**Communication Styles:**

Communication styles are defined by our tendency to communicate directly or indirectly. Every person has a unique communication style, but there are four main communication styles you’re likely to encounter in the workplace. When you can accurately identify each style, you’ll be better equipped to work with any type of person you encounter.

**Why are communication styles important?**

When individuals exhibit different communication styles, it’s easy for conflict or misunderstandings to occur. Understanding the characteristics and tendencies of different communication styles can help us to effectively interact with someone who has a different style.

**4 basic communication styles**

Your communication style is the way you interact with others and it determines how you speak, act and react in various situations. Here are the four primary communication styles:

### 1. Passive

Passive communicators are typically quiet and don’t seek attention. They may act indifferent during debates and rarely take a strong stance or assert themselves. They don’t usually share their needs or express their feelings, so it may be difficult to know when they are uncomfortable or need help with an important project.You can identify a passive communicator by these tendencies:

* Inability to say no
* Poor posture
* Easy-going attitude
* Lack of eye contact
* Soft voice
* Apologetic demeanor
* Fidgeting

If you’re dealing with a passive communicator, consider these methods to encourage a good working relationship:

* **Take a direct approach.** Initiate one-on-one conversations, as private interactions are often more comfortable for a passive communicator than group settings.
* **Ask for their opinions.** Allow plenty of time for them to think over their responses.
* **Use broad language.** Avoid asking “yes” or “no” questions that can be answered with little elaboration. Stay patient with long silences, as passive individuals often take their time thinking through a response.

**If you’re a passive communicator**, it’s important to work on your [communication skills](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/communication-skills?from=careerguide-autohyperlink-en-US). Seek out opportunities where you feel you can comfortably speak up. If you’re uncomfortable in group settings, seek out personal meetings. If you prefer writing over talking, try communicating via email instead of in person. Over time, you’ll see that openly sharing your thoughts creates opportunities for positive interactions.

### 2. Aggressive

Aggressive communicators frequently express their thoughts and feelings and tend to dominate conversations, often at the expense of others. They may also react before thinking, which can negatively affect relationships and decrease productivity in the workplace. While an aggressive communication style might command respect in certain leadership situations, it’s often intimidating to those who respond better to a calm approach.These are a few signs of an aggressive communicator:

* Interrupting people while they’re speaking
* Invading personal spaces
* Presenting an overbearing posture
* Using aggressive gestures
* Maintaining intense eye contact

Consider these methods when working with an aggressive communicator:

* **Be calm and assertive.** Try not to let the nature of an aggressive communicator be intimidating. Focus your conversation on an actionable approach to the issue.
* **Keep conversations professional.** Direct the conversation away from personal issues or emotions.
* **Know when to walk away.** Walk away from the situation if the aggressive communicator becomes too demanding or you’re no longer making positive progress.

**If you have an aggressive communication style**, you may struggle to form strong relationships at work. Learning more positive communication techniques may help you overcome some of your aggressive tendencies. Reducing stress in your life can help as well. You can take a healthy approach to combat stressors by engaging in physical activity and practicing mindfulness or meditation.

### 3. Passive-aggressive

Passive-aggressive communicators appear passive on the surface but often have more aggressive motivations driving their actions. While their words might sound agreeable, their actions don’t always align with what they say. They can quietly manipulate a situation into one that benefits them. Some passive-aggressive communicators use this approach because they feel powerless or manipulated, though that isn’t necessarily the case.Passive-aggressive communicators may use the following approaches:

* Muttering
* Using sarcasm
* Exhibiting denial
* Presenting a happy face when they’re clearly upset
* Giving the silent treatment

If you’re dealing with a passive-aggressive communicator, you might find that they undermine your efforts even after giving you verbal assurances.Consider the following approaches when dealing with a passive-aggressive communicator:

* **Make clear requests.** Try not to leave room for misinterpretation or confusion.
* **Confront negative behavior.** Talk to them directly about their behavior. Consider looping in a manager if your conversation doesn’t produce change.
* **Ask for their feedback.** Directly ask them for their feedback in one-on-one situations to try to elicit honest communication.

**If you have passive-aggressive tendencies**, look for opportunities to communicate your thoughts and needs openly. Find a way to pursue clear and honest lines of communication to ensure you feel heard and are taking active steps to directly address a situation.

### 4. Assertive

The assertive style is typically the most respectful and productive type of communication in the workplace. Assertive communicators share their thoughts and ideas confidently, but they’re always respectful and polite. They readily take on challenges but know how to say *“no”* when it’s required. These individuals understand their own limits and protect their boundaries without acting overly aggressive or defensive.When you’re with an assertive communicator, you’ll notice their ability to make others feel comfortable. They’re the ones that you seek out because you know they can easily facilitate a productive discussion.Assertive behavior exhibits itself through:

* Expansive gestures
* Collaborative and sharing tendencies
* Healthy expression of ideas and feelings
* Good posture
* A clear voice
* Friendly eye contact

**If you have assertive communicators on your team**, encourage them to share their ideas, place them in positions of leadership and enlist their help dealing with passive, passive-aggressive and aggressive communication styles.