION The first step is making sure that everyone understands the task or assignment. For example, the planning council at Fallingstar State College could dedicate the beginning of its first meeting to reviewing the council's goal and deadlines as well as the need to produce written recommendations. During this phase, group members ask questions about their roles and responsibilities in the problem-solving process.

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION Once a group understands and supports its common goal, members should focus on understanding the nature of the problem and developing a set of key questions. Begin by identifying the all-important *single* question, the answer to which is all that the group needs to know in order to accomplish its agreed-upon goal. Although reaching agreement on the single question may take many hours, the investment of time is essential.⁴⁶

Suppose, for example, that the Fallingstar council phrases its single problem-solving question as, "Given the severe budget constraints and declining enrollment, how can the college preserve high-quality instruction and student services?" This is a question of policy that also requires answering subquestions of fact, conjecture, and value.

Overlooking this second step can send a group in the wrong direction. In the case of Fallingstar State College, there may be many different ways to define the college's problem. Is declining enrollment a problem? Some group members may consider this an advantage rather than a disadvantage, because having fewer students can result in smaller classes, more individualized instruction, less chaos at registration, and easier parking. Is the problem a lack of money? Although lack of money seems to be a universal problem, perhaps Fallingstar is being run inefficiently. If that's the case, the planning council could find that in fact,

Table 9.7 Balanced Issue Analysis

Rash and Reckless Analysis: Poor Group Decisions	Balanced Analysis	Analysis Paralysis: No Group Decision
Aggressive Members	Assertive Members	Passive Members
Too Spontaneous	Spontaneity and Structure	Too Structured
Highly Controlled Participation	Equitable Participation	Uncontrolled Participation
Autocratic Leader	Democratic Leader	Laissez-Faire Leader
Intuitive and Instinctive	Intuitive and Sensor	Analytical and Detailed
Strict Conformity	Conformity and Constructive Nonconformity	Uncontrolled Nonconformity
Excessive Cohesion	Cohesion and Constructive Conflict	Excessive Conflict
Judgmental Listening	Listening to Understand	Indifferent Listening

the college has enough money if it enhances productivity and becomes more businesslike.

FACT FINDING AND ISSUE ANALYSIS During the fact-finding and issue analysis step, group members should answer the following questions of fact, conjecture, and value:

- What are the facts of the situation at Fallingstar State College?
- What additional information or expert opinions do we need?
- How serious is the problem?
- What are the causes of the problem?
- What prevents us from solving the problem?

These questions require investigations focused on the college's situation, conclusions about causes and effects, and value judgments about the seriousness of the problem.

Fallingstar State College's planning council could look at many factors: the rate of enrollment decline and future enrollment projections, the anticipated budgets for future years, the efficiency of existing services, the projected impact of a slow economy, estimated salary increases, predictable maintenance costs, the likely causes of declining enrollment, and so on. It could take months to investigate these questions, and even then, it may be impossible to find clear answers to all of them. However, failure to search for such answers is more likely to jeopardize the success of the group's effort than not searching at all.

Groups in Balance . . . Avoid Analysis Paralysis

Although carefully evaluating facts and opinions is critical to effective problem solving, groups must also know when it's time to move onto the next stage. A phenomenon known as **analysis paralysis** occurs when group members are so focused on gathering information and analyzing a problem that they fail to make a decision.⁴⁷ Rather than continuing to spend time arguing about the issue or looking for the perfect

piece of information or better data, a group may have to begin its search for solutions.

In order to avoid or minimize analysis paralysis, a group must navigate two extremes. On the one hand, obsessive analysis may prevent a group from making a decision when members become preoccupied with finding the "best" or "right" facts, analyses, and reports. On the other hand, a group may make "ill-conceived and arbitrary decisions . . . without systematic study and reflection."⁴⁸ Table 9.7 identifies several dialectic tensions that can affect the quality and quantity of fact finding and issue analysis. We have labeled the extremes in this dialectic as well as a balanced analysis in the middle column. Notice that in some cases, a concept discussed in a previous chapter provides the balancing element. In other cases, a *both/and* approach may resolve the tension. Look at the first two examples in Table 9.7. Assertiveness balances aggressiveness and passivity; Spontaneity and Structure balances too much spontaneity and too much structure.⁴⁹

Resolving the tensions between overly efficient and overly obsessive group work requires a balanced perspective. When group "decisions are consistently driven either by irrational impulses or by obsessive number crunching, a new cycle of diagnosis and adjustment is overdue."⁵⁰

SOLUTION CRITERIA AND LIMITATIONS **Solution criteria** are specific standards that an ideal solution to a problem should meet. For example, the Fallingstar planning council recognizes the need for an *affordable* method for *both* increasing enrollment *and* preserving high-quality instruction and student services. The following solution criteria questions and answers can help a group establish standards for what a good solution should accomplish.⁵¹

- Will the solution work—is it reasonable and realistic?
- Do we have the resources (i.e., money, equipment, personnel) to implement the solution?
- Do we have enough time to implement the solution?
- Does the solution reflect and protect our values?

Solution criteria should also reflect a realistic understanding of the solution's limitations, which may include

financial, political, and legal restrictions. For the Fallingstar planning council, solution criteria could include affordability, acceptance of the solution by all subgroups (administrators, faculty members, staff members, and students), a commitment to using fair and open procedures to assess existing programs, and considerations of the political and legal consequences of proposed actions.

SOLUTION OPTIONS In this step of the deliberation process, some possible solutions may be obvious. Even so, the group should concentrate on suggesting as many solutions as possible. Having spent time understanding the task, identifying the problem, analyzing its consequences and causes, and establishing solution criteria, members should be able to offer numerous solutions. Certainly, brainstorming, NGT, and DOT can help a group generate and analyze creative options. Use caution in this step of the problem-solving process: Suggest multiple solutions *without* making final judgments about any of them.

Suggestions from the Fallingstar planning council could include a wide range of options: raise tuition, embark on a new promotional campaign, seek additional grants and corporate donations, freeze raises and promotions, require additional teaching by faculty members, increase class size, reduce the number of administrators and staff members, eliminate expensive programs and services, lobby the state for more funds, and charge student fees for special services. This list could double or triple, depending on the knowledge, creativity, and resourcefulness of group members.

SOLUTION EVALUATION AND SELECTION This step of the Progressive Problem Solving Method may be the most difficult and controversial. Here, group members discuss the pros and cons of each suggestion in light of the established solution criteria. Discussions may become heated and disagreement may grow fierce. If this occurs, consider using a modified DOT method to sort and prioritize potential solutions.

In some groups, members may be so tired or frustrated by the time they get to this phase that they have a tendency to jump to conclusions. If group members have been conscientious in analyzing the problem and establishing criteria for solutions, they will reject some solutions quickly, while others will swiftly rise to the top of the list.

The Fallingstar planning council may hear students argue against increased tuition, but faculty members may predict a decline in instructional quality if they are required to teach more or larger classes. Administrators and staff members may cringe at freezing their salaries, but faculty members and students may support reductions in administrative staff. During solution evaluation and selection, group members should remember their solution criteria and use them to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each suggested solution. When a group nears the end of this step, members select and/or recommend one or more solutions.

SOLUTION IMPLEMENTATION



Brainstorming, Nominal Group Technique (NGT), the Decreasing Options Technique (DOT), and the Progressive Problem Solving Method are only four of many structured procedures groups use to make decisions and solve problems without losing the benefits of spontaneity and creativity.

Having made a difficult decision, the group faces one more challenge: How should we implement our solution? Is our group responsible for implementation, or do we delegate implementation to someone else? It may take the group even more time to organize and implement the solution than it did trying to solve the problem. If the Fallingstar planning council decides that it needs a new promotional campaign to attract students, the campaign must be well planned and affordable to achieve its goal. If the college wants to enhance fundraising efforts, the group must have the authority and resources to seek such funds. Brilliant solutions can fail if no one takes responsibility or has the authority to implement them.

Virtual Teams Mediated Decision Making and Problem Solving

Objective: Compare the effectiveness of different types of mediated communication technologies in information sharing, group discussion and brainstorming, and group decision making and problem solving.

Although the group decision-making and problem-solving methods described in this chapter were originally designed for face-to-face meetings, they also work well in virtual teams—with some modifications. Specialized computer software, also known as *groupware*, can facilitate virtual team collaboration, decision making, and problem solving. For example, the app *Decision Buddy Decision Maker* supposedly helps virtual teams make decisions by collecting and ranking individual preferences to find an option likely to please almost everyone in the group.⁵²

Different kinds of mediated technology are not equally well suited to all types of virtual problem solving. In *Mastering Virtual Teams*, Deborah Duarte and Nancy Tennant Snyder offer a matrix that rates the effectiveness of different types of technology

Table 9.8 Technology Selection Matrix for Virtual Teams

Type of Technology	Information Sharing	Discussion and Brainstorming	Decision Making	Product Production
Telephone or Computer Audioconference	Effective	Somewhat effective	Somewhat effective	Not effective
Email and texting	Effective	Somewhat effective	Not effective	Not effective
Bulletin Board, Restricted Blog	Somewhat effective	Somewhat effective	Not effective	Not effective
Videoconference without shared documents	Effective	Somewhat effective	Effective	Not effective
Videoconference with text and graphics	Effective	Effective	Effective	Effective
Electronic Meeting System with audio, video, and graphics	Effective	Highly effective	Highly effective	Effective
Collaborative Writing with audio and video	Effective	Effective	Somewhat effective	Highly effective

in relation to meeting goals.⁵³ In this matrix, “Product Production” refers to a meeting in which group members work on a collaborative project such as analyzing complex data, developing a design, or drafting a policy. Electronic Meeting Systems used in face-to-face or virtual settings allow virtual team members to use a computer application to input comments and analyses into a central display screen.⁵⁴ See Table 9.8.

Group experts Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith remind us that when virtual teams use groupware, they must “recognize and adjust to key differences between face-to-face and groupware interactions.”⁵⁵ They also caution against approaching every virtual meeting in the same way. Group problem-solving and decision-making tasks require more interaction than do, for example, information sharing or presentations. A virtual team should select the technology that best suits its problem-solving task, method, and members.

In light of the advantages and cautions associated with virtual problem solving, we offer several strategies to help your team meet the various challenges of such meetings.

1. Ask members to send their ideas, recommendations, or reports well in advance of the meeting. Appoint someone to collect and summarize those contributions and share them with members before the meeting so they have time to process the information.
2. Make sure that all members receive an agenda, a description of the problem-solving procedure that will be used, and any other documents they may need in advance. Urge them to review this material well before the meeting begins.
3. Depending on the topic and type of technology, use anonymous features for functions such as voting and brainstorming as well as in the initial steps of the NGT and the DOT method.
4. When possible, use technology such as group editing and collaborative writing to obtain “buy in” from everyone on the final recommendations or product.

Virtual teams have the potential to stimulate more ideas and enhance overall productivity with fewer blocking behaviors. Researchers claim that mediated idea generation and consolidation can be more productive and satisfying than face-to-face efforts.⁵⁶ However, most computer-linked groups require more time to complete certain tasks, and as a result, virtual team members may become frustrated or bored. So, before you exclaim, “Let’s not have any more face-to-face meetings,” consider these additional research findings:

- In mediated discussions, demographic differences in age and nationality initially make it more difficult for team members to work together and potentially reduce the group’s overall creativity and participation.⁵⁷
- Virtual teams benefit from planning and attending an initial face-to-face meeting before going virtual, especially if members “do not know each other and the project or work is complex and requires a high degree” of coordination, open mindedness, and individual expertise.⁵⁸
- When groups go online, two opposite phenomena may arise: The first is a high degree of writing apprehension by poor writers or members who are not fluent English speakers; and the second is that some members may feel *more* confident when communicating virtually because they are good writers and prefer that medium to face-to-face interactions.⁵⁹
- Some members need additional time to construct suitable replies when using a text-only medium. They want to make sure they send something that won’t embarrass or be used against them later.
- Virtual teams benefit from shared leadership. A virtual team leader has additional management duties such as providing technical training, arranging when and how the group will meet using specialized software, establishing rules for interaction, and developing criteria for group decision making. This burden can be offset if other members assume some of these responsibilities.
- Virtual teams will be more successful if they continuously check that members understand the meaning of shared messages, particularly those that have an emotional component.⁶⁰

WRITING PROMPT

Moderated Decision Making and Problem Solving

What four strategies can help ensure success in a virtual team’s decision making process?

The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

9.4: Creativity and Problem Solving

9.4 Describe strategies that enhance creative thinking and innovation in group problem solving

Curiosity and creativity fuel all *great* groups. These two qualities enable groups to “find creative, boundary-bursting solutions rather than simplistic ones.”⁶¹ When Walt Disney “asked his artists to push the envelope of animation, he told them ‘If you can dream it, you can do it.’ He believed that, and, as a result, they did too.”⁶² Effective group members and leaders understand the near-magical quality that creativity can inject into the group process.

9.4.1: Creative Thinking

Creativity has two components:

1. the nonjudgmental process of seeking, separating, and connecting unrelated ideas and elements, and
2. combining these elements into new ideas.⁶³

Encouraging and rewarding creativity can be as important to problem solving as following any of the structured procedures described in this chapter. For example, one of your authors once chaired a meeting in which the injection of creativity broke through a problem-solving logjam:

I was chairing a meeting of graphic artists, copywriters, and public relations staff members at the college. Our assignment was to write and design a commemorative booklet for the college’s fortieth anniversary. On the conference table sat a dozen such booklets from other colleges. The group had reviewed all the samples and come up with a list of common features. The problem was this: We had limited funds to print the booklet, so we had to confine ourselves to twenty-four pages. Very quickly, the process bogged down. An uncomfortable silence settled over the group. At this point, I asked, “If you hadn’t seen any of these model booklets, what would you write and design to commemorate our anniversary?” The response was immediate and energizing: “You mean we can come up with something new and different?” The answer was “Yes.” The result: A new sense of excitement and eagerness permeated the group. The “model” booklets were swept off the table. Highly creative, outside-the-box alternatives materialized.

When groups engage in creative problem solving, members share imaginative ideas and unusual possibilities. Although impossible to describe in precise terms (it wouldn’t be all that creative if we could), the creative process in groups has four basic stages:

1. *Investigation:* Group members gather information and attempt to understand the nature and cause(s) of a problem
2. *Imagination:* Group members engage in free thinking by removing procedural and mental roadblocks.

The group generates and discusses new and unusual ideas.

3. *Incubation:* The group allows a period of time in which imaginative ideas can percolate and recombine in new ways. During this stage, the group may take a break or focus on another topic or issue.
4. *Insight:* The “Aha!” moment occurs and new approaches or solutions emerge. Group members recognize the “breakthrough moment,” and may build on or improve the idea.

Fortunately, group members can learn how to use creativity in effective ways when solving problems. Some enlightened colleges have begun offering courses in creative thinking with such titles as “Creativity, Innovation, and Change” and “Introduction to Creative Studies.” Why? Because the ability to “spot problems and devise smart solutions” has become a “prized and teachable skill” that requires higher-order thinking.⁶⁴ Interestingly, the “Introduction to Creative Studies” course recommends a creative strategy that works just as well for groups as it does for individual thinkers: Rephrase problems as questions and don’t shoot down a new idea.⁶⁵

When group members receive training in creative problem solving, they participate more, criticize one another less, support new ideas more, exhibit more humor, and produce ideas that are more worthwhile.⁶⁶ John Kao, the academic director of the Managing Innovations program at Stanford University, compares balancing creativity and structured group process to tending the flames of a fire: “The spark needs air, breathing room, and freedom to ignite. But let the air blow too freely, and the spark will go out. Close all the doors and windows, and you will stifle it.”⁶⁷

9.4.2: Enhancing Group Creativity

Remember the group trying to design the commemorative booklet for the college’s anniversary? Until their creativity was released, they were bogged down in inertia and imitation. Encouraging members to be innovative and imaginative sparked the group’s creative powers.

Given the benefits of creative problem solving, we recommend three strategies for enhancing group creativity, regardless of the chosen problem-solving method:

1. Control judgment,
2. Ask “What-if?” questions, and
3. Use metaphors.

CONTROL JUDGMENT It’s hard to think of anything that inhibits group creativity more than negative responses to new ideas and innovative solutions, such as, “That won’t work,” “We’ve tried that,” or “That’s bizarre.” Sometimes a bizarre idea can evolve into a creative solution. “Keeping the process open and avoiding premature closure are crucially important. Because creative work is exploratory in

nature, it deserves suspension of belief in the early stages.”⁶⁸ Rather than automatically shooting down an idea, look for two or three positive things to say about it.⁶⁹

ASK “WHAT-IF?” QUESTIONS Group members are often reluctant to think creatively because they have preconceived notions about what they should do. Asking “What-if?” questions can help a group overcome these constraints. John Kao suggests that there are two types of knowledge: The first is raw knowledge—facts, information, and data. The second type of knowledge is insight, or the “Aha!” moment. It is “a response to *what if* and *if only we could inquiries*.⁷⁰

Here are some questions that the commemorative booklet committee could have asked:

- What if we had \$1 million to design and print the commemorative booklet—what would we do?
- What if we had 100 pages to work with?
- What if we created an online-only brochure?
- What if we could hire a famous author or designer to do this—what would they do?

Group members could consider one more “What-if?” scenario: What if we do nothing?⁷¹ What are the consequences, if any, if we don’t produce a commemorative booklet?

USE METAPHORS The answers to many problems already exist; it’s just that they are hiding in other areas of our lives.⁷² You can find these hiding places in common metaphors. **Metaphors** are language devices that make a comparison between two unrelated things or ideas without using connective words such as *like* or *as*. Well-chosen metaphors can help group members explain, understand, guide, and direct their creative thinking in ways they would not have thought of otherwise.⁷³ For example, the metaphor of an emergency room could help redesign the registration process at some colleges. Students who don’t need help can register online. Those who need help meet a kind of “triage nurse,” a college advisor who can answer simple questions, direct them to a clerk for processing, or send them to a private room where they can receive “intensive care” from a “specialist” counselor. The beauty of metaphors is that they force group members to look at a problem in new and creative ways.

Ethics in Groups

The Morality of Creative Outcomes

Objective: Explain how a group’s creativity and resulting innovations can have unethical consequences.

In *Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration*, Warren Bennis and Patricia Ward Biederman warn that “creative collaboration is so powerful a phenomenon that it inevita-

bly raises moral issues.”⁷⁴ John Rawls, a contemporary ethicist, urges us to examine the consequences of group creativity. He believes fairness is an important consideration in creative problem solving.⁷⁵ For example, creative groups need to ask if their creative innovations have the potential to help or hurt others. Should political consulting firms help the wealthiest or the worthiest candidates? What are the consequences when corporate executives find creative ways to “cook the books” and collect millions of unearned dollars?

Many of the creative geniuses who collaborated to create and test the atomic bomb during World War II subsequently struggled to deal with the consequences of their work. Dr. Richard Feynman, who later won a Nobel Prize in physics, was one of those scientists. He recalled that the group became so caught up in the frenzy and excitement of creating the bomb that they didn’t stop to think about the consequences. However, when a colleague of Feynman’s said, “It’s a terrible thing that we made,” he realized that they had unleashed the greatest terror on Earth.⁷⁶

9.5: Problem-Solving Realities

9.5 Explain how politics, preexisting preferences, power, and organizational culture can affect group decision making and problem solving

Although procedures may be the most powerful tool available to improve the conduct of meetings, several other factors affect the outcome of group decision making and problem solving. We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge that politics, preexisting preferences, power, and organizational culture often infiltrate and influence the group process. Group “decision making in the real world is often messy.”⁷⁷

9.5.1: Politics

In organizational settings, almost all decisions have a political component. Some group members come to meetings ready to pursue hidden agendas and personal interests. A member who wants to get ahead may be reluctant to oppose an idea supported by the boss. Another who knows why a plan won’t work may remain silent to make sure that the person responsible for implementing the plan fails. Although most conscientious and ethical group members do not engage in such deceptive behavior, it would be naïve to assume that all members care equally about achieving the group’s common goal. In some groups, meetings are political arenas in which individuals and special-interest subgroups are dedicated only to meeting their own needs. Ground-breaking research by Carl Larson and Frank LaFasto on the differences between successful and unsuccessful groups identified politics in the form of personal agendas as “the greatest threat to goal clarity [and] effective teamwork.”⁷⁸

Fortunately, constructive group norms and roles, ethical leadership, competent group members, the use of clear procedures, and an appropriate balance between member and group goals can minimize the negative influence of self-centered, political members.

9.5.2: Preexisting Preferences

An intelligent group member is rarely a blank slate who walks into a meeting uninformed or unconcerned about the topic or issue to be discussed. Well before it's time for a decision, most of us have powerful preexisting preferences that affect how we participate and vote.

Psychologists report that we often resist or dismiss information that doesn't mesh with our preconceived beliefs, and that when we hear or read something that supports our preferences, we view it as valid and persuasive—a phenomenon known as confirmation bias.⁷⁹ **Confirmation bias** is a tendency to discount information that is inconsistent with a preconceived belief. When we encounter something that challenges our beliefs, we often view it as flawed.⁸⁰ In 2015, the Columbia School of Journalism condemned the fatally flawed *Rolling Stone* article about the rape of a female student in a fraternity house at the University of Virginia, as an example of confirmation bias. The article used unconfirmed facts and biased testimony that fit "a certain narrative or preconceived notions" by editors and readers about the nature and frequency of rape on college campuses.⁸¹

In addition to holding different opinions, we're also "holding different facts," which tends to distort our "perceptions about what is 'real' and what isn't."⁸² For example, in a 2014 analysis of 928 studies about climate change published in prestigious scientific journals, not a single study disagreed with the view that humans contribute significantly to global warming.⁸³ Why, then, did polls show that less than half of Americans believed there was strong evidence that human actions are changing the Earth's climate?⁸⁴ Preconceived beliefs can take a long time to change. In the case of climate issues, it took almost a decade before public opinions shifted. A 2015 poll found that an "overwhelming majority of the American public, including half of Republicans, support government action to curb global warming."⁸⁵ Even Pope Francis issued an encyclical titled "On Care for Our Common Home" that articulated the need to accept the evidence and act to protect the environment from devastating climate change.⁸⁶

Fortunately, a combination of open discussions, clear goals, and the use of appropriate structured procedures can moderate these preferences, particularly when members analyze them logically and fairly. Even when members have preexisting preferences, procedures that require a pro-and-con discussion of each option help members understand the nature and causes of a problem.

9.5.3: Power

The power of individual group members significantly affects whether a group achieves its goals. It is no secret that powerful people influence group decisions. They affect how and whether other members participate, as well as whose ideas and suggestions get serious consideration. Highly influential members can convince a group "to accept invalid facts and assumptions, introduce poor ideas and suggestions, lead the group to misinterpret information presented to them, or lead the group off on tangents and irrelevant discussion."⁸⁷ In short, one powerful but misguided member can be responsible for the poor quality of a group's decision.

9.5.4: Organizational Culture

All groups work in a **culture**, not a vacuum. Organizations—whether a small business, a nonprofit association, a start-up company, or a global mega-corporation—develop their own unique cultures. Thus, **organizational culture** describes the values, behavioral norms, and expectations that make up the shared environment and perceptions of an organization.⁸⁸ An organizational culture is evident in the way the organization conducts business and how it treats its employees and customers. In some organizations, groups are given the freedom to develop new ideas and make decisions concerning how they work. In others there are strict rules and limits on how employees work alone and in groups.

The more you know and adapt to the various organizational cultures of the groups in which you work, the more successful you and your group will be. Ask yourself whether your group works in, for, or on behalf of an organization that

- is aware of and sensitive to member needs, interests, and goals.
- encourages creativity, innovation, and change.
- adapts to cultural differences, such as collectivism and individualism, high-power and low-power distance, and other aspects of diversity.
- models effective communication practices in interpersonal, group, and public environments.
- respects gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, political, and personal differences of organizational members.

Would you want to work in a group or organization that did not exemplify these characteristics?

In addition to these mentioned dimensions, there are other factors associated with a specific organizational culture. Is the dress code formal or informal? Is there a strict and impenetrable hierarchy that separates those at the top from those at the bottom? What metaphor best describes the organization in which you work and collaborate with colleagues: Is it a zoo, a jungle, a journey, a clan, a party, a

win-all game, a family, a well-oiled machine, a playground, or an obstacle course? Each metaphor “carries with it different connotations about the organization” and the norms, practices, policies, and processes it embodies.⁸⁹ Just as you would adapt to different cultures in everyday life, an accomplished group and organization understands and adapts to its corporate culture.

Watch Helping Annie



Watch the video clip from “Helping Annie,” which illustrates concepts in this section of the chapter.

WRITING PROMPT

Organizational Culture

- To what extent did politics, preexisting preferences, power, and organizational culture affect the member input, group process, and group output in this situation?
- The three members of the group were Jessica (social worker), Judy (nurse) and Max (psychiatrist). Which member was the most politically cautious? Which member exhibited preexisting preferences? Which member or members had the most power? Which member was willing to challenge the organizational culture? How could this group have minimized the effects of these problem-solving impediments?
- Describe your own experiences in dealing with any or all of these four challenges.

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

[Submit](#)

Group Assessment Problem-Solving Competencies in Groups

Regardless of a group's common goal and the characteristics and needs of its members, there are core competencies that apply to all problem-solving groups. Select a group to which you now belong or group in which you were a member in the past. Keeping that group in mind, assess that group's competence.

Directions: Use this assessment instrument to evaluate your group's behavior in problem-solving discussions or the behavior of a problem-solving group to which you once belonged or now belong. The first five items focus on decision-making and problem-solving prerequisites. Items 6–12 analyze steps in the problem-solving process. Items 13–14 focus on group creativity and adaptation to problem-solving realities. Item 15 asks you to rate your group's overall problem-solving competence.

Use the following ratings to assess each problem-solving competency:

1 = excellent 2 = satisfactory 3 = unsatisfactory

Problem-Solving Competencies in Groups	1	2	3
1. Clear goal. We have a clear, common goal.			
2. Quality Content. We seek and use the best available information and research related to achieving our common goal.			
3. Structured Procedures. We select one or more appropriate problem solving methods to organize our work and achieve our common goal.			
4. Commitment to Deliberation. We skillfully communicate and manage the quality and quantity of interaction with one another.			
5. Collaborative Communication Climate. We candidly communicate with and appropriately support other group members.			
6. Task Clarity. We understand the group's overall goal as well as member roles and responsibilities.			
7. Problem Identification. We define the nature and scope of the problem and the group's responsibilities.			
8. Fact Finding and Issue Analysis. We contribute relevant and valuable information and conscientiously analyze the issues that arise in discussions of the problem.			
9. Establishment of Solution Criteria. We use a variety of methods to develop realistic criteria for assessing the workability, effectiveness, and value of a solution.			
10. Option Generation. We identify possible solutions that meet the solution criteria.			
11. Selection and Evaluation of Solutions. We use a variety of methods for selecting and evaluating the potential success of a solution.			
12. Solution Implementation. We use a variety of methods to develop a workable implementation plan.			
13. Encouragement of Creativity. We encourage spontaneity and creativity to enliven our discussion and discover innovative ideas and approaches.			
14. Adaptation to Problem-Solving Realities. We adapt appropriately to the politics, preexisting preferences, power, and organizational culture that affect our work as a group.			
15. Overall rating of the group's Problem-Solving Competencies.			

WRITING PROMPT**Problem-Solving Competencies in Groups**

1. What are the leading factors that account for effective or ineffective group decision making?
2. How could your group improve its problem-solving strategies and skills?

The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

Summary: Decision Making and Problem Solving in Groups

9.1: Understanding Group Decision Making and Problem Solving

- Group decision making and problem solving are often more complex, difficult, and time consuming than making individual decisions.
- Decision making is the act of making a judgment, choosing an option, or reaching a solution. Problem solving is a complex process in which groups make multiple decisions as they analyze a problem and develop a plan for solving the problem or reducing its harmful effects.
- Five prerequisites for group decision making and problem solving include a clear goal, quality content, structured procedures, a commitment to deliberation, and a collaborative communication climate.
- The Single Question Format is a problem-solving approach that focuses group analysis on answering a single, agreed-upon question in order to arrive at a solution.
- There are four types of decision-making questions: questions of fact, questions of conjecture, questions of value, and questions of policy. Some discussions require answers to all four.

9.2: Group Decision Making

- Groups make decisions by voting, seeking consensus, and/or relying on authority rule.
- Groups should be wary of false consensus, which occurs when members give in to group pressure or an external authority and accept a decision that they do not like or support.
- Differences in decision-making styles among rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous decision makers can cause conflict and tension in groups.

9.3: Group Problem Solving

- Brainstorming encourages group members to generate as many ideas as possible in a non-evaluative atmosphere.
- The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is a two-phase decision-making process in which individual members engage in fact finding and idea generation on their own, followed by an analytical group discussion of and voting on ideas.
- The Decreased Options Technique (DOT) is a problem-solving procedure that helps groups reduce and refine a large number of ideas into more manageable categories.
- The Progressive Problem Solving Method guides a group through a series of systematic problem-solving steps, beginning with task clarification, problem identification, fact finding and issue analysis, followed by solution criteria, limitations, options, evaluation, selection, and implementation.
- Groups in balance avoid analysis paralysis, which occurs when group members are so focused on gathering information and analyzing a problem that they fail to make a decision.
- Effective virtual teams must carefully match their decision-making and/or problem-solving methods to the appropriate technology.

9.4: Creativity and Problem Solving

- Creative problem solving in groups includes four stages: investigation, imagination, incubation, and insight.
- Regardless of the method, groups can enhance creativity by controlling judgment, asking “What-if?” questions, and using creative metaphors.
- Ethical groups consider the moral consequences of creative solutions and outcomes.

9.5: Problem-Solving Realities

- Groups must consider the realities of problem solving by taking into account politics, preexisting preferences, power, and the organizational culture.
- Groups can enhance their problem-solving behaviors by regularly evaluating how well decision-making and problem-solving prerequisites are addressed, whether appropriate decision-making methods and problem-solving procedures are chosen and followed, and whether the group engages in creative thinking and adaptation to problem-solving realities.

SHARED WRITING CASE STUDY: NO MORE HORSING AROUND

Use the information you have learned to answer the following questions about the case study that was presented at the beginning of the chapter:

Why (or why not) is using consensus as the decision-making method appropriate for this group?

Review and discuss the similarities and differences between your answer and those of at least two of your classmates.

► A minimum number of characters is required to post and earn points. After posting, your response can be viewed by your class and instructor, and you can participate in the class discussion.

Post

0 characters | 140 minimum

Chapter 9 Quiz: Decision Making and Problem Solving in Groups

Chapter 10

Critical Thinking and Argumentation in Groups



Effective argumentation in groups promotes understanding, improves decision making, and helps groups avoid groupthink..



Learning Objectives

- 10.1** Describe how effective critical thinking and argumentation benefit groups
- 10.2** Review the functions of the components of the Toulmin Model of Argument
- 10.3** Outline the criteria for evaluating the validity of the different types of evidence used to support arguments
- 10.4** Apply the four steps for preparing arguments that are claims of fact, value, conjecture, and policy
- 10.5** Identify specific fallacies in terms of how they affect the validity of arguments
- 10.6** Describe strategies for adapting to member differences in gender, culture, and emotional intelligence

Case Study: Slicing the Pie

At Georgia College, the Student Finance Board is responsible for distributing funds to campus clubs and organiza-

tions. Board members include the president, vice president, and treasurer of student government, four members from active student groups, two faculty members, and the college's comptroller. The director of student activities chairs the meeting but has no voting power. However, he does

provide data and background information about how previous boards made these decisions.

The board meets twice a year to consider funding requests. Board members read the requests and listen to presentations by club members who argue that their organizations should receive the funding they requested. Then the board discusses the requests and argues for or against funding amounts for particular organizations. Finally, the group makes its decision, knowing that some clubs and advisors will argue that a decision to give them less than they requested is unfair.

This year, the student members on the Finance Board come from the Philosophy Club, the Latino Heritage Club, the Intramural Sports Council, and the Drama Society. The group has \$500,000 to distribute and has received requests for \$875,000. Clearly, many groups will receive less than they requested.

Patrice, president of the student government, proposes that the board begin with a blank slate—that is, clubs will not be guaranteed the same budgets received in past years. Instead, the board should use four criteria to decide how much each club should get:

1. the number of members,
2. the quality of their written funding request,
3. the value of their activities to students and others, and
4. the level of cost effectiveness.

Several board members respond immediately. Wendell, a faculty member who is also the Nursing Club advisor, objects to Patrice's proposed approach, saying, "Many clubs depend on getting what they've had in the past. Their numbers, as well as the quality and quantity of their activities, have not changed—so why should their funding change?"

Patrice responds, "Well, their funding may not change at all. It might even go up." Charlie, a member of the Philosophy Club, answers, "But that answer doesn't respond to Wendell's argument. For example, the Debating Society doesn't have many members, but their activities boost the college's academic reputation. So should we give them less?"

"The answer to your question, Charlie, is yes," says Mark, a member of the Intramural Sports Council. "Thirty times as many students participate in intramurals and we get only ten times as much as the debate team."

Charlie quickly replies, "And the intercollegiate sports teams get more money than all other clubs combined. Let's look at the quality of each program, its value to the college, and how much it costs. Remember how much it cost when college Republicans invited Rush Limbaugh to speak on campus?"

The director of college activities gently interrupts and suggests that the group pause and listen to a few stories about how previous boards dealt with such problems in the past.

Patrice—who has been silent as long as she can stand it—interrupts the director: "The past is the problem. Some

groups got more than they deserved and others got much less than they needed to survive."

Caesar, from the Latino Heritage Club, sighs audibly and shakes his head. "Look, that approach is fine for clubs that have been around for years. But the Latino Heritage Club is new. We don't have many members right now—but we will if we have the funds to get the word out to potential members. We don't have a track record—but we will if we have the funds to sponsor activities. We're not even sure we wrote the funding proposal correctly. As I see it, Patrice's criteria will only make sure we get nothing."

The Drama Society member nods her head, responding, "And then there are the thousands of people who come to our theater productions—how do you count them?"

Charlie concedes and says, "I never thought about it that way."

Finally, the college's comptroller calls for order. "I'm appointed to this board by the college to make sure that our decisions are justifiable and legal. Let's stop bickering about the clubs we do and don't support. Instead, we need an orderly way of letting everyone make their arguments clearly and fairly. Okay?"

Critical Thinking Questions

When you finish reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following critical thinking questions about this case study:

1. To what extent did the Student Finance Board benefit from argumentation? Did it enhance understanding and critical thinking, avoid groupthink, and improve decision making? Why or why not?
2. What types of evidence did Student Finance Board members use to support their arguments? Was the evidence valid? Why or why not?
3. Which fallacies of reasoning were evident in some of the board members' arguments?
4. How can the Student Finance Board improve the quality of their arguments in order to reach final budget decisions that are fair and justifiable?

10.1: The Nature of Critical Thinking and Argumentation

10.1 Describe how effective critical thinking and argumentation benefit groups

Highly effective group members understand the value of argumentation, the use of critical thinking to advocate a position, examine competing ideas, and influence others. Highly effective groups know that argumentation is a valuable resource, not a war between rivals.

Before examining the theories, strategies, and skills of argumentation, we must clarify two important concepts: critical thinking and the nature of an argument.

Critical thinking is the conscious process of assessing the validity of claims, evidence, and reasoning for the purpose of reaching a justified conclusion or decision. Critical thinking is not about criticizing, belittling, or attacking someone's ideas. Rather, it is the kind of thinking you use when you analyze and evaluate what you read, see, or hear. Critical thinking is invaluable for groups dealing with a complex and changing world as they coordinate a diverse set of goals, roles, and intellectual challenges.¹ In a survey of 318 employers, 93 percent report that the ability to think critically is more important than a prospective employee's undergraduate field of study.²

The second major concept is the nature of an argument. Many people view an argument as a hostile confrontation between two or more combatants. In effective group communication, arguments are both inevitable and potentially beneficial. An **argument** is a claim supported by evidence and reasons for accepting it. Group communication scholar John Gastil notes that "time and again, researchers find that the arguments group members make *matter*."³ Effective argumentation helps group members develop and present arguments as well as objectively listen to and analyze the arguments of others.

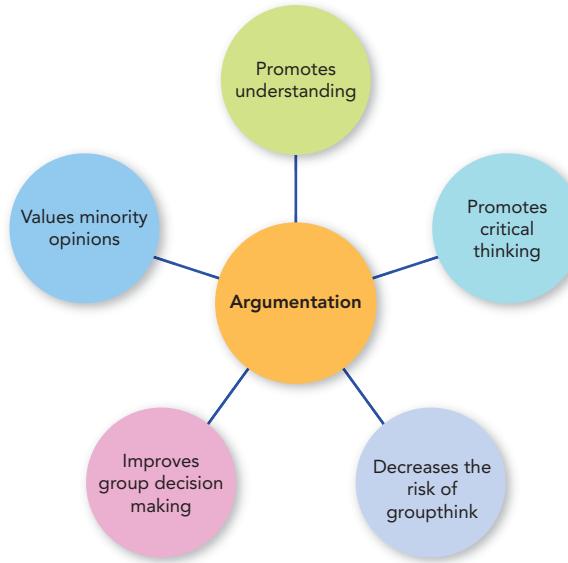
An argument is more than an opinion, such as "I think the Latino Heritage Club should be given more funds next year." An argument is an idea or opinion *supported* by evidence and reasoning: "The Latino Heritage Club should be given more funds next year because it has doubled in size and cannot provide the same number or quality of programs without more funds." When viewed this way, an argument does not necessarily involve conflict or disagreement. An effective argument is a way of demonstrating that an idea, proposal, or decision is reasonable and worthwhile. Research suggests that individuals with effective argumentation skills are less likely to engage in verbal aggression and are better able to manage conflict constructively.⁴

10.1.1: The Value of Argumentation in Groups

Effective argumentation helps groups understand and analyze ideas, influence members, and make informed decisions. Thus, the quantity and quality of argumentation are significant factors in determining whether a group achieves its common goal. Figure 10.1 illustrates the benefits of argumentation in groups.

PROMOTES UNDERSTANDING Group members use argumentation to explain their opinions and listen to others' reasons. For example, Charlie argues in favor of funding the Philosophy Club, and Caesar explains the importance of adequate funding for the newly formed Latino Heritage

Figure 10.1 Benefits of Effective Argumentation



Club. The process of argumentation allows Charlie and Caesar the opportunity to better understand each other's perspectives. Group members also learn about each other. Some group members argue logically; others argue emotionally. A few use a both/and approach that combines logical and emotional arguments into a powerful, persuasive message. Some group members argue on behalf of what's best for the group; others argue for personal gain. Highly skilled members use a both/and approach to argumentation by using well-constructed arguments to demonstrate how their position benefits the group *and* its individual members.

PROMOTES CRITICAL THINKING Effective argumentation helps group members analyze issues and critically examine ideas. When you present an argument, another member may challenge your claim and ask you to justify your position. Your response requires skilled argumentation supported by strong evidence, sound reasoning, and an understanding of how other group members think and feel about an issue. The process of argumentation may even cause you to rethink your own positions and beliefs. Argumentation in groups goes hand-in-hand with critical thinking.

DECREASES THE RISK OF GROUPTHINK **Groupphink** occurs when efforts to discourage conflict and maintain cohesion go overboard, leading a group to make flawed decisions. Effective argumentation "offers an antidote to groupphink" by seeking "well-informed decisions, rather than a false sense of cohesion."⁵ Effective argumentation encourages the critical examination of opposing ideas without impairing group cohesion. Groups can avoid groupphink when members think critically, ask questions, offer reasons for their positions, and seek critical input from others.

IMPROVES GROUP DECISION MAKING Argumentation helps group members examine the consequences of a potential action before making a final decision. Errors in reasoning are exposed, and weaknesses in evidence are uncovered. Argumentation can also improve group decision making because, unlike one-on-one argumentation, it enables several members to work together to develop the same argument. In this “tag-team” situation, like-minded members build on the arguments presented by others by providing additional evidence or reasons to support a particular position, and the result is a single comprehensive argument constructed cooperatively by a subgroup. Although there is strong evidence that argumentation improves group decision making,⁶ it is based on the assumption that group members know how to develop and use arguments effectively.

VALUES MINORITY OPINIONS When groups value effective argumentation and welcome arguments from both sides in a dispute, the majority generally wins. However, minority viewpoints can succeed when the arguments that support them are well-founded, forceful, and consistent.⁷ For example, during the college Student Finance Board discussion of “slicing the pie” of available funds for student activities, the members of two smaller clubs (the Latino Heritage Club and the Drama Society) argue that Patrice’s proposal is not fair to new clubs or those that serve a wider student and public audience. A third member changes his mind. These kinds of shifts “can cascade relatively quickly in the minority’s favor.”⁸

Theory in Groups

Argumentative Communication

Objective: Compare the advantages and disadvantages of working with group members whose argumentativeness scores are high, moderate, or low.

Group members vary in terms of how comfortable they are when arguing with others. This variance in feelings and attitudes refers to the concept of **argumentativeness**, a member’s willingness to debate and openly disagree with others.⁹ A self-test called the *Argumentativeness Scale* will help identify your level of argumentativeness.

A group member’s level of argumentativeness provides insights into how that member will approach a discussion or debate. A highly argumentative person “experiences a sense of anticipation and excitement, and has a strong tendency to approach an argument” rather than avoid it.¹⁰ Group members with higher levels of argumentativeness tend to have stronger decision-making and problem-solving skills and are more likely to become group leaders.¹¹

Group members with lower levels of argumentativeness are rarely eager or excited about engaging in argumentation; instead, they try to avoid it. As a result, other group members

may see them as not only unskilled in argumentation, but less influential in group decision making.

Argumentative members are highly influential in group decision making. They like defending a point of view, and perceive argumentation as a practical and enjoyable form of communication.¹² Argumentative group members also create more arguments on *both* sides of a position.¹³ When considering multiple perspectives or options, a group is less likely to reach a biased decision or succumb to groupthink. Groups usually view their most argumentative members as skilled communicators with high credibility and influence. Argumentativeness generally benefits a group as long as it does not lead to aggression and hostility. The responsible argumentative member focuses on issues and avoids personal attacks.

10.1.2: Deliberative Group Argumentation

Effective groups engage in unique kinds of argumentation that are unlike what happens when two people argue. For example, once a group makes a decision based on listening to and analyzing arguments from its members, the argument is over. A decision signals the end of argumentation and the beginning of implementation or the discussion of a different issue. In addition, when an entire group argues—rather than only two people—there are more questions and challenges, which force “the group’s argument into more complex realms of reasoning, challenging members to reevaluate [arguments] in light of new evidence.”¹⁴

An effective arguer balances a personal desire to win an argument with the group’s need to accomplish a common goal. Communication scholars Josina Makau and Debian Marty maintain that argumentation in groups should be cooperative rather than competitive. They identify this cooperative perspective by putting the word *deliberative* before the word *argumentation*. *Deliberative* is the adjective form of the word *deliberation*, a collective group process that calls for thoughtful arguments, critical listening, civility, and informed decision making.¹⁵ Makau and Marty define **deliberative argumentation** as the process of reasoned and ethical interaction that helps members reach the best conclusion or make the best decision in a given situation.¹⁶

Deliberative argumentation focuses on the group’s common goal of solving a problem or making a decision. Members recognize that exploring alternative points of view enhances the group’s understanding of an issue.¹⁷ When group members participate in deliberative argumentation, they “want to hear and be heard, to understand and be understood,” and work together to reach the best possible decision.¹⁸

Competitive argumentation is an adversarial approach to argumentation in which the goal is to win rather than to work with others in search of a reasonable resolution. Competitive arguers are opponents rather than allied

Group Assessment Argumentativeness Scale¹⁹

Do you enjoy yourself and do well when engaged in an argument, or do you dislike arguing and do poorly? Dominic Infante and Andrew Rancer developed the Argumentativeness Scale to measure an individual's level of high, moderate, or low argumentativeness. Your score will help you understand whether you have a competing or an avoiding approach to argumentation.

Directions: Indicate how often each statement about arguing is true for you personally by selecting the appropriate number. Use the following ratings to respond to each statement:

1 = Almost never true 2 = Rarely true 3 = Occasionally true 4 = Often true 5 = Almost always true

Statement	Degree of Relevance				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1. While in an argument, I worry that the person I am arguing with will form a negative impression of me.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. Arguing over controversial issues improves my intelligence.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I enjoy avoiding arguments.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I am energetic and enthusiastic when I argue.	<input type="radio"/>				
5. Once I finish an argument, I promise myself that I will not get into another.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. Arguing with a person creates more problems for me than it solves.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. I have a pleasant, good feeling when I win a point in an argument.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. When I finish arguing with someone, I feel nervous and upset.	<input type="radio"/>				
9. I enjoy a good argument over a controversial issue.	<input type="radio"/>				
10. I get an unpleasant feeling when I realize I am about to get into an argument.	<input type="radio"/>				
11. I enjoy defending my point of view on an issue.	<input type="radio"/>				
12. I am happy when I keep an argument from happening.	<input type="radio"/>				
13. I do not like to miss the opportunity to argue about a controversial issue.	<input type="radio"/>				
14. I prefer being with people who rarely disagree with me.	<input type="radio"/>				
15. I consider an argument an exciting intellectual exchange.	<input type="radio"/>				
16. I find myself unable to think of effective points during an argument.	<input type="radio"/>				
17. I feel refreshed after an argument on a controversial issue.	<input type="radio"/>				
18. I have the ability to do well in an argument.	<input type="radio"/>				
19. I try to avoid getting into arguments.	<input type="radio"/>				
20. I feel excitement when I expect that a conversation I am in is leading to an argument.	<input type="radio"/>				

Reset Submit

Scoring Instructions

- Add your scores on items 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, and 20.
- Add 60 to the sum obtained in step 1.
- Add your scores on items 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, and 19.
- To compute your argumentativeness score, subtract the total obtained in step 3 from the total obtained in step 2.

Interpretation of Scores

73–100 = High in argumentativeness

56–72 = Moderate in argumentativeness

20–55 = Low in argumentativeness

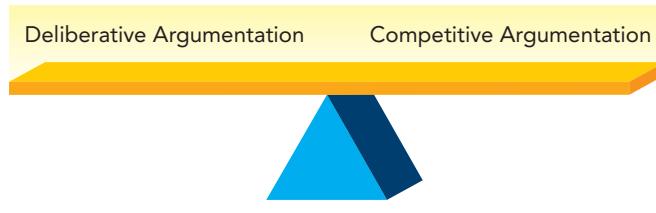
teammates. They are not open to other perspectives and may not listen to anyone else's point of view. In short, they demonstrate the detrimental, diametric opposite of deliberative argumentation.

The following strategies foster a supportive climate for engaging in effective deliberative argumentation.²⁰

- Remain focused on the group's common goal throughout the argumentative process.
- Share new and important information with other members.
- Ask questions to gain an understanding of others' arguments.
- Listen and respond to achieve shared understanding of one another's arguments.
- Acknowledge and build on areas of agreement.
- Commit to a fair assessment of your own and others' arguments.
- Avoid responding defensively to disagreement.
- Encourage all members to express their thoughts openly and without fear of retaliation.
- Treat other group members respectfully.

Group members engaged in deliberative argumentation respect one another and their ideas even when they disagree. They listen to and analyze other members' arguments in order to learn more about an issue, reach sound conclusions, and move a group toward consensus when solving a problem or making a decision (Figure 10.2).²¹

Figure 10.2 Balancing Deliberative and Competitive Argumentation



Watch The Politics of Sociology



Watch this clip from the video "The Politics of Sociology," which illustrates concepts in this section of the chapter.

WRITING PROMPT

Balancing Deliberative and Competitive Argumentation

1. How well did Art present his argument for creating a new course, "The Sociology of Time"? To what extent did his recommendation reflect the goal stated by the chairman? How did the group respond to Trevor's comment that "we don't want enrollment to dictate . . . "?
2. To what extent did group members engage in deliberative argumentation? Did they listen, understand, appropriately respond to one another's arguments, avoid responding defensively to disagreements, and treat one another with respect? Explain your answers.
3. What could Steve, the Department Chair, have done to encourage and manage the focus and quality of argumentation among group members?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

10.2: Understanding Arguments

10.2 Review the functions of the components of the Toulmin Model of Argument



Elected officials, such as Florida State Senator Eleanor Sobel, must develop, present, and refute arguments in both private and public settings.

Stephen Toulmin, an English philosopher, compares an argument to a living organism with its own anatomical structure and specific physiological functions.²² The **Toulmin Model of Argument** provides a system of understanding, analyzing, and creating effective arguments.

Before you can present or refute an argument effectively, you need to understand the elements of a complete argument. In his layout of an argument, Toulmin identifies six components: claim, evidence, warrant, backing, reservation, and qualifier.²³ The first three components are

essential in all arguments; the second three help clarify the nature and power of an argument.

10.2.1: Claim, Evidence, and Warrant

The **claim** states the conclusion of an argument. It is the position you advocate—a statement you wish others to believe. A claim answers such questions as “Where do you stand on this issue?” and “What position are you asking others to agree to as the outcomes of your argument?”²⁴

Evidence includes the facts, statistics, opinions, examples, or other materials that support a claim. For example, the statement “My group will do well on our class project” is a claim. The evidence for this claim might be that during the first meeting, all members of the group made a verbal commitment to work hard on the project.

Evidence answers a challenger’s questions: “What makes you say that?” or “What do you have to go on?” Toulmin and his colleagues note that a claim can be no stronger than the evidence “that provides its foundation.”²⁵

A **warrant** explains and justifies how the evidence supports a particular claim. Warrants answer the questions “How did you get there?” and “Why does that evidence lead you to that conclusion?”²⁶ Although the word *warrant* has several different meanings (such as “arrest warrant”), it also means a way to justify our beliefs and actions as in the following statement: “Given the way she behaved, his angry reaction was warranted.” In argumentation, warrants explain how the evidence proves a claim. For example, a warrant might state that if group members hold to their commitment and work hard, a successful outcome is usually the result.

Warrants authorize or confirm the validity of a conclusion and give you the right to make your claim. In contrast, the following is an example of an unwarranted argument:

Mark (accusingly): “I saw you talking to the president of the Young Democrats before our meeting.”

Patrice: “Just because you saw me talking to Jake before the meeting you jumped to the conclusion that we were making a deal about the funding for the Young Democrats? That inference is unwarranted! I was actually asking whether his mother was out of the hospital.”

The evidence (Patrice speaking to the president of the Young Democrats) is insufficient to make the claim (Patrice and the club president were making a deal for more funding) because the warrant (If the president of student government talks to the president of a club before a funding meeting, they must be making a deal) is unreasonable.

Figure 10.3 “Basic T” of the Toulmin Model

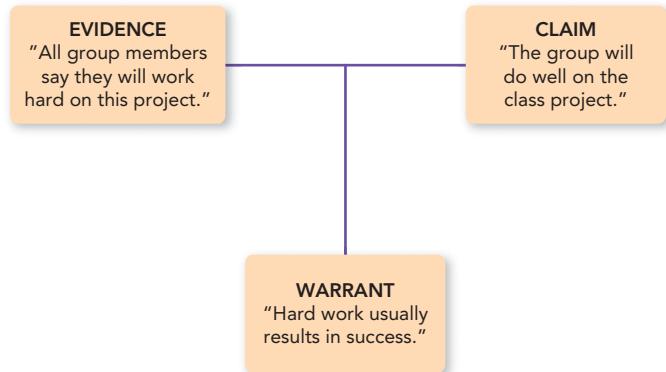


Figure 10.3 illustrates the relationship among these three components of the Toulmin Model. The argument in Figure 10.3 would sound something like this: “All group members say they will work hard. Because hard work usually results in success, the group will do well on the class project.” The combined evidence, claim, and warrant make up the “basic T” of the Toulmin Model.

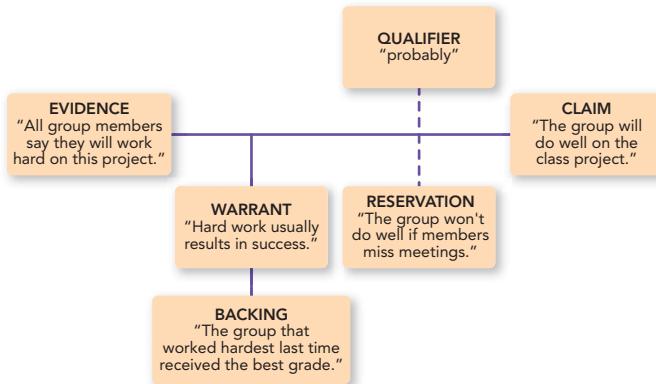
10.2.2: Backing, Reservation, and Qualifier

Beyond the “basic T” of the Toulmin Model, there are three additional components: backing, reservation, and qualifier. The **Backing** provides support for an argument’s warrant. In the class project example, backing for the warrant might be the fact that the group that worked the hardest on the last assignment received the best grade. If you believe that members may doubt the validity of your evidence, make sure you have backing to support it.

Not all claims are true all the time. The **reservation** component of the Toulmin Model recognizes the conditions under which a claim may not be true. A reservation allows members to acknowledge exceptions to an argument, or indicates that a claim may not necessarily be true under certain circumstances. At the first meeting, group members said they would work hard; if, however, some members do not attend the planning meetings, the group is less likely to do well. You now have reason to doubt your claim about group success.

The final component of the model is the **qualifier**. The **qualifier** states the degree to which a claim appears to be true. Qualifiers are usually words or phrases such as *likely*, *possibly*, *certainly*, *unlikely*, or *probably*. A claim with a qualifier might be, “The group will *probably* do well on the class project.” Figure 10.4 illustrates the relationship among all six components of this argument.

The Toulmin Model of Argument provides a blueprint for creating and evaluating arguments. In most

Figure 10.4 Six Key Components of the Toulmin Model

cases, you don't need to state all six components; however, understanding the model lets you know what questions to ask about your own and other members' arguments. If someone states only an argument's claim, you may ask for evidence to support that claim. If the warrant is questionable, you may ask for backing to support it. Recognizing that situations may alter the certainty of your claim, you may ask for qualifiers that recognize exceptions. When you develop your own arguments, the Toulmin Model can help you test the strength of every component. When you are analyzing someone else's argument, the model helps reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the claims.

Table 10.1 The Toulmin Model in Action²⁷

Component	Example	Question
Initial Claim	The Ravens will win the Super Bowl this year.	<i>What makes you say that?</i>
Evidence	They have the best defense in the league.	<i>Why does that evidence lead you to believe that they'll win the Super Bowl?</i>
Warrant	A good defensive team is the key to winning a Super Bowl.	<i>How sure are you that this is the factor that matters?</i>
Backing	The team with the best defense has won the Super Bowl each of the past five years.	<i>But aren't there other factors that also affect who wins?</i>
Reservation	I guess it's possible that the Ravens' defense might have a lot of injuries or that the other team's quarterback might improve significantly.	<i>How confident are you in your prediction?</i>
Qualifier	I believe that the Ravens have the best chance.	<i>So how does that affect your original claim?</i>
REVISED CLAIM	The Ravens will probably win the Super Bowl this year.	

GroupWork

Analyze the Argument

Group members who recognize and analyze the components of the Toulmin Model of Argumentation do a better job of developing valid arguments and analyzing other members' arguments. As a result, groups that engage in constructive and effective argumentation make better decisions. The *Analyze the Argument* activity is an opportunity for you to practice identifying the six components of the Toulmin Model of Argumentation: claim, evidence, warrant, backing, reservation, and qualifier.

Part 1

Directions: Read the following example in which each of Toulmin's six components is identified. Then read the second example and see if you can accurately identify the six components of the Toulmin Model.²⁸

Example 1

Want whiter teeth? Want to stand out in photographs with a sparkling white smile? Then get yourself a tube of White Up, our tooth-whitening dental paste. Independent laboratories have confirmed that White Up will make your teeth 50 percent whiter after using it for two weeks. Of course, if you drink a lot of coffee—the most significant cause of stained teeth—we can't guarantee such good results. So put down that coffee cup and pick up a tube of White Up.

Initial Claim	Buy White Up, the tooth-whitening dental paste.
Evidence	Independent laboratories have confirmed that your teeth will become 50 percent whiter after using White Up for only two weeks.
Warrant	Most people want whiter teeth.
Backing	People want whiter teeth in order to look better in photographs, to mask ugly stains, and to impress others with a sparkling smile.
Reservation	Coffee drinking is the most significant cause of stained teeth and may negate the effects of a tooth whitener.
Qualifier	Coffee drinkers should not expect their teeth to become 50 percent whiter.
Qualified Claim	If you want whiter teeth and a bright smile, put down that coffee and pick up a tube of White Up.

Example 2

Now it's your turn. Read the following argument. Identify the six components of the Toulmin Model of Argument. After identifying the six components, create a revised claim.

Directions:

The U.S. Congress should ban animal research because animals are tortured in experiments that have no necessary benefits for humans, such as testing cosmetics. The well-being of animals is more important than the profits of the cosmetics industry. Only Congress has the authority to make such a law because corporations can simply move from state to state to

avoid legal penalties. However, a law to ban all animal research could go too far, such as banning critical medical research, so the law would probably have to be written carefully to define the kinds of animal research that should be banned.

Initial Claim**Evidence****Warrant****Backing****Reservation****Qualifier****Qualified Claim**

say a word or two about their credentials, and mention the source (e.g., publication, website, television program) and its date. For example, if you claim that the United States puts a greater proportion of its citizens in jail than any other country, you could say, “According to a 2014 report by the American Psychological Association, the United States has 2.2 million people behind bars, more than any other nation. That’s 1 out of every 110 American adults! The U.S. has 25% of the world’s prisoners even though it accounts for only 5% of the world’s population.”³⁰

10.3: Supporting Arguments

10.3 Outline the criteria for evaluating the validity of the different types of evidence used to support arguments

All arguments gain strength when you research your position and use appropriate evidence to make your case. **Research** is a systematic search or investigation designed to find useful and appropriate evidence. Even if you already know something about the topic area, good research can make you look and sound even better. For example, you may know that Americans watch a lot of television; research lets you know that the average American watches television more than five hours a day.²⁹

A researcher with a good research strategy becomes an effective investigator with a systematic plan for searching sources of information, much in the same way a detective searches for clues. The information you need is out there; you just have to find it. As you do your research, make sure you choose appropriate types of evidence and test their validity.

Groups in Balance . . .

Document Sources of Evidence

Documentation is the practice of citing the sources of evidence. All group members should document their evidence—including information from Internet sources and interviews—in writing and then orally in discussions. Documentation enhances your credibility and the validity of your arguments.

Unlike writers, you will rarely display footnotes during a discussion, unless perhaps a PowerPoint presentation gives you that opportunity. Rather, you provide an **oral citation**, a comment that includes enough information to allow others to find the original source of evidence. It’s a good idea to provide the name of the person (or people) whose work you are using,

10.3.1: Types of Evidence

Toulmin lists evidence as an essential component in his model of an argument. Evidence takes many forms:

- facts and opinions,
- definitions and descriptions,
- examples and illustrations, and
- statistics.

FACTS AND OPINIONS A **fact** is a verifiable observation, experience, or event, something known to be true. Here is a fact:

In 1876, Colonel Henry M. Robert used the British Parliament’s procedures and Thomas Jefferson’s code of congressional rules as a basis for *Robert’s Rules of Order*.

An **opinion** is a personal conclusion regarding the meaning or implications of facts. Here are two contrasting opinions:

Robert’s Rules of Order is outdated and makes a meeting more complicated than necessary.

Robert’s Rules of Order is time tested and ensures fair and objective decision making.

Unlike opinions, facts can usually be proved true or false. Group members should not mistake their opinions for facts. As Daniel Patrick Moynihan (sociologist, U.S. Senator, and ambassador) is quoted as saying: “Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts.”³¹

When used as evidence, opinions usually express an authority’s judgment or interpretation of facts. Keep in mind that different experts may not reach the same conclusions even when relying on the same facts. Look for a variety of opinions rather than relying on claims that represent only one perspective.

DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS A **definition** is a statement that clarifies the meaning of a word, phrase, or concept. A definition can be as simple as explaining what *you* mean by a word or as complex as an encyclopedia entry. Here is an example:

According to Warren Bennis and Bruce Nanus, “There is a profound difference between management and leadership, and both are important. ‘To manage’ means ‘to bring

about, to accomplish, to have charge of or responsibility for, to conduct.' 'Leading' is 'influencing, guiding in direction, course, action, opinion.'"³²

During an initial meeting, a group should define key terms. For example, a group dealing with sexual harassment policies should gather and analyze several definitions of sexual harassment and either choose or develop an agreed-upon definition.

Descriptions are more detailed than definitions. Rather than clarifying the meaning of a word or concept, a **description** is a type of evidence that creates a mental image of a person, event, place, or object. Causes, effects, historical contexts, characteristics, and operations can all be included in a description. Here is a description of *feelers*, one of the Myers-Briggs personality types: Feelers are people-oriented members who seek group harmony. They want everyone to get along. Feelers will spend time and effort helping other members.

EXAMPLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS An **example** refers to a specific case or instance. Examples are usually brief. An **illustration** is an extended or detailed example. Illustrations can take up an entire paragraph or tell a lengthy story. The following are examples of the situations in which we often work in groups: "We work in groups at school and on the job; with family members, friends, and colleagues; in diverse locations from sports fields and battlefields to courtrooms and classrooms." In contrast, the case studies that appear at the beginning of each chapter in this textbook are illustrations. For example, the case of the Student Finance Board at the beginning of this chapter illustrates the challenge of group argumentation.

STATISTICS Information presented in a numerical form is a type of evidence called **statistics**. There are various types of statistics, including averages, percentages, rates, rankings, and so on. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau reported the following: "In 2014, there were 57 million Hispanics in the United States, "making people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest ethnic or racial minority. Hispanics constituted 17 percent of the nation's total population."³³

Many of us believe statistics, particularly when published by reputable sources. However, always examine statistical findings carefully. The source and form of a statistic can result in different interpretations of the same numbers. Misinterpreting statistical information can jeopardize a group's effectiveness and success. For example, the number of miles driven by the millennial generation is 23% less than previous generations.³⁴ Here are some interpretations of that statistic:

1. Health-conscious millennials are walking more and driving less.

2. Millennials concerned about the environmental effects of automobile exhaust decreased their driving.
3. Student loan debt and the high cost of housing make driving less affordable for millennials.

Expert analysts identify the third reason as the most likely interpretation.³⁵

10.3.2: Tests of Evidence

Evaluate every piece of evidence before using it in an argument or sharing it with group members. Make sure your information is **valid**—that the ideas, information, and opinions you include in an argument are logically sound and factually accurate. Test your evidence by asking the following questions:

- *Is the Source Identified and Credible?* How credible are your information sources? Who are the author(s) and publisher(s)? Are they reputable?
- *Is the Source Unbiased?* Do their opinions seem one-sided, self-serving, unreasonable, or unfair?
- *Is the Information Recent?* When was the information collected? When was it published? Is the information no longer true?
- *Is the Information Consistent?* Is the information similar to information reported in other sources on the same subject? Does the information make sense based on what you know about the topic?
- *Are the Statistics Valid?* Do the statistics accurately measure what they claim to measure? How are the statistics reported?

Virtual Teams

Think Critically about the Internet

Objective: Evaluate Internet information and opinion by asking critical thinking questions about authority, accuracy, objectivity, and currency.

Although our ability to do research electronically has enormous benefits, it also has significant disadvantages. Dan Gillmor, director of the Center for Citizen Media, worries that "many people tend to believe what they read. Others tend to disbelieve everything. Too few apply appropriate skepticism."³⁶ The Internet is a rich resource of information, but group members must think critically about online sources to distinguish valid evidence from inaccurate information.

The Internet does not cover all possible sources of information, even though many people now rely, almost exclusively, on the Internet for such information. This is why it is so important and often difficult to test the validity of Internet-based evidence. The most trustworthy websites include information from major newspapers and magazines, profes-

sional associations, government agencies, libraries, institutions of higher education, legitimate media outlets, and well-known experts.

Following are four related criteria to consider when you find and want to use an Internet source:

Criterion 1: Authority

- a. Are the sponsor's identity and purpose clear?
- b. Are the *author's* identity and qualifications evident?
- c. Can you verify the legitimacy of the page's sponsor? For example, is there a phone number or postal address to contact for more information?

Criterion 2: Accuracy

- a. Are the sources of information available so you can verify the claims?
- b. Has the sponsor provided links you can use to verify claims?
- c. Is statistical data well labeled and easy to read?
- d. Is the information free of grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors that could indicate poor quality control?

Criterion 3: Objectivity

- a. Is it evident why the sponsor is providing the information?
- b. Is the sponsor's point of view presented clearly with well-supported arguments?
- c. Does the sponsor account for opposing points of view?

Criterion 4: Currency

- a. Is the material recent enough to be accurate and relevant?
- b. Are there any indications that the material has been revised and kept up to date?
- c. Do you see statements indicating when data for charts and graphs were gathered?

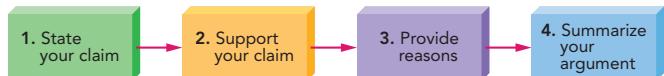
Asking questions about the authority, accuracy, objectivity, and currency of Internet sources applies to *all* types of evidence. Some of the Internet sources will be well-known *and* highly respected; others may not be well-known but equally reliable and respected. If, however, you cannot answer "Yes" to the questions for each of these criteria, avoid using that source.

10.4: Presenting Arguments

10.4 Apply the four steps for preparing arguments that are claims of fact, value, conjecture, and policy

If you want your ideas taken seriously by your group, you must present your arguments skillfully.³⁷ Figure 10.5 shows a four-step process for presenting arguments. In some cases, you may not need to include every step when you present an argument. If the evidence is strong and clear, you don't need to provide the warrant. If your argument is very brief, a summary may not be necessary. However, you should be prepared to include all of these steps if group members challenge your arguments.

Figure 10.5 Procedure for Presenting Arguments



10.4.1: State Your Claim

The first step in presenting an argument is to state your claim clearly. Claims for arguments fit into four categories—fact, conjecture, value, and policy.³⁸ A **claim** is a declarative statement that identifies your position on a particular issue.

- A **claim of fact** is an argument stating that something is true or false or that something did or did not occur. Whether a claim is true or not depends on further analysis of the evidence and the warrant. Here is a claim of fact:

Sex education in schools promotes teenage promiscuity.

- A **claim of conjecture** is an argument suggesting that something will or will not happen. Although your group cannot foresee the future, it can make reasonable predictions based on the best information available. Here is a claim of conjecture:

Enrollment at the college will increase by 5% next year.

- A **claim of value** is an argument that evaluates whether something is good or bad, right or wrong, or worthwhile or worthless. Arguments involving claims of value are often difficult to prove because each group member brings personal experiences, opinions, beliefs, and perspectives to the discussion. Here is a claim of value:

My instructor is the best professor at the college.

- A **claim of policy** is an argument that recommends a particular course of action. Claims of policy ask you to consider a particular course of action for solving or minimizing a problem rather than other options. Policy claims can also recommend a particular procedure for achieving an agreed-upon goal. Here is a claim of policy:

We should oppose next year's 9% tuition increase.

GroupWork Clarify Your Claims

The types of arguments members use in and on behalf of their groups influence the strategies they use to achieve group goals. However, many people fail to identify the nature of the claims they pose accurately. The *Clarify Your Claims* activity is an opportunity for you to practice identifying different types of claims.

(continued)

Directions: Read each of the following statements and identify whether it is a Claim of Fact, Claim of Conjecture, Claim of Value, or Claim of Policy.

Claim	Answer
The assassination of John F. Kennedy was the result of a conspiracy involving the CIA.	
The number of people pursuing a college education will dramatically increase.	
Private schools provide students with a better education than public schools.	
School uniforms should be required in the local elementary schools.	
Volunteering in the community is important.	
Drivers over the age of 75 should be required to complete a driver's examination every 2 years.	
Intelligent life exists on other planets.	
Earthquakes will eventually destroy California's coastal cities.	

WRITING PROMPT

Clarify Your Claims

1. What strategies should be used to present claims of fact, conjecture, value, and policy?
2. Is it possible to have all four types of claims involved in a single argument? If so, how?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

10.4.2: Support Your Claim

The fact that a claim is stated does not mean that it is true. To be convincing, you must support your claim with strong and valid evidence. Regardless of whether that evidence takes the form of facts, opinions, definitions, descriptions, examples, illustrations, or statistics, groups should continuously evaluate the quality of any evidence.

10.4.3: Provide Reasons

If it isn't clear to others why a particular piece of evidence proves your claim, demonstrate the link between your evidence and your claim. In the Toulmin Model, this link is the warrant and the backing—statements that explain why the evidence is sufficient to prove the claim.

Suppose a friend tells you that drinking one glass of red wine daily can prevent heart disease and reduce your chances of a life-threatening heart attack. Your friend cites the conclusions of several scientific studies as evidence. You

may wonder: How can this be? Isn't alcohol dangerous—doesn't it do more harm than good? When you question the claim, your friend provides the argument's warrant: The alcohol in a glass of red wine suppresses the accumulation of fatty plaques in the blood vessels, particularly the coronary arteries that supply the heart. Now the argument makes sense, because you understand the reason for the claim.³⁹

10.4.4: Summarize Your Argument

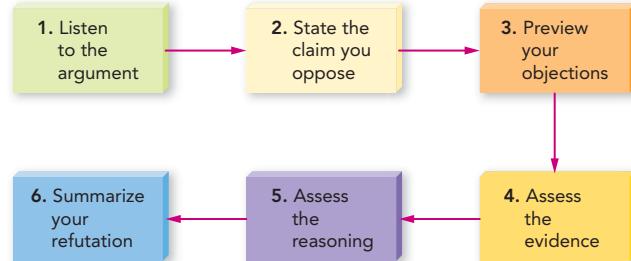
A good summary restates the original claim and summarizes the supporting evidence. Be brief. Don't repeat all of your evidence and reasons. When the presentation of the claim and the evidence has been brief and clear, you can omit the summary. However, lengthy and complicated arguments often need a summary to ensure that all members understand your argument.

10.5: Refuting Arguments

10.5 Identify specific fallacies in terms of how they affect the validity of arguments

Refutation is the process of proving that an argument is false or lacks sufficient support. Refutation can question, minimize, and deny the validity or strength of someone else's argument. Group members should be willing and able to refute claims that are unsupported or untrue. A group unwilling to evaluate arguments risks the dangers of groupthink. Figure 10.6 shows six steps that can help you refute another member's argument.

Figure 10.6 Procedure for Refuting Arguments



10.5.1: Listen to the Argument

First, engage in **listening to understand**. You must fully understand an argument before you can refute it effectively. Ask questions and take notes. Once you comprehend the meaning of an argument, you can shift to critical listening (**listening to evaluate**).

- What type of claim is it?
- Is there evidence to support the claim?
- How well does the evidence support the claim?

- What is the implied or stated warrant?
- Is the claim qualified in any way?

Analyzing the argument as you listen will help you formulate an appropriate response.

10.5.2: State the Opposing Claim

Group members may offer several claims during an argumentative discussion. Don't try to respond to all of them at once. When you are ready, state which claim you oppose. Clearly stating the claim gives you the opportunity to make sure that you understand the argument. For example, you may think a group member's claim was, "Employees are stealing supplies from the company." Instead, the claim was, "The company should identify ways to use supplies more efficiently." If you have misunderstood a claim, ask other group members to clarify their arguments for you.

10.5.3: Preview Your Objections

Provide a brief overview of your objections to or concerns with the argument. Let other group members know the general direction of how you will refute someone else's argument. This is particularly important when your refutation will be lengthy or complicated. An example of a good preview is, "I don't believe we should raise funds for and sponsor a carnival for three reasons: the high cost, the unpredictable weather, and the undesirable location." If they have a general idea of the reasons for your refutation, group members will be better prepared to listen to and understand your objections and concerns.

10.5.4: Assess the Evidence

When refuting a claim, you may be able to show that the evidence supporting the claim is faulty. You can do this by presenting contradictory evidence. For example, if a group member contends that tuition is high, you may present evidence from a survey showing that your college's tuition is one of the lowest in the state. You can also refute an argument by questioning the quality of the evidence. An outdated statistic or a quotation by a discredited source can be reason enough to reject an arguer's evidence—as well as the claim. Proving that the evidence is of poor quality does not mean that the claim is untrue, but it does highlight potential weaknesses.

10.5.5: Assess the Reasoning

Assess reasoning by identifying fallacies. A **fallacy** is an argument based on false or invalid reasoning. It is not always necessary to identify the fallacy by name, particularly if group members are not familiar with the different types of fallacies. It is much more important to explain why the reasoning in the argument is flawed. Table 10.2 briefly describes seven of the most common fallacies of argument.

Table 10.2 Fallacies of Argument

Fallacy	Definition	Example
Ad Hominem Attack	Making an irrelevant attack against a person's character rather than a substantive response to an issue or argument	"What would you know about the benefits of a year-round school schedule? You don't have kids!"
Appeal to Authority	Relying on biased or unqualified expert opinion when that person has no particular expertise in the area under consideration	"According to a popular television talk show host, women who work full-time can't also be great parents to their children."
Appeal to Popularity	Justifying an action or belief because many people do it or believe it	"Almost everyone I know has cheated on an exam. It's really no big deal."
Appeal to Tradition	Claiming that people should continue a certain course of action because that's the way it's always been done	"The group should continue to meet on Monday afternoons because that's when we've always met."
Faulty Analogy	Claiming that two things are similar when they actually differ with regard to relevant characteristics	"North Carolina and Texas are both developing policies to address undocumented immigration. What works in North Carolina should work for Texas."
Faulty Cause	Claiming that an effect is caused by something that has little or no relationship to the effect	"Since the college's basketball team began doing poorly two years ago, overall enrollment at the college has declined."
Hasty Generalization	Using too few examples or experiences to support a conclusion	"A Volvo is an unreliable car. The one I used to own was always breaking down."

10.5.6: Summarize Your Refutation

The final step is to summarize your response to the argument. If your refutation has been lengthy or complex, it is helpful to restate your major points. However, it is not necessary to review all of your points in detail because doing so wastes valuable group discussion time. If your refutation has been short and to the point, it may not be necessary to summarize it. On the other hand, there is no harm providing a robust and convincing summary to reinforce your refutation and make it memorable.

Watch *Helping Annie*



Watch this clip from the video "Helping Annie," which illustrates concepts in this section of the chapter.

WRITING PROMPT

Refuting Arguments

1. Compare the ways in which Jessica (the social worker) and Max (the psychiatrist) presented their arguments for or against a holistic approach and a medication-based treatment for helping Annie? To what extent does each argument have a well-founded claim, applicable evidence, and a reasonable warrant?
2. How could Judy (the school nurse) have intervened to improve the quality and value of the arguments between Jessica and Max? Given what you've seen in terms of Jessica's participation, what advice would you give her to help achieve the goal of helping Annie?
3. Describe the ways in which members use language, nonverbal behaviors, and listening skills as they engage in argumentation.

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

10.6: Adapting to Argumentation Styles

10.6 Describe strategies for adapting to member differences in gender, culture, and emotional intelligence

Research suggests that men and women argue differently, as do group members from different cultures. In addition, group members' emotional intelligence also affects how they develop and refute arguments. These differences appear to be a function of how we learn to argue and what values we believe are important. Effective group members recognize and try to adapt to other members' argumentation styles.

10.6.1: Gender Differences in Argumentation

Researchers have devoted a great deal of attention to the impact of gender on critical thinking and argumentation. Their conclusion is that—in general—there are fewer differences than you might think between the way women and men argue. Studies in the late 1990s claimed that men engage in competitive argumentation, but women are more likely to seek consensus within a group. The same research found that men tend to view issues as only two-sided (for or against, right or wrong), but women are more likely to search out many different perspectives on a subject.⁴⁰

Generally, there are *no* differences in men's and women's use of facts, opinions, statistics, or other types of evidence. In addition, men and women are relatively equal in

voicing objections to others' statements. There may be differences in how people *expect* women to think and argue. When arguing, women are often expected to be nice, but men are expected to be more aggressive. When women adopt an aggressive or competitive approach to resolving disagreement, they are evaluated more negatively than men who take that same approach.⁴¹

We urge you to avoid stereotyping the way men and women argue. Don't assume that the women in your group are more submissive and emotional, and that the men are more assertive and objective. Instead, take a dialectic approach: Groups benefit when members value *both* deliberation *and* competition as appropriate. A study by Renee Meyers and her colleagues found that when group members argue, they must balance "the tension between the need to agree and disagree, to challenge and reach convergence, to ask questions and make statements." Although these "tasks may be divided along gender lines . . . there is nothing inherently superior or inferior about either men's or women's communication. They may be different, but they are both necessary and equally important to the group's success in argument."⁴²

10.6.2: Cultural Differences in Argumentation

Cultures often dictate who should and should not argue. In some cultures, a young person would not challenge or argue with an older adult. Among several American Indian and African cultures, elders claim more wisdom and knowledge than younger members. Philosopher Stephen Toulmin suggests that what is considered appropriate argumentation often varies from culture to culture.⁴³



Negotiations in Asian countries are often characterized by extreme politeness and an avoidance of arguments in which participants could lose face.

One of the most significant cultural differences in argumentation is the way in which people use evidence to support a claim. There are no universal standards for valid

evidence that apply across all cultures. Americans value the use of facts and expert testimony to prove claims; however, expert testimony is not considered reliable evidence in some other cultures. In some African cultures, “the words of a witness would be discounted and even totally disregarded because the people believe that, if you speak up about seeing something, you must have a particular agenda in mind; in other words, no one is regarded as objective.”⁴⁴ In other cultures, the use of parables and stories constitutes sufficient evidence to support a claim. For example, many Muslims, Jews, and Christians use stories from the Koran or the Bible as evidence in support of their arguments.⁴⁵ Given such different perspectives, the evidence used to support a claim in one culture may seem irrational in another.

10.6.3: Argumentation and Emotional Intelligence

When group members argue about the wisdom of adopting a controversial proposal, whether it is the hiring of an unconventional job applicant or the best way to break bad news to colleagues, they need to understand the role of emotions in argumentation. In some cases, members should restrain their emotions; in other circumstances, they can exert influence by expressing emotions.

Psychologist Antonio Damasio was one of the first researchers to link emotions to communication, critical thinking, and decision-making ability.⁴⁶ While studying patients with damage to the emotional centers of their brains, he noted that his patients made terrible decisions. Despite having high IQs, he found that they “make disastrous choices in business and their personal lives, and can even obsess endlessly over a decision as simple as when to make an appointment.” Dr. Damasio contends that feelings are *indispensable* for rational decision making.⁴⁷

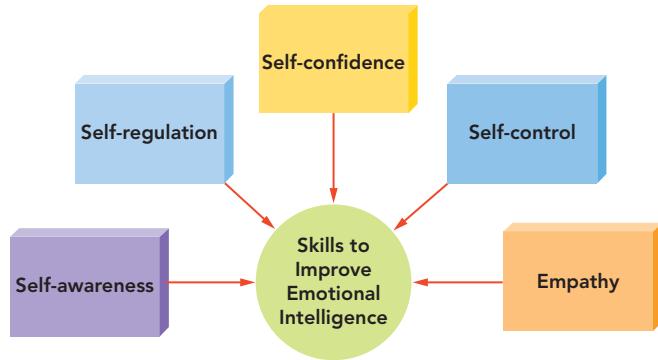
Emotional intelligence is the capacity to recognize your own and others’ feelings and to manage emotions effectively.⁴⁸ The role of emotional intelligence in critical thinking and argumentation can take two forms:

1. curbing inappropriate emotions and
2. expressing appropriate emotions.

Effective group members understand the need for both and learn how to balance their use.⁴⁹ Figure 10.7 describes five skills that can help you and the members of your group improve your emotional intelligence and your group’s ability to think critically and argue reasonably.

If you care about your group and its goal, express your emotions openly and constructively to emphasize what you say. Emotions play a significant role in arguments. “The more committed group members are to a cause, the more familiar arguers are with one another, and the more

Figure 10.7 Skills to Improve Emotional Intelligence



Self-awareness Recognize your own feelings, level of excitement, and consider how you tend to express your feelings to others.

Self-regulation Handle your emotions responsibly, delay personal gratification, and focus on achieving the group’s common goals.

Self-confidence Demonstrate that you are assertive and certain that the group can work things out by discussing the issue rather than escalating the controversy.

Self-control State your own point of view in neutral language, without using an antagonistic tone or combative words.

Empathy Interpret and adapt the emotional meaning of what members say and their nonverbal messages (tone of voice, facial expressions, and body tensions) as a way of guiding the search for an equitable way to resolve arguments that members can embrace.⁵⁰

the topic is recurrent, the more likely emotional arguments will surface.”⁵¹ Group members with greater emotional intelligence are able to engage in deliberative argumentation. They are able to control their emotions appropriately while evaluating the pros and cons of arguments to reach ethical and effective decisions (Figure 10.8).⁵²

Figure 10.8 Balanced Emotional Intelligence



Ethics in Groups

Ethical Argumentation

Objective: Describe the four ethical responsibilities that apply to argumentation in groups.

A successful argument should be persuasive, but it also must be ethical. The National Communication Association’s Credo for Ethical Communication is clear: Truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason are essential for ethical communication; ethical communicators express their personal convictions in

pursuit of fairness and justice.⁵³ In *Advocacy and Opposition*, Karyn and Donald Rybacki demonstrate the applicability of these general guidelines in four ethical responsibilities in argumentation: research, common good, reasoning, and social code.⁵⁴

- 1. Research Responsibility.** Group members should be well informed and prepared to discuss the issues.
 - Do not distort or suppress important information and evidence.
 - Never fabricate or make up information.
 - Reveal the sources of information so others can evaluate them.
- 2. Common Good Responsibility.** Ethical arguers look beyond their own needs and consider the circumstances of others.
 - Consider the interests of those affected by the decision.
 - Promote the group's goal as more important than winning an argument.
- 3. Reasoning Responsibility.** Group members understand the structure of an argument and apply that knowledge to presenting arguments and recognizing fallacies.

- Do not misrepresent the views of others.
- Use sound reasoning supported by evidence.
- Avoid making or accepting any fallacies of argument.

- 4. Social Code Responsibility.** Group members promote an open and supportive climate for argumentation.
 - Treat other group members as equals.
 - Give everyone, including those who disagree, the opportunity to respond to an argument.
 - Do not insult or attack the character of a group member.
 - Give the group an opportunity to review the evidence.

There are ethical components in every argument. Even the decision to smile or not smile at other group members has an ethical dimension.⁵⁵ Is the smile genuine, or is it an attempt to influence the others in a way that serves a selfish need? Ethical group deliberation should "foster empathic and critical listening skills, mutual respect, . . . humility, accountability, and a shared commitment to working together in pursuit of reason and just resolutions of critical issues."⁵⁶ Ethical communication is central to group collaboration and the achievement of a common goal.

Summary: Critical Thinking and Argumentation in Groups

10.1: The Nature of Critical Thinking and Argumentation

- Critical thinking is the conscious process of assessing the validity of claims, evidence, and reasoning for the purpose of reaching a justified conclusion or decision.
- Argumentation is the use of critical thinking to advocate a position, examine competing ideas, and influence others.
- An argument is a claim supported by evidence and reasons for accepting it.
- Effective argumentation promotes understanding of others' views, promotes critical thinking about ideas, helps avoid groupthink, improves group decision making, and values minority opinions.
- Argumentativeness is the willingness to debate and openly disagree with others.
- Deliberative argumentation is a process of reasoned and ethical interaction that helps members reach the best conclusion or make the best decision in a given situation.

10.2: Understanding Arguments

- The Toulmin Model of Argument is a model of an argument that provides a system of understanding, analyzing, and creating effective arguments.
- The components of the Toulmin Model of Argument include claim, evidence, warrant, backing, reservation, and qualifier.
- Many arguments require doing research, a systematic search or investigation designed to find useful and appropriate evidence.

10.3: Supporting Arguments

- Evidence takes many forms, including facts, opinions, definitions, descriptions, examples, illustrations, and statistics.
- Valid evidence must meet several criteria. It should come from a source that is identified, credible, unbiased, and recent, and the information should be consistent with other evidence.

- Determining the validity of statistical evidence requires answers to two questions: (1) Are the statistics accurate? (2) How are the statistics reported?
- Use the following criteria when evaluating Internet evidence: authority, accuracy, objectivity, and currency.

10.4: Presenting Arguments

- When presenting an argument, state your claim, support your claim, provide reasons, and summarize your argument.
- Argument claims generally fit into one or more of four categories—claims of fact, claims of conjecture, claims of value, and claims of policy.

10.5: Refuting Arguments

- Six guidelines can help you refute an argument: (1) listen to the argument, (2) state the claim you oppose, (3) preview your objections, (4) assess the evidence, (5) assess the reasoning, and (6) summarize your refutation.
- A fallacy is an argument based on false or invalid reasoning. Common fallacies include *ad hominem* attacks, appeals to authority, appeals to popularity, appeals to tradition, faulty analogies, faulty causes, and hasty generalizations.

10.6: Adapting to Argumentation Styles

- There is no significant difference in men's and women's use of evidence in argumentation. However, there are differences in how people *expect* women to think and argue.

- Cultures often dictate who should and should not argue. Culture also influences the way in which people use evidence to support a claim.
- Emotional intelligence refers to the capacity to recognize your own and others' feelings and to manage emotions effectively. The role of emotions in argumentation can take two forms: (1) curbing inappropriate emotions and (2) expressing appropriate emotions.
- Four ethical responsibilities in every argument are research, common good, reasoning, and social code.

SHARED WRITING CASE STUDY: SLICING THE PIE

Use the information you have learned to answer the following questions about the case study that was presented at the beginning of the chapter:

How can the Student Finance Board improve the quality of their arguments in order to make budget decisions that are fair and justifiable?

Review and discuss the similarities and differences between your answer and those of at least two of your classmates.

► A minimum number of characters is required to post and earn points. After posting, your response can be viewed by your class and instructor, and you can participate in the class discussion.

Post

0 characters | 140 minimum

Chapter 10 Quiz: Critical Thinking and Argumentation in Groups

Chapter 11

Planning and Conducting Meetings



Well-planned group meetings enhance decision making and conflict resolution as well as group productivity and member satisfaction.



Learning Objectives

- 11.1** Compare the critical characteristics of effective meetings and ineffective meetings
- 11.2** Identify the essential questions that group members should answer when planning and chairing a meeting
- 11.3** Describe three general strategies for adapting to problematic behaviors in meetings and to member diversity
- 11.4** List the five guiding principles of parliamentary procedure
- 11.5** Identify appropriate criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of a group meeting

Case Study: Monday Morning Blues

On the second Monday of every month, the full-time employees of the Foxglove Athletic Club get together for a staff meeting at 1:30 PM, when very few club members are in the gym. Four part-time staff members share reception duties and assist members on the weight machines during the staff meeting.

Promptly at 1:30, seven staff members assemble in the yoga studio sitting on floor mats. Darrell, the club director, rushes in at 1:40, looks around, and asks, "Where are Maggie and Guy?" Everyone shrugs; Maggie and Guy are late for everything. Then Darrell says to Eli, "I think it's your turn to take minutes. Kim did it last month." Eli groans, resigns himself to this bothersome task, leaves to get paper and a pen, and returns a few minutes after the meeting has begun.

Darrell takes his usual seat on a short stool in front of the full-wall mirror. "Okay," he begins, "we have a lot to cover today, but I promise we'll be done by 3:00." Darrell lifts his clipboard, which contains a list of topics scribbled on the back of a club enrollment form. The first two items are announcements about the purchase of new treadmills and plans to redesign the layout of the small shop in which Foxglove sells athletic equipment, athletic wear, energy bars, and protein shakes.

As Darrell talks, two of the instructors begin a whispered conversation about their classes. Chris, the shop manager, interrupts Darrell and describes, in detail, how great the redesigned shop will be and how he's ordered the latest designs in athletic wear. Darrell tries to interrupt him, but Chris chatters on and on. It's now 2:00, and in walks Maggie. "Where's Guy?" asks Darrell. "He's busy doing something," answers Maggie. Other group members roll their eyes or shake their heads.

Since the meeting began, Rob has been sitting in his usual corner and stewing. Finally, he can't stand it anymore and blurts out, "We've been here for half an hour and accomplished nothing. This is a joke!"

"Robert!" exclaims Darrell in his *I'm-in-charge* voice. "I know *you* may not be interested in all this, but others are. Give it a rest. I know we're running behind; let's jump ahead to the fifth item on my list."

"It's time," announces Darrell, "to decide whether we should expand our classes to meet growing demand." The preoccupied instructors look up in confusion, hoping they haven't missed anything important.

The discussion drags on . . . 2:30 . . . 2:45 . . . 3:00 . . . 3:15. A few members have begun doing barely concealed stretching exercises. Others nod at Darrell—no matter what he says—faking attention. Finally, Rob breaks in again, noting that it's almost 3:30 and the gym is beginning to fill up. Darrell looks through the glass door of the studio to see a

line of people on the treadmills. "Well, we didn't get through everything, but there's always next month's meeting. So let's get out there with lots of energy, excitement, and enthusiasm!"

Critical Thinking Questions

When you finish reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following critical thinking questions about this case study:

1. How well was this meeting planned and structured?
2. Would the meeting have been more productive if everyone had seen Darrell's agenda in advance? Why or why not?
3. To what extent did group members behave productively and responsibly during the meeting?
4. Did this staff meeting need someone to take minutes? Why or why not?
5. Which dialectic tensions were most evident in the way the staff meeting occurred?

11.1: Meetings, Meetings, Meetings

11.1 Compare the critical characteristics of effective meetings and ineffective meetings

More than 11 million business meetings take place in the United States every day.¹ The typical employee spends almost 15 hours each week in meetings and may attend 60 formal or informal meetings each month.² Despite advances in technology that many thought would reduce the need for meetings, the amount of time we spend preparing for and attending meetings continues to rise.³ Odds are that you've spent your share of time in meetings. Certainly, you will attend them in the future.

Most textbooks, trade books, magazine articles, and blogs begin their discussions about meetings with negative statements. People hate them. They waste time, energy, and money. They are boring, useless, and aggravating. Humorist Dave Barry has nothing nice to say about meetings either. He compares them to funerals—people sit around in uncomfortable clothes and would rather be somewhere else. At least, he notes, funerals have a purpose and a definite conclusion. Unfortunately, many meetings don't.⁴

We prefer to begin this chapter on a more positive note. After all, there must be some good reasons for the millions of meetings that occur every day in the United States. Tyler Cowen, an economist at George Mason University, shares our view. He preaches "good news for the legions of meeting haters: Most meetings aren't as wasteful as they seem." Research reveals that well-planned and effectively conducted meetings increase group productivity, promote member satisfaction, and contribute to the success of an organization.⁵ Furthermore, a group is more confident in its

ability to “meet its objectives on schedule” when members have a positive attitude about its group meetings.⁶

The American Management Association adds to Dr. Cowen’s “good news.” Well-planned, well-run meetings produce

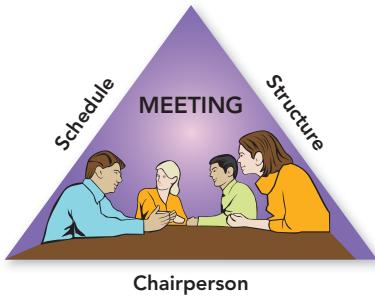
- better decisions.
- better and broader buy-in from group members.
- better understanding of complex problems and issues.
- better conflict resolution.
- better and more thorough follow-up and follow-through.⁷

Meetings also give members the time and opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with colleagues, to clearly articulate their ideas and opinions, and to listen more effectively. Equally important, group members “often learn in meetings how to work together . . . as well as learning how to plan and conduct more effective meetings.”⁸ We hope that by the conclusion of this chapter, you’ll side with us about the value and necessity of effective group meetings.

11.1.1: What Is a Meeting?

If people get together in the same room at the same time, you have a meeting, right? Wrong. You merely have a gathering of people in one place. A **meeting** is a scheduled gathering of group members for a structured discussion guided by a designated chairperson. Let’s take a closer look at the three elements in this definition: schedule, structure, and chairperson, as shown in Figure 11.1.

Figure 11.1 Three Essential Elements of a Meeting



First, most meetings are scheduled in advance at a particular time and place. A coincidental gathering of group members does not constitute a meeting.

Second, meetings can be formal and highly structured or informal and loosely structured. A meeting using parliamentary procedure is an example of a formally structured meeting, whereas an emergency staff meeting relies on an event to structure the discussion. Effective groups balance the need for *both* structure *and* spontaneity appropriate for the meeting’s goal and the group’s norms (Figure 11.2).

The third element of a meeting is a designated **chairperson** (also referred to as the **chair**), an appointed or elected member who conducts a group’s meeting.

GroupWork

It Was the Best of Meetings; It Was the Worst of Meetings

Working in any group typically requires meetings. Unfortunately, most of us have suffered through some dreadful meetings. Fortunately, we have participated in highly effective and efficient meetings. The *It Was the Best of Meetings; It Was the Worst of Meetings* activity is an opportunity for you to identify the characteristics of effective meetings and the factors that contribute to poor meetings.

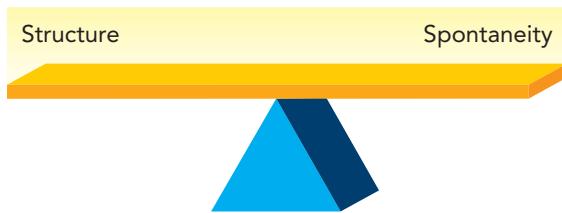
Directions: Think about some of the meetings you’ve attended. They may have been on-the-job staff meetings, club meetings, non-profit organization meetings, and even family meetings. Recall which meetings were the most productive and satisfying and which meetings were the most unproductive and dissatisfying. Now, identify and write down at least two major characteristics of the best meetings and two major characteristics of the worst meetings.

The Best of Meetings	The Worst of Meetings
Example: We knew each other very well and often laughed a lot, even when the topic was very serious.	Example: The group leader did 90% of the talking and didn’t let anyone else interrupt or express their opinions.
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

In light of your responses, consider the following questions:

- What major factors characterized the best of meetings and the worst of meetings?
- Do the best group experiences outweigh the worst ones, or vice versa?
- What can groups do to improve their meetings?

Figure 11.2 Balancing Structure and Spontaneity in Meetings



11.1.2: Why Do Meetings Fail?

Over the course of your career, you will spend a significant amount of time in meetings. Research shows that meetings can take up 25 to 80 percent of a worker's time. Is this time well spent? More than 70 percent of executives report that most of the meetings they attend are a waste of time.⁹

In another study, almost 42 percent of the meetings employees attended were rated as poor.¹⁰ All of this wasted meeting time comes at a cost. The estimated annual cost of unnecessary and ineffective meetings in the United States may be as high as \$37 billion annually.¹¹

Time wasted in meetings also has significant negative effects on member attitudes. For example, many employees' feelings of fatigue, perceptions of workload, and overall job satisfaction are directly related to perceptions of meeting effectiveness.¹² The result, as one study reports, "is a direct correlation between time spent each week in meetings and an employee's desire to find another job."¹³ Other studies and our own observations suggest several explanations for why so many people dread meetings.¹⁴

Think of the many meetings you've attended. What were the characteristics of the most effective and least effective meetings? Compare your thoughts with the following survey research results that summarize common characteristics of ineffective meetings:

- The meeting is unnecessary.
- The meeting goal is unclear.
- Members arrive late or leave early.
- The chairperson is ineffective.
- The meeting is too long.
- There is no agenda.
- The agenda has too many items.
- Members aren't given sufficient advance notice.
- Members are unprepared.
- There are too many people in the meeting.
- The right people are not at the meeting.
- The meeting is held at an inconvenient time or place.
- There is too much pressure to conform or take sides.
- The meeting accomplishes nothing.
- Members fail to follow up after the meeting.

Meetings also fail because we take them for granted. Too often, we resign ourselves to attending unproductive meetings rather than trying to improve them. Highly effective meetings exhibit several common characteristics:¹⁵

- The meeting has a clear goal.
- The chairperson prepares and distributes an agenda in advance.
- Members receive sufficient advance notice.
- The chairperson effectively conducts and manages the meeting.
- Group members come prepared.
- Group members actively participate.
- Group members understand and complete the follow-up tasks they are assigned.

Rather than dreading bad meetings, group leaders and members should work together to make their meetings positive and productive experiences.

WRITING PROMPT

Why Do Meetings Fail?

A meeting was held at 10 a.m. on a Monday morning. Alex, the chair of the meeting, arrived early with paper copies of the meeting agenda, which had been distributed in advance via email. After arriving 10 minutes late, Sydney indicated that she would need to leave by 10:25 to attend another meeting. Bob seemed to be listening, but was texting during the entire meeting. Having read the agenda in advance, Pat requested an addition to it shortly after the meeting began. Indicate which meeting characteristics were displayed by Alex, Sydney, Bob, and Pat, and whether they were effective or ineffective.

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

11.2: Planning and Chairing Meetings

11.2 Identify the essential questions that group members should answer when planning and chairing a meeting

The easy solution to the problem of so much wasted time in meetings is to eliminate meetings altogether, right? Wrong! Group meetings are important; too few meetings on critical issues may deprive members of significant information needed for effective decision making and may decrease member satisfaction.¹⁶ Rather, the fundamental problem is that many of our meetings are *ineffective*. The success or failure of a meeting largely depends on good planning. One study found that careful planning can prevent at least 20 minutes of wasted time for each hour of a group's meeting.¹⁷ Planning a meeting is not something you do a few

minutes before the meeting takes place. In some cases, a critical meeting requires weeks of preparation and planning to make sure that it achieves its goal.

Theory in Groups

Chaos and Complexity Theories

Objective: Justify the statement that effective meetings walk a fine line between order and chaos.

Group meetings can be boring and/or exciting, simplistic and/or complex, orderly and/or chaotic. Watching a well-planned meeting demonstrates the dynamic nature of group dialectics as members strive to find a *both/and* approach to accomplish a variety of group goals. Chaos and complexity theories give us valuable scientific tools for analyzing group meetings.

Chaos Theory claims “that although certain behaviors in natural systems are not predictable, there is a pattern to their randomness” that emerges over time.¹⁸ In other words, you can never predict exactly what will happen in a meeting, but you can assume that most meetings will eventually share similar characteristics and processes.

Complexity Theory seeks patterns in complex systems by examining the interactions of three states—order, complexity, and chaos. Mitchell Waldrop, author of *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos*, explains Complexity Theory with an analogy that contrasts and compares order, complexity, and chaos to different states of water: ice, liquid, and steam. Order is like ice—frozen and solid. Chaos is like steam—in constant motion and insubstantial. Complexity, however, has the properties of liquid—fluid and relatively controllable. Waldrop also uses the example of national economies to illustrate order (economic stagnation), chaos (economic collapse), and complexity (a strong *and* flexible economy).¹⁹

What does this have to do with planning and conducting meetings? Throughout this text and particularly in this chapter, we emphasize the need for groups to balance dialectic tensions such as: **individual goals ↔ group goals, structure ↔ spontaneity, and conflict ↔ cohesion**. Meetings require a judicious mix of such opposites. Consider what happens in meetings. Group members work best when they have a clear goal for the meeting, but they also need the freedom to change that goal if needed. Group agendas provide a clear structure for group work, but they can also restrict or prohibit spontaneity. Cohesive group members help and support one another, but also engage in conflict to settle differences and find common solutions.

Effective meetings find a productive point of balance between order and chaos. Enlightened group members understand that too much order or too much chaos stifles group progress. A *both/and* approach allows a group to make first-rate decisions and progress toward its common goal.

11.2.1: Questions About Meetings

Of all the reasons so many people criticize and dread meetings, “The meeting was unnecessary” tops the list. Before spending hours preparing for a meeting, make sure your group needs to meet. Use the answers to the following questions to guide the planning process:

- Why are we meeting?
- Who should attend the meeting?
- When should we meet?
- What materials do we need?

WHY ARE WE MEETING? The best way to avoid wasting time or frustrating group members is to make sure you need a meeting.

- Is an immediate decision or response needed?
- Are group input and interaction critical?
- Are members prepared to discuss the topic?
- What is the purpose of the meeting?

Without question, “a clear purpose is the first step in an effective and successful meeting.”²⁰

In addition to making sure you need a meeting, make sure everyone understands whether the meeting’s specific purpose is to share information, provide training, solve problems, make decisions, or accomplish a combination of some these purposes as shown in Table 11.1.²¹

Table 11.1 Identifying the Meeting’s Purpose

Meeting Type	Purpose	Example
Information-Sharing Meeting	Provides members with the opportunity to exchange information relevant to group goals	The staff of an arts organization meets to share information about the level of enrollment in summer arts courses.
Instructional meeting	Provides members with the opportunity to learn or improve a specific skill or knowledge area relevant to the common goal	The faculty members at a college meet to learn how to use new course management software.
Problem-Solving Meeting	Provides members with the opportunity to analyze a problem and develop a plan of action for solving or reducing the impact of a problem relevant to the common goal	The Board of Directors of a non-profit organization meets to revise an outdated mission statement.
Decision-Making Meeting	Provides members with the opportunity to make a judgment, choose an option, or make up their minds about something relevant to the common goal	The members of a planning committee meet to choose the date and place for the annual fundraising gala.

In many situations, a memo, fax, email, voicemail message, or one-on-one conversation may accomplish the goal more effectively than a meeting. A survey of senior and middle managers reported that “phone calls, memos, emails, or voicemails could have replaced 25% of the meetings” they attend.²² In other situations, however, a meeting is the most effective and efficient way to inform and interact with a group of people.

The most important step in planning a meeting is defining its goal as clearly as possible. A meeting’s goal is not always the same as its subject. The subject is the topic of the discussion. The goal identifies the desired outcome. For example, if an executive calls her assistant and says, “Call a staff meeting next Thursday at 2:00 PM,” the assistant may ask, “What will the meeting be about?” Has the executive’s reply—“Employer-provided day care”—revealed the goal of the meeting? No. In this case, we know only that the subject of the meeting is employer-provided day care. If the executive had instead replied, “We need to determine whether our employer-provided day-care system needs expansion,” the purpose or goal of the meeting is made clear.

WRITING PROMPT

Why Are We Meeting?

Think about the last meeting you attended. What type of meeting was it? How well did it accomplish its purpose? What could have been done to improve the meeting?

 The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

WHO SHOULD ATTEND THE MEETING? The membership of many groups is predetermined. However, if a task does not require input from everyone or if it needs the expertise of only certain people, it makes more sense to invite participants who can make a significant contribution and who have a stake in the outcome of the meeting. Consider the following criteria when determining who should attend a meeting:²³

- Will the member contribute useful information or insights during the discussion?
- Will the member actively participate in the meeting?
- Is the member committed to achieving the group’s common goal?
- Are the selected members available at the designated meeting time?
- Are diverse points of view represented?
- Are important decision makers and implementers represented?

Make sure that the size of your group is manageable. Try to limit meetings to fewer than 12 participants; a group of 5 to 7 members is ideal for problem-solving sessions. Meetings become nonproductive when too many people attend.²⁴ In many situations, the size of the group is predetermined. For instance, an organization’s bylaws may require that a majority of association, club, or board members attend in order to conduct a vote.

WHEN SHOULD WE MEET? The next step is deciding what day and time are best for the meeting. Should the meeting be in the morning, in the afternoon, after work hours, or during lunch? Generally, the best time to schedule a meeting is between 9:30 and 11:30 AM and between 1:30 and 3:30 PM. Meeting before lunch may be convenient and allows some or all members to continue the discussion informally during lunch. The following considerations will help you determine an ideal meeting time for your group:²⁵

- Avoid Friday afternoon meetings when energy and enthusiasm may be low.
- Avoid meetings immediately after lunch when members may be sluggish.
- Avoid early morning meetings that make it difficult for members to arrive on time.
- Avoid scheduling group meetings near holidays or at the beginning of the week.

Determine what time the meeting should begin and end. The optimal meeting length is one hour. If your meeting must run longer, schedule breaks to give members a chance to stretch, get food or drinks, visit the restroom, or check their messages.²⁶ When they return, members should be relaxed and ready to work when the meeting reconvenes. If the task is complex, time-consuming, and difficult, you may need to schedule a series of meetings to achieve the group goal.

Contact group members to find out when they are available, and schedule the meeting at a time when the most essential and productive participants are free. If only a few can attend, the meeting will not be very productive and may waste the time of those who do show up.

WHERE SHOULD WE MEET? Choose an appropriate location and room size for group meetings. The room should be large enough, clean, well lit, not too hot or too cold, and furnished with comfortable chairs. In addition, look for a quiet meeting room where members cannot hear ringing phones and hall conversations. You may want to consider a “No cell phone” rule as well. Although you may have little control over the features of your meeting place, do your best to provide a comfortable setting. It’s important to consider the purpose of the meeting. Will the group engage in a creative problem-solving discussion?

Consider meeting in a room with enough wall space to post members' ideas.

The location and quality of a meeting's setting can mean the difference between comfortable, attentive members who participate fully in a discussion and distracted members who must contend with disruptions or an uncomfortable room. As Table 11.2 shows, most business meetings typically occur in four types of locations, each with its own advantages and disadvantages.²⁷

Table 11.2 Business Meeting Locations

Type of Location	Advantages	Disadvantages
Leader's Office	Convenient; access to materials and resources; enhances the meeting's importance	Members may feel like "guests" rather than equals; subject to distractions
Member's Office	Convenient; access to materials and resources; boosts the member's status	Subject to distractions; may be a small cubicle with cramped seating
On-site Meeting Room	Avoids distractions of a working office; more spacious and comfortable than an office	Subject to interruptions; distant from materials and resources; may be time limits on use
Off-site Meeting Room	Eliminates most distractions; provides neutral territory; more attractive and comfortable	Costly in terms of room rental and travel time; distant from materials and resources

WHAT MATERIALS DO WE NEED? The most important item to prepare and distribute to group members prior to a meeting is an agenda, a document outlining what topics will be discussed and in what order. The chairperson should also distribute essential reading materials to every member and make sure that needed supplies and equipment, such as markers, paper, flip charts, projectors, computers, and WiFi, are available to all participants.

11.2.2: Preparing the Agenda

An **agenda** is an outline of the items for discussion at a meeting. A well-prepared agenda is an organizational tool—a road map that helps group members focus on a progression of tasks. When distributed ahead of time, it helps participants prepare for a meeting by telling them what to expect and what they will need to contribute. An agenda also provides the group with a sense of continuity by tracking members' assignments and providing status checks for work in progress. After a meeting, you can use the agenda to assess the meeting's success by examining how the group addressed each item.

When you are very busy or when a meeting is routine and predictable, preparing an agenda may seem like a waste of time. Just the opposite is true—failure to plan and prepare an agenda denies a chairperson and a group one of

the most powerful tools in meeting management. A meeting without an agenda is like sending out a search party without a map or goal.²⁸

ELEMENTS OF AN AGENDA Although the chairperson is responsible for preparing and distributing an agenda in advance of the meeting, member input can ensure that it covers the topics that are important to the entire group. Table 11.3 summarizes the elements of a traditional business meeting agenda.

Table 11.3 Elements of a Business Agenda

Purpose of the Meeting	A clear statement of the meeting's objective and topic for discussion helps members prepare.
Names of Group Members	A list of all participants lets members know who will be attending.
Date, Time, and Place	The agenda clearly indicates the date, time, duration, and precise location of the meeting.
Call to Order	The point at which the chairperson officially begins the meeting.
Approval of the Agenda	Members have an opportunity to correct or modify the agenda.
Approval of the Minutes	The minutes of the previous meeting are reviewed, revised if necessary, and approved by the group as an accurate representation of the last meeting's discussion.
Reports	Officers, individuals, or subcommittees report on the progress of their activities.
Unfinished Business	The agenda lists topics that require ongoing discussion or issues that the group was unable to resolve during the last meeting.
New Business	New discussion items are outlined and discussed in this section.
Announcements	Any items of information that the group needs to know but that do not require any discussion are announced.
Adjournment	The chairperson officially dismisses the participants and ends the meeting.

Many meetings do not follow the traditional sequence of business agenda items. The norms of a group and the goals of a meeting should determine the agenda's format. For example, if you schedule a meeting to address or solve a specific issue or problem, the agenda items may be in the form of questions, as shown in Figure 11.3.

Agenda questions should follow the problem-solving method the group decides to use. In addition to identifying the discussion topics, agenda items should include any information that will help group members prepare for the meeting. The following guidelines can improve meeting productivity:

- Note the amount of time it should take to complete a discussion item or action. This lets the group know the relative importance of the item and help to manage the time available for discussion.
- Identify how the group will deal with each item. Will the group share information, discuss a problem, and/

or make a decision? Consider putting the phrases *For Information*, *For Discussion*, *For Decision*, and *For Implementation* next to appropriate agenda items.

- Include the names of members responsible for reporting information on a particular item or facilitating a portion of the discussion. Such assignments remind members to prepare for a specific topic or action item.

Figure 11.3 Sample Discussion Agenda

The graphic shows a recycling symbol at the top. Below it, the title "Recycling Task Force" is displayed, followed by the date "November 6, 2016, 1:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M." and the location "Conference Room 4". A large, faint circular watermark with the recycling symbol is visible in the background. The main content area contains the purpose statement and a numbered list of items.

Purpose: To recommend ways to increase the effectiveness of and participation in the company's recycling program.

- I. What is the goal of this meeting? What have we been asked to do?
- II. How effective is the company's current recycling effort?
- III. Why has the program lacked effectiveness and full participation?
- IV. What are the requirements or standards for an ideal program?
 - A. Level of Participation
 - B. Reasonable Cost
 - C. Physical Requirements
 - D. Legal Requirements
- V. What are the possible ways in which we could improve the recycling program?
- VI. What specific methods do we recommend for increasing the recycling program's effectiveness and level of participation?
- VII. How should the recommendations be implemented? Who or what groups should be charged with implementation?

DETERMINE THE ORDER OF ITEMS After selecting the agenda items, carefully consider the order in which each topic will be discussed. When a group must discuss several topics during a single meeting, put them in an order that maximizes productivity and group satisfaction:

- Begin the meeting with simple business items and easy-to-discuss issues.
- Reserve important and difficult items for the middle portion of the meeting.
- Use the last third of the meeting for easy discussion items that do not require difficult decisions or business that can be postponed to a subsequent meeting.

This sequence provides the group with a sense of accomplishment before it launches into more complex, controversial issues. If a difficult but important decision takes more time than anticipated, the group may be

able to deal with the remaining, less important items at the next meeting or via email. For example, when preparing an agenda for the monthly School Library Resources Committee meeting, Ron anticipates a lengthy and controversial discussion about purchasing new sex education books. He decides to begin the meeting by reviewing the schedule for library tours and then devote a significant amount of meeting time to discussing the sex education books. The last item on the agenda is a discussion of plans to purchase foreign-language books, which the group can address at another meeting if time runs out.

Groups in Balance . . . Avoid Meetingthink

Groupthink, the deterioration of group effectiveness in highly cohesive groups, can occur in any well-organized group meeting.²⁹ After observing the negative outcomes of groupthink, communication researchers Kelly Quintanilla and Shawn Wahl noticed that some groups make equally poor or disastrous decisions even though they have not experienced any of the major factors responsible for groupthink, such as a volatile situation, high cohesiveness, or a structural flaw in the procedures they use. Quintanilla and Wahl identify what they call **meetingthink**, the “suspension of critical thinking that results in faulty decisions.”³⁰ Recognizing and trying to avoid the conditions that lead to meetingthink can help you and your group avoid its destructive consequences.

Three factors contribute to the suspension of critical thinking in meetings:

1. **Deceitful Leadership.** The leader falsely claims that members will be involved in the decision-making process, but group members soon realize “that their opinions, ideas, and thoughts are not valued, so they remain silent during meetings.”³¹ Critical thinking gets them nowhere, or, if they express their thoughts, it makes matters worse.
2. **Information and Work Overload.** Too much information and work puts a huge burden on group members and prevents them from concentrating on or understanding the issues in the meeting. “Overloaded group members may withhold valuable input because they fear it will somehow lead to more work.”³²
3. **Poorly Run Meetings.** There may be no agenda to guide the group and member participation, the meeting may drag on for too long, and/or the leader or influential members may be doing all the talking.³³

What can you and your group do to avoid meetingthink? The answer only appears simple: Run a good meeting. This chapter offers several effective strategies on how to plan and run a good meeting in which members use critical-thinking skills to achieve group goals.

11.2.3: Chairing the Meeting

If you are chairing a meeting, you have tremendous influence over, and responsibility for, the success of the meeting. In addition to conducting the meeting, you may also create the agenda, schedule the meeting, distribute the minutes, and follow up or implement decisions after the meeting is over. Effective chairpersons facilitate productive discussions by making sure that they have fulfilled their responsibilities prior to, during, and after the meeting (Table 11.4).

Table 11.4 Chairperson Tasks

Pre-Meeting	During Meeting	Post-Meeting
• Notify members	• Begin on time	• Evaluate the meeting
• Distribute the agenda	• Delegate minutes	• Distribute minutes
• Distribute materials	• Follow the agenda	• Monitor assigned tasks
• Remind members	• Facilitate discussion	
• Prepare for discussion	• Provide closure	

PRE-MEETING TASKS Prior to an upcoming meeting, the chairperson should notify every group member—either face-to-face or via mediated communication—about its time and place. Notify members well in advance so that they can be well prepared for the meeting. Provide a clear statement of the meeting’s goal and a list of pre-meeting responsibilities (such as reading a report in advance or preparing recommendations). Most important, send each member a preliminary agenda well in advance of the meeting. Member feedback on the agenda can improve it and identify additional critical items that should be discussed. Along with the agenda, send any additional materials in advance that group members will need for the discussion. Check with all members to confirm that they plan to attend, and send a brief reminder before the meeting.

DURING-MEETING TASKS The agenda is your guide for conducting the meeting in an orderly manner. Begin on time, distribute the most up-to-date agenda, and determine who will record the minutes. Take attendance and make sure the recorder includes the results in the minutes. Ask the group to review the agenda and make any needed revisions. Then take up each of the agenda items in order.

Your first priority is facilitating the group’s discussion. Guide the discussion, but don’t dominate it. Seek an appropriate balance of the following group dialectics: **conflict ↔ cohesion, leadership ↔ followership, and structure ↔ spontaneity**. Encourage participation and constructive disagreement. Welcome new or competing ideas but also question them, challenge them, and insist on evidence to back them up.

During meetings, effective chairpersons do the following:

- “balance strength with sensitivity.”
- “balance knowing where they want the meeting to go with allowing the group to” digress or bring up related issues.
- “balance having something to say with the restraint to say nothing; they assume the role of traffic cop in discussions without coming across with stifling authority.”³⁴

There may be nothing worse than sitting through a meeting that moves too slowly, strays from the agenda, or lasts too long. One study found that more than 90 percent of attendees admit to daydreaming in meetings, 73 percent admit to bringing other work, and 39 percent admit to falling asleep.³⁵

The following strategies can help keep your meetings moving at a comfortable pace:³⁶

- Start the meeting on time and stick to the agenda.
- Don’t waste time reviewing earlier discussions for latecomers.
- Place a time limit on each agenda item.
- Stay focused on the meeting’s goal.
- End the meeting on time or schedule another meeting to discuss unfinished business.

When a meeting is well planned and skillfully chaired, group members are so involved that they focus all of their attention and energy on the discussion—there’s no time for daydreaming, completing other work, or napping.

At the end of a meeting, briefly summarize meeting accomplishments and identify items that still need attention and action. Delegate members to work on or complete assignments with clear standards and deadlines. All group members should clearly understand the follow-up tasks for which they are responsible. If the group plans to schedule another meeting, ask for agenda suggestions and, if possible, set the date, time, and place of the next meeting. A good chairperson allows enough time for everyone to participate, but still ends the meeting on time.

POST-MEETING TASKS Every meeting is an opportunity to learn how to run effective meetings. Evaluate how well your meeting accomplished its goals, produced a constructive discussion, and adhered to its schedule. Identify strategies for improving your next group meeting. Distribute a copy of the meeting’s minutes to members as soon after the meeting as possible. The minutes record important information, group decisions, and assigned tasks. As the chair or leader of the group, you are responsible for following up with members after the meeting. Remind members of any responsibilities they were assigned during the meeting, ask for updates, and monitor their progress toward completing those tasks.

Watch Planning the Playground



Watch the clip from the video “Planning the Playground,” which illustrates concepts in this section of the chapter.

WRITING PROMPT

Planning the Playground

1. How would a well-constructed agenda have helped this group begin its work on planning a playground?
2. What items would you put in an agenda for this meeting? In what order should these items be discussed?
3. What could David, who is chairing the meeting, have done before and during this meeting to improve its effectiveness?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

11.2.4: Preparing the Minutes

The **minutes** of a meeting are the written record of a group’s discussion, decisions, and actions during a meeting. In addition to serving as a written record for those who attend the meeting, the minutes provide a way to communicate with those who did not attend. By looking through a group’s minutes over a period of time, you can learn a great deal about its activities, measure how productive it has been, assess the qualities of individual members’ contributions, and learn whether group meetings tend to be formal or informal. Most important, minutes help prevent disagreement over previous meeting decisions and assigned tasks.

SELECTING A RECORDER The chairperson, or chair, is ultimately responsible for the accuracy and distribution of the minutes. During the meeting, however, the chairperson must be free to conduct the meeting. It makes more sense to assign the task of taking minutes to another group member. The group may designate a recorder or a secretary to take minutes at every meeting, or members can take turns. Remember that, regardless of who takes the minutes, the chairperson is responsible for checking, fairly editing, and distributing copies to all group members.

DETERMINING WHAT INFORMATION TO INCLUDE

For the most part, the minutes should follow the format of the agenda and include the following:

- Name of the group
- Date and place of the meeting
- Names of those attending
- Name of the person who chaired the meeting
- Names of absent members
- The exact time the meeting was called to order
- The exact time the meeting was adjourned
- Name of the person preparing the minutes
- Summary of the group’s discussion and decisions, using agenda items as headings
- Specific action items

An **action item** is an item in the written minutes of a meeting that identifies member responsibilities for assigned tasks. Each action item should include the person’s name, the assignment, and the deadline. For example, an action item might look like this: “Action: Mark Smith will review and bring samples of good website designs to the next meeting.” Underline or italicize action items in the minutes to make it easier to refer back to them when reviewing the group’s progress.

TAKING MINUTES Well-prepared minutes are brief and accurate. They are not a word-for-word record of everything that every member said. To be useful, they must briefly summarize the discussion.

Figure 11.4 Sample of Informal Minutes

Domestic Violence Class Discussion Group Meeting August 10, 2016, in Library Conference Room 215

Present: Gabriella Hernandez (chairperson), Eric Beck, Terri Harrison, Will Mabry, Tracey Tibbs

Absent: Lance Nickens

Meeting began at 2:00 P.M.

Group Topic: The group discussed whether emotional and verbal abuse should be included in the project. Since we don’t have much time to do our presentation, we decided to limit the topic to physical abuse only.

Research Assignments: Since the assignment is due in two weeks, we decided to divide the issue into different topics and research them on our own.

Action: Eric will research why people stay in abusive relationships.

Action: Gabriella will research the effects on the children.

Action: Terri will find statistics and examples of the seriousness of the problem.

Action: Will is going to find out why and how the abuse happens.

Action: Tracey will find out what resources are available in the area for victims.

Members will report on their research at the next meeting.

Absent Members: Lance has not been to the last two class meetings. We don’t know if he is still going to participate in the group. Action: Gabriella will call Lance.

Class Presentation: We need to think of creative ways to make a presentation to the class. The group decided to think about this and discuss it at the next meeting.

Next Meeting: Our next meeting will be at 2:30 on Tuesday, August 16th, in the same place. Action: Terri will reserve the room.

The meeting ended at 3:15 P.M.
(Meeting notes taken by Tracey Tibbs)

The following guidelines can help you take useful minutes:

- Write clear statements that briefly and accurately summarize the main ideas and actions.
- Word decisions, motions, action items, and deadlines exactly as the group makes them in order to avoid future disagreements and misunderstandings.
- If you are not sure about what to include in the minutes, ask the group for clarification. Many workplaces, teams, and organizations have examples of past minutes in their files that can be used as a model for your own minutes.
- Obtain a copy of the agenda and any reports that were presented to attach to the final copy of the minutes. These documents become part of the group record, along with the minutes. The minutes may also include links to electronic formats of important documents and reports.

- When in doubt, ask the group if an issue should be included or how to word it for the minutes.
- Always keep in mind that the minutes are often the only record of the meeting, and that individuals outside the group may read them.

Immediately after the meeting—or as soon as possible—prepare the minutes for distribution. The longer you delay, the more difficult it will be to remember the details of the meeting. After preparing the minutes, give them to the chairperson for review. When a group officially approves the minutes, they are final and become the official record of the meeting.

Ethics in Groups

Use Good Judgment When Taking Minutes

Objective: Explain why a group's recorder or secretary has an ethical obligation to exercise good judgment when deciding what to include in the minutes and what to omit.

The person charged with taking minutes has an ethical obligation to exercise good judgment when deciding what to include in the minutes and what to omit. Everything included in the minutes must reflect the discussion of major issues and group decisions accurately. At the same time, a recorder must balance the need for accuracy with discretion.

There are times when a group does not want the details of its discussion recorded in the minutes. For instance, groups discussing sensitive legal or personnel issues often keep that information confidential. If the agenda includes confidential items, the chairperson should remind members that some information should not leave the group, and the recorder should not include details of some of the discussion in the minutes.³⁷

During a meeting, group members may make comments that should not appear in the minutes. For example, a group that vents its frustration with a boss will not want to read the following in the minutes: "The group agreed that Dan is unreasonable and insensitive." Groups often express complaints in a meeting. Including such comments in the minutes can stifle open communication and is not necessary for making the meeting minutes useful.

The following guidelines can help you determine when to include information and when to leave it out:

- Report the facts and all sides of a discussion accurately.
- Never insert your own personal opinions.
- Be discreet. If the group determines that a portion of the discussion should be "off the record," you should honor that decision.

11.3: Managing Members in Meetings

11.3 Describe three general strategies for adapting to problematic behaviors in meetings and to member diversity

A well-planned meeting, clear agenda, and skilled chairperson are prerequisites for a productive meeting. However, none of these elements prepare a group for the challenging mix of member traits, work styles, and habits. Member needs, personalities, roles, cultural perspectives, and communication styles all affect group interaction. However, there are two particular challenges that, if unmanaged, can inhibit the efficiency and effectiveness of group meetings.

11.3.1: Adapting to Problematic Behaviors



Successful groups deal effectively with behaviors that distract members, disrupt a meeting, or lead to misunderstandings.

A carefully planned meeting can fail if member behaviors disrupt the meeting. Group members should address such behavior rather than assuming that the chairperson can or will resolve the problem. In *How to Make Meetings Work*, Michael Doyle and David Straus write that dealing with

these kinds of meeting problems “is like walking a tightrope. You must maintain a delicate balance between protecting the group from the dominance of individual members while protecting individuals from being attacked by the group.”³⁸

When you must confront a problematic member, be sensitive; focus on the behavior, and don’t turn it into a personal attack. Describe the behavior, suggest alternative behaviors, and indicate the consequences if the behavior continues. Don’t overreact; if you do, your intervention may be more disruptive than the problem member’s behavior. It is best to begin with the least confrontational approach, and then work toward more direct methods as necessary. Here, we examine a few common disruptive behaviors that can change a positive meeting into a negative experience: nonparticipants, texters, loudmouths, interrupters, whisperers, and latecomers and early leavers.

NONPARTICIPANTS You don’t need full participation from all members all of the time; the goal is a balanced group discussion over the course of a meeting. However, you should be concerned about **nonparticipants**, members who never or rarely contribute during a group meeting. Take some time to analyze why such members are not participating. Are they anxious or intimidated by group members with more experience or seniority? Are they unprepared, uninterested, or annoyed? Are they introverts overwhelmed and intimidated by extroverted colleagues?

Do not put apprehensive or introverted members on the spot by forcing them to contribute if they are not ready to do so. Provide opportunities for reluctant members to become involved in the discussion. When nonparticipants do contribute, respond positively to their input to demonstrate that you see the value in their ideas.

TEXTERS **Texters** are members who disrupt meetings by using cell phones, tablets, or laptops to text, check email, check social media, or engage in other online activity rather than fully participating in the meeting. One study found that in 22 percent of meetings, participants sent three or more emails, on average, for every 30 minutes of meeting time.³⁹

Although texters may believe they’re not causing a problem, group members preoccupied with checking and responding to their messages are not listening effectively, and are not fully engaged in the meeting. In addition to distracting other members, texting and emailing are rude because they send an implied message that whatever a member is doing online is more important than the meeting. Groups can establish ground rules at the beginning of a meeting that ban texting, talking on cell phones, or checking email during a meeting unless there is an emergency. After the meeting, the chairperson should talk to members who violate these rules.

LOUDMOUTHS A member who talks in a loud voice or talks more than others is not necessarily a problem. However, **loudmouths** are members who talk too much in an

overly forceful or tactless way so that no one else gets a chance to speak. At first, allow loudmouths to state their ideas, and acknowledge that you understand their positions. It may be necessary to interrupt them to do so. Then shift your focus to other members or other issues by asking for alternative viewpoints. If a loudmouth continues to dominate, remind this person of the importance of getting input from everyone. The next time the group meets, you may want to assign the loudmouth the task of taking minutes as a way of shifting focus from talking to listening and writing. One study found that when groups take “time to sort out actual experts from loudmouths who only sound like they know what they’re talking about, [they] perform better in problem-solving tasks than those that don’t.”⁴⁰

INTERRUPTERS Sometimes group members are so preoccupied with their own thoughts and goals that they interrupt others whenever they have something to say. **Interrupters** are members who habitually speak out during a meeting while other members are talking. Although most interrupters are not trying to be rude, their impatience and excitement cause them to speak out while other members are still talking. When a group member continually interrupts others, it is time to interrupt the interrupter. Invite the interrupted member to finish speaking. A more assertive option is to intervene and say, “Let Mary finish her point first, and then we’ll hear other viewpoints.”

WHISPERERS **Whisperers** disrupt meetings by participating in confidential or side conversations with another group member. The “noise” caused by whispering or private snickering makes it hard for other members to listen and concentrate. It can also be very unnerving when members are unsure whether they are the target of the whispered comments. Directing eye contact toward such sideline conversations can make the offenders more aware of their disruptive behavior. If the behavior persists, ask the talkers to share their ideas with the group. This usually stops the behavior; it may also uncover issues that deserve discussion by the group as a whole.

LATECOMERS AND EARLY LEAVERS **Latecomers** and **early leavers** disrupt meetings by failing to arrive on time or choosing to leave before a meeting is adjourned. They annoy group members who have managed their time well enough to arrive on schedule and stay for the entire meeting. Research estimates that approximately 37 percent of meetings begin late because at least one participant fails to arrive on time.⁴¹

If you are the chairperson, start the meeting at the scheduled time. Do not waste meeting time by summarizing meeting business for the benefit of latecomers. Let them sit without participating until they have observed enough to contribute to the discussion. Rather than publicly reprimanding or embarrassing latecomers or early leavers, talk to them after the meeting about the importance of attending

the entire meeting. "The more you make a practice of waiting for people, the more likely people will continue to arrive to meetings late."⁴²

Watch Adapting to Problematic Behaviors



Watch these five short clips from several videos that illustrate concepts in this section of the chapter.

WRITING PROMPT

Adapting to Problematic Behaviors

1. Which problematic member behaviors did you observe in the video clips?
2. Did you see or hear any problematic behaviors not described in the text? What were they?
3. Choose three of these problematic behaviors and describe how you would intervene and resolve them?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

11.3.2: Adapting to Member Differences

Very often, group members from different cultures, ethnic groups, generations, genders, and socioeconomic groups do not share similar expectations about group roles and individual behavior in meetings. In some cultures, a young group member would never interrupt an older member; a new group member would not challenge a veteran member. In such cases, it is easy to interpret lack of participation as inattention or lack of interest, when, in fact, the group member is demonstrating a high degree of respect for other members.

Communication norms during meetings vary across cultures. For example, American meetings are typically more relaxed and often begin with small talk, whereas German meetings rarely involve small talk and may begin with more formal introductions.⁴³ The focus of a meeting also may differ across cultures. In the United States, a significant portion of meetings is used to make decisions. In Japan, the goal is to publicly confirm and endorse deci-

sions made by smaller groups. In Mexico, meetings are opportunities to build relationships with other group members. "In the Netherlands, a meeting may be a time to identify all the weaknesses and criticisms of a particular approach or plan."⁴⁴

The president of an organization where one of your authors worked appointed an advisory council to improve the racial climate at the organization. One council member was a former diplomat from a West African country. He rarely spoke, but when he did, he always began with a very formal "Madam Chairman." After that, he would deliver a 3- to 5-minute speech in which he would summarize the discussion and offer his opinion and recommendations. When he was finished, he would thank everyone for listening. At first, we didn't know how to respond. It was so formal, so complex. Eventually we learned to expect at least one "speech" from this member. We learned to listen and respond to a very different style of participation. This member defined his role very formally and acted accordingly. Patience on the part of other group members helped the group understand, respect, and adapt to his style of participation.

Meetings that include highly diverse participants can be challenging, but they are also opportunities to learn about others' cultures. Consider how your own and other members' cultural preferences may influence a meeting. Adapt your communication in ways that respect others and that also help the group achieve its goal.

Virtual Teams Meeting in Cyberspace

Objective: Describe unique characteristics of and communication principles that apply to virtual team meetings.

In their book *Virtual Groups*, Deborah Duarte and Nancy Snyder maintain that "The right technical tools enhance our ability to share concepts, merge ideas, and use synergy to accomplish our goals." At the same time, they emphasize, "Technology cannot make up for poor planning or ill-conceived meetings. In fact, it can make the situation worse."⁴⁵ Fortunately, many of the same principles that apply to planning a productive face-to-face meeting apply equally well to planning virtual meetings. Determining the purpose of a meeting and who should attend is similar to planning a face-to-face meeting. However, deciding on a time to meet is more complicated when members are located in different places and time zones. Determining where to meet requires a decision regarding technology. Many virtual teams meet at the same time of day for every meeting or have a standing meeting time that works for everyone.⁴⁶ Will your group meet via email, audioconference, videoconference, web conference, or a combination? The answer may depend on the purpose of your meeting and your group's access to technological resources.

Test your group's readiness to meet in cyberspace by checking off items on the following "To-Do" list:

1. Does everyone know the meeting's goal?
2. Did all members receive the agenda in advance, including notes on which discussion items will use any specialized technology?
3. Are only the members who need to participate invited?
4. Is the group small enough to allow everyone a chance to contribute actively?
5. Is the group meeting at the most convenient time for the most members?
6. Is the group using the most appropriate technology for achieving the meeting's goal?
7. Does the group have access to the technology or facilities that support audioconferences, videoconferences, or web conferences?
8. Do all members have compatible technology?
9. Are all members trained adequately on the chosen technologies?
10. Has someone tested the technology prior to the meeting?

One of the disadvantages of working in a virtual team is that establishing relationships with other members and building team cohesion are more difficult. For this reason, it is useful to schedule an initial face-to-face meeting with the team if possible.⁴⁷

Here are some suggestions for dealing with some of the challenges of a virtual meeting:⁴⁸

- *Use video.* If possible, use technology that allows members to see one another during a meeting. Video allows members to observe nonverbal communication and deters members from multitasking rather than fully participating in the meeting.
- *Eliminate reports.* Avoid using virtual meeting time to present simple reports that can instead be distributed via email. Use meeting time for questions, comments, and discussion.
- *Be prepared.* All virtual team members should read any material and the agenda that is distributed in advance of the meeting.
- *Introduce yourselves.* When members don't know each other well, it's important that each team member has an opportunity to introduce themselves to other group members. Keep in mind that virtual teams don't have as many opportunities as face-to-face groups to connect personally and build relationships with each other.
- *Give each person time.* Allow each member of a virtual team the opportunity to have an idea placed on the meeting agenda. The chance to discuss a difficult challenge or get advice from other members promotes collaboration.
- *Evaluate the meeting.* Every virtual meeting is an opportunity to learn how to improve the effectiveness of your team's meetings. Discuss what worked and ways to improve the meeting next time the group meets.

11.4: Parliamentary Procedure

11.4 List the five guiding principles of parliamentary procedure



Many organizations and associations specify that parliamentary procedure must be used to conduct meetings. Here, the newly elected mayor of a small city in New York State presides over the organizational meeting of the city council.

Almost no one questions the need for rules in sporting events. Without them, playing the game would be impossible and players could end up in a brawl or in the hospital. The same is true for certain kinds of decision-making discussions. In large, formal groups, rules can be as detailed and complex as the official rule books used in baseball, football, basketball, and tennis, or those used in competitive bridge and chess tournaments. In group discussions, the most popular, official rule book is *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, or adaptations of those rules.⁴⁹

Parliamentary procedure is a set of formal rules used to determine the will of the majority through fair and orderly discussion and debate. It ensures that group decisions both reflect the will of the majority and protect the rights of minority members. For group members who are new to parliamentary procedure, learning and following the rules can be confusing and intimidating. Not only are there hundreds of rules, but the language of parliamentary procedure also has a unique vocabulary, including such statements as, "Mr. Chairman, I call the previous question," or, "Madam President, I rise to a point of order."

According to the National Association of Parliamentarians, "parliamentary procedure defines how groups of people, no matter how formal or informal, can most effectively meet and make decisions in a fair, consistent manner—and make good use of everyone's time."⁵⁰ The president of the American Institute of Parliamentarians calls it "the single most effective method of group decision making ever devised."⁵¹ Although all group members should have a working knowledge of parliamentary procedure, some

groups appoint or hire an official parliamentarian who knows the rules and how to apply them to specific situations.

In formal business and association discussions, group members must know the principles and rules of parliamentary procedure. An interesting analogy describes the value of such rules:

Parliamentary procedure might be compared with our traffic laws. The traffic laws tell us when to *stop*, and parliamentary procedure tells us when to be *silent*. The traffic laws tell us when to *go*, and parliamentary procedure tells us when to *speak*. Without parliamentary procedure, we often find ourselves “running into one another”—speaking at the same time. Parliamentary procedure helps “direct our traffic.”⁵²

11.4.1: Who Uses Parliamentary Procedure?

Numerous organizations use parliamentary procedure every day, including government and civic organizations from neighborhood associations to the U.S. Congress; corporations, from boards of directors to shareholders; and nonprofit organizations, from professional associations to unions, clubs, and churches.⁵³ Most organizations and associations specify in their constitution or **bylaws** (written rules governing how an organization operates) that the group must use parliamentary procedure to conduct official meetings. One study found that of the 23,000 national voluntary associations; 11,000 international associations; and 53,000 regional, state, and local associations in the United States, most use some form of parliamentary procedure.⁵⁴ In all likelihood, you belong or will belong to an association, organization, or business group that uses parliamentary procedure to govern discussion and debate.

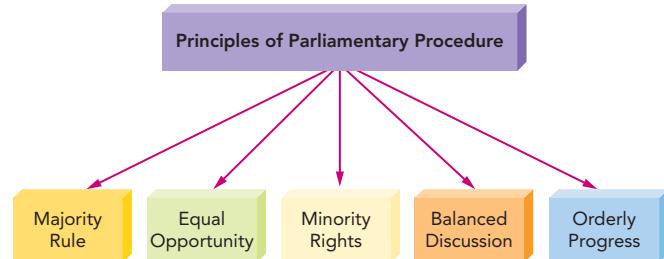
Groups with a record of accomplishing their goals without much controversy, confusion, or waste of time and effort may not need parliamentary procedure. In fact, they may want to avoid it. Unless used properly, parliamentary procedure can discourage participation and hinder decision making. When a group is small enough to permit face-to-face, cooperative interaction, decision making may be easier without the restrictions imposed by the rules of parliamentary procedure. However, if your group is either large or formal, must make critical decisions in a short period of time, and has a history of unsuccessful or contentious debate, parliamentary procedure may be the best way to maintain order while engaging in important deliberations.

11.4.2: The Guiding Principles of Parliamentary Procedure

Before learning the rules of parliamentary procedure, you should understand its guiding principles. In this way, you can appreciate why this procedure continues as “the law of

the land” in many meetings. *Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised* claims that the rules of parliamentary procedure are “constructed upon a careful balance of the rights of persons or subgroups within an organization’s . . . total membership.”⁵⁵ These guiding principles, illustrated in Figure 11.5, form the basis for all parliamentary rules.

Figure 11.5 The Guiding Principles of Parliamentary Procedure



MAJORITY RULE First and foremost, parliamentary procedure promotes the most basic principle in a democracy—the majority of members determine the outcome. When groups agree to abide by the rules of parliamentary procedure, the will of the majority always prevails. In the case of critical or controversial issues, decisions may require a two-thirds vote rather than a simple majority.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY Although parliamentary procedure requires that the majority rules, it also protects every member and guarantees that everyone has an equal right and opportunity to speak before a vote is taken. Regardless of whether you agree or disagree with other members, you have the right to express your ideas, opinions, and arguments. Parliamentary procedure also grants every member the right to vote and run for office, and the same rules apply to all members.

MINORITY RIGHTS Parliamentary rules are specifically designed to protect the rights of all members whether or not they represent the majority. By using the rules of parliamentary procedure, a well-organized minority may try to block, postpone, or defeat an idea proposed by the majority of group members. You can view this capability negatively or positively. To majority members, parliamentary tactics can create gridlock and erode member relationships. Just consider how a political party or a coalition group in the U.S. Congress can hold a bill hostage by manipulating parliamentary procedure. However, from the point of view of minority members, these rules guarantee that their viewpoint is heard. Yet all members should recognize and accept the fact that parliamentary rules are designed to ensure that the majority rules.

BALANCED DISCUSSION Parliamentary procedure guarantees the rights of all members to speak on different sides of an issue by balancing the participation of frequent and infrequent contributors as well as supporters and

opponents of a particular proposal. In *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure*, author Alice Sturgis is very specific about this guarantee:

A member who has not spoken has a prior claim over the one who has already discussed the question. Similarly, a member who seldom speaks should be given preference over one who claims the attention of the assembly frequently . . . The presiding officer should alternate between proponents and opponents of a motion whenever possible.⁵⁶

ORDERLY PROGRESS When groups use parliamentary procedure, the approved meetings' agenda promotes orderly business while also allowing flexibility in the decision-making process. In order to prepare for a fair and orderly meeting, everyone should know which issues and items of business are scheduled for discussion—well in advance.

Parliamentary procedure's guiding principles of majority rule, equal opportunity, minority rights, balanced discussion, and orderly progress are fundamental to determining the will of the majority. In addition to these principles, several rules safeguard the rights of all group members:

- Only one person may speak at a time.
- Only one proposal or subject may be discussed at a time.
- Members must limit their remarks to the topic under discussion.
- Although the chairperson has the *primary* responsibility for enforcing the rules, all members share that responsibility.
- A group may not make a decision unless the meeting is properly called and the rules of parliamentary procedure are followed.

11.4.3: The Parliamentary Players

When groups use parliamentary procedure, only official members may participate and vote. For example, when a condominium association meets, each residential unit has a single vote, regardless of how many people live in that unit. Only the members of a college's board of trustees or governing board may vote to hire or fire the college's president. In addition, there are rules governing the number of members needed to hold a meeting as well as the responsibilities of key players. Most groups that use parliamentary procedure require a specific number of members in attendance as well as special "players" to conduct business: a chairperson; a clerk; and, in some cases, a parliamentarian.

QUORUM In addition to certifying that members are eligible to vote, most parliamentary groups require a **quorum**, the minimum number or percentage of voting members who, according to a group's constitution or bylaws, must be present at a meeting in order to transact business. Without a quorum requirement, a small group of members could meet and make decisions that go against the will of the majority. If this

were to happen, the group would violate the most fundamental principle of parliamentary procedure—majority rule.

Usually, a quorum is 51 percent of the members. For meetings at which the level of attendance is often low or unpredictable, groups may set the quorum at 25 or 30 percent of the membership. Unless a quorum is present, the group may not take any action. Even a subcommittee can require a quorum in order to conduct its business.

CHAIR Parliamentary procedure requires that someone "chair" the meeting. In some organizations, the bylaws specify that the president, CEO, or appointed/elected leader shall chair all meetings. In parliamentary procedure, the **chair** or **chairperson** is the presiding officer who uses and enforces parliamentary rules while conducting a meeting. Like a police officer stationed at a busy intersection, the chair controls the flow of communication and protects the rights of all members to participate. Naturally, the person chairing a meeting should know the rules very well and remain separate from the congestion caused by "communication traffic."

According to parliamentary procedure, if you chair a meeting, you should not join the discussion or express your personal opinions at any time. Your job is to make sure the group follows an approved agenda, to uphold the rules and the rights of all members, to ensure fair debate, and to ensure that the majority ultimately prevails. However, chairing a meeting does not take away your rights as a group member. The chair can vote when members use secret ballots for voting. The chair can also vote to make or break a tie. For example, if there is a tie vote, the proposal is defeated unless the chair votes to break the tie in favor of passage. The chair can also vote to create a tie, which, in effect, defeats the proposed action because there is no majority.

CLERK In a parliamentary setting, the **clerk** is a group member assigned to take minutes, track the status of motions, and record votes during a meeting. The clerk takes the minutes and keeps a careful record of the status of all business, including the wording of motions and amendments that pass or do not pass. When a vote count is ordered or a written ballot is used, the clerk must record the final results, such as "The motion passed" or "The motion failed for lack of a majority," but not necessarily indicate the number of votes on each side.

PARLIAMENTARIAN When meetings are formal and large, when the issues are highly controversial and require the stamp of legality, or when the chair or group is unsure of the rules, a parliamentarian may be appointed, elected, or hired.

A **parliamentarian** is a person who advises the meeting chairperson on matters concerning parliamentary procedure. Like an umpire, the parliamentarian has a thorough knowledge of the rules and can apply them to specific situations.

The U.S. Congress employs parliamentarians, as do national organizations, such as labor unions, corporate

boards of directors, and political parties. In less-formal organizations, a member who knows parliamentary procedure may serve as parliamentarian. Although good parliamentarians know the rules inside and out, the parliamentarian does not have the final word—the chair does. The parliamentarian advises the chair and explains the basis for parliamentary rulings to the entire group when asked to do so by the chair.

11.4.4: Making a Motion

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised consists of more than 700 pages and includes hundreds of rules for conducting business. Parliamentary procedure also has its own unique vocabulary. Rather than saying, “Let’s vote,” parliamentary procedure asks that you “Call the previous question.” Rather than saying, “Don’t interrupt me while I’m talking,” parliamentary speakers say, “I believe I have the floor.” As with any new procedure, it takes time to get used to the terms and customs required of participants.

The key to effective use of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* is understanding the concept of a **motion**, a formal proposal by a member seeking the consideration and action of an assembled group.⁵⁷ In other words, if you want the group to make a decision or agree to do something, you must state your proposed action as a motion with a statement such as, “I move that . . .” To make a motion, you must address and be recognized by the chair.

Mr. Kennedy: Madam President.

Chair: The chair recognizes Mr. Kennedy (or, “The chair recognizes the member in the second row”).

Mr. Kennedy: Madam President, I move that we hold our 2020 convention in Chicago to celebrate our association’s 100th anniversary and founding in that city.

At first, you may feel awkward using a phrase such as “I move that . . .,” but such language soon becomes second nature in a parliamentary session. To make and debate a motion, you must know the rules governing different types of motions and the requirements for getting a motion voted on and passed.

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised covers more than 80 different types of motions, each with special rules on how to introduce, debate, amend, and vote on it. To complicate matters even further, some motions are debatable, but others are not; some are amendable, but others are not; and although some require a second motion and/or a vote, others do not. Fortunately, learning how to handle the most commonly used motions can help you deal with the others. Table 11.5 lists 14 of these common motions, their purpose, and the way in which to make the motion during a meeting.⁵⁸

The motions shown in Table 11.5 are numbered because they are presented in the order of **precedence**, the ranked order or priority of different types of motions for con-

Table 11.5 Common Motions

Motion	Purpose	Example of Phrasing
1. Adjourn	To end or dismiss a meeting	“I move that we adjourn.”
2. Recess	To adjourn for a short and specific time	“I move that we recess for 90 minutes for a lunch break.”
3. Question of Privilege	To get an immediate ruling on issues related to the personal needs and rights of members	“I rise to a point of privilege. Will the speaker please use the microphone so we can hear in the back?”
4. Parliamentary Inquiry	To call attention to a violation of the rules or an error in procedure	“I rise to a point of order. It is out of order to vote on the main motion before we vote on the amendment.”
5. Request for Information (or Point of Information)	A request for information related to the business at hand, but not related to parliamentary procedures	“I have a request for information. This motion calls for a large expenditure. Will the treasurer state the present balance in our budget?”
6. Orders of the Day	To force the group to conform to its agreed-upon agenda and timing of business	“I call for the orders of the day. According to the agenda, we should be discussing the funding resolution.”
7. Lay on the Table	To interrupt pending business so as to permit doing something else immediately	“I move that we table the main motion in order to let Rafael present his report, because he must leave to catch a plane.”
8. Previous Question	To immediately end the debate of a particular motion and move to an immediate vote	“I move the previous question on the budget motion” or “I call for the previous question.”
9. Limit or Extend Debate	To limit or extend the amount of time devoted to discussion	“I move that each speaker be limited to a three-minute statement on this motion.”
10. Postpone to a Certain Time	To defer action on an item to a specific time or date	“I move that this matter be postponed until our next meeting.”
11. Refer to Committee	To send a motion to a committee for further study; to postpone debate, or to develop recommendations	“I move that the motion to raise membership dues be referred to the Finance Board for its recommendations.”
12. Amend	To change the wording of a motion being considered by the group	“I move that we amend the motion by striking out the word <i>honors</i> before the word <i>scholarship</i> in the motion.”
13. Postpone Indefinitely	To drop the main motion without a direct vote on it	“I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely.”
14. Main Motion	To propose that the group take a certain action	“I move that we adopt the Peregrine Falcon as our official mascot.”

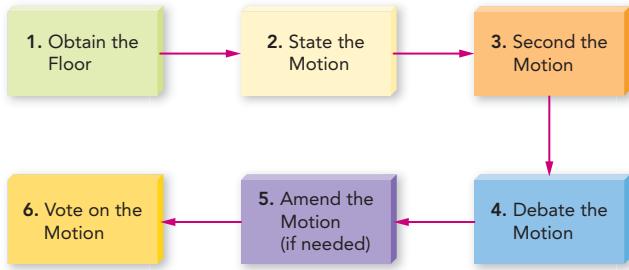
sideration and action. When multiple motions are made, the motion to adjourn (ranked #1) must be considered before any of the others. After all, if the group adjourns, none of the other motions are relevant. A motion to amend (ranked #12) must come before a final vote on the main

motion (ranked #14). And you cannot amend a motion (ranked #12) if someone makes a request for information (ranked #5) or a recess (ranked #2). We particularly like using the previous question motion (ranked #8) when a debate has gone on too long and members are only repeating themselves or becoming discourteous to one another. “I move the previous question” requires a two-thirds vote of the group, which, when secured, immediately stops the debate for a vote by the members.

11.4.5: Making a Main Motion

At the heart of parliamentary procedure is the **main motion**, a proposal for a new action or a decision. Main motions are the very reason people assemble in groups. A proposal to build a tennis court for a condominium community, to increase a college’s tuition, or to downsize a company’s workforce is a recommendation for a new action that requires the vote of assembled members. Taking a main motion from its initial proposal to its final vote requires the six basic steps listed in Figure 11.6.

Figure 11.6 Making a Main Motion



OBTAIN THE FLOOR To make a motion and speak in a parliamentary session, you must “Obtain the floor.” The **floor** is the right to speak after being recognized to do so by the chair. Although the word *floor* refers to standing before the group on the floor of the meeting room, it has come to mean that only one member may speak at that time. Thus, if you are interrupted as you speak, you may say, “I have the floor!” To present any motion, you must have the floor.

STATE THE MOTION When you prepare a main motion, word it clearly and state it in the affirmative. Good motions are clear, objective, and brief. Groups can waste hours of discussion and debate by trying to sort out a poorly expressed motion.

The following two examples illustrate properly worded motions:

Mr. President: I move that we adopt the Peregrine falcon as our official mascot.

Madam Chair: I move that we give \$5,000 to our county’s community college for scholarships.

SECOND THE MOTION Once you make a motion, someone else must second your motion. A **second** is the expression of support for consideration of a motion by a second member. After all, if only one person wants to pass a motion, why would a group take valuable time to discuss it? The person who seconds a motion does not have to agree with the motion; seconding a motion only means that the member wants the group to consider the motion.

Mr. Kennedy: Madam President.

Chair: The chair recognizes Mr. Kennedy.

Mr. Kennedy: Madam President, I move that we give \$5,000 to our county’s community college for scholarships.

Ms. Rodriguez: Second.

Chair: It has been moved and seconded that we donate \$5,000 to our county’s community college for scholarships. Is there any discussion?

Notice that the chair does not have to recognize the person who seconds the motion. As soon as someone makes a main motion, anyone may second it. If there is silence after someone makes a main motion, the chair should ask for a second. If there is no second, the motion “dies for lack of a second” and cannot be considered by the group.

DEBATE THE MOTION Once a motion has been made and seconded, the chair will “open the floor” for discussion and debate, giving first priority to the member who made the motion. During this period, members may argue for or against the motion. The chair makes sure that members who support the motion and those who oppose it have equal opportunities to express their views.

AMEND THE MOTION In addition to supporting or opposing a main motion, anyone can amend most types of motions. An **amendment** is the proposed modification of wording in a motion under consideration by an assembled group. If you wish to change another member’s main motion, by *substituting* one word for another, you do so by saying, “I move that we amend the motion by substituting the amount of \$25,000 for the \$5,000 in scholarship funds.” You can amend a motion by *adding* words, such as, “I move that we amend the motion by inserting the words *honors program* before the word *scholarship*.” You can also amend a motion by *subtracting* words, such as, “I move that we amend the motion by deleting the words *for scholarships*.” Like a main motion, someone must second an amendment before the group can debate its merit. A group may consider only one amendment at a time. In most cases, the group debates the amendment and then votes for or against adding it to a main motion.

VOTE ON THE MOTION After debating a motion and accepting or rejecting all proposed amendments, a group may vote to accept or reject the final form of the motion. However, at any point in a debate either the chair or a member of the group can ask for a vote. The chair may ask, “Are we ready to

vote on the question?" In parliamentary sessions, the word **question** refers to any motion put before a group that requires a vote. In a sense, a vote determines the answer to a question such as, "Should we give \$25,000 to the community college for honors program scholarships?" Those in favor vote "Yes" or "Aye"; those opposed vote "No" or "Nay."

If the chair does not ask whether the group is ready to vote, any member may call for a vote by saying, "I move the previous question." This motion must be seconded, cannot be debated or amended, and requires a two-thirds vote to pass. In other words, if two-thirds of the members decide that they want to vote on the motion, the vote must take place.

Chair: Are you ready to vote?

Members: Yes!

Chair: All those in favor of the motion that this organization give \$25,000 to our local community college for honors program scholarships say, "Aye."

Members: Aye.

Chair: Those opposed, say, "Nay."

Members: Nay.

Chair: The motion is passed (*or defeated*).

If a chair cannot determine whether a motion passes by listening to the yes and no votes, the chair may choose another voting option, such as raising hands or secret ballots.

11.5: Evaluating the Meeting

11.5 Identify appropriate criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of a group meeting

To determine the effectiveness of meetings—be it an informal discussion, a staff meeting, or a large parliamentary assembly—and identify areas for improvement, groups should evaluate their meetings. There are a number of ways to do so:

- Throughout the meeting, the chairperson asks for comments and suggestions before moving on to the next item. This feedback allows the group to modify its behavior and improve its interaction when discussing the next item.
- At the end of the meeting, the chairperson briefly assesses the meeting, asks for comments and suggestions from the group before adjourning, or distributes a Post-Meeting Reaction form to all members.
- After the meeting, the chairperson asks members for their comments and suggestions for improving the group's next meeting.

A **Post-Meeting Reaction (PMR) Form** is a questionnaire designed to assess the success of a meeting by collecting written reactions from participants. The chairperson should

prepare the form in advance of the meeting, distribute it at the end of a meeting, and collect it before participants leave. A PMR form should ask questions about the discussion, the quantity and quality of group interactions, and the effectiveness of meeting procedures. Analyzing member feedback can help improve subsequent meetings.

Group Assessment Post-Meeting Reaction (PMR) Form

The sample PMR form contains useful questions for evaluating most types of meetings. The PMR form may be used as an individual assessment or as a group assessment. You can use this form to evaluate meetings in classes, clubs, volunteer groups, community groups, legislatures as well as in job settings.

Directions: After a selected meeting, complete the following *Post-Meeting Reaction (PMR) Form* by selecting the number that best represents your answer to each question. How could you use the results as a basis for improving future meetings?

1. How clear was the goal of the meeting?						
Unclear	1	2	3	4	5	Clear
2. How useful was the agenda?						
Useless	1	2	3	4	5	Useful
3. Was the meeting room comfortable?						
Uncomfortable	1	2	3	4	5	Comfortable
4. How prepared were group members for the meeting?						
Unprepared	1	2	3	4	5	Well Prepared
5. Did everyone have an equal opportunity to participate in the discussion?						
Limited opportunity	1	2	3	4	5	Ample opportunity
6. Did members listen effectively and consider different points of view?						
Ineffective listening	1	2	3	4	5	Effective listening
7. How would you describe the overall climate of the meeting?						
Hostile	1	2	3	4	5	Friendly
8. Were assignments and deadlines made clear by the end of the meeting?						
Unclear	1	2	3	4	5	Clear
9. Did the meeting begin and end on time? Did the group use its meeting time efficiently?						
Unproductive	1	2	3	4	5	Productive
10. How would you rate this meeting overall?						
Unsuccessful	1	2	3	4	5	Successful
Additional Comments						

Summary: Planning and Conducting Meetings

11.1: Meetings, Meetings, Meetings

- The primary characteristics of a meeting are a schedule, a structure, and a designated chairperson.
- When meetings are well planned and well conducted, they increase group productivity, promote member satisfaction, and contribute to the success of an organization.

11.2: Planning and Chairing Meetings

- Meetings balance order and chaos. Effective group members understand that too much order or too much chaos stifles group progress.
- For an effective meeting, decide the meeting's purpose, who should attend, where and when to meet, and what materials members need in order to be prepared and productive.
- A meeting's purpose may be to share information, instruct members, solve problems, and/or make decisions.
- An agenda is an outline of the items to be discussed at a meeting.
- Effective groups recognize and avoid the conditions that lead to meetingthink.
- The chairperson is responsible for planning, preparing for, conducting, and following up a meeting.
- The minutes of a meeting are the written record of the group's discussion, decisions, and actions during a meeting.
- Ethical groups use good judgment when recording the minutes of a meeting.

11.3: Managing Members in Meetings

- Common types of problematic group members include nonparticipants, texters, loudmouths, interrupters, whisperers, and latecomers and early leavers.
- Meetings should be adapted to the diverse needs and expectations of members.
- Virtual meetings require agendas and minutes as well as special adaptations to member availability and choice of technology.

11.4: Parliamentary Procedure

- Parliamentary procedure is a set of formal rules used to determine the will of the majority through fair and orderly discussion and debate.
- The guiding principles of parliamentary procedure include a commitment to all of the following: majority rule, equal opportunity, minority rights, balanced discussion, and orderly progress.
- A quorum is the minimum number or percentage of voting members who, according to a group's constitution or bylaws, must be present at a meeting in order to transact business.
- A motion is a formal proposal by a member seeking the consideration and action of an assembled group.

11.5: Evaluating the Meeting

- Groups can learn from experience by evaluating meetings and using such feedback to improve future meetings.
- A Post-Meeting Reaction (PMR) Form can help a group analyze the quality of a discussion, the quantity and quality of group interactions, and the effectiveness of meeting procedures.

SHARED WRITING CASE STUDY: MONDAY MORNING BLUES

Use the information you have learned to answer the following questions about the case study that was presented at the beginning of this chapter:

Do you think the meeting would have been more productive if everyone had seen Darrell's agenda in advance? Why or why not?

Review and discuss the similarities and differences between your answer and those of at least two of your classmates.

► A minimum number of characters is required to post and earn points. After posting, your response can be viewed by your class and instructor, and you can participate in the class discussion.

Post

0 characters | 140 minimum

Chapter 11 Quiz: Planning and Conducting Meetings

Chapter 12

Group Presentations



Public panel discussions occur in classrooms, at conferences, in community centers, as well as on radio, television, and the world wide web.



Learning Objectives

- 12.1** Differentiate the three types of group presentations
- 12.2** Review the seven key elements and guiding principles of presentation speaking with respect to individual group member presentations
- 12.3** Review the seven key elements and guiding principles of presentation speaking with respect to group presentations
- 12.4** Summarize three major guidelines for designing effective presentation slides

Case Study: Team Challenge

As the final project in their Media and Message Design course, student teams develop and present promotional campaigns for selected academic departments in the college. Each team must submit a written report as well as designs for a poster, a brochure, and a web page. In addition, all

group members must participate in a 30-minute team presentation summarizing and explaining their research, campaign strategies, and media designs to an audience of class members, two communication professors, and faculty members from the client department.

Brittany, Simon, Leah, Javier, and Enola have enlisted the theatre department as their client. After weeks of research, analysis, and intense discussions, the group drafts

a promotional plan. Javier and Enola—two art majors—develop a creative design for the poster and brochure. The same design will also be used on the website. Leah writes the report and brochure content. Simon and Brittany prepare a new layout and copy for the website. Now the group faces the task of preparing their team presentation.

The group decides that Enola should serve as the moderator. Leah claims the task of presenting the group's research and analysis. Javier wants to present the poster on his own, but Enola objects, saying that even though she's the moderator, she wants to participate in that part of the presentation. Brittany and Simon watch Javier and Enola vie for the honor of presenting the poster. They agree to present the website design together.

As the date of the team presentation approaches, the group realizes they are spending most of their time trying to decide who will present the individual presentations rather than finalizing the report and crafting the team presentation. They declare a moratorium on arguments about media and shift to discussing the overall presentation.

"Just remember," says Brittany, "our purpose is to get an A!"

"No," says Javier. "Our purpose is to present a brilliant promotional plan and set of designs to the audience—and if we do that well, we'll earn a good grade, too."

Leah asks the group to put aside concerns about grades and look at the presentation in a broader sense. "Aren't we supposed to demonstrate how our promotional plan and designs will help the theatre department attract more majors?"

The group decides to concentrate on how to integrate their individual presentations into the team presentation. As much as she would like to present the poster, as long as Javier gives her credit as the co-designer, Enola says she will open the team presentation by explaining the overall campaign plan. Leah disagrees, insisting that *she* should do that section because she did most of the research and writing.

By now, the team is anxious. They're still arguing about who does what rather than what to do, and everyone is talking at once. "Hold on," says Brittany, "What if we look at this as members of the theatre department. What would they want to know? Why would they trust our judgment and recommendations?"

Simon adds, "We also need to consider how to 'perform' this presentation in a way that will impress the theatre department *and* our communication instructors."

The group looks at Brittany and Simon with gratitude. "I guess we're back to square one," says Leah. The group acknowledges the need to find an appropriate approach to planning their team presentation.

Critical Thinking Questions

When you finish reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following critical-thinking questions:

1. What, in your opinion, is the team presentation's purpose or purposes?

2. How well did the group consider the needs of its audience—other students, the course instructor, and faculty members from the theatre department?
3. In what ways can the group establish or enhance its credibility?
4. To what extent did the group follow the *Seven-Step Team Presentation Planning Guidelines*?
5. Which dialectic tensions are likely to affect whether the group's team presentation is successful?

12.1: Presentations in and by Groups

12.1 Differentiate the three types of group presentations

In her book *Keeping the Team Going*, Deborah Harrington-Mackin responds to a question frequently asked by her management clients:

QUESTION: I like the idea of having team members speak on panels and give presentations, but how can I trust that they will give the right answers when under pressure?

ANSWER: I'm always pleasantly surprised at how competent, composed, and prepared team members are when they sit on panels or give presentations. Remember, they're in the spotlight and want to look and act their best.¹

In general, we agree with Harrington-Mackin, but we also know there's a lot more involved in an effective presentation than hoping and trusting it will turn out okay. In this chapter, we define a **group presentation** as a relatively uninterrupted talk or speech by one or more group members within a group, on behalf of a group, or by an entire group (Table 12.1). Group members should know how to prepare and deliver successful individual and team presentations adapted to the needs and characteristics of their group and its goals.

Table 12.1 Three Types of Group Presentations

Types of Presentations	Example
Presentations to Group Members	<i>Discussing a tuition proposal.</i> The student government association discusses the college's proposal to increase tuition by 4 percent. In order to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to speak at the meeting, student representatives are limited to three-minute statements.
Presentations for Nongroup of Public Audiences	<i>Opposing the tuition proposal.</i> The student government association selects a spokesperson to make a presentation opposing the proposed tuition increase at the monthly, public meeting of the college's board of trustees.
Presentations by Groups	<i>Appealing for state funding.</i> The college president asks the student government's spokesperson to participate in a group presentation to the state legislature's appropriations committee in which an administrator, professor, staff member, and student have a total of 20 minutes to request more state funding.

WRITING PROMPT

Presentations in and by Groups

Think about the last time you made a presentation to group members, with a group in a team presentation, to nongroup members on behalf of that group, to a class, at a celebration, on a special occasion, or to a public audience. What was the purpose of your presentation? Explain why you were successful, partially successful, or unsuccessful in achieving your goal.

- The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

12.2: Presentation Guidelines

12.2 Review the seven key elements and guiding principles of presentation speaking with respect to individual group member presentations

All group members make presentations. You may share the highlights of a report, state the rationale for an argument or proposal, and/or join your group in a team presentation to a group of decision makers. In this section, we introduce seven guiding principles to help you make critical decisions about your presentation from the minute you find out you will have to speak to the minute you've said your last word. We have selected a single word to represent the key element in each guiding principle, as shown in Figure 12.1. Note that each element is presented as a gear to show that a decision

Figure 12.1 Key Elements and Guiding Principles of Presentation Speaking



you make about one element affects the others; moving one gear moves the others as well. Thus, if you discover that audience members are more likely to agree rather than disagree with you, that information affects decisions you make about the other six elements.

Are the principles represented by these seven elements all you need to know about making an effective presentation? No. Instead, the seven key elements and guiding principles provide a framework for strategic decision making about the complex process of presentation speaking.²

12.2.1: Purpose

The first and most important step in developing a successful presentation is identifying your purpose—much like the need for groups to identify and agree on a common goal. Your *purpose* is not the same thing as your *topic*. A **presentation purpose** states what a speaker wants listeners to know, think, believe, or do as the result of a specific presentation. For example, a proposed tuition increase is the discussion topic for the student government association. However, a student speaker's purpose may be to support or oppose the increase. Having a clear purpose for your presentation does not necessarily mean that you will achieve it—but without a clear purpose, you may not accomplish anything.

Dr. Terry Paulson, psychologist and author of *They Shoot Managers, Don't They?*, cautions speakers against making a presentation without a purpose:

There are so many messages . . . hurled at [us] today . . . it's like sipping through a fire hydrant. Don't unnecessarily add to the stream by including unnecessary fill, fact, and fluff. Volume and graphs will not have a lasting impression: having a focus will. Ask yourself early in the process: What do I want them to remember or do three months from now? If you can't succinctly answer that question, cancel your presentation.³

When determining your purpose, ask yourself: What is my own and my group's overall goal? What is the major point I should make? Given my purpose, how do I focus and narrow the topic for maximum effect? When speaking within a group, on behalf of a group, or in a team presentation, you must balance your personal goals with those of the group. Effective speakers seek an appropriate both/and approach to the **individual goals ↔ group goals** dialectic tension (Figure 12.2).

Figure 12.2 Balancing Presentation Tensions



12.2.2: Audience

After determining the purpose of your presentation, turn your attention to analyzing and adapting to your listeners—the members of your group or an outside audience. This process begins by seeking answers to two basic questions:

1. What are your listeners' characteristics?
2. What are their opinions?

In some cases, you can answer these questions with ease because you know the listeners very well, have interacted with them on many occasions, or have made presentations on the same topic to a variety of audiences. Even so, make sure you also assess *your* characteristics and opinions. Are they the same as, similar to, or very different from those of the listeners? How will those differences affect how they listen and your choice of strategies to achieve the purpose of your presentation?

AUDIENCE CHARACTERISTICS Focus your attention on two types of audience characteristics: demographic traits and individual attributes:

1. **Demographic traits** include the general and measurable characteristics of audience members, such as their ages, genders, races, ethnicity, religions, political affiliations, and marital status. If you have been working in a group for a long time, you can easily catalog the demographic traits of group members. For a presentation to a new group or to a large audience, the task is more difficult. Take a good look at your listeners and note visible demographic traits, such as age, gender, and race. At the same time, assume that there is more diversity than similarity among audience members.
2. **Audience-specific attributes** include information about the distinct characteristics of a particular group or audience, such as the uniformity or variety of job titles and status, special interests, personality traits, relationships with other members, and length of group membership. Also take into consideration their ability and motivation to listen to you and your message. Given that most of us have difficulty remembering half of what we hear and even less if we are not motivated to listen, make sure that you speak clearly, emphasize important ideas, repeat critical ideas and information, and even ask questions to make sure that they're paying attention, comprehending, and correctly interpreting your message.

Demographic traits and audience-specific attributes can affect how listeners react to you and to your message. For example, students who support themselves on limited incomes may oppose a tuition increase more strongly than students who can afford the increase.

AUDIENCE OPINIONS There can be as many opinions in a group or audience as there are members. Some members will agree with you before you begin your presentation, but others will disagree with you no matter what you say. Some will have no opinion about an issue and will accept a reasonable point of view. Effective presenters try to predict who or how many listeners will agree, disagree, or be undecided. Then they look for communication strategies that adapt to the diversity of opinions. Fortunately, there are several effective strategies for adapting to a variety of listener opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and values (Table 12.2).

Table 12.2 Audience Adaptation Strategies

If the Audience Agrees with You, Is Undecided, or Has No Opinion:

- Gain and maintain their attention and interest
- Present new information
- Give audience members a reason to care
- Acknowledge both sides of the argument
- Motivate audience members to act

If the Audience Disagrees with You:

- Set realistic goals
- Find common ground
- Accept differences of opinion
- Use fair and reasonable evidence
- Enhance your personal credibility

If most listeners agree with you or are undecided, your presentation should share new, interesting information, summarize important ideas and arguments, and motivate them to care *and* act. For example, if the members of the student government are universally opposed to a tuition increase, a speaker could focus on motivating them to show up at the college's board of trustees meeting, tweet other students, and write letters to the editor of the college and community newspapers.

If listeners disagree with you, make sure you set realistic goals. Asking students to storm the president's office may get the administration's attention, but such an action may be too radical for most students to support. A second strategy is to find **common ground** in the form of an identifiable belief, value, experience, or point of view shared by those who disagree with you. Emphasizing shared ideas, feelings, history, and hopes can help you overcome resistance. For example, if a student speaker tells the board of trustees that the student government wants to help find a solution to the financial crisis, the board may be more willing to listen to student concerns about the proposed tuition increase.

Finally, when you address a controversial issue, make sure you acknowledge differences of opinion, support your arguments with fair and reasonable evidence. If your arguments and evidence are weak, your opponents are likely to use those weaknesses against you, which in turn will hurt your credibility.

12.2.3: Credibility

As a speaker, your **credibility** represents the extent to which group or audience members believe you and your message. No matter how much you know about the subject or how sincere you are about your purpose, your audience decides whether you seem competent and trustworthy.

Confident speakers are also more credible presenters. Even speakers who experience high levels of **communication apprehension** can project confidence and credibility. Their secret, as we explain in Chapter 3, is knowing how to reduce their level of speaking anxiety and build their communication confidence.

Of the many factors researchers have identified as major components of credibility, four have an especially strong impact on the believability of a speaker: competence, character, caring, and charisma:

- **Competence** is an aspect of speaker credibility based on listener perceptions of your expertise and abilities.⁴ If you are not a recognized expert on a subject, you must demonstrate that you are well prepared. There is nothing wrong with letting your group or audience members know how much time and effort you have put into researching the topic or with sharing your surprise at discovering new information.
- **Character** is an aspect of speaker credibility based on listener perceptions of your honesty and trustworthiness. Are you truthful and sincere? Do you put the group's goal above your own? Do you freely share important information with others? Do you fairly assess your own and others' ideas? If your group or audience members don't trust you, it won't matter what you say. A speaker of good character is seen as a good person. In this case, *good* means "being ethical"—doing what is right and moral when you communicate within a group, on behalf of a group, or as a participant in a team presentation.
- **Caring** is an aspect of speaker credibility based on listener perceptions that you understand others' ideas and are empathetic and responsive to their needs.⁵ Caring speakers let their actions speak louder than their words. Do you merely complain about higher tuition and cutbacks in student services, or do you also write to your college's board of trustees and express your concerns? By showing that you are active and committed to a purpose, you can inspire a group or an audience to join you—and enhance your credibility.
- **Charisma** is an aspect of speaker credibility based on listener perceptions about your level of enthusiasm and commitment. A speaker with charisma is dynamic, forceful, powerful, assertive, and intense. Certainly, charisma is a valuable asset for any speaker, but it is not essential for success. A gentle speaker who is competent,

trusting, and caring is often more successful than a charismatic speaker with questionable motives. In fact, some speakers have so much energy and intensity that they may frighten or exhaust their listeners. Practicing and improving your delivery skills can enhance your charisma in the same way that thorough preparation can help you become a more competent speaker.

Theory in Groups

Aristotle's *Ethos*

Objective: Explain the meaning of *ethos* and its importance as a guiding principle of effective presentation speaking.

The concept of speaker credibility is more than two thousand years old. Even in ancient times, speech coaches (yes, there were speech teachers back then) recognized that the speaker was just as important as the speech. In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle wrote about **ethos**, a Greek word meaning "character" that has evolved into the modern concept of credibility. Aristotle wrote: "The character [ethos] of the speaker is a cause of persuasion when the speech is so uttered as to make him worthy of belief. . . . His character [ethos] is the most potent of all the means to persuasion."⁶

Numerous studies support the importance of speaker credibility. In most of these studies, two different audiences listen to a recording or see a live or video performance of the same presentation. One audience is told that the speaker is a national expert on the topic; the other audience is told that the speaker is a college student. After listening to the presentation, each audience is asked for their reactions. Can you guess the results? The presentation by a "national expert" persuaded more audience members to change their minds than did the one by the "student"—even though both audiences listened to the same exact presentation. The only difference was the *perceived* credibility of the speaker.

We want to emphasize that your credibility as a speaker is solely based on the attitudes and perceptions of your audience. Only your audience decides whether you are believable. Even if you are a recognized expert on your topic and you deliver a carefully constructed presentation in a skillful manner, the ultimate decision about your credibility lies with your audience.⁷ Think of it this way: Credibility is "like the process of getting a grade in school. Only the teacher (audience) can assign the grade to the student (or speaker), but the student can do all sorts of things—turn in homework on time, prepare for class, follow the rules—to influence what grade is assigned."⁸ Teachers give grades, judges award prizes, reviewers critique books, and audience members determine your level of credibility.

12.2.4: Logistics

Logistics describes the strategic planning, arranging, and use of people, facilities, time, and materials relevant to your presentation. Adapting to the occasion and setting of

a presentation requires more than taking a quick look at the seating arrangements for a meeting. Ask questions about *where* and *when* you will be speaking:

- **Where?** Will you be making your presentation in a large conference room, an auditorium, a classroom, or a meeting room? What are the seating arrangements? Are there any distracting sights or sounds? Will you need a microphone? Do you need special equipment to display your presentation aids? Once you have answered such questions, figure out how to adapt to the location. For example, if a student government spokesperson learns that several hundred people will be attending the board of trustees meeting, she or he should request a microphone.
- **When?** Will you be speaking in the morning or the afternoon? Are you scheduled to speak for 5 minutes, 20 minutes, or an hour? What comes before or after your presentation? The answers to such questions may require major adjustments to your presentation. If there is a time limit for the presentation, respect and adhere to that limit. Regardless of whether you have 5 minutes or an hour for your presentation, never add more than 5 percent to your allotted time—even better, aim for 5 percent less. Most people lose patience when someone speaks too long.

12.2.5: Content

As soon as you know you have to make a presentation, start collecting relevant ideas and information. Gathering materials can be as simple as spending a few hours thinking about the purpose of your presentation or as complicated and time-consuming as spending days doing research. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Where and how can I find materials that support my purpose?
- How much and what kinds of supporting materials and evidence do I need?
- Are my ideas and information compelling and interesting?
- Have I used reliable, credible sources?
- Are the ideas and information I want to use valid, appropriate, and believable?

12.2.6: Organization

Listeners react positively to well-organized presentations, and negatively to poorly organized ones.⁹ Ask yourself whether there is a natural structure or framework for your message. What common ideas have appeared in most of your materials? What information seems most interesting, important, and relevant to the purpose of your presentation?

Your ability to organize a presentation also depends on whether you have selected appropriate ideas and information based on your analysis of purpose, audience, and logistics. Without well-thought-out content, you may have nothing substantive to organize.

ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS Even the most experienced speakers sometimes find it difficult to see how their content fits into an organizational pattern. If you’re in a similar position, do not despair. Several commonly used organizational patterns can help you clarify your central idea and find an appropriate format for your presentation. Table 12.3 lists several common patterns.

Table 12.3 Organizational Patterns

Organizational Pattern	Example
Reason Giving	Three reasons why we should increase the dues are . . .
Time Arrangement	The college’s hiring steps must be complied with in the following order . . .
Space Arrangement	The following membership increases occurred in the East, South, West, and Central regions . . .
Problem–Solution	This research method avoids the problems we encountered last time . . .
Causes and Effects	Here’s what could happen if we fail to increase our dues . . .
Stories and Examples	I’ve contacted four community associations in this country and here’s what I found . . .
Compare–Contrast	Let’s take a look at the two research methods we considered . . .

OUTLINING YOUR PRESENTATION Many speakers use outlines as a planning tool for organizing their presentations. Some speakers also use their outlines as speaking notes for delivering a presentation. In addition to outlining, we encourage speakers to consider other methods, such as putting your ideas and supporting material on separate sticky notes that can be moved and arranged into a variety of patterns. Regardless of which method you use, a presentation should be packaged in a format that helps you achieve your purpose—similar to the way agendas help groups organize and conduct goal-based meetings.

Presentation outlines begin with a few basic building blocks. Use the outline in Figure 12.3 as a model for organizing almost any kind of presentation.

Naturally, every outline will differ, depending on the number of main points you have and the amount and type of supporting material you use.

The very first part of your presentation is critical, because a well-crafted introduction gains attention and interest. An effective beginning should focus listener attention on you and your message. An interesting example, statistic, quotation, or story at the beginning of a presentation can “warm up” the members of your group or audience and prepare them for your message.

Figure 12.3 Presentation Outline Format

Presentation Outline Format
I. Introduction
II. Central Idea or Purpose (Preview of Main Points)
III. Body of Presentation
A. Main Point 1
1. Supporting Material
2. Supporting Material
B. Main Point 2
1. Supporting Material
2. Supporting Material
A. Main Point 3
1. Supporting Material
2. Supporting Material
IV. Conclusion

The “Central Idea or Purpose” section of a presentation lets you state your purpose and preview your main points. This section should be brief, no more than a few sentences. The heart of your presentation is the “Body” section. Here, you add your supporting material to each main point. No matter how many main points there are, each one should be backed up with at least one type of supporting material. If you can use several different types of material, your presentation will be more interesting and impressive.

The end of a presentation should have a strong and well-planned “Conclusion.” An effective conclusion helps listeners remember the most important parts of your message. A quick summary, a brief story, a memorable quotation, or a challenge to the group can leave a strong final impression. Figure 12.4 shows one possible organizational

Figure 12.4 Sample Presentation Outline

OUTLINE
Hold the Line on Tuition
I. Introduction
Story: Student who had to choose between buying shoes for her children and paying tuition for her nursing courses.
II. Central Idea or Purpose
Because a tuition increase will have a devastating effect on many students, we ask you to search for other ways to manage the college's financial crisis.
III. Body of Presentation
A. Another tuition increase will prevent students from continuing or completing their college education on schedule.
1. More students are becoming part-time rather than full-time students. (College statistics)
2. Students are taking longer to complete their college degrees. (College statistics)
3. Students are sacrificing important needs to pay their tuition bills. (Quotations and examples from college newspaper)
B. There are better ways to manage the college's financial crisis.
1. Consolidate areas and reduce the number of administrators and support staff. (Compare to college of same size that has less staff)
2. Seek more state and grant funding. (Statistics from national publication comparing funding levels and grants at similar types of colleges)
3. Re-evaluate cost and need for activities and services, such as athletic teams, the off-campus homecoming and scholarship balls, intersession courses, and full staffing during summer sessions. (Examples)
IV. Conclusion
Money is a terrible thing to waste when students' hearts and minds are at stake. Let's work together to guarantee that all of our students become proud and grateful alumni.

structure, including notes, for a presentation by a student spokesperson to a college's board of trustees.

12.2.7: Delivery

By the time you ask questions about delivery, you should have given a lot of thought to what you want to say and how you want to say it. *How you speak* may reveal more about what you really mean than *what you say*. *How you speak* also affects how well listeners hear, understand, and remember your message.

Preparing to deliver a presentation requires knowledgeable answers to several important questions. These answers will help you decide how to deliver your presentation in a way that will most likely achieve its purpose:

- Should I read my presentation from a manuscript, word-for-word or rely on a few notes to keep me on track?
- How can I make sure that everyone hears me? Depending on the room's size and the number of people listening, do I need a microphone or can I project my voice and reach every person?
- Should I speak energetically and quickly or speak in a slower, more conversational voice?
- Am I sufficiently well prepared and rehearsed to be able to look directly at individual group or audience members, eye to eye?
- Will I look confident and relaxed as I speak, stand, gesture, and move?
- How will I adapt to the media used in a virtual team presentation?



Delivery skills affect how well listeners hear, understand, and respond to your message.

FORMS OF DELIVERY In many group and public audience settings, you will speak **impromptu**, a form of presentation delivery in which you speak without prior preparation or practice. For example, a member of the board of trustees may ask a question following a student spokesperson's presentation. The student must respond impromptu.

When you do have advance notice, you will be more effective if you speak extemporaneously, the most common style of delivery. **Extemporaneous speaking** is a form of presentation delivery in which you are fully prepared but use an outline or notes to guide you through your presentation. Your notes can be a few key words on a small card, or a detailed outline that includes supporting materials. These notes reflect the decisions you have made during the preparation process, but they also give you the flexibility to adapt your presentation to the audience and the occasion.¹⁰

Unless the situation is very formal or your words are intended for publication, avoid reading a manuscript version of your presentation. Even though your manuscript may be well written and well read, this delivery style may be too formal for most settings. Reading from a script also prevents you from observing listener reactions and modifying your presentation accordingly. If you must use a manuscript, write it as though you are speaking—that is, avoid long sentences, complex words, and formal term-paper grammar. Also, do not memorize your manuscript and try to deliver it without any notes. What if you forget or go blank? This isn't show business or a speech contest. Unless you have the skills of a professional actor and can memorize a script and make it sound as if you just came up with the wording, forget about memorizing a presentation.

VOCAL AND PHYSICAL DELIVERY The key to a successful delivery is practice. Once you begin your presentation, it's too late to make many delivery decisions. The only way to predict the length of your presentation accurately is to practice it aloud and time it.

You can learn to control, improve, and practice your vocal delivery by focusing on characteristics, such as volume, rate, articulation, and pronunciation.

- **Volume.** Rehearse your presentation in a strong, loud voice, but without shouting. Even in a small-group setting, a presentation requires more volume than you would use in everyday conversations.
- **Rate.** Monitor your speaking rate. Many listeners have difficulty following someone who speaks at a rate that exceeds 180 words per minute. The tolerable, all-purpose rate is 145 to 180 words per minute.¹¹
- **Articulation.** Articulate your words clearly and pronounce words correctly. Poor articulation is often described as *sloppy speech* or *mumbling*. Generally, it helps to speak a little more slowly and a little louder and to open your mouth a little wider than usual.
- **Pronunciation.** It can be embarrassing to mispronounce a word or a person's name. Look up any words you are not sure of in a dictionary, or ask someone how to pronounce them correctly.

You can learn to control, improve, and practice your physical delivery by focusing on eye contact, gestures, and movement.

- **Eye Contact.** The single most important physical characteristic in an oral presentation is eye contact. Look directly at individual group or audience members, eye to eye. Even when presenting before a large group, “the only kind of eye contact that successfully establishes the feeling of connection with members of the audience is a reasonably long, in-focus look at specific individuals.”¹²
- **Gestures.** Move your hands naturally and purposefully. Avoid distracting gestures, such as pushing up eyeglasses, tapping the table with a pencil, or pulling on a strand of hair. Such movements draw attention away from the content of your presentation.
- **Posture.** Stand or sit comfortably and confidently. If your posture is rigid and your gestures are awkward, you communicate rigidity and unease. If you stand, your feet should be about a foot apart. When you speak, lean slightly toward your listeners, and keep your chin up to open your airways and make your voice stronger.

WRITING PROMPT

Delivery

How comfortable are you when you are required or expected to speak extemporaneously? How can you improve your presentation using this form of delivery?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

Virtual Teams

Mediated Presentations

Objective: Compare the communication strategies speakers should use in audio presentations and in video presentations.

Presentations are no longer the sole domain of people who speak, uninterrupted, to an audience that they can see and hear in real time. Many groups now rely on a variety of media to collaborate with members and address non-group audiences. In **mediated group presentations**, group members rely on electronic technology to speak across time, distance, and organizational boundaries. Preparing and delivering effective virtual presentations are essential skills for anyone speaking within a group, on behalf of a group, or as part of a team presentation.

Despite the fact that audio and video media can reach huge audiences, they are still very personal, even intimate, forms of communication. Most people listen to the radio or watch TV on their own turf—in their cars, living rooms, or bedrooms—so the voice from the speaker or the face on the screen seems to talk directly to them. In addition, the audience at the other end of the radio or television set is as close as a good friend or colleague. Accordingly, mediated presentations can be more relaxed and conversational.

Audio Presentations

Speaking via an audio-only connection is, in one sense, easier than speaking in front of a television camera. Obviously, you don't have to worry about your appearance. You don't have to worry about the amount of eye contact you maintain with group or audience members.

The most important factor in making an audio presentation is the quality of your voice and its ability to communicate sincerity and enthusiasm. Just because an audience can't see you doesn't mean that your attitude or level of commitment changes. Generally, you sound better if you speak in a conversational tone. If you apply the vocal delivery techniques described earlier in this chapter, you will sound clear and natural. This is not a time to proclaim or broadcast; it's a time to communicate clearly and authentically. In audio-only conferences, use your voice to communicate your meaning and emotions. Speak as clearly as you can. Use changes in rate, pitch, and inflection to emphasize particular ideas and to communicate your feelings.

Video Presentations

Participating in a video conference adds physical delivery to the mix. Video presentations are a personal form of communication—even more so than audio presentations. In a visual medium, how you look matters.

Dress appropriately: avoid busy patterns, noisy jewelry, and stark white or black clothing. When you're on camera, your face is the primary focus of attention. If you gesture a great deal while you speak, remember that the camera may be too close to pick up your hand movements. Consider gesturing closer to your face, being careful not to hide your face behind your hands. You may want to record a video of yourself in close-up so that you can get a sense of how—or if—your gestures appear on-screen.

The key thing to remember is video's intimate nature. If you are on a panel, talk to the panel members, not to the camera. When other panelists are speaking, look at them. The camera may be shooting the entire panel at any time, so don't decide to adjust your clothes, look around the room, or check your phone when you're not speaking. If you are talking to an audience at another location, speak directly to the camera as though it were a group member instead of a machine. Speak as though you are having a conversation. This isn't a television broadcast; it's a group at work.

WRITING PROMPT

Mediated Presentations

If you had to choose, would you rather make an audio presentation or a video presentation? Explain your answer.

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

[Submit](#)

12.3: Group Presentations

12.3 Review the seven key elements and guiding principles of presentation speaking with respect to group presentations



FEMA's Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs) participate in frequent training sessions to prepare for a variety of emergency situations. The team leader conducting the training session may encourage group members to ask questions. In turn, the leader can model how to answer questions effectively.

The seven key elements and guiding principles—purpose, audience, logistics, content, organization, credibility, and delivery—apply to any presentation you make to your group or to external audiences. However, when you make a presentation as a member of a public group or as a participant in a team presentation, you must consider some additional factors, such as understanding the group or audience's needs and expectations; preparing to answer listeners' questions; and adapting to the format, setting, and occasion of the presentation. Above all else, remember that you are speaking to benefit or work on behalf of a group with a specific, common goal.

12.3.1: Public Group Presentations

Public group presentations occur when group members speak in front of or for the benefit of the public in settings,

Table 12.4 Types of Public Group Presentations

Public Group Presentation	Description	Characteristics	Examples
Panel Discussion	Several people interact with one another on a common discussion topic for the benefit of an audience.	There may be little or no coordination among speakers who may have different goals and who may disagree with one another during the discussion.	Very common on television; range from entertainment formats (<i>Ellen</i> , <i>The View</i>) to moderated political and business discussions, such as <i>Meet the Press</i> , <i>Face the Nation</i> , and brief news analysis discussions by journalists and political consultants on CNN, Fox's <i>The Five</i> , and <i>The PBS News Hour</i> .
Symposium	A series of speakers present short, uninterrupted presentations on different aspects of the same topic for the benefit of an audience.	Presenters may not belong to or work as a united group when planning their presentations. Each speaker may have different positions and different goals.	A local PTA sponsors a drug symposium in which a doctor, a psychologist, a police officer, and a former drug addict talk to parents about preventing, recognizing, and treating drug use. At a medical convention, researchers present new findings on a common topic, such as advances in detecting early-onset Alzheimer's disease.
Forum	Provides opportunities for audience members to comment, express concerns, and ask questions to presenters, usually at the conclusion of the group presentation.	A forum requires a strong moderator to make sure that audience members have an equal opportunity to speak and that they speak civilly and coherently. A strong moderator applies similar standards to those who answer questions.	A question-and-answer session following a single presentation or a group of presentations. Employees ask questions and express opinions after listening to a company's plan for cutting expenses. Citizens comment and ask questions of elected officials at a town meeting. Listeners ask questions of individual group members following a team presentation.

such as panel discussions, symposiums, and forums as shown in Table 12.4.

When you are participating in a public group, remember that you are always “on stage” even when you are not speaking. If you look bored while another member of the group is speaking, the audience may question the value and validity of that speaker’s comments. During a presentation by a public group, an attentive audience notices other group members’ gestures and facial expressions. For example, if a member of a college board of trustees rolls his eyes every time another board member speaks in support of student concerns, the audience receives a mixed message about that board member’s commitment to students. Look at and support the other members of your group when they speak, in the hope that they will do the same for you.

12.3.2: Team Presentations

When you prepare a presentation as an individual group member, you must make dozens of critical decisions. When an entire group prepares a team presentation, the task becomes more complex. A **team presentation** is a well-coordinated informative and/or persuasive presentation by a cohesive group of speakers.

As illustrated by the following examples, team presentations are common in public meetings, nonprofit agencies and organizations, and business corporations:

- A professional football team seeking backing for a new stadium brings a well-rehearsed group of executives and players to a public meeting, at which they explain how the stadium will enhance the economic development and prestige of the community without adversely affecting the surrounding neighborhoods.

- Companies making the “short list” of businesses being considered for a lucrative government contract make team presentations to the officials who award the final contract.
- In a public college’s presentation to the state legislature’s appropriations committee, the board chairperson, college president, academic vice president, and student representative have a total of 20 minutes to justify their request for more state funding.
- Staff members from the county Board of Elections present a training session for new election poll officials on procedures for early voting and election day voting, as well as descriptions of new voting laws and strategies for dealing with angry voters.

TYPES OF TEAM PRESENTATIONS A team presentation is *not* a collection of individual speeches; it is a team product. Symposium speakers may not present a unified front or coordinate their presentations with one another, but team presenters do. Because effective presentations require significant time from members to develop, coordinate, and rehearse their presentation, they are usually reserved for more important situations. A team presentation may be necessary in many circumstances, as shown in Table 12.5.

In many ways, the team presentation is the ultimate group challenge because it requires both efficient and effective decision making and a high level of coordinated performance. Otherwise, the team is merely presenting a series of individual speeches.

Groups that work well in the conference room may fall apart in the spotlight of a team presentation. Marjorie Brody, author of *Speaking Your Way to the Top*, writes:

To be effective, team presentations must be meticulously planned and executed. . . . If a team works like a smooth,

Table 12.5 Types of Team Presentations

Goal	Description	Example
Secure a Contract	The team must demonstrate its competence in performing a task or taking on a major responsibility.	Members of an engineering firm develop a coordinated presentation to convince the state department of transportation to select their firm for the design of a new highway.
Solicit Support	A team presents a united front when seeking support from influential decision makers or an entire organization.	A group of teachers develops a coordinated team presentation designed to convince the school board to increase teacher salaries so they are more competitive with neighboring jurisdictions.
Share Important Information	Several group members can speak more knowledgeably on different aspects of an important topic than an individual presenter.	A group of administrators, staff, and faculty members develops a coordinated presentation to inform new students about important services and institutional policies at a college orientation session.

well-oiled machine, if one member's presentation flows into the next presentation, and if all members present themselves professionally and intelligently, the impression left is one of confidence and competence.¹³

Rosa Vargas, the human resources manager for the Topps Company in New York City, learned about team presentations in graduate school:

During my MBA studies, I was part of a team, and our purpose was to launch a new product to market. I feel that preparation and rehearsal are key to a successful team presentation. I was nervous in the beginning of our presentation (we presented to a panel of professors and students), but as the presentation progressed, I relaxed a bit. Our group had practiced, and I know this helped us give a more focused presentation.¹⁴

THE SEVEN-STEP GUIDE TO TEAM PRESENTATIONS
As with any significant group task, the **structure ↔ spontaneity** dialectic comes into play when planning and delivering a team presentation. An effective team presentation is both highly structured and very flexible. Team members must be well prepared with their own presentations *and* prepared to adapt to listeners' questions, a group member's misstep, or logistical problems. When preparing a team presentation, follow the guidelines presented in Figure 12.5.

Every group member should know every detail of a team presentation. The moderator or leader should introduce each speaker, preview the subtopics, bolster the group's credibility, and keep the group moving along the planned agenda. In addition to describing the member credentials, a brief story or humorous anecdote about the topic or a group member gives the audience another reason to listen.¹⁵

Figure 12.5 The Seven-Step Team Presentation Planning Guide

- 1. Purpose**
 - a. _____ Develop and agree upon a clear and common goal for the team presentation.
 - b. _____ Begin discussing the kinds of individual presentations needed to support the group's goal.
 - c. _____ Choose a chairperson who will moderate the team presentation and oversee the project.
 - d. _____ Create a timetable of meetings for sharing, reviewing, assessing, and rehearsing individual presentations and the team presentation.
- 2. Audience**
 - a. _____ Conduct research about audience characteristics, opinions, expectations, and needs.
 - b. _____ Develop strategies for adapting presentations to the specific audience.
- 3. Credibility**
 - a. _____ Enhance team credibility by emphasizing member expertise in individual presentations and transitions between speakers.
 - b. _____ Remind team members to show interest in and enthusiasm for all of the individual presentations.
- 4. Logistics**
 - a. _____ Determine how long each member will speak.
 - b. _____ Make sure the moderator has time to introduce the presentation and group members, provide transitions between speakers, and conclude with a summary.
 - c. _____ Set strict deadlines for preparing and sharing individual presentations.
 - d. _____ Decide whether the group will use visual aids and how they will be developed in a consistent design and style.
- 5. Content**
 - a. _____ Research and select appropriate supporting material for each presentation. Do not overwhelm listeners with unrelated details.
 - b. _____ Assess the quality and quantity of the group's content and supporting material.
 - c. _____ Review all presentation aids for effectiveness, consistency in style, and quality of content.
- 6. Organization**
 - a. _____ Divide the team presentation into separate topics for individual group members.
 - b. _____ Determine the order of each presentation.
 - c. _____ Make sure individual presentations are well-organized.
 - d. _____ If possible, schedule the strongest speakers as the first and last speakers.
- 7. Practice**
 - a. _____ Review, critique, and revise the content and delivery of individual presentations.
 - b. _____ Assess the team presentation as a whole to determine if there are unaddressed topics and ways to strengthen the overall presentation.
 - c. _____ Make final decisions about the logistics of the team presentation.
 - d. _____ Practice the team presentation at least three times including the moderator's introduction, transitions, and summary. Practice until the team's performance approaches perfection.
 - e. _____ Practice with all visual aids.
 - f. _____ Make sure the team presentation is well within the time limit.
 - g. _____ Prepare the team to look for and adapt to audience reactions.

Groups in Balance . . . Welcome and Encourage Questions

Many public group and team presentations end with a question-and-answer session. In some cases, a team encourages listeners to ask questions during the presentation, but someone on

the team must keep an eye on the clock to make sure that they have enough time to finish the whole presentation.

Effective presenters use a variety of techniques to encourage audience members to ask questions. Never open a question-and-answer session with “Are there any questions?” If audience members do not have any questions in mind, they may just sit there. Instead, begin by asking a question that assumes that there are questions, such as, “What are your questions?” or “Who has the first question?”

If no one speaks up at this point, pause and wait. Inexperienced presenters often feel uncomfortable waiting the several seconds it takes for audience members to come up with questions. Just as you may need a few seconds to organize your thoughts for an answer, audience members may need time to frame their questions. If you still don’t get any questions after a significant pause, be prepared with some of your own, for example: “One of the questions our group often hears is . . .” or “If I were in the audience, I’d want to know . . .”

Once an audience member asks the first question, you may find yourself facing the opposite situation: You may get an overwhelming number of questions and not have time to answer them all. As you near the end of your allotted time, or when you determine that the question-and-answer session has gone on long enough, bring the questioning to an end by saying, “I have time for two more questions.” Then do just that: Answer two more questions and thank the audience for its participation.¹⁶

If there is a single rule, it is this: Answer the question. Practice for a question-and-answer session using these guidelines:

- *Be brief.* Respond to questions with no more than a few sentences.
- *Be honest.* If you don’t know the answer to a question, admit it. Don’t change the subject. The audience will know if you are avoiding the issue.
- *Be prepared.* Provide appropriate information. Have some ready-made remarks, including interesting statistics, stories, examples, and quotations you can use in your answers.

The best technique for handling questions is to anticipate the questions that are most likely to come up and agree—as a team—how they should be answered.¹⁷ A team can also decide which members should answer certain types of questions based on their expertise and ability to handle controversial issues. If you run into difficult or hostile questions, remember that one listener’s disagreement doesn’t mean everyone is against you. Follow the listening guideline and “listen before you leap.” Take your time before answering, and do not strike back in anger. Try to paraphrase the question to make sure you understand what the person is asking, which also gives you a few more seconds to prepare your response. The key to making a question-and-answer session a positive experience for everyone is to be prepared to answer a variety of questions, to know what to do when the group doesn’t have an answer, and to handle disagreement well.

TIPS FOR TEAM PRESENTATIONS Here are some additional guidelines we’ve collected after watching, participating in, and reading about successful team presentations.¹⁸

- *Choose an appropriate and skilled leader.* The leader can be the person with the most authority, but must be someone who also is a highly skilled communicator. The boss or team leader may not be the best choice. A team presentation leader should be able to moderate the presentation, set the tone, track the time, briefly introduce members and extol their expertise and virtues, know the content, structure, slides, and agenda better than anyone else, and have the authority to make on-the-spot decisions or changes.
- *Make sure everyone contributes.* If you bring seven people to a team presentation event, all seven should contribute. Other than the team member in charge of technology and visuals (who may be busy with other things), each member of the team should speak.
- *Use visual aids consistent in design and content.* All of the visual aids should look as though they were created by a talented media designer. Put extra effort into making them clear, attractive, and easy to understand.
- *Dress as a team.* You do not have to wear uniforms, matching T-shirts, or company hats. However, if one team member wears jeans and a T-shirt while others are dressed in suits, the team will not appear cohesive or united. Everyone should probably dress more formally than the audience or the key decision makers.
- *Do not abuse the assigned or anticipated time limit.* Consider assigning someone to track the time who also has the authority to interrupt and end the presentation in a positive way, such as, “We regret that we’ve reached our time limit, but certainly can provide more information based on your needs and questions. Or we can arrange a follow-up meeting if you wish.” However, if many listeners ask you to continue, do so.
- *Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse.* Assign a timekeeper to make sure you hit the mark in terms of your assigned time. Invite one or more experienced evaluators to listen to and critique the presentation in practice sessions. Discuss ways to improve and track whether those improvements appear in subsequent rehearsals.
- *Do your best to prepare for the worst.* What if, after many rehearsals, a team member cannot attend? What if the technology fails and you cannot show the team’s meticulously crafted PowerPoint slides? What if you are given a shorter or longer time limit when you arrive? A group should answer these questions in advance and have a back-up plan for each scenario. In most cases, the worst will not happen, but it’s always best to be prepared.

Group Assessment Team Presentation Evaluation

Regardless of a group's purpose and the characteristics of its members, there are core competencies that apply to all effective team presentations. Each competency in the *Team Presentation Evaluation* represents an expected and measurable level of performance by individual group members based on their knowledge, skills, and attitudes applicable to team presentations. Select a team presentation to evaluate—be it in class, beyond the classroom in public or private settings, or mediated.

Directions: Use the *Seven-Step Team Presentation Planning Guidelines* checklist shown in Figure 12.5 to assess a team presentation. Then identify two of the group's strengths and make two suggestions for improvement.

Team Presentation Evaluation Form

Team Name and/or Group Members: _____					
Team Presentation Planning Guidelines		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Purpose. The purpose of individual presentations and the overall team presentation were clear.					
2. Audience. Individual presentations and the overall team presentation engaged, interested, and adapted to the audience.					
3. Credibility. Group members seemed well informed, trustworthy, responsive, and dynamic.					
4. Logistics. Individual presentations and the overall team presentation adapted to the setting, time limits, and occasion.					
5. Content. Individual presentations and the overall team presentation offered valuable ideas and information.					
6. Organization. Individual presentations and the overall team presentation were well organized and easy to follow.					
7. Delivery. Individual presentations and the overall team presentation were well rehearsed and delivered. Presentation aids (if used) were well designed and appropriate.					
Group Presentation Strengths	1. _____ _____				
Suggestions for Improvement	1. _____ _____				

Even though you have probably made individual presentations in other settings, doing a team presentation requires exceptional teamwork as well as a great deal of time, effort, and resources. However, the payoffs are high. For instance, following team presentations by several companies, the Department of Energy awarded a \$2.2 billion contract for environmental cleanup to a team headed by Fluor Corporation. Fluor made the best impression. "All the firms had capabilities, but how the team works as a team in the oral presentations is a key determining factor."¹⁹ The awarding of a \$2.2 billion contract should convince anyone who doubts the value of effective team presentations.

WRITING PROMPT

Group Presentations

If you were preparing to answer questions from group or audience members, what key strategies would you use?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

12.4: Presentation Aids

12.4 Summarize three major guidelines for designing effective presentation slides

Presentation aids are supplementary audio and/or visual materials that help group and audience members understand and remember the content of a discussion or presentation. Effective presentation aids can make a dull topic interesting, a complex idea understandable, and a long presentation durable. Studies sponsored by the 3M Corporation found that group "presenters who use visual aids are perceived as better prepared, more professional, more highly credible, and more interesting than those who do not."²⁰ At first, these findings may be difficult to believe. Can something as simple as a PowerPoint slide make that much difference? The answer is yes—but *only* if the presentation aid is clear, appropriate, and well designed.

Presentation aids are more than pretty pictures or sets of colorful computer slides. They serve three specific functions:

1. *Gain attention and interest.* A clever cartoon, a dramatic photograph, a startling graph, or any other compelling aid can gain and hold listener attention.

2. *Enhance clarity and comprehension.* Presentation aids can enhance comprehension when presenting numbers and statistics, comparing and contrasting ideas and items, explaining a complicated process, or talking about something visual (a map, a film, a painting) or auditory (music, bird calls, heartbeats).
3. *Save time.* A graph or chart can save time when summarizing a complex process or a set of statistics. Instead of writing on a whiteboard or a flipchart, speakers use computer-generated slides and handouts to save time for other important parts of your presentation.

As you consider the benefits and functions of presentation aids, keep in mind the most basic principle of all: *Presentation aids are only aids.* They are not your presentation. Too often, business and professional presentations—whether they occur within meetings, in front of clients, or before public audiences—are nothing more than narrated slide shows. The presenter simply reads what appears on a slide. By not taking time to connect with audience members, such presenters miss the point of making presentations in the first place. Before preparing any presentation aids, make sure you know what you want to say and what you want your listeners to understand and remember.

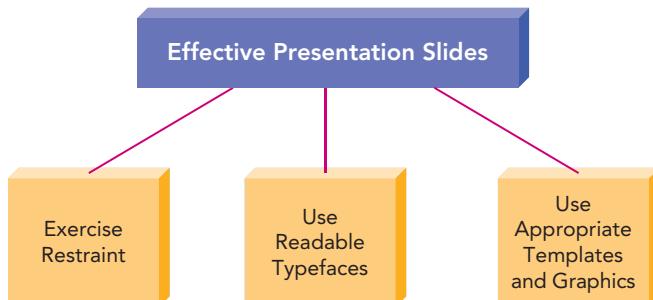
The first question you should ask yourself about presentation aids is whether you need them. In some scenarios, presentation aids are unnecessary and a waste of time. In others, a presentation aid can help listeners understand and remember critical ideas and information.

12.4.1: Presentation Slides

In addition to asking whether you need presentation aids, ask a second question: Do they need to be digital? In *The Non-Designer's Presentation Book*, Robin Williams writes that making a set of slides “is the first thing many people think of when they are asked to give a presentation, [but] not all information is best presented digitally. Seriously consider your other alternatives so you know you are using the best method for the information you need to impart.”²¹ Don’t let your aids and their technical razzle-dazzle steal the show.

Figure 12.6 highlights three of the most important guidelines for creating and sharing effective presentation slides.

Figure 12.6 Effective Presentation Slides



EXERCISE RESTRAINT Presentation software offers such a dazzling array of graphics, fonts, colors, and other visual elements that you may be tempted to use them all. Resist that temptation. More often than not, a simple slide is much more effective than a complex one.

Two recommendations can help you decide how much is just right for a presentation using computer-generated slides (as well as hand-drawn posters and flipcharts):

1. *Make only one point on each slide.* Each slide should make only one point, and the title of the slide should state that point. Everything else on the slide should support the main point. It takes less time to present two well-structured slides than to load up one slide with a muddled message.²²
2. *Follow the six-by-six rule.* In general, aim for no more than six lines of text with six words per line. This allows your slide to contain the main heading and several bullet points without information overload.²³ Depending on your purpose, audience, logistics, and content, you may want less on each slide and use a four-by-four rule or even a one-sentence, one-phrase, or one-word rule.

Today’s multimedia technology allows you to go beyond the words on a slide. It is possible to create presentation aids so dazzling that group members remember more about the slide show than about you or your message. It’s possible to combine words, pictures, sound, charts, graphics, and animation in so many ways that may overwhelm audience members so much that they are unable to focus on your message. Your goal is to find a balance by creating clear and concise slides and/or forms of media that will interest your audience and highlight your ideas. Finding this balance depends on understanding not only the value of presentation aids, but also the pitfalls to avoid when adding technical “sizzle” to your presentation.²⁴ If you create a multimedia presentation, you should be able to give a reason for doing so other than, “It’ll be awesome!”

Although animation or sound may sometimes enhance understanding, these multimedia components frequently get in the way of the message. The last thing you want is for your audience to leave a presentation wondering how you got the *Tyrannosaurus rex* to eat the pie chart (to the beat of the latest top-of-the-charts hit) instead of discussing the data represented in the pie chart.

USE READABLE TYPEFACES After deciding what you want to put on a slide, select an appropriate typeface or font. “Users of presentation software have instant access to a veritable candy store of typefaces with tempting names.”²⁵ Again, exercise restraint. Algerian, Chiller, and Magneto-Bold may be tempting, but don’t let them seduce you. Avoid the fancy but difficult-to-read fonts. You are better off

choosing common typefaces. One choice is type with *serifs*, little design elements at the ends of letters, such as Times Roman and Garamond. A second choice is type without these design elements, referred to as *sans serif*, such as Arial and Tahoma. Using too many typefaces looks amateurish. As a rule, never use more than two different fonts on a single slide unless you want to emphasize a word or phrase. And avoid backgrounds that make the type difficult to read.

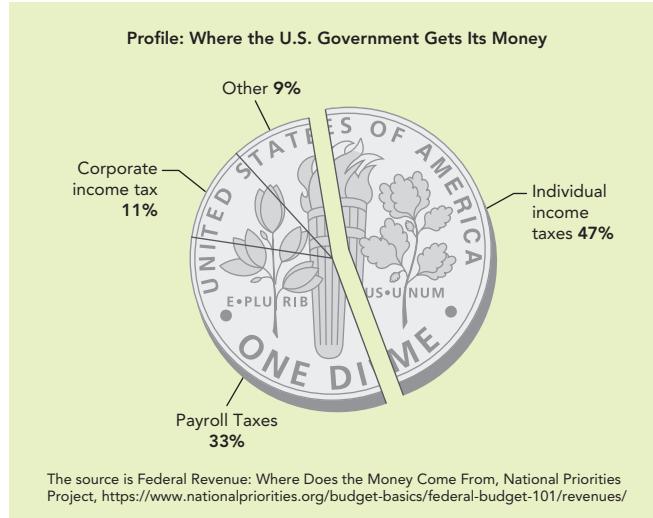
Type size is as important as font selection. The best way to determine if your type is large enough is to prepare a few sample slides and project them in the room where your group will be meeting. Generally, you should try to avoid type that is smaller than 24 points. If you have more text than fits on a slide, don't reduce the size of the type. Two clear slides are always better than a single crowded, hard-to-read, or cluttered slide.

USE APPROPRIATE TEMPLATES AND GRAPHICS Use a consistent and simple style and background for your slides. Here, too, restraint is key. In most cases, it is better to choose a modest background that spruces up your slide but doesn't compete with your words, charts, or graphics.

When choosing graphics, ask yourself whether group members really need to see the picture you want to use. For example, if you are making a presentation about a new medical device, it may be useful to show a picture of the device, but not as useful to show a picture of a doctor talking to a patient.

Artwork included without a specific purpose can get in the way of your presentation. Although most presentation software comes with numerous clip-art images, resist the temptation to use graphic elements just because you can. More often than not, clip-art graphics get in the way of messages when the graphic is not the reason for the slide. Figure 12.7 shows an example of an effective presentation slide.

Figure 12.7 Sample Presentation Slide



Ethics in Groups

Respect Copyrights

Objective: Apply the principles in copyright laws to the content of presentation aids.

Technology not only makes it easier to create professional-looking presentation aids, but also makes it easier to appropriate the creative work of others in a presentation. When the creation of visual or audio images is a person's livelihood, the uncompensated use of such images raises ethical questions. Such unfair use may even be a violation of federal copyright laws. A discussion of whether a particular use of an image is illegal is far beyond the scope of this text; however, you should be aware of the legal and ethical implications of using unlicensed images.

A whole industry has developed to provide clip art, audio files, and photographs to computer users. A user who purchases such packages has the right to make copies of the images and use them in presentations. Likewise, the visual images included with presentation software are free. However, if you create slides by scanning an image from another source or copying an image from the Internet, you may need legal permission to do so and be required to pay a licensing fee.

Copyright laws also apply to works beyond those you find in print. Musical compositions, sound recordings, and lyrics are all protected by copyright laws. The same is true for "pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works." If you think that this only applies to the Mona Lisa and the Statue of Liberty, think again. Works of visual art include advertisements, films, television shows, cartoons, bumper stickers, toys, greeting cards, and even fabric designs.²⁶ Fortunately, there are exceptions for educational uses. For a class project, you can use copyrighted material as long as you credit the sources accurately. However, under no circumstances should you use or reproduce copyrighted material in other situations, unless you have obtained or paid for permission to use them. For example, U.S. Copyright laws list the following protections for music and lyrics:

- you cannot reproduce the music or lyrics
- you cannot distribute the music or lyrics either for free, for no profit, or for profit
- you cannot perform the music or lyrics in public
- you cannot play a recording of the music or lyrics in public—even if you own the CD
- you cannot make a derivative work or arrangement for public use in any form

As you make decisions regarding what constitutes fair use and what does not, let your conscience and your knowledge of copyright law act as your guide.

CONSIDER OTHER MEDIA AND FORMATS Before opening your slide software, consider whether other types of presentation aids would better fit your needs. Ask yourself whether any of the following types of

presentation aids will work just as well or better than computer-generated slides:

- Flip chart
- Whiteboard
- Handout or booklet
- Interactive activity or exercise
- Theatrical performance—a reading, a song, or a physical demonstration

Before rejecting or ridiculing the above types of presentation aids, remember that none of them requires advanced technology. No computer or projector or screen is needed. If nothing else, consider these types of presentation aids as fallback methods in case your technology fails.

12.4.2: Delivering Presentation Aids

Presentation aids can take many forms, some of which have already been described: handouts, posters, flip charts, overhead transparencies, computer-generated slides, and videos. The dos and don'ts presented in Table 12.6 can help you avoid some common pitfalls when using any type of presentation aid.

Table 12.6 Dos and Don'ts for Using Presentation Aids

Do ...	Don't ...
<i>Explain the point.</i> A presentation aid does not speak for itself. You may need to explain why you have chosen it and what it means.	<i>Talk to your aid.</i> You control the presentation aid; it shouldn't control you. Talk directly to the people in your audience, not to the flip chart or slide.
<i>Wait until the appropriate time.</i> Prepare listeners for a presentation aid so that they will want to see it. Give them enough time to see or read it before turning their attention back to you.	<i>Read your slides to the audience.</i> “Contrary to conventional wisdom and common practice, reading bullet points word-for-word from a screen actually hurts learning rather than helping it.” ²⁷
<i>Be prepared to manage without it.</i> Presentation aids can be lost or damaged; equipment can malfunction. Have a backup plan. Be prepared to make your presentation without your presentation aids.	<i>Use music and sound effects unless they are relevant and needed to achieve your purpose.</i> Rather than enhancing your message, music and sound effects can reduce comprehension because they compete with the visuals and the sound of your voice.
<i>Handle handouts effectively.</i> Handouts are appropriate when your presentation contains a lot of technical information or if you want your audience to take notes. In general, distribute handouts before you begin speaking—but not if your handout is a word-for-word copy of your presentation.	<i>Use a pointer unless absolutely necessary.</i> Unless focusing audience attention on a particular word, number, or point on a graphic, don't use a pointer. Circling an item or trying to hold a pointer steady can leave an audience dizzy rather than enlightened.
<i>Show and tell.</i> Audience members learn and remember more when a speaker's words and visuals are presented simultaneously rather than successively. In other words, show the audience a well-designed visual and tell them about it at the same time.	<i>Speak in the dark.</i> Create slides that can be seen in normal light. Don't dim the lights so audience members can pick up the details in a complex or poorly designed slide. The audience should always be able to see you as well as your slides.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE



Computer-generated slides have become so popular that many speakers embrace them without applying design and delivery principles. Some speakers say they feel helpless or “naked” without their slides.

Beyond these dos and don'ts, here is one more piece of advice: Practice, practice, practice. Practice not only improves your overall performance, it can also alert you to problems with your presentation aids. For example, we once watched a consultant put almost everything in her talk on slides. As soon as she projected something onto the screen, she would turn around and point out the numbers that she thought were important. Unfortunately, she stood right between the screen and the projector so that most of the information projected onto her back. If she had practiced in front of others before making the presentation, she could have avoided that problem.

WRITING PROMPT

Presentation Aids

Given your experience in watching speakers use computer-generated slides, what general guidelines would help them decide whether to use slides and improve the slide designs and the slide content?

► The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

Groups in Balance . . . Know When to Break the “Slide” Rules²⁸

PowerPoint trade books and courses are full of rules—and, in many cases, the rules contradict one another from book to book and instructor to instructor. Effective speak-

ers understand that the “rules” are a way of demonstrating guidelines, such as exercising restraint or choosing appropriate type. Consider the following sets of rules. Would you feel comfortable breaking or bending any of these “rules”?

Slide Timing Rules

Graphic designer Nancy Duarte extols the “3-second rule”: She describes the slides in presentations as “glance media”—more closely related to billboards than other media. Billboards require commuters to process information quickly as they drive past them (unless, of course, they’re stuck in rush-hour traffic). Imagine having a billboard full of bullet points; drivers would crash trying to process the ads. Ask yourself whether the message included on a single slide can be processed effectively within three seconds. The audience should be able to ascertain the meaning quickly before turning their attention back to the presenter.²⁹ Other designers recommend giving an audience up to 60 seconds to read a slide. We suggest giving an audience time to read a slide twice.

Rather than interpreting this advice as contradictory, consider the content and context of the presentation. The amount of information on a slide and the amount of time it takes an audience to read it depends on a number of factors related to the key elements and guiding principles of presentation speaking: purpose, audience, the setting and occasion, content (amount and complexity of the message), and delivery (the presenter’s speaking style and skills).

Magic Number Rules

Rules about the amount of text on a slide include the rule of four items; the 5×5 , 6×6 , and 7×7 rules; the 1-7-7 rule; and the 3-word- and 6-word-per-slide rules. One book advocates no more than 7 slides per presentation; another suggests a 10-slide limit. Again, consider the presentation’s content and context. Figure 12.8 makes fun of such rigid rules by demonstrating the pointless 1-5-5 version of the words-per-slide rule. The answer to the two questions (Does his rule make sense? and Are five bullet points ideal?) is NO.³⁰

Figure 12.8 The Pointless 1-5-5 Rule

What Is the 1-5-5 Rule?

- Only one idea per slide
- Only five lines of text
- Only five words per line
- Does this rule make sense?
- Are five bullet points ideal?

One big word on a slide may have much more impact than a rule-bound number of lines and bullet points. As was the case with slide timing, there are exceptions to all of these rules depending on the speaker’s purpose, audience, context, message, and delivery. If using our suggested six-by-six rules produces slides that are too busy and boring, break the rules!

POWERPOINT PROBLEMS A survey of college students concluded that students like technology in the classroom, but some gave professors failing grades when it came to using PowerPoint. They complained that many professors cram slides with text and then recite the text during class, which some students say makes the delivery flatter than if the professor did not use the slides.³¹ One professor reported a 20 percent drop in attendance when he posted his PowerPoint slides on the Web. Now his slides are “riddled with blanks and missing information, which he fills in aloud during lecture.”³²

Many presenters use PowerPoint (or other presentation software, such as Prezi) without thoroughly investigating whether it enhances the listeners’ comprehension or helps speakers accomplish their purpose. Some corporations have even banned PowerPoint presentations by employees who have not had extensive training in visual design and its relationship to audience comprehension and reasoned analysis. The 3M Corporation discourages the use of PowerPoint because “it removes subtlety and thinking.”³³

Edward Tufte, author of several books on graphic design, has the following to say about the use of presentation aids:

Presentations largely stand or fall on the quality, relevance, and integrity of the content . . . If your numbers are boring, then you’ve got the wrong numbers. If your words or images are not on point, making them dance in color won’t make them relevant. Audience boredom is usually a content failure, not a decoration failure. . . . PowerPoint cognitive style routinely disrupts, dominates, and trivializes content. PowerPoint presentations too often resemble a school play: very loud, very slow, and very simple.³⁴

In many cases, paper handouts can show text, numbers, data, graphics, and images more effectively than slides. Images on paper have a higher resolution. Content on paper can include more words and numbers. Thoughtfully planned, well-written handouts tell your audience that you are serious and thorough, that your message has consequences, and that you respect their attention and intelligence.³⁵

GroupWork

Re-envision the Visual

The following activity gives you an opportunity to apply design principles, content recommendations, communication strategies, and your own creativity and good sense to redesigning a slide that should embarrass the speaker using it. In her book *The Non-Designer's Presentation Book*, Robin Williams offers sharp and sound advice about slide design: Get rid of extra words! Use fewer words. Slides should not tell the whole story. Don't present your notes. Don't stick random

rubbish in the corners (such as clip art of a logo, or a photo). Don't use dorky clip art.³⁶ With that advice in mind, imagine each of these previous sentences as the headline of a single slide with a dreadful example to illustrate the point. Avoid these errors when you tackle a slide in this "Re-envision the Visual" activity.

Directions: Redesign one of the slides using the design principles presented in this chapter. In addition to changing the design, you may change wording (add, subtract, substitute other words) but not the basic meaning. When you are finished, be prepared to present your new design.

Figure 12.9 Re-envision the Slide



Summary: Group Presentations

12.1: Presentations in and by Groups

- A group presentation is a relatively uninterrupted talk or speech by one or more group members.
- Group members make presentations within a group, on behalf of a group, or as part of a team presentation.

12.2: Presentation Guidelines

- Apply the seven key elements of presentation speaking: (1) purpose, (2) audience, (3) credibility, (4) logistics, (5) content, (6) organization, and (7) delivery.
- The first and most important principle in developing a successful presentation is to determine your *purpose*—

what you want your listeners to know, think, believe, or do as a result of your presentation.

- Seek common ground with your audience by analyzing their demographic traits, individual attributes, and opinions.
- Four major factors that enhance a speaker's credibility are competence, character, caring, and charisma.
- An effective presentation should have an interesting introduction, the statement of a central idea, a preview of key points, a well-organized body, and a memorable conclusion.
- Forms of delivery include impromptu, extemporaneous, manuscript, and memorized delivery.

- Mediated presentations should apply the seven key elements and guiding principles of presentation speaking to characteristics of specific media.

12.3: Group Presentations

- Public group presentations take place in panel discussions, symposiums, and forums.
- A team presentation is a well-coordinated informative and/or persuasive presentation by a cohesive group of speakers.
- When you are the member of a group making a public presentation, remember that you are “on stage” at all times—even when you are not speaking.
- Use the *Seven-Step Team Presentation Planning Guidelines* to ensure successful team presentations.
- During a question-and-answer session, be brief, be honest, and be specific.

12.4: Presentation Aids

- Use design principles when developing computer-generated slides: exercise restraint, use readable typeface, and use appropriate templates and graphics.
- When using presentation aids, make sure you can explain the point shown, know when to display it,

know where to stand when using it, and are prepared to make the presentation without it.

- Adhere to copyright laws and identify your sources when using the work of others in your presentations.

SHARED WRITING

CASE STUDY: TEAM CHALLENGE

Use the information you have learned to answer the following questions about the case study that was presented at the beginning of this chapter:

What is the team presentation’s purpose or purposes? How well do you think the group considered the needs of its audience—other students, the course instructor, and faculty members from the theatre department?

Review and discuss the similarities and differences between your answer and those of at least two of your classmates.

► A minimum number of characters is required to post and earn points. After posting, your response can be viewed by your class and instructor, and you can participate in the class discussion.

Post

0 characters | 140 minimum

Chapter 12 Quiz: Group Presentations

Glossary

abdicator A group member who reacts to unmet control needs by being submissive and avoiding responsibility.

abstract word A word that refers to an idea or concept that cannot be perceived by the five senses.

accent The sound of one language imposed on another language.

accommodating conflict style An approach to disagreement in which a person gives in to other members at the expense of his or her own goals.

achievement norm A norm that specifies the quality and quantity of work expected from group members.

acquainting phase The second phase of new member socialization in which members of an established group determine if a newcomer meets the group's needs and expectations.

action item An item in the written minutes of a meeting that identifies member responsibilities for assigned tasks.

ad hominem attack The fallacy of making an irrelevant attack against a person's character rather than a substantive response to an issue or argument.

adaptive phase The third phase of new member socialization in which a newcomer tries to fit in and adjust to group expectations.

adjourning stage A group development stage in which a group has achieved its common goal and begins to disengage and disband.

A-E-I-O-U Model An approach to conflict resolution that involves five steps: Assume that others mean well; Express your feelings; Identify your goal; clarify expected Outcomes; and achieve mutual Understanding.

affection need The desire to express and receive warmth or be liked by others.

agenda An outline of the items for discussion at a meeting.

aggressiveness Critical, insensitive, combative, or abusive behavior that is motivated by self-interest at the expense of others.

agreeableness A Big Five Personality Theory trait that describes a cooperative, friendly, flexible, trusting, good-natured, and tolerant person.

amendment In parliamentary procedure, the proposed modification of wording in a motion under consideration by an assembled group.

analysis paralysis A situation that occurs when group members are so focused on gathering information and analyzing a problem that they fail to make a decision.

analyzer A group member who assesses information, opinions, and arguments; evaluates courses of action; and suggests multiple options for solving problems (a task role).

anger An emotional response to unmet expectations that ranges from minor irritation to intense rage.

anger management The process of applying appropriate communication strategies for dealing with and expressing personal anger while treating others who are angry with understanding and respect.

apology A statement that expresses regret for saying or doing something wrong.

appeal to authority The fallacy of relying on biased or unqualified expert opinion when that person has no particular expertise in the area under consideration.

appeal to popularity The fallacy of justifying an action or belief because many people do it or believe it.

appeal to tradition The fallacy of claiming that people should continue a certain course of action because that is the way it has always been done.

argument A claim supported by evidence and reasons for accepting it.

argumentation The use of critical thinking to advocate a position, examine competing ideas, and influence others.

argumentativeness The willingness to debate or openly disagree with others.

assertiveness Speaking up and acting in your own best interests without denying the rights and interests of others.

assimilation phase The fourth phase of new member socialization in which a newcomer becomes fully integrated into the group's culture.

attacker A disruptive group member who puts down other members or deflates others' status for self-centered reasons.

attribution theory A theory claiming that we tend to interpret behavior in terms of its causes.

audience-specific attributes Information about the distinct characteristics of a particular group or audience, such as the uniformity or variety of job titles and status, special interests, personality traits, relationships with other members, and length of group membership.

authority rule A decision-making method in which a single person within the group or an outside authority makes final decisions for the group.

autocrat A group member who reacts to unmet control needs by trying to dominate the group.

autocratic leader A leader who uses power and authority to strictly control the direction and outcome of group work.

avoidant decision maker A person who feels uncomfortable and reluctant when asked to make decisions.

avoiding conflict style A passive and non-confrontational approach to disagreement.

Baby Boomer A U.S. generation born between 1946 and 1964.

backing The component of the Toulmin Model of Argument that provides support for an argument's warrant.

balance A state of equilibrium in which extreme approaches neither dominate nor interfere with the group's ultimate ability to achieve its common goal.

balanced power differentiation talk A team talk dimension characterized by considerate and equitable language.

Big Five Personality Traits A theory that describes five factors (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience) that, taken together, constitute a personality.

brainstorming A problem-solving procedure that encourages group members to generate as many ideas as possible in a non-evaluative atmosphere.

bylaws Written rules governing how an organization operates.

bypassing The miscommunication that occurs when people have different meanings for the same words or phrases.

caring An aspect of speaker credibility based on listener perceptions that you understand others' ideas and are empathetic and responsive to their needs.

certain Gibb's communication behavior that contributes to a defensive climate by expressing inflexible positions and refusing to consider the ideas and opinions of others.

chairperson or chair An appointed or elected member who conducts a group's meeting; in parliamentary procedure, the presiding officer who uses and enforces parliamentary rules while conducting a meeting.

channel The media through which group members share messages using one or more of their five senses in face-to-face or mediated settings.

Chaos Theory A theory that claims that, although certain behaviors in natural systems are not predictable, there is a pattern to their randomness that emerges over time.

character An aspect of speaker credibility based on listener perceptions of your honesty and trustworthiness.

charisma An aspect of speaker credibility based on listener perceptions about your level of enthusiasm and commitment.

Charismatic Leadership Theory An approach to leadership that focuses on leaders who exhibit a special dynamism, captivating charm and/or visionary appeal that inspires loyalty to the leader and arouses enthusiasm for a group's common goal.

charismatic power A type of personal power that relies on a leader's character, competence, and vitality.

civic group A group dedicated to worthy causes that helps people within the group.

claim The component of the Toulmin Model of Argument that states the conclusion of an argument.

claim of conjecture An argument suggesting that something will or will not happen.

claim of fact An argument stating that something is true or false or that something did or did not occur.

claim of policy An argument that recommends a particular course of action.

claim of value An argument that evaluates whether something is good or bad, right or wrong, or worthwhile or worthless.

clarifier A group member who explains ideas and suggestions, corrects misunderstandings, summarizes the group's discussion and conclusions, and helps the group refine its goal (a task role).

clerk A group member assigned to take minutes, track the status of motions, and record votes during a meeting.

co-culture A group of people who coexist within the mainstream society yet remain connected to one another through their cultural heritage.

codeswitching The ability to shift from the dialect of your own culture and adopt the dialect of another cultural group.

coercive power A type of position power that relies on the ability to deal out sanctions and punishments.

cognitive restructuring A technique for reducing communication apprehension that analyzes irrational beliefs about speaking to others (cognitions) and seeks to modify those thoughts (restructuring).

cohesion The mutual attraction and teamwork that hold the members of a group together.

collaborating conflict style An approach to disagreement that seeks solutions that satisfy all group members and that also helps achieve the common goal(s).

collaboration Coordinated group interaction in which members share a common goal, respect others' perspectives and contributions, and work together to create a successful group experience.

collective cohesion Group unity that results when group members identify with a group and feel a sense of belonging.

collective intelligence A phenomenon in which "smart" groups are more likely to succeed when members are sensitive to one another's feelings, promote equal participation, and include female members.

collectivism A cultural value or belief in interdependence that places greater emphasis on the views, needs, and goals of the group than on the views, needs, and goals of individuals.

common goal The shared purpose or objective toward which group work is directed.

common ground An identifiable belief, value, experience, or point of view shared by those who disagree with you.

communication apprehension The fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons.

communication climate A communication atmosphere characterized by group members' degree of comfort or discomfort when interacting with one another.

competence An aspect of speaker credibility based on listener perceptions of your expertise and abilities.

competing conflict style An approach to disagreement in which members are more focused on achieving their personal goals than on collaborating with others to achieve a common goal.

competitive argumentation An adversarial approach to argumentation in which the goal is to win rather than to work with others in search of a reasonable resolution.

Complexity Theory A theory that seeks patterns in complex systems by examining the interactions of three states—order, complexity, and chaos.

compromising conflict style An approach to disagreement in which group members concede some goals in order to achieve other more important goals.

computer anxiety A feeling of being fearful or apprehensive when using or considering the use of a computer.

concrete word A word that refers to a specific thing that is perceived with one of the five senses.

confirmation bias A tendency to discount information that is inconsistent with a preconceived belief.

conflict The disagreement and disharmony that occur in groups when differences arise regarding goals, ideas, behavior, roles, or group procedures.

conflict ↔ cohesion A group dialectic in which the value of constructive conflict is balanced with the need for unity and cohesiveness.

conflict management talk A team talk dimension characterized by collaborative, nonjudgmental language.

conforming ↔ nonconforming A group dialectic in which a commitment to group norms and standards is balanced with a willingness to differ and change.

conformity Adopting attitudes and actions that adhere to group norms and are favored by a majority of group members.

conscientiousness A Big Five Personality Theory trait that describes a self-disciplined, organized, thorough, responsible, hard-working, and persevering person.

consensus A decision in which all members have a part in shaping and that all find at least minimally acceptable as a means of accomplishing some mutual goal.

constructive conflict An approach to disagreement in which group members express differences in ways that value everyone's contributions and promote the group's goal.

constructive nonconformity The act of resisting conformity to norms as a way of alerting members about problems that may prevent the group from achieving its common goal.

context The physical and psychological environment in which a group communicates.

control need The desire to feel competent, confident, and free to make decisions.

controlling Gibb's communication behavior that contributes to a defensive climate by dominating a situation or imposing a decision on others.

cooperative negotiation A collaborative approach to bargaining that involves identifying common interests in order to find a mutually beneficial solution or resolution to conflict.

coordinator A member who serves as the group's manager by keeping the group focused on its goal, planning and conducting meetings, assigning tasks, facilitating decision making, and identifying group process problems (a task role).

cosmopolitanism The recognition that there are universal ethical values across cultures while also acknowledging variations in values and the manner in which they are applied.

creativity The nonjudgmental process of seeking, separating, and connecting unrelated ideas and elements, and combining these elements into new ideas.

credibility The extent to which group or audience members believe you and your message.

critical thinking The conscious process of assessing the validity of claims, evidence, and reasoning for the purpose of reaching a justified conclusion or decision.

cultural dimension An aspect of culture that can be differentiated and measured relative to other cultures.

cultural synergy A leadership goal and approach that brings culturally diverse members together to create a more productive and supportive communication climate based on the combined strengths, perspectives, and skills of members.

culture A learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, and norms that affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people.

decision making The act of making a judgment, choosing an option, or reaching a conclusion.

decision-making meeting A meeting that provides members with the opportunity to make a judgment, choose an option, or make up their minds about something relevant to the common goal.

Decreasing Options Technique (DOT) A procedure that helps groups reduce and refine a large number of suggestions into a manageable number of options.

deep diversity Member characteristics that are difficult to observe, such as knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the demands of a group's task.

defensive climate A communication environment that triggers the instinct for self-protection in reaction to severe verbal criticism and dominance.

defensive listening Assuming that critical remarks made by other group members are personal attacks; focusing on how to respond to or challenge members rather than listening objectively.

definition A statement that clarifies the meaning of a word, phrase, or concept.

deliberation A collective group process that calls for thoughtful arguments, critical listening, civility, and informed decision making.

deliberative argumentation A process of reasoned and ethical interaction that helps members reach the best conclusion or make the best decision in a given situation.

democratic leader A leader who promotes the interests of group members and practices social equality.

democratic member A group member whose need for control is met, has no problems with power, and is just as comfortable giving orders as taking them.

demographic traits The general and measurable characteristics of audience members, such as their ages, genders, races, ethnicity, religions, educational levels, political affiliations, and marital status.

dependent decision maker A person who seeks the advice and opinions of others before making a decision.

description A type of evidence that creates a mental image of a person, event, place, or object.

descriptive Gibb's communication behavior that contributes to a supportive climate by stating facts about a situation or another person and using appropriate "I" and "We" language.

designated leader A leader selected by group members or by an outside authority.

destructive conflict Disagreement expressed through behaviors that create hostility and prevent the group from achieving its goals.

destructive nonconformity Resistance to conforming to norms without regard for the best interests of the group and its goal.

dialect The distinct regional and cultural variations in vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, and style that distinguishes speakers from different ethnic groups, geographic areas, and social classes.

dialectics A method for examining and resolving two contradictory or opposing ideas.

discrimination Acting out and expressing prejudice by excluding groups of people from the opportunities and rights granted to others.

disruptive listening Interrupting members, exaggerating your nonverbal responses, and/or withholding your attention while they are speaking.

diversity The quality of being different.

doctrine of the mean An ethical virtue based on moderation and a response somewhere between the two extremes of expressing mild annoyance and spewing uncontrolled rage.

documentation The practice of citing the sources of evidence.

dominator A disruptive group member who prevents others from participating by monopolizing discussions in a way that inhibits collaboration and decision making.

egoist A disruptive group member who seeks personal attention in ways that distract the group from achieving its goal.

emergent leader A person who gradually achieves leadership by interacting with group members and contributing to the achievement of the group's goal.

emoticon A grouping of typographical characters used to express emotions when communicating via technology.

emotional cohesion Group unity that results when group members experience positive emotions while interacting with other members.

emotional intelligence The capacity to recognize your own and others' feelings and to manage emotions effectively.

emotional stability A Big Five Personality Theory trait that describes a calm, poised, and secure person.

empathetic Gibb's communication behavior that contributes to a supportive climate by expressing acceptance, understanding, and caring of others and their feelings.

engaged ↔ disengaged A group dialectic in which member energy and labor are balanced with the group's need for rest and renewal.

equality Gibb's communication behavior that contributes to a supportive climate by making sure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

ethics An understanding of whether group members' communication behaviors meet agreed-upon standards of right and wrong.

ethnocentrism A mistaken belief that your culture is superior, with special rights and privileges that are or should be denied to others.

ethos A Greek word meaning "character" that has evolved into the modern concept of credibility.

evaluating The ability to analyze and make a thoughtful judgment about the validity of a message.

evaluative Gibb's communication behavior that contributes to a defensive climate by making judgmental and critical statements about a situation or another person.

evidence The component of the Toulmin Model of Argument that includes facts, statistics, opinions, examples, or other materials that support a claim.

example A type of evidence that refers to a specific case or instance.

exclusionary language Words that demean other people and reinforce stereotypes.

exit phase The final phase of new member socialization in which a newcomer may leave an established group.

expert power A type of personal power that relies on expertise and credentials.

explicit norm A group norm that is written or stated verbally and shared with all group members.

extemporaneous speaking A form of presentation delivery in which you are fully prepared but use an outline or notes to guide you through your presentation.

extrinsic motivation An incentive that comes from external sources, such as a boss or business, a teacher or coach, a friend, a family member, or a role model.

extroversion A Big Five Personality Theory trait that describes an outgoing, talkative, sociable, assertive, and active person.

extrovert A Myers-Briggs personality type who is outgoing, usually talks more than others, and is often enthusiastic and animated during a discussion.

face The positive image a person wishes to create or preserve that is also appropriate for a particular culture.

fact A verifiable observation, experience, or event; something known to be true.

fallacy An argument based on false or invalid reasoning.

false consensus A situation in which members give in to group pressure or an external authority and accept a decision that they do not like or support.

faulty analogy The fallacy of claiming that two things are similar when they actually differ with regard to relevant characteristics.

faulty cause The fallacy of claiming that an effect is caused by something that has little or no relationship to the effect.

feedback Verbal and/or nonverbal responses from members that indicate how well others received and interpreted a message.

feeler A Myers-Briggs personality type who wants everyone to get along and who will spend time with other group members to achieve harmony.

feminine orientation An egalitarian cultural perspective in which both men and women are nurturing, modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.

Fiedler's Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness A situational leadership theory that contends that effective leadership occurs only when there is an ideal match between the leader's style and the group's situation.

5M Model of Leadership Effectiveness An approach to leadership that identifies five interdependent leadership functions: (1) Model leadership, (2) Motivate members, (3) Manage group process, (4) Make decisions, and (5) Mentor members.

floor In parliamentary procedure, the right to speak after being recognized to do so by the chair.

forgiveness The process of letting go of feelings of revenge and a desire to retaliate.

forming stage A group development stage in which members become acquainted with one another and attempt to understand the nature of their task.

forum A type of public group presentation that provides opportunities for audience members to comment, express concerns, or ask questions to presenters, usually at the conclusion of a presentation.

4Rs Method of Conflict Management A four-step process (reasons, reactions, results, resolution) for analyzing the nature of a disagreement and selecting an appropriate conflict management strategy.

Functional Leadership Theory An approach to leadership that focuses on the communicative behavior of leaders and group members that enable a group to achieve its common goal.

fundamental attribution error The tendency to identify someone's internal characteristics, attitudes, or motives to explain a particular behavior, rather than considering the facts of a situation.

Fundamental Interpersonal Relationship Orientation (FIRO) Theory

A theory that examines how the need for inclusion, the need for control, and the need for affection influence how group members interact with one another.

gatekeeper A group member who facilitates member participation by monitoring the flow of communication within the group, encouraging quiet members to speak, and discouraging anyone from dominating a group discussion (a social maintenance role).

gender expectation A cultural dimension that describes the ways in which cultures define gender roles and the extent to which a culture values competition and assertiveness over harmony and nurturance.

Generation X A U.S. generation born between 1965 and 1980.

glass ceiling A seemingly invisible barrier that prevents women from moving up into senior management and leadership positions.

glass cliff A phenomenon in which women are more likely to rise to positions of organizational leadership in times of crisis, and men are more likely to achieve or take over those positions in prosperous times.

golden listening rule A principle stating that you should listen to others as you would have them listen to you.

group communication The collaboration of three or more interdependent members working to achieve a common goal.

group dialectics The inevitable contradictory tensions group members experience as they collaborate with one another to achieve a common goal.

group presentation A relatively uninterrupted talk or speech by one or more group members within a group, on behalf of a group, or by an entire group.

groupthink A deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from in-group pressure.

habit Something you do so frequently and have done for so long that you no longer think about why and how you do it.

harmonizer A group member who creates a cooperative group environment by reducing tensions, helping members resolve conflicts, and encouraging the group to adapt to interpersonal differences (a social maintenance role).

hasty generalization The fallacy of using too few examples or experiences to support a conclusion.

hearing The ability to make clear distinctions among the sounds and words in a language.

Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership® Model A situational leadership theory that links specific leadership styles to the readiness of group members.

heterogeneous group A group composed of members who are different from one another.

hidden agenda A member's undisclosed reason for doing something that benefits only individual members rather than the group as a whole.

high context A cultural perspective in which gestures, silence, facial expressions, and the relationships among communicators are more reliable indicators of meaning.

high context—low context A cultural dimension that describes whether a culture relies more on nonverbal behavior or on words for the meaning of messages.

high power distance A cultural perspective that accepts major differences in power and assumes that all people are *not* created equal.

homogeneous group A group composed of members who are all the same or very similar to one another.

homogeneous ↔ heterogeneous A group dialectic in which member similarities are balanced with member differences in skills, roles, personal characteristics, and cultural perspectives.

HURIER Listening Model A framework that distinguishes six interrelated components of the listening process: (1) Hearing, (2) Understanding, (3) Remembering, (4) Interpreting, (5) Evaluating, and (6) Responding.

hyperpersonal communication A theory that explains why some group members express themselves more competently and confidently in mediated settings than they do in face-to-face discussions.

identification talk A team talk dimension characterized by the use of plural rather than singular pronouns.

illustration A type of evidence using an extended or detailed example.

immediacy The degree to which a person seems approachable and likable.

implementer A group member who transforms group ideas into action by developing action plans, following through on assigned tasks, creating oral and/or written reports, and helping other members needing assistance with their tasks (a task role).

implicit norm A group norm that is rarely discussed or openly communicated, but is still an expected rule of behavior.

impromptu A form of presentation delivery in which you speak without prior preparation or practice.

inclusion need The desire to be given attention and to feel significant and accepted by other group members.

individual goals ↔ group goals A group dialectic in which members' personal goals are balanced with the group's common goal.

individualism A cultural value or belief that the individual is important, that independence is worth pursuing, that personal achievement should be rewarded, and that individual uniqueness is important.

individualism-collectivism A continuum of traits representing the degree to which a culture relies on and has allegiance to the self or the group.

information provider A member who researches and shares relevant information, offers well-informed suggestions, and/or contributes specialized expertise and skills (a task role).

information-sharing meeting A meeting that provides members with the opportunity to exchange information relevant to group goals.

informational power A type of position power that relies on the control and transmission of needed information.

instructional meeting A meeting that provides members with the opportunity to learn or improve a specific skill or knowledge area relevant to the common goal.

interaction norm A norm that specifies how group members should communicate with one another.

interdependence The influence of each group member on the thoughts and actions of other members.

interdependence talk A team talk dimension characterized by using collective language such as "we" and "our."

interpreting The ability to empathize with another person's feelings.

interrupter A member who habitually speaks out during a meeting while other members are talking.

intimate distance The zone of interaction ranging from touching to approximately 18 inches apart that is typically reserved for interactions with close friends, some family members, and lovers.

intrinsic motivation A reward that comes from internal sources inherent in a particular activity.

introvert A Myers-Briggs personality type who needs time to think before speaking and who may prefer to work alone rather than in a group.

intuitive A Myers-Briggs personality type who likes to make connections and formulate big ideas but who may become bored with details.

intuitive decision maker A person who makes decisions based on instincts and feelings.

jargon The specialized or technical language of a profession.

judger A Myers-Briggs personality type who is highly structured and likes to plan ahead.

kinesics The study of body movement and physical expression.

laissez-faire leader A leader who lets the group take charge of most decisions and actions.

latecomer and early leaver A member who disrupts meetings by failing to arrive on time or choosing to leave before a meeting is adjourned.

leader-member relations A situational leadership factor in Fiedler's Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness that describes the extent to which a leader gets along with group members.

leader power A situational leadership factor in Fiedler's Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness that represents the extent to which a leader has the ability to influence members, shape decisions, and control resources through a variety of means.

leadership The ability to make strategic decisions and use communication effectively to mobilize group members toward achieving a common goal.

leadership ↔ followership A group dialectic in which effective and ethical leadership is balanced with committed and responsible followership.

leadership integrity The consistency between a leader's words and deeds and a perception that the leader and members share common values and goals.

learning group A group that helps its members gain knowledge and develop skills.

legitimate power A type of position power that relies on the authority of a job title or duty.

listening The ability to understand, analyze, respect, and respond appropriately to the meaning of another person's spoken and nonverbal messages.

listening filters The internal and external factors that color your perceptions and subsequent interpretations of the messages you hear.

listening to evaluate The ability to analyze critically and make objective judgments about the validity of a message.

listening to hear The ability to make clear, aural distinctions among the sounds and words in a language.

listening to interpret The ability to recognize, empathize, and respond appropriately to someone else's situation or feelings.

listening to remember The ability to recall accurately what you hear.

listening to respond The ability to react appropriately to others in a way that indicates comprehension or appreciation of a message.

listening to understand The ability to focus on accurately grasping the meaning of spoken and nonverbal messages; also known as *comprehensive listening*.

logistics The strategic planning, arranging, and use of people, facilities, time, and materials relevant to your presentation.

long-term time orientation A cultural perspective in which people see time as flexible and able to suit their needs rather than the other way around.

loudmouth A member who talks too much in an overly forceful or tactless way so that no one else gets a chance to speak.

low context A cultural perspective in which the meaning of messages is dependent on language.

low power distance A cultural perspective in which power distinctions are minimized.

main motion A proposal for a new action or a decision.

majority vote The results of a vote in which more than half the members vote in favor of a proposal.

manipulator A group member who skillfully, but unethically, influences and controls others to his or her own advantage in an unfair, dishonest, or deceitful manner.

masculine orientation A cultural perspective in which men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.

mediated group presentation A presentation in which group members rely on electronic technology to speak across time, distance, and organizational boundaries.

meeting A scheduled gathering of group members for a structured discussion guided by a designated chairperson.

meetingthink The suspension of critical thinking that results in faulty decisions.

member readiness A variable in the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership® Model that measures the extent to which group members are willing and able to work together in order to achieve a common goal.

members People with distinct knowledge, experiences, personality traits, attitudes, skills, and cultural backgrounds who are recognized as belonging to the group.

mentor A person who teaches and gives advice to a less experienced and often younger mentee.

messages The ideas, information, opinions, claims, and/or feelings expressed by group members that generate meaning in others.

metaphor A language device that makes a comparison between two unrelated things or ideas without using connective words such as *like* or *as*.

Millennial A U.S. generation born between 1981 and 1999.

mindfulness The ability to be fully aware of the present moment without forming opinions, taking sides, or making hasty judgments as you learn more about someone else.

mindlessness Allowing rigid categories and false distinctions to become habits of thought and behavior.

minutes The written record of a group's discussion, decisions, and actions during a meeting.

mnemonic A memory aid based on something simple, such as a pattern or a rhyme.

motion A formal proposal by a member seeking the consideration and action of an assembled group.

motivation The inspiration and/or incentives that move group members to work together to achieve a common goal.

motivator A group member who creates enthusiasm for the group's goal, empowers the group to make its own choices, encourages members to do their best, and acknowledges member and group accomplishments (a social maintenance role).

Muted Group Theory A theory that claims that power imbalances inhibit some female and minority group members from expressing themselves assertively and impede their ability to participate effectively in group work.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI) A widely used inventory that identifies specific personality types based on the ways in which people perceive the world around them and make judgments.

NCA Credo for Ethical Communication A set of guiding principles that assess how well communication behaviors meet agreed-upon standards of right and wrong, as written and approved by the National Communication Association.

negotiation talk A team talk dimension characterized by exploratory and problem-solving language.

neutral Gibb's communication behavior that contributes to a defensive climate by appearing withdrawn, detached, indifferent, and unwilling to take a position.

noise Any external or internal factors that interfere with how well members express themselves or interpret the messages of others.

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) A problem-solving procedure that combines aspects of silent voting with limited discussion to help a group build consensus and arrive at a decision.

nonconformity A member's behavior that does not reflect the norms or expectations of the group.

nonparticipant A group member who never or rarely contributes to a group's discussion or work.

nonverbal communication The use of message components other than words to generate meaning.

norm An expectation concerning the kinds of behaviors and opinions that are acceptable and unacceptable in a particular group.

norming stage A group development stage in which members resolve early tensions and begin collaborating as a committed and unified team pursuing a common goal.

obstructionist A disruptive group member who blocks group progress by consistently making negative statements and unreasonably disagreeing with others.

open system ↔ closed system A group dialectic in which external support and recognition are balanced with internal group solidarity and rewards.

openness to experience A Big Five Personality Theory trait that describes an imaginative, curious, broadminded, intelligent, original, and artistically sensitive person.

opinion A personal conclusion regarding the meaning or implications of facts.

opinion provider A group member who expresses informed opinions, interprets the opinions and perspectives of others, and ensures that members are familiar with various points of view when making decisions (a task role).

optimal group experience A situation in which all group members are caught up in the group's work and are performing at a high level of achievement.

oral citation A comment that includes enough information to allow others to find the original source of evidence.

organizational culture The values, behavioral norms, and expectations that make up the shared environment and perceptions of an organization.

organizational group A group that works to achieve specific goals on behalf of a business or organization.

overpersonal member A group member whose affection needs are not met and who seeks intimate friendships despite the disinterest of other members.

oversocial member A group member whose inclusion needs are not met and who seeks attention to compensate for feelings of inadequacy.

panel discussion A type of public group presentation in which several people interact with one another on a common discussion topic for the benefit of an audience.

paraphrasing A form of feedback that uses different words to restate what others say in a way that indicates you understand them.

parliamentarian A person who advises the meeting chairperson on matters concerning parliamentary procedure.

parliamentary procedure A set of formal rules used to determine the will of the majority through fair and orderly discussion and debate.

passive-aggressive behavior Uncooperative and obstructive behavior that appears to be cooperative.

passivity Nonassertive behavior characterized by a lack of confidence and/or a reluctance to express opinions and feelings.

perceiver A Myers-Briggs personality type who is less rigid about deadlines and time constraints and who is flexible and willing to try new options.

performing stage A group development stage in which members are fully engaged and focused on collaborating to achieve group goals.

personal conflict Disagreement among group members related to differences in personalities and communication styles and conflicting core values and beliefs.

personal distance The zone of interaction ranging from approximately 18 inches to 4 feet that is typically used for routine interactions with friends, acquaintances, and many business associates.

personal member A group member whose affection needs are met and who is emotionally comfortable interacting with group members.

personal power Authority that stems from an individual's character, competence, and earned status.

personality A consistent set of relatively permanent traits that influence how we think, feel, and behave in a variety of contexts.

persuasive power A type of personal power that relies on effective and strategic communication skills.

pitch How high or low the voice sounds.

Platinum Rule The intercultural communication principle to "Do unto others as they wish to have done to themselves."

position power Authority derived from a member's job responsibilities or official status within an organization.

positive intentionality The assumption that other people are not trying to cause conflict.

Post-Meeting Reaction (PMR) Form A questionnaire designed to assess the success of a meeting by collecting written reactions from participants.

power distance A cultural dimension that reflects the physical and psychological distance between those who have power and those who do not have power in relationships, institutions, and organizations.

power The ability and/or authority to influence members, shape decisions, and control resources through a variety of means.

precedence In parliamentary procedure, the rank order or priority of different types of motions for consideration and action.

prejudice A negative attitude about other people that is based on faulty and inflexible stereotypes.

preliminary phase The first phase of new member socialization in which a newcomer brings beliefs and attitudes, cultural dimensions, needs and motives, personality traits, knowledge, and prior experiences to a group.

presentation aids Supplementary audio and/or visual materials that help group and audience members understand and remember the content of a discussion or presentation.

presentation purpose A statement declaring what a speaker wants listeners to know, think, believe, or do as the result of a specific presentation.

primary group A group of family members or friends who provide affection, support, and a sense of belonging.

primary tension The social unease and inhibitions experienced by group members during the getting-acquainted stage of a group's development.

problem oriented Gibb's communication behavior that contributes to a supportive climate by seeking mutually agreeable solutions.

problem solving A complex process in which groups make multiple decisions as they analyze a problem and develop a plan for solving the problem or reducing its harmful effects.

problem-solving meeting A meeting that provides members with the opportunity to analyze a problem and develop a plan of action for solving or reducing the impact of a problem relevant to the common goal.

procedural conflict Disagreement among group members about the methods, processes, or policies a group should use.

procedural norm A norm that specifies how a group should operate and what structured procedures it should use.

Progressive Problem Solving Method A systematic procedure that guides a group through a series of problem-solving steps: task clarification, problem identification, fact-finding and issues analysis, solution criteria, limitations, options, evaluation, selection, and implementation.

provisional Gibb's communication behavior that contributes to a supportive climate by offering tentative suggestions but also accepting ideas from others.

proxemics The study of how people perceive and use space within the context of a culture.

pseudolistening Faking attention or pretending to listen, particularly when your mind is elsewhere, you are bored, or you think it pleases the speaker.

public distance The zone of interaction extending beyond 12 feet from another person that is typically reserved for large audiences.

public group A group that discusses important issues in front of or for the benefit of the public.

public group presentations Presentations that occur when group members speak in front of or for the benefit of the public in settings, such as panel discussions, symposiums, and forums.

Qualifier (verbal) A word that conveys uncertainty or timidity.

Qualifier (Toulmin) The component of the Toulmin Model of Argument that states the degree to which a claim appears to be true.

question In parliamentary procedure, any motion put before a group that will require a vote.

question of conjecture A question that asks whether something will happen.

question of fact A question that asks whether something is true or false, whether an event did or did not occur, or whether something caused this or that.

question of policy A question that asks whether and how a specific course of action should be implemented to address a problem.

question of value A question that asks whether something is worthwhile; good or bad; right or wrong; moral or immoral; or best, average, or worst.

questioner A group member who asks for information and opinions, requests clarification, probes for what others think or feel, and tests for group consensus (a task role).

quorum The minimum number or percentage of voting members who, according to a group's constitution or bylaws, must be present at a meeting in order to transact business.

rate The speed at which a person speaks in terms of words per minute.

rational decision maker A person who carefully weighs information and options before making a decision.

referent power A type of personal power that relies on members' respect for and experience with a leader.

Reflective Thinking Process A problem-solving approach that focuses on understanding a problem before developing and selecting a solution.

refutation The process of proving that an argument is false or lacks sufficient support.

Relational Dialectics Theory A theory that claims that relationships are characterized by ongoing, dialectic tensions among the multiple contradictions, complexities, and changes in human experiences.

relationship-motivated leaders Leaders who derive major satisfaction from positive interpersonal relationships with group members.

religious literacy The knowledge of and ability to understand and discuss religions.

remembering The ability to store, retain, and recall information that has been heard.

research A systematic search or investigation designed to find useful and appropriate evidence.

reservation The component of the Toulmin Model of Argument that recognizes the conditions under which a claim may not be true.

responding The ability to react in a way that indicates full understanding of a message.

reward power A type of position power that relies on the ability to give out resources valued by members.

role A pattern of behaviors associated with a member's specific function within a particular group.

role flexibility The ability to assume the roles needed by a group in a particular context.

second In parliamentary procedure, the expression of support for consideration of a motion by a second member.

secondary tension The frustrations and personality conflicts experienced by group members as they compete with one another for acceptance and achievement.

selective listening Listening to messages with which you agree, avoiding listening to complex or messages with which you disagree; listening for faults in what other people say.

self-centered listener A listener who pursues personal goals by listening and responding in ways that disrupt group progress and demoralize members.

self-help group A group that offers support and encouragement to members who want or need help with personal problems.

self-serving bias A tendency to blame negative consequences on external forces and attribute positive consequences to one's own behavior.

sense of choice The shared feeling that the group has the power and ability to make decisions about how to organize and do its job.

sense of competence The shared feeling that the group is doing good, high-quality work.

sense of meaningfulness The shared feeling that the group is pursuing a worthy task.

sense of progress The shared feeling that the group is accomplishing something.

sensor A Myers-Briggs personality type who focuses on details and prefers to concentrate on one task at a time.

Servant Leadership Theory An approach to leadership that focuses on how leaders serve the needs of followers by motivating them to collaborate with one another in pursuit of a common goal.

service group A group dedicated to worthy causes that help other people outside the group.

short-term time orientation A cultural perspective in which people are highly organized and value time.

Single Question Format A problem-solving approach that focuses group analysis on answering a single, agreed-upon question in order to arrive at a solution.

Situational Leadership Theory An approach to leadership claiming that effective leaders choose leadership strategies that appropriately match their group and the circumstances in which they work together.

skill A specific ability that helps a group engage in collaborative work to achieve its common goal.

social cohesion Group unity that results when group members like each other.

social dimension A group's focus on the interpersonal relationships among group members.

social distance The zone of interaction ranging from approximately 4 to 12 feet that is typically used for interactions with new acquaintances and strangers.

social equality talk A team talk dimension characterized by casual, informal language.

social group A group in which members share common interests in a friendly setting or participate in social activities.

social maintenance role A set of behaviors that affect how group members get along with one another while pursuing a common goal.

social member A person whose inclusion needs are met and who enjoys working with people but is also comfortable working alone.

socialization A process in which members communicate with one another in order to acquire or adjust to the social knowledge, behavioral expectations, and skills necessary to function effectively in a particular group.

solution criteria Specific standards that an ideal solution to a problem should meet.

spontaneous Gibb's communication behavior that contributes to a supportive climate by being straightforward, direct, open, and honest.

spontaneous decision maker A person who makes quick decisions impulsively and on the spur of the moment.

statistics Information presented in a numerical form.

status norm A norm that specifies the levels of influence among group members and how status is established or earned in the group.

stereotype A generalization about a group of people that oversimplifies their characteristics and results in erroneous judgments about the entire group of people.

storming stage A group development stage in which some members compete with one another to determine individual status, establish member roles, and agree upon a common goal.

strategic Gibb's communication behavior that contributes to a defensive climate by manipulating others and concealing hidden agendas or personal motives.

strategy A method, guideline, or technique for dealing with issues and problems that arise in groups.

structural cohesion Group unity that results when group members embrace clear norms and well-defined roles.

structure ↔ spontaneity A group dialectic in which the need for structured procedures is balanced with the need for innovative and creative thinking.

Styles Leadership Theory An approach to leadership that identifies three distinct styles: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire.

superficial listening Paying more attention to how members look and speak rather than to what they say; drawing conclusions about what members mean or claim before they have finished talking.

superiority Gibb's communication behavior that contributes to a defensive climate by promoting resentment and jealousy by implying that your experience and opinions are better than others.

support seeker A disruptive group member who needs frequent and excessive emotional support and sympathy from the group.

supporter A group member who offers encouragement, praises group members, identifies and expresses group feelings, and listens with empathy to other members (a social maintenance role).

supportive climate A communication environment in which members feel free to share their opinions and feelings.

symposium A type of public group presentation in which a series of speakers present short, uninterrupted presentations on different aspects of the same topic for the benefit of an audience.

synergy A state in which the effective collaboration of group members produces better results than what would be expected given the sum of skills and abilities of individual members working alone.

system A collection of interacting, interdependent elements working together to form a complex whole that adapts to a changing environment.

Systems Theory A group of theories that examines how interdependent factors affect one another in a complex environment.

tag question A brief question added to the end of a statement.

task cohesion Group unity that results when group members are committed to a common goal.

task conflict Disagreement among group members about issues, ideas, actions, or goals.

task dimension A group's focus on achieving its goal.

task dimension ↔ social dimension A group dialectic in which the responsibility and motivation to complete tasks are balanced with promoting member relationships.

task role A set of behaviors that affects a group's ability to complete its work and achieve a common goal.

task structure A situational leadership factor in Fiedler's Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness that describes the degree to which a group's task is structured or unstructured, well-organized or disorganized.

task-motivated leaders Leaders who derive major satisfaction from getting things done and doing them well.

team builder A group member who enhances group cohesion by promoting a group identity, showing respect for other members, and expressing pride in the group's work (a social maintenance role).

team presentation A well-coordinated informative and/or persuasive presentation by a cohesive group of speakers.

Team-Role Theory A theory that explains that, in effective groups, members seek out and perform roles compatible with their personal characteristics and skills.

team talk The language group members should use when working together in pursuit of a common goal.

territoriality The sense of personal ownership attached to a particular space.

texter A member who disrupts meetings by using cell phones, tablets, or laptops to text, check email, check social media, or engage in other online activity rather than fully participating in a meeting.

textspeak A brief form of written communication that uses abbreviations, acronyms, initials, and emoticons to shorten a message and/or convey emotion.

theory A clear, systematic, and predictive explanation of a phenomenon.

thinker A Myers-Briggs personality type who takes pride in thinking objectively and making difficult decisions.

thought speed The speed (in words per minute) at which most people can think compared to the speed at which they speak.

time orientation A cultural dimension that describes the extent to which a culture organizes and values time.

touch approacher A person who is comfortable being touched and initiating touch with others.

touch avoider A person who is less comfortable being touched and touching others.

Toulmin Model of Argument A model developed by Stephen Toulmin that provides a system of understanding, analyzing, and creating effective arguments.

Traditionalist A U.S. generation born between 1900 and 1945.

Trait Leadership Theory An approach to leadership that identifies physical, behavioral, personality, competency, and attitudinal traits that characterize successful leadership across a variety of situations.

Transformational Leadership Theory An approach to leadership that focuses on how leaders inspire group members, embrace change, and achieve vision-based goals.

Tuckman's Group Development Model A model of group development that identifies five discrete stages in the life cycle of groups—forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

two-thirds vote The results of a vote in which at least twice as many members vote in favor of a proposal as those who vote to oppose it.

underpersonal member A group member whose affection needs are not met and who may establish only superficial relationships with other members because they believe no one likes them.

undersocial member A group member whose inclusion needs are not met and who may feel unworthy or withdraw from the group.

understanding The ability to accurately grasp the meaning of someone's spoken and nonverbal message.

valid Logically sound and factually accurate.

verbal communication The way in which words in a language are used to generate meaning.

virtual team A group that relies on one or more mediated technologies to collaborate, often across time, distance, and organizational boundaries.

visualization A technique for reducing communication apprehension that encourages positive thinking about communicating in groups by physically relaxing and imagining yourself succeeding.

vocal expression Variations in pitch, volume, speaking rate, and word stress.

volume The loudness of the voice.

warrant The component of the Toulmin Model of Argument that explains and justifies how the evidence supports a particular claim.

whisperer A member who disrupts meetings by participating in confidential or side conversations with another group member.

Whorf Hypothesis A theory claiming that language is influential in shaping how people think and experience the world, which in turn influences how speakers of a language come to think, act, and behave.

word stress The degree of vocal prominence given to a syllable within a word or to a word within a phrase or sentence.

working The physical and/or mental effort group members expend when trying to accomplish something.

writing apprehension The fear or anxiety associated with writing situations.

zones of interaction The variable psychological space surrounding each person that expands or contracts in different contexts.

Notes

Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

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Chapter 3

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ined the traditional assumptions of these roles and asked questions about their ability to describe genuine group roles in a clear, valid, and useful way. Specifically, we analyzed, modified, deleted, and added to the roles developed by Kenneth Benne and Paul Sheats in the 1940s and the more recent team roles described by R. Meredith Belbin. We also placed significant emphasis on the centrality of communication behavior in each role. The resulting set of roles combined with our own observations of groups in instructional and other professional settings, identified eleven distinct roles—seven task roles and five social maintenance roles. Not surprisingly, there are similarities between our list and those of other theorists. However, there are critical distinctions in our functional descriptions of each role. It should also be noted that Benne and Sheats identified nine "self-centered roles" that serve as barriers to effective group work. We believe Benne and Sheats' self-centered roles are better understood as disruptive behavior rather than group member roles. We address the issue of disruptive behavior in a later section in this chapter. See Kenneth D. Benne and Paul Sheats, "Functional Roles of Group Members, *Journal of Social Issues* 4 (1948) and R. Meredith Belbin, *Management Teams: Why They Succeed or Fail*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, UK: Butterworth Heinemann, 2010).

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Chapter 4

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