



essential communication

SECOND EDITION

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Getting the Most Out of This Book

You are about to explore communication in a variety of situations—online, in person, at home, at work, and during intercultural experiences, to name a few. Along the way, you will have the opportunity to try out communication strategies and see which work best for you.

It's a journey worth taking. As Martin Yate, author of the best-selling job search guide *Knock 'em Dead*, puts it, "Communication counts big time."¹ Of the top 10 qualifications employers want most, 7 directly involve communication.² And employers aren't the only ones hoping to land great communicators. Listening skills and supportive communication are among the most desired qualities in friends³ and romantic partners.⁴

Throughout this book, we will consider the ways that communication both shapes and reflects our personal identity. We will consider the impact of verbal and nonverbal cues and the importance of mindfully listening to others. We'll take a close-up look at the dynamics of communicating with friends, family members, romantic partners, and coworkers, and conclude with guidance on becoming an accomplished public speaker. At every step, you will have opportunities to reflect on your own communication patterns and goals. As you will see, no one communication strategy works well for everyone or every situation. Instead, the best communicators make well-informed choices depending on the circumstances.

Given that what you learn here can improve your personal life and career success, here are three tips for getting the most from this book.

Don't skip anything.

This isn't your ordinary textbook. For one thing, we have zeroed in on the fundamentals, so this book is shorter than most. For another, chapter elements look more like magazine stories than traditional texts. So how will you know what is essential and what is extra? In this book, *everything* is essential and nothing is extra. Key words and theories appear in unexpected places, such as question-and-answer features and *Tips & Reminders*. The result is an unconventional experience that feels like pleasure reading but provides the deep-level learning of a traditional text.

Apply concepts to your own life.

As you read, reflect on how you can enhance your communication skills. Self-quizzes in *Ask Yourself* segments provide insights about your communication strengths and challenges. To take that a step further, *Pause to Reflect* and *Putting It All Together* features invite you to apply what you are learning to real-life situations.

Save important reminders.

Visual reminders boost the likelihood that people will follow through with important goals,⁵ so we have provided handy information in the form of *Tips & Reminders* and *Communication Take-Aways* that you might want to save for future reference.

The bottom line is:

Don't be fooled into thinking that a fun-looking story is frivolous or extra. Every element in this book is loaded with essential information that can help you become a better communicator.

Contents

Getting the Most Out of This Book

1 Communication: What and Why

Communication Defined

- Communication is symbolic.
- Communication is a process.
- Communication is irreversible.
- Communication is relational.

Models of Communication

- Linear Model
- Transactional Model

PAUSE TO REFLECT: *How “Noisy” Is Your Communication?*

Communication Contexts

- Intrapersonal Communication
- Dyadic/Interpersonal Communication
- Small Group Communication
- Organizational Communication
- Public Communication
- Mass Communication

PAUSE TO REFLECT: *Which Contexts Suit You Best?*

The Unique Context of Social Media

- Audience size varies vastly.
- Users generate their own content.
- Networks are highly diverse.

TIPS & REMINDERS: *5 Tips for Communicating Well on Social Media*

Communication Competence

There is no “ideal” way to communicate.
Competence is situational.
Competence is relational.
Competence can be learned.
Competent communicators are flexible.
Competent communicators are empathic.
Competent communicators are cognitively complex.
Competent communicators self-monitor.
Competent communicators are committed.

 **PAUSE TO REFLECT:** *What Are Your Communication Goals?*

 **ASK YOURSELF:** *What Type of Communicator Are You?*

Misconceptions About Communication

Myth 1: Communication requires complete understanding.
Myth 2: Communication can solve all problems.
Myth 3: Communication is good.
Myth 4: Meanings are in words.
Myth 5: Communication is simple.
Myth 6: More communication is always better.

 **COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS:** *Communication: What and Why*

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: *Show Your Communication Know-How*

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The Self, Perception, and Communication

The Self-Concept Defined

Self-Concept
Self-Esteem

Communication and the Self-Concept

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Mass Media
Culture
Expectations

 **PAUSE TO REFLECT:** *What Shapes Your Self-Concept?*

Mistaken Attributions and Communication

Individuals typically judge themselves more charitably than they judge others.
People often pay more attention to negative impressions than to positive ones.
When individuals do perceive positive qualities, they tend to overgeneralize.
People gravitate to the familiar.

Myths About Gendered Communication

Myth 1: Sex and gender are the same.
Myth 2: People are either male or female.
Myth 3: Gender is a continuum.

Empathy, Emotional IQ, and Communication

Display empathy.
Understand the difference between empathy and sympathy.
Cultivate emotional intelligence.

 **TIPS & REMINDERS:** *3 Steps to Engage in Perception Checking*

ASK YOURSELF: How Emotionally Intelligent Are You?

Identity Management

- Individuals have public and private selves.
- People engage in facework to manage their identities and the identity of others.
- Identity management is collaborative.
- People have multiple identities.
- Identity management may be deliberate or unconscious.
- People differ in their degree of identity management.
- Roles influence the identities people display.
- Identity management can be goal oriented.
- Identity management isn't necessarily dishonest.

PAUSE TO REFLECT: Which Identities Do You Enact?

Identity Management and Social Media

- Social media can boost self-esteem.
- Being genuine matters most.
- Self-esteem can enhance emotional resilience.

 COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS: *Self, Perception, and Communication*

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Culture and Communication

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- Political Viewpoints
- Ability and Disability

TIPS & REMINDERS: 3 Ways to Discuss Politics Responsibly on Social Media

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- Ideas about aging change over time.
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- Being young has its challenges.
- Generations regard technology differently.
- Differences emerge at work.

TIPS & REMINDERS: 4 Ways to Learn More About Other Cultures

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- Individualism and Collectivism
- High and Low Context
- Uncertainty Avoidance

Power Distance
Talk and Silence
Competition and Cooperation

 PAUSE TO REFLECT: *What Cultural Norms Do You Embrace?*

 ASK YOURSELF: *How Much Do You Know About Other Cultures?*

Overcoming Prejudice

We tend to think our culture is the best.
We often prejudge and stereotype others.
Judgments can lead to unfair treatment.
Mindful thinking can help.

Coping with Culture Shock

Don't be too hard on yourself.
Homesickness is normal.
Expect progress and setbacks.
Reach out to others.

 COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS: *Communication and Culture*

 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: *Show Your Communication Know-How*

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Language

The Nature of Language

Language is symbolic.
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Accents and Dialects
“Powerful” and “Powerless” Speech
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Language differs by community.
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Listening

The Importance of Listening

- People with good listening skills are more likely than others to be hired and promoted.
- Listening is a leadership skill.
- Good listeners are not easily fooled.
- Asking for and listening to advice makes you look good.
- Listening makes you a better friend and romantic partner.

PAUSE TO REFLECT: How Can You Improve as a Listener?

Misconceptions About Listening

- Myth: Hearing and listening are the same thing.
- Myth: Listening is a natural process.
- Myth: All listeners receive the same message.

The Listening Process

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- Understanding
- Remembering
- Interpreting
- Evaluating
- Responding

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- Psychological Noise
- Physical Noise
- Cultural Differences

TIPS & REMINDERS: 3 Ways to Limit Social Media Distractions

Gender: Listening and Responding

- Women tend to disclose similar experiences.
- Men tend to solve or distract.
- Empathy from women can feel like a put-down to men.
- A man's well intentioned response can feel like disinterest to a woman.
- Awareness can help.

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- Pretending to Listen
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- Nonverbal behavior is part of identity management.
- Nonverbal cues help define relationships.
- Nonverbal behavior is ambiguous.
- Nonverbal communication is essential to success.

 **PAUSE TO REFLECT:** *How Nonverbally Savvy Are You?*

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

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- Online communication can be validating.
- Online communication has a pause option . . . sometimes.
- Online communication can be distracting.
- Online communication can be overwhelming.

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Confirming and Disconfirming Messages

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- Show that you agree.

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Do men and women do friendship differently?

Can heterosexual men and women be *just* friends?

Are there advantages to other-sex friendships?

How does gender diversity figure into friendship?

Communicating with Friends Online

There is greater diversity online.

Many people share more in person, at least at first.

Online communication can be less anxiety provoking.

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COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS: Communicating with Romantic Partners

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Describe relevant challenges, actions, and results.

Ask good questions of your own.

Follow up after the interview.

Interviewing by Phone or Video

Present a professional identity.

Practice with technology in advance.

Ensure that you have the right time for the interview.

Ask in advance how long the interview will last.

Look at the camera, not at the screen.

Conduct a dress rehearsal.

 **COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS:** *Communicating to Land a Job*

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Communicating in the Workplace

Communication Skills Boost Career Success

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Good communicators enhance client satisfaction.

Good communicators build public awareness.

Good communicators make good leaders.

Good communicators inspire others.

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Creating the Introduction

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New to the Second Edition



An essential part of effective communication is listening carefully. We've endeavored to practice what we preach in developing this second edition of *Essential Communication*. We've honored the requests of educators and students to make this new version even more practical and engaging.

More than ever, *Essential Communication* is a practical guide to improving communication skills in a variety of settings. The second edition is loaded with real-life examples, self-quizzes, reflection opportunities, question-and-answer features, and handy checklists of communication tips and strategies. Two chapters have been refocused on finding a job and succeeding in the workplace. This edition also provides tips for talking about politics in a respectful way, being a better listener, communicating with people from different cultures, addressing audiences, and more. Here is an overview of what's new in the second edition.

- Discussions about social media use include the importance of:
 - » Protecting one's privacy and self-disclosing with care ([Chapter 7](#))
 - » Presenting an impressive but genuine identity online ([Chapters 2 and 10](#))
 - » Judging the validity of viral news and information ([Chapter 4](#))
 - » Understanding the disruptive influence of social media trolls and bots ([Chapters 3 and 12](#))
 - » Engaging in civil discourse about controversial issues ([Chapters 3, 4, 12, and 14](#))
 - » Balancing social media use with in-person communication ([Chapter 5](#))
- Expanded coverage of diversity includes:
 - » Generational differences in the way people communicate ([Chapter 3](#))
 - » Intersectionality theory ([Chapter 3](#))
 - » Impacts of gender diversity ([Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9](#))
 - » Tips for overcoming prejudice ([Chapters 3 and 4](#))
 - » More about cultural norms around the world ([Chapter 3](#))
- Professional communication takes center stage in [Chapter 10](#), "Communicating to Land a Job," with expert guidance on:
 - » Establishing a professional presence online
 - » Participating in video conference interviews
 - » Creating employment interview presentations using PowerPoint or Prezi
- [Chapter 11](#), "Communicating in the Workplace," focuses on communication strategies for professional environments and includes:
 - » Communication mistakes to avoid at work

- » Tips for communicating in a professional manner in person and online
- » How to leave a job graciously
- » Leadership and teamwork skills
- The chapters on public speaking ([Chapters 12, 13, and 14](#)) have been revised to be more applicable and contemporary. New and expanded content focuses on:
 - » Confirmation bias and how political polarity affects public speaking
 - » Audience analysis techniques based on real-world and classroom examples
 - » Guidance on using an array of presentation software tools
 - » Implications of Aristotle's Triad for persuasive speeches.
- New sample speeches include:
 - » Marily Oppezzo's "Want to Be More Creative? Go for a Walk" TED Talk (Appendix A)
 - » Emma González's "We Call BS" speech from the March for Our Lives rally (Appendix B)
- In each chapter of the book, new real-life examples, self-assessment quizzes, reflection questions, and checklists allow students to connect with the content and apply communication lessons to their own lives. These new features include:
 - » *Pause to Reflect*
 - » *Ask Yourself*
 - » *Tips & Reminders*
 - » *Putting It All Together*

Instructor Resources

The Essential Guide to Teaching Communication

The Essential Guide to Teaching Communication by Athena du Pré will get new teachers up and running instantly. The *Guide* will also provide teaching veterans with a library of new ideas to try out. It includes a full syllabus (with a reading schedule, assignments, grading rubrics, and more) as well as chapter lesson plans suitable for hybrid, online, and face-to-face courses. Instructor resources for each chapter include experiential learning activities, lecture notes, videos, discussions guides, journal topics, and public speaking prompts—all organized by learning objective and accompanied by ready-to-use handouts and corresponding PowerPoint slides. Lesson plans include integrated teaching tips and screen shots of the lecture slides so instructors can choose the elements they like.

The Essential Lecture Slide Deck

The Essential Lecture Slide Deck includes a toolkit of class activities for each chapter: video clips with discussion prompts and lead-in slides for group activities, speaking opportunities, and writing prompts. *The Essential Lecture Slide Deck* sets instructors up for great classes all on its own. When combined with *The Essential Guide to Teaching Communication*, instructors also get expert teaching tips for specific activities, accompanying worksheets, and time estimates for each activity to help plan courses.

The Accessible Lecture Slide Deck

Instructors and students who have special accessibility needs, or who just prefer a more standard slide deck containing a detailed outline of the chapter and its accompanying images, may choose *The Accessible Lecture Slide Deck* for a comprehensive chapter overview that's as accessible as possible.

Test Bank

The comprehensive Test Bank offers approximately 65 class-tested exam questions per chapter in multiple-choice and short-answer formats. It is available in several formats: as a Word document, as a computerized

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Now Playing: Instructor's Edition

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- Animation activities to help students visualize communication processes and ensure that they understand what they read
- *Tips & Reminders* that provide a quick review of how students can use communication concepts in their lives right now
- *Pause to Reflect* prompts to inspire students to think critically about their own communication

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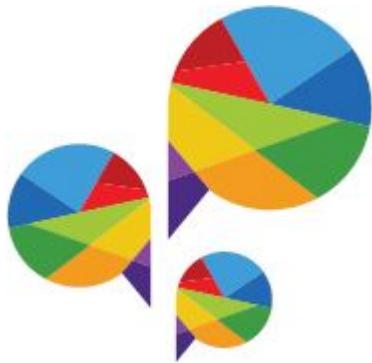
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essential

Communication

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COMMUNICATION

What and Why

Communication Defined

What is the definition of communication?
What models best describe communication?

Communication Contexts

How does communication vary by context?
What's unique about social media?

Communication Competence

What qualities make someone a competent
communicator in person and online?

Dispelling Myths

What common beliefs about
communication are untrue?



Communication Defined

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1.1: Define communication and explain its essential characteristics.

Communication isn't as easy to define as you might think. It can refer to everything from the message on T-shirts to presidential speeches to chimpanzee behavior. In this book, we focus on human communication, and we define **communication** as *the process of creating meaning through symbolic interaction*. What does this mean? Our definition of communication highlights four important characteristics.

Communication is symbolic.

Symbols are used to represent things, processes, ideas, or events in ways that make communication possible. The most significant feature of a symbol is its arbitrary nature. For example, there's no logical reason why the letters in the word *book* should stand for the object you're reading now. Speakers of Spanish call it a *libro*, and Lithuanians call it a *knyga*. Even in English, another term would work just as well as long as everyone agreed to use it in the same way. Symbolic communication allows people to think or talk about the past, explain the present, and speculate about the future. You'll read more about the symbolic nature of language in [Chapter 4](#).

Communication is a process.

We often think about communication as if it occurs in discrete, individual acts. But communication is a continuous, ongoing process. Even what appears to be an isolated message is often part of a much larger process. Imagine, for example, that your friend tells you that you look "fabulous." Your interpretation of those words will depend on a long series of experiences stretching far back in time: *What have others said about your appearance in the past? How do you feel about the way you look? Is your friend prone to sarcasm?* This simple example shows that it's inaccurate to talk about "acts" of communication as if they occur in isolation. Instead of being like photos, they unfold like a movie in which the meaning comes from the interrelated series of images.



Communication is irreversible.

At certain moments, you've probably wished you could back up time to erase words you've said or actions you've taken. But it's no more possible to "unsend" or "unreceive" most messages than it is to unsqueeze a tube of toothpaste. This principle is especially true online, where a careless message can haunt you virtually forever. For this reason, it's almost always wise to think before you speak, write, message, post, or tweet.

Communication is relational.

Communication isn't something we do *to* others. Rather, it is something we do *with* them. Psychologist Kenneth Gergen captures the relational nature of communication well when he points out that our success depends on interaction with others. As he says, "one cannot be 'attractive' without others who are attracted, a 'leader' without others willing to follow, or a 'loving person' without others to affirm with appreciation."¹ If a communication episode is disappointing, it doesn't usually make sense to blame just one person. It's usually better to ask, "How did *we* handle this situation, and what can *we* do to make it better?" ●

Models of Communication

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1.2: Compare and contrast linear and transactional models of communication.

One way to explore our definition of communication in more depth is to look at models that describe what happens when two or more people interact. Communication researchers have identified two main models: linear and transactional.

Linear Model

Until almost a century ago, researchers viewed messages as something that one person "sends" to another.² In this **linear communication model**, communication is like tossing a ball: A **sender encodes** ideas and feelings into some sort of **message** and then conveys them to a **receiver** who **decodes** them. The idea is that people take turns being either a sender or a receiver.

If you recall our discussion of communication as a process, you'll see that this model doesn't capture the fact that communication is continuously unfolding. Nonetheless, it does offer some good insights.

One important element of the linear model is the communication **channel**—the method by which a message is conveyed between people. In addition to face-to-face contact, people may engage in **mediated communication**, meaning that they trade messages through a medium such as a phone, computer, or tablet.

The linear model also introduces the concept of **noise**—a term that describes any force that interferes with effective communication. Three types of noise can disrupt communication: external, physiological, and psychological.

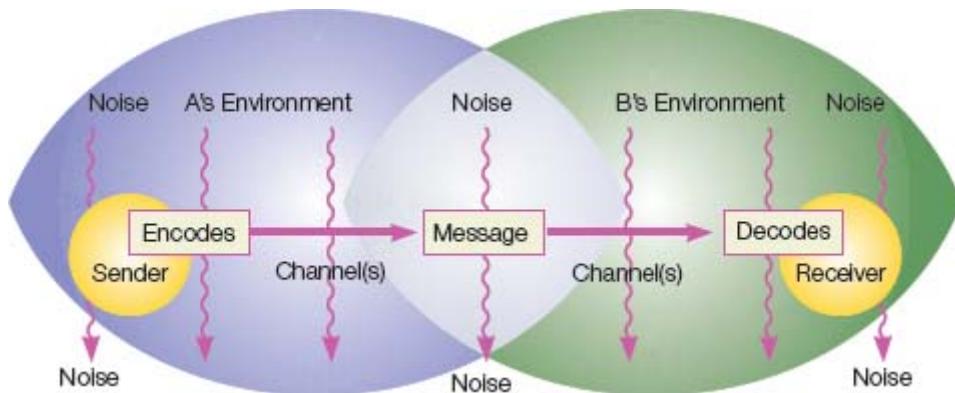


FIGURE 1.1 Linear Communication Model

- *External noise* includes factors outside of a person that are distracting or make hearing difficult. For instance, an incoming text or a noisy lawnmower might divert your attention during a classroom lecture.
- *Physiological noise* involves biological factors in the receiver or sender that interfere with accurate reception. As you have probably noticed, it's difficult to listen well if you are tired, sick, or hungry.
- *Psychological noise* refers to thoughts and feelings that interfere with the ability to express or understand a message accurately. For instance, if you believe that someone dislikes you, you may perceive everything that person says in a negative way.

A linear model (Figure 1.1) shows that communication occurs in an **environment**, which includes both the circumstances and physical location of a communication episode *and* the personal experiences and cultural backgrounds that each person brings to the encounter. Every communicator occupies a somewhat different environment. It's easy to imagine how your position on economic issues might differ depending on whether you are struggling financially or are well off, and how your thoughts on immigration reform might depend on how long your family has lived in this country.

If the participants' shared environment is small, communication may be challenging. However, there is always some overlap in terms of goals and experiences we have in common. Communicating with people who are different than you can be rewarding. In [Chapter 3](#), we discuss the advantages and skills involved in intercultural communication, and throughout this book we offer ways to bridge the gaps that separate each of us to varying degrees.

Transactional Model

The **transactional communication model** does a better job of capturing the fact that communication is a process by showing that people usually send and receive messages simultaneously. Consider what happens when someone yawns as you complain about your family, or a new friend blushes at one of your jokes. Even though you are a "sender" in these episodes, you are at the same time a "receiver" who is aware of your friend's reactions. Some types of mass communication flow in a one-way, linear manner. But most personal communication involves simultaneous, two-way exchanges.³ As depicted in [Figure 1.2](#), the roles of sender and receiver that seemed separate in the linear model are now redefined as those of "communicators," reflecting the fact that we receive, decode, and respond to other people's behavior at the same time they receive and respond to ours.

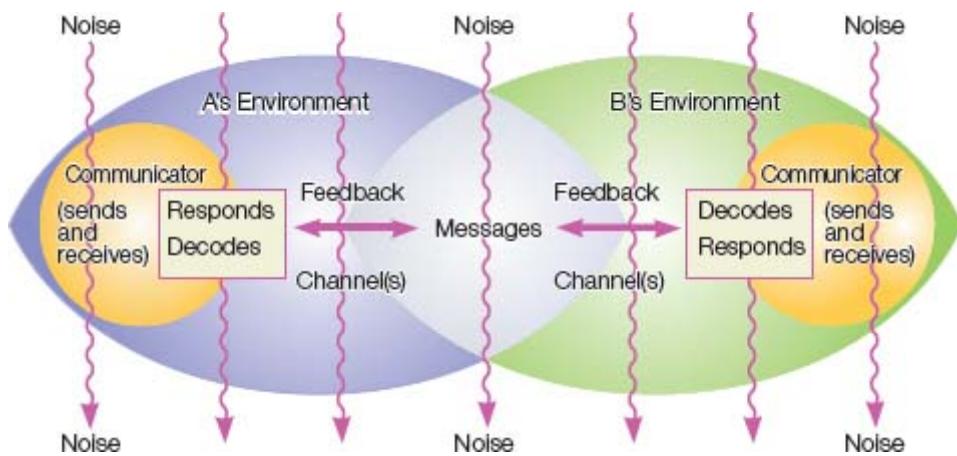


FIGURE 1.2 Transactional Communication Model

A receiver's perceivable response to a sender's message is called **feedback**. Some feedback is nonverbal—smiles, frowns, eye rolling, and so on. Feedback may be oral or written, too. For example, the comments that followers add to your post (or the lack thereof) give you an idea how your message has been received. Even messages once considered one-way communication, such as advertisements and news stories, now include options for influential feedback. For example, in 2017, Nivea skin care quickly pulled an advertising campaign

with the tagline “White Is Purity” after White supremacists praised it on social media and others condemned the slogan as racist.⁴

Another difference between the liner and transactional model is that the latter includes messages that aren’t deliberately encoded. Your facial expressions, gestures, postures, and vocal tones may offer information to others even when you are unaware of them. For this reason, the transactional model replaces the term *encodes* with the broader term *responds* to include both intentional and unintentional actions.⁵



PAUSE TO REFLECT *How “Noisy” Is Your Communication?*

1. Pause for a moment to consider your environment. Write down at least three examples of external noise that are present. (Remember that noise includes more than sounds.) _____

2. What types of physiological noise are you experiencing right now? _____

3. Think of a recent conversation. Write down, not what you said, but what you were thinking. Did psychological noise interfere with your ability to listen well? _____

Communication Contexts



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1.3: Distinguish between communication in a variety of contexts.

Both the linear and transactional models reflect the reality that communication is influenced by the people engaged in it and the situations in which it occurs. Consider your communication in the last 24 hours. This will no doubt highlight the fact that you present yourself differently depending on circumstances. For example, you may not behave the same way with your boss as with your best friend, and you are likely to say different things in a work group than with your family. In this section, we consider six communication contexts, each with its own characteristics, advantages, and challenges.



Intrapersonal Communication

Intrapersonal communication is “communicating with oneself.”⁶ One way each of us communicates internally is by listening to the little voice in our heads. (Notice what your inner voice is saying now. Perhaps something like “What little voice? I don’t have any little voice!”) Intrapersonal communication affects almost every type of interaction. The way you handle a conversation with a friend depends on the intrapersonal communication that precedes or accompanies what you say (“I’m making a fool of myself ” or “She likes me!”). [Chapter 2](#) describes the perception process we use in everyday situations, and part of [Chapter 13](#) focuses on intrapersonal communication that can minimize anxiety when you speak in public.



Dyadic/Interpersonal Communication

Social scientists call it **dyadic communication** when two people interact. Dyadic communication can occur in person or via mediated channels such as instant messaging and social networking sites. It’s common to find people communicating one-on-one in a variety of settings ranging from playgrounds to airports to shopping malls. Dyadic communication is sometimes considered identical to interpersonal communication, but, as [Chapter 7](#) explains, not all two-person interaction is interpersonal. And you’ll learn that the qualities that characterize interpersonal communication can also exist in groups of three or more.



Small Group Communication

In **small group communication**, every person can participate actively with other members. Your family is a group. So are an athletic team, several students working on a project, and coworkers in different countries who are connected online. Whether small groups meet in person or via mediated channels, they exhibit

characteristics that are not present in a dyad. In a dyad, there is no such thing as a majority. In a group, however, the majority of members can exert pressure, either consciously or unconsciously, on those in the minority. Majority pressures can lead members to take risks they would not take if they were alone or in a dyad. However, groups may also be more creative than dyads, if only because there are more people from whom to draw ideas. Groups are so important that [Chapter 10](#) focuses extensively on them.



Organizational Communication

Larger, more permanent collections of people engage in **organizational communication** when they collectively work to achieve goals. Organizations operate for a variety of reasons: business (such as a corporation), nonprofit (such as an aid organization), political (a government or political action group), health (a hospital or doctor's office), and recreational (a YMCA or sports league). Organizational communication differs from communication in other contexts. Specific roles (sales associate, general manager, corporate trainer) shape what people communicate about and their relationship to one another. Culture also plays a role. Each organization develops its own culture, which can be useful to consider when you apply for jobs and communicate in the workplace, the focus of [Chapters 10](#) and [11](#).



Public Communication

Public communication occurs when a group becomes too large for all members to contribute. It is generally characterized by an unequal amount of speaking. One or more people are likely to deliver their remarks to the remaining members, who act as an audience. Even when audience members have the chance to post questions and comments (either in person or online), in public communication, the speakers are still mostly in control and do the majority of the talking. And public speakers usually have a greater chance to plan and structure their remarks than do communicators in smaller settings. For this reason, [Chapters 12](#) through [14](#) describe the steps you can take to prepare and deliver effective speeches.



Mass Communication

Mass communication consists of messages that are transmitted to large, widespread audiences via electronic and print media such as websites, magazines, television, radio, and blogs. Most mass messages are aimed at a large audience without personal contact between sender and receivers. However, social media have a way of blurring boundaries. Sometimes, what begins as mass communication (e.g., a Twitter feed from a celebrity with a mass following) becomes more personal (as when celebrities respond to particular followers). In addition, many of the messages sent via mass communication channels are developed, or at least financed, by large organizations such as advertisers and movie studios. Finally, traditional media outlets, such as newspapers and broadcast television, are controlled by gatekeepers (e.g., editors, producers, executives, corporate and government sponsors) who determine the timing and content of messages. ●



PAUSE TO REFLECT

Which Contexts Suit You Best?

1. In which of the contexts described here do you feel most comfortable as a communicator? _____

2. In which contexts would you most like to build your skills? Why? _____

The Unique Context of Social Media

- **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1.4:** Describe factors that make social media unique and tips for communicating well in that environment.

Until recently, mass communication was primarily a corporate or government product created by professional gatekeepers. **Social media** revolutionized this practice by allowing ordinary individuals to use communication technology to

communicate with networks of people via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and similar platforms. Here are three qualities that make social media a communication context like no other.

Audience size varies vastly.

Whereas mass media messages are aimed at large audiences, the intended audience in social media can vary from a few receivers via a group text to thousands or even millions with a video or tweet. Some homemade messages go viral with viewership that rivals commercial programs. For example, video of a prank in which brothers convinced their sister that zombies were taking over the city has drawn more than 23 million viewers on YouTube.⁷ That's about three times more people than tune in to *Saturday Night Live* each week.⁸

Users generate their own content.

Unlike traditional forms of mass communication, social media are also distinguished by user-generated content. The term **Web 2.0** refers to the capability of everyday people to not only consume mediated messages, but to personally create them. You decide what goes on your Facebook page and what topics are covered in your YouTube video. There generally aren't any market researchers to tell you what the audience wants. No staff writers, editors, designers, or marketers craft your message. It's all up to you.

Networks are highly diverse.

Social media challenge the conventional idea that we communicate differently with close friends than with strangers. For example, Twitter offers an interesting blend of messages from real friends and celebrities, "strangely intimate and at the same time celebrity-obsessed," as one observer put it, adding that "you glance at your Twitter feed over that first cup of coffee, and in a few seconds, you find out that your nephew got into med school and Shaquille O'Neal just finished a cardio workout in Phoenix."⁹ A person's social media network may include friends, relatives, potential employers, celebrities, and much more. Managing so many "audiences" at one time can be challenging. We offer some tips on the next page for skillful use of social media. ●



TIPS & REMINDERS

5

Tips for Communicating Well on Social Media

Imagine seeing an “I LOVE YOU” message posted by someone else on your sweetheart’s Facebook page. That happened to Brittany, who posted the enraged reply: “F--- off b---- his in relationship.” The atrocious spelling and grammar were bad enough, but it turns out that the “other woman” was her boyfriend’s mother.¹⁰ Here are some tips for communicating effectively in the unique blend of public and private communication that social media offers.

1. Choose the best medium.

Sometimes the choice is a no-brainer. If a friend says “call me while I’m on the road,” you know what to do. If your boss or professor only responds to emails, then it would be foolish to use any other approach. But in many situations, you have a wide array of options. Anyone who has been dumped via a text message knows that it only adds insult to injury. Just because an option exists doesn’t mean you should use it. Many difficult conversations are better when conducted face to face. These include, but aren’t limited to, sharing really bad news, ending a relationship, and trying to resolve a conflict. In situations like these, a useful guideline is what’s been called the “platinum rule”: Treat others as *they* would like to be treated. Ask yourself how the recipient of your message would prefer to receive it and act accordingly.

2. Think before you post.

It’s almost guaranteed that organizations (and many people) monitor social media for anything that mentions them. This means that potential employers and others are likely to see what you post about them. Consider the fate of a high school student who tweeted rude remarks about other students while visiting a college she hoped to attend. University decision makers saw her posts and put her on the “no” list. The author of “They Loved Your GPA, Then They Saw Your Tweets” encourages people to consider that anything they post is public information.¹¹

3. Adapt to the audience.

Short, casual messages have become so common online that people sometimes forget to use different etiquette for professional communication. Beginning an email to your boss or professor with “Hey” or no salutation at all can come off as disrespectful. Likewise, don’t forget to say “please” and “thank you.” Social media encompasses a range of audiences and contexts. Consider who will (or might) read each of your messages.

4. Respect others’ need for undivided attention.

If you have been texting and emailing since you could walk, it might be hard to believe that some people are insulted when you divide your attention between them and your phone. As one observer put it, “While a quick log-on may seem, to the user, a harmless break, others in the room receive it as a silent dismissal. It announces: ‘I’m not interested.’”¹² Chapter 5 includes more about the challenges of listening effectively. Even if you think you can multitask and still listen well, it’s important to realize that others may perceive you as being rude.

5. Keep your cool.

If you’ve ever posted a snide or offensive comment on a blog, shot back a nasty reply to a text or IM, or forwarded an embarrassing email, you know that it’s easier to behave badly when the recipient of your message isn’t right in front of you. The tendency to transmit messages without considering their consequences is called **disinhibition**, and research shows that it’s more likely in mediated channels than it is face to face.¹³ Sometimes communicators take disinhibition to the extreme, blasting off angry—even vicious—emails, text messages, and website postings. The common term for these outbursts is **flaming**. Flames are problematic because of their emotional and irreversible nature. Even after you’ve calmed down, the aggressive message can still cause pain and damage your reputation.

Communication Competence

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1.5: Identify characteristics of effective communication and competent communicators.

It's easy to recognize good communicators and even easier to spot poor ones. But what is it that makes someone an effective communicator? Answering this question has been one of the leading challenges for communication scholars. Most agree that **communication competence** involves achieving one's goals in a manner that, ideally, maintains or enhances the relationship in which it occurs.^{14,15}

This definition suggests several important characteristics of effective communication. For one, using a variety of communication styles can be effective. Also, competent behavior varies by situation and from one relationship to another. And, finally and perhaps most significantly, competence can be learned. With these principles in mind, here are nine implications that arise from research about competent communication in any setting.

There is no “ideal” way to communicate.

Some very successful people are serious, whereas others use humor. Some are loud, whereas others are quiet. And some people are straightforward, whereas others prefer subtlety. Just as there are many kinds of beautiful music and art, there are many kinds of competent communication.

Competence is situational.

It's a mistake to think that communication competence is a trait that a person either possesses or lacks. It's more accurate to talk about *degrees* or *areas* of competence. You might be quite skillful socializing at a party but less successful making small talk with professors at office hours. It's likely that your communication competence varies from one situation to another.

Competence is relational.

Because communication is transactional, something we do *with* others rather than *to* them, behavior that is competent in one context or culture isn't necessarily competent in others. Consider this real-life example: After two friends, Rafa and James, had a meal together, James thanked Rafa for paying the bill. Rafa replied, “Don't be stupid!” James was hurt by what he considered a gruff response. But to Rafa, who is from Spain, “Don't be stupid” is a friendly way of saying, “We are such close friends that a ‘thank you’ is unnecessary.”¹⁶ Such experiences demonstrate that competence is cultural and personal.



Competence can be learned.

Communication involves a set of skills that can be learned. Systematic education (such as the class in which you are now enrolled) and a little training can produce dramatic results.^{17, 18} We also acquire communication skills through a process of trial-and-error and observation. We learn from our own successes and failures and by seeing what works well, and not so well, for the people around us.

Competent communicators are flexible.

Many poor communicators are easy to spot by their limited range of responses. Some are chronic jokers. Others always seem to be argumentative. Still others are quiet in almost every situation. Like a piano player who knows only one tune or a chef who can prepare only a few dishes, these people rely on a small range of responses again and again, whether or not they are successful. By contrast, competent communicators have a wide repertoire from which to draw, and they have the ability to choose the most appropriate behavior for a given situation.

Competent communicators are empathic.

You have the best chance of developing an effective message when you understand the other person's point of view. And because other people don't always express their thoughts and feelings clearly, the ability to *imagine* how an issue might look from someone else's viewpoint is also an important skill. This is why listening is so important. Not only does it help us understand others, it also gives us information to develop strategies about how to best influence them. Because listening is such an important element of communicative competence, [Chapter 5](#) is devoted to the topic.

Competent communicators are cognitively complex.

Cognitive complexity is the ability to understand issues from a variety of perspectives. For instance, imagine that your longtime friend seems angry with you. Is your friend offended by something you have done? Or did something upsetting happen earlier in the day? Or perhaps nothing at all is wrong, and you're just being overly sensitive. Researchers have found that analyzing the behavior of others can lead to greater conversational sensitivity.¹⁹ However, the same researchers found that, although participants in their study were *capable* of paying attention to important conversational cues, they often didn't put in the effort to do so, perhaps because they were preoccupied or distracted.

Competent communicators self-monitor.

Psychologists use the term **self-monitoring** to describe the process of paying close attention to our own behavior and using these observations to shape the way we behave. Used wisely, this is a valuable skill. High self-monitors are more likely than low self-monitors to develop relationships with many types of people.²⁰ It's possible to take the desire to please and fit in too far, however. One mother of a 3-year-old reflects, "I disciplined my son and he threw a tantrum that I thought was so funny that I disciplined him again just so I could video it. . . . After uploading it on Instagram I thought, 'What did I just do?'"²¹ We return to the topic of self-monitoring in [Chapter 2](#).

Competent communicators are committed.

One feature that distinguishes effective communication in almost any context is commitment. People who are emotionally committed to a relationship are more likely than others to talk about difficult subjects and to share personal information about themselves, which can strengthen relationships and contribute to a heightened sense of well-being.²² Answer the questions below to identify communication goals that are important to you.



PAUSE TO REFLECT

What Are Your Communication Goals?

1. Describe the most skillful communicator you know. What makes this person so effective? How can you adapt that skill to your own repertoire? _____

2. In what situations are you at your best as a communicator? At your worst? _____

3. Describe three communication goals you would like to achieve. (For example, you might say, "I would like to listen more without interrupting.") _____



ASK YOURSELF

What Type of Communicator Are You?

Answer the questions below for insight about your approach as a communicator.

1. You are puzzled when a friend says, "The complex houses married and single soldiers and their families."²³ What are you most likely to do?
 - a. Tune out and hope your friend changes topics soon.

- b. Declare, “You’re not making any sense.”
- c. Ask questions to be sure you understand what your friend means.
- d. Nod as if you understand, even if you don’t.
- _____ 2. You are working frantically to meet a project deadline when your phone rings. It’s your roommate, who immediately launches into a long, involved story. What would you probably do?
- a. Pretend to listen while you continue to work on your project.
- b. Interrupt to say, “I don’t have time for this now.”
- c. Listen for a few minutes and then say, “I’d like to hear more about this, but can I call you back later?”
- d. Listen and ask questions so you don’t hurt your friend’s feelings.
- _____ 3. You are assigned to a task force to consider the parking problem on campus. Which of the following are you most likely to do during task force meetings?
- a. Talk in a quiet voice to the person next to you.
- b. Express frustration if meetings aren’t productive.
- c. Ask questions and take notes.
- d. Spend most of your time listening quietly.
- _____ 4. Your family is celebrating your brother’s high school graduation at dinner. What are you most likely to do at the table?
- a. Ask for dessert in a takeout container so you can leave early.
- b. Keep your cell phone handy so you won’t miss anything your friends post.
- c. Give your undivided attention as your brother talks about his big day.
- d. Paste a smile on your face and make the best of the situation, even if you feel bored.

INTERPRETING YOUR RESPONSES !

For insight about your communication style, see which of the following best describes your answers.

(More than one may apply.)

Distracted Communicator If you answered “a” to two or more questions, you have a tendency to disengage. Perhaps you are shy, introverted, or easily distracted. You needn’t change your personality, but you are likely to build stronger relationships if you strive to be more attentive and proactive. Active listening tips in [Chapter 5](#) may be helpful.

Impatient Communicator If you answered “b” to two or more questions, you tend to be a straight-talker who doesn’t like delays or ambiguity. Honesty can be a virtue, but be careful not to overdo it. Your tendency to “tell it like it is” may come off as bossy or domineering at times. The perception-checking technique in [Chapter 2](#) offers a good way to balance your desire for the truth with concern for other people’s feelings.

Tactful Communicator If you answered “c” to two or more questions, you tend to balance assertiveness with good listening skills. Your willingness to actively engage with people is an asset. Use tips throughout the book to enhance your already-strong communication skills.

Accommodator If you answered “d” to two or more questions, you tend to put others’ needs ahead of your own. People probably appreciate your listening skills but wish you would speak up more. Saying what you feel and sharing your ideas can be

an asset both personally and professionally. Tips in [Chapters 9](#) and [13](#) may help you become more assertive and confident without losing your thoughtful consideration for others.

P.S. If the quotation in question 1 seems perplexing, consider that, in this case, “complex” is a noun.

Misconceptions About Communication

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1.6:** Explain how misconceptions about communication can create problems.

Having talked about what communication is, we conclude here by reaffirming some things it is not. Correcting misconceptions is important because following them can get you into trouble. Here we set the record straight on how communication actually functions.

Myth 1: Communication requires complete understanding.

Most people operate on the flawed assumption that the goal of all communication is to maximize understanding between communicators. Although some agreement is necessary, there are some types of communication in which complete comprehension isn’t the primary goal.²⁴ For example, when people in the United States ask social questions such as “How’s it going?” they typically are not interested in the details of how someone is doing. And sometimes people want to be purposely ambiguous, as when they decline unwanted invitations by saying “I can’t make it.” If the goal was to be perfectly clear, they might say, “I don’t really feel like spending time with you.”

Myth 2: Communication can solve all problems.

“If I could just communicate better . . .” is the sad refrain of many unhappy people who believe that, if they could express themselves better, their relationships would improve. Although this is sometimes true, it’s an exaggeration to say that communicating, even communicating clearly, is a guaranteed cure-all.

Myth 3: Communication is good.

In truth, communication is neither good nor bad in itself. Rather, its value comes from the way it is used. Communication can be a tool for expressing warm feelings and useful facts, but under different circumstances the same words and actions can cause pain.

Myth 4: Meanings are in words.

There’s an axiom popular among communication scholars: *Meanings are in people, not in words*. By that, they mean that it’s a mistake to think that just because you use a word in one way, others will do so, too. For example, some people may be insulted if you call them “savage,” whereas your friends may interpret it as a compliment meaning that they are bold and confident. In [Chapter 4](#) you’ll read a great deal more about the problems that come from mistakenly assuming that meanings reside in words.

Myth 5: Communication is simple.

Most people assume that communication is an aptitude that people develop without the need for training—rather like breathing. After all, we’ve been swapping ideas with one another since early childhood, and there are lots of people who communicate pretty well without ever having had a class on the subject. However, this idea of communication as a natural ability is a gross oversimplification.

Communication skills are a lot like athletic ability: Even the most inept of us can learn to be more effective with training and practice, and those who are talented can always become better.

Communication in itself is neither good nor bad. What matters is how you use it.

Myth 6: More communication is always better.

Although it's certainly true that not communicating enough is a mistake, there are also situations when *too much* communication is a problem. Sometimes we "talk a problem to death," going over the same ground again and again without making any headway. And there are times when communicating too much can actually aggravate a problem. We've all had the experience of "talking ourselves into a hole"—making a bad situation worse by pursuing it too far. One key to successful communication, then, is to share an adequate amount of information in a skillful manner. Exploring ways to do that is one of the major goals of this book. ●

COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS

Communication: What and Why

Communication Is . . .

- Symbolic
- A process
- Irreversible
- Relational, not individual

Models of Communication

Linear Model

- A sender encodes ideas and conveys them to a receiver who decodes them.
- Messages are conveyed via channels, either face-to-face or mediated.
- Three types of noise can disrupt communication—external (outside of a person), physiological (biological factors within a person), and psychological (thoughts and feelings).
- Environment includes physical location, personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, and more.



Transactional Model

- We send and receive messages simultaneously.

- Feedback is a receiver's perceptible response to a message.
- Feedback may be intentional or unintentional.



Communication Contexts

- Intrapersonal communication is communication with oneself.
- Dyadic communication involves two persons interacting, whether or not it is interpersonal.
- In small group communication, every person can participate actively with the other members.
- People engage in organizational communication when they collectively work to achieve goals.
- Public communication occurs when a group is too large for all members to contribute, as when an audience listens to a lecture.
- Mass communication consists of messages that are transmitted to large, widespread audiences via electronic and print media.

Unique Context of Social Media

- Audience size varies vastly.
- Users generate their own content.
- Networks are highly diverse.

5 Tips for Using Social Media Well

- Choose the best medium.
- Think before you post.
- Adapt to the audience.
- Respect others' need for undivided attention.
- Keep your cool.

Communication Competence

We use communication to achieve goals in a manner that, ideally, maintains or enhances the relationship in which it occurs.

- There is no “ideal” way to communicate.
- Competence is situational.
- Competence is relational.
- Competence can be learned.
- Competent communicators are flexible.
- Competent communicators are empathic.
- Competent communicators are cognitively complex.
- Competent communicators self-monitor.
- Competent communicators are committed.



Myths About Communication

- Communication requires complete understanding.
- Communication can solve all problems.
- Communication is good.
- Meanings are in words.
- Communication is simple.
- More communication is always better.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Show Your Communication Know-How



1.1: Define communication and explain its essential characteristics.

Imagine a conversation the people pictured above might be having. Explain how the conversation you imagine illustrates the four key elements of communication described on [page 2](#).

KEY TERMS: [communication](#), [symbols](#)

1.2: Compare and contrast linear and transactional models of communication.

Based on the linear model, if one person in the picture above is talking, what role are the others playing? How does this differ from a description of their communication based on the transactional model?

KEY TERMS: [linear communication model](#), [sender encodes](#), [message](#), [receiver](#), [decodes](#), [channel](#), [mediated communication](#), [noise](#), [environments](#), [transactional communication model](#), [feedback](#)

1.3: Distinguish between communication in a variety of contexts.

Imagine that you've been offered a great job far away from where you live now. Describe the different ways you might share that news with a close friend, your boss, and your current work group. In what ways would you adapt your message to suit each relationship?

KEY TERMS: intrapersonal communication, dyadic communication, small group communication, organizational communication, public communication, mass communication



1.4: Describe factors that make social media unique and tips for communicating well in that environment.

You and your significant other have just split up. Would you announce that via social media? Why or why not? If so, how would you craft your social media message(s) to be appropriate for different audiences (your friends, your boss, your family, and so on)?

KEY TERMS: social media, Web 2.0

1.5: Identify characteristics of effective communication and competent communicators.

Rate yourself from 1 to 10 in terms of how well your communication reflects each of the following: empathy, cognitive complexity, self-monitoring, and commitment. Which of these are you good at? Which might you improve and how?

KEY TERMS: communication competence, cognitive complexity, self-monitoring, disinhibition, flaming



1.6: Explain how misconceptions about communication can create problems.

Which misconceptions about communication (page 12) have caused the greatest problems in your life? How can you approach similar situations more constructively in the future?

2

The Self, Perception, and Communication

The Self-Concept

How does communication shape and reflect your concept of self?

Distorted Perceptions

How does perceptual bias influence your view of self and how you view others?

What are some misconceptions about gender?

Empathy and Emotion

What is the difference between empathy and sympathy?

How can you enhance your emotional intelligence?

Identity Management

What communication strategies do people use to establish a favorable social identity?

When do social media make people feel better (or worse) about themselves?



The Self-Concept Defined

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2.1: Explain the self-concept and its relation to self-esteem in human communication.

Individuals have a sense of what makes them different from other people and how they are alike. These perceptions are based largely on communication with others.



Take a few minutes to list as many of your traits and characteristics as you can. Try to include all the characteristics that describe you, including:

- *Physical characteristics* (e.g., tall, petite, slim, overweight, dark-skinned, light-skinned, brown hair, curly hair, straight hair, ugly, attractive, etc.)
- *Social traits* (e.g., outgoing, shy, talkative, quiet, funny, serious, generous, selfish, compassionate, callous, etc.)
- *Social roles* (e.g., brother, sister, mother, father, friend, student, teammate, employee, etc.)
- *Defining interests* (e.g., blogger, gamer, musician, actor, athlete, politician, journalist, etc.)
- *Talents* (e.g., intellectual, musical, artistic, dramatic, athletic, etc.)
- *Your belief systems* (e.g., Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Mormon, atheist, libertarian, progressive, etc.)

Self-Concept

The items on your list contribute to your **self-concept**, a set of relatively stable perceptions each individual holds about themselves. It includes your conception of what is unique about you and what makes you different from others. The self-concept is complex. Even a list of 20 or 30 terms would be only a partial description of the factors that describe you.

To be more complete, your list would have to be hundreds—or even thousands—of words long. Of course, not all items would be equally important. For example, you might define yourself primarily by your skills and accomplishments, while others might define themselves primarily by social roles or physical appearance.

Self-Esteem

An important element of the self-concept is **self-esteem**, a personal evaluation of self-worth. For example, if your self-concept includes being athletic or tall, your self-esteem may be shaped by how you feel about these

qualities, as in “I’m glad that I am athletic” or “I am embarrassed about being so tall.”

There is a powerful link between communication and self-esteem. It’s probably no surprise that people who have close, supportive interactions with others are more likely to have high self-esteem.^{1,2} And the same principle works in reverse. People with high self-esteem are more likely than others to take a chance on starting new relationships³ and showing affection to others,⁴ which can enhance their feelings of self-esteem even more.

Despite its obvious benefits, self-esteem doesn’t guarantee success in personal and professional relationships.⁵ People with an exaggerated sense of self-worth may *think* they make a good impression on others, even if they don’t. In fact, people with an inflated sense of self-worth may irritate others by coming across as condescending know-it-alls.⁶ ●

Communication and the Self-Concept

● **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2.2:** Analyze ways that communication both influences and reflects the self-concept.

To better understand the relationship between the self-concept and communication, let’s consider some specific ways that they influence each other. This section explores four factors that affect and reflect people’s sense of self.

Significant Others

In a classic experiment, researchers told teachers that 20 percent of the children in a certain elementary school showed unusual potential for intellectual growth.⁷ The names of the 20 percent were drawn randomly. However, eight months later, these unusually “smart” children showed significantly greater intellectual achievement than did the remaining children, who had not been singled out for the teachers’ attention. This example highlights some of the ways that self-concept is formed and how it influences people’s behavior.

The concept of **reflected appraisal** describes how individuals develop an image of themselves based on the way they think others view them. As people learn to speak and understand language, verbal messages—both positive and negative—contribute to their developing self-concept, particularly when they come from what social scientists call **significant others**—people whose opinions an individual especially values. In the study just mentioned, the teachers gave the “smart” students more time to answer questions and provided more feedback to them than to other students. The children who were singled out did better, not because they were more innately intelligent than their classmates, but because their teachers (significant others) treated them as if they were. Everyone has probably been influenced, for better or worse, by a teacher, coach, close friend, or relative who has left an imprint on how they view themselves.

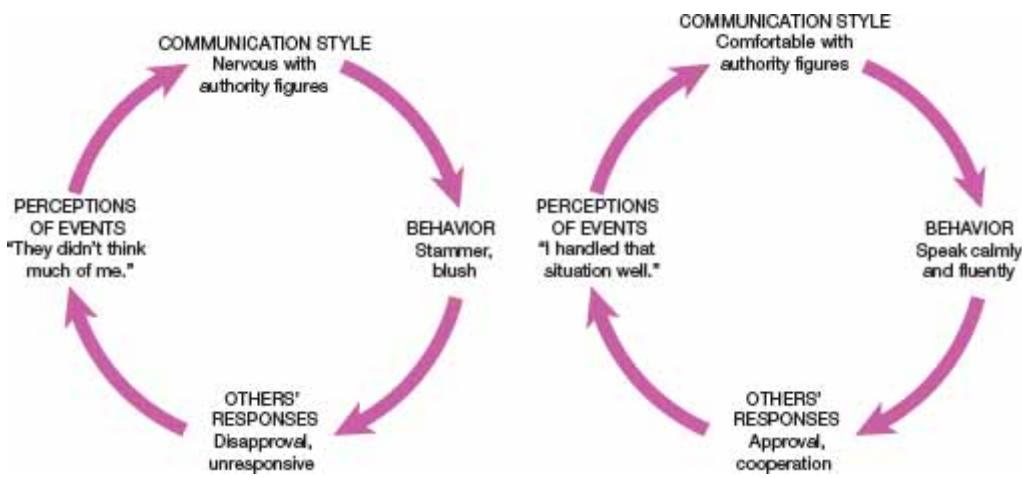


FIGURE 2.1 The Relationship Between the Self-Concept and Behavior

Mass Media

As you may remember from [Chapter 1](#), communication includes messages that people receive in magazines, movies, the news, television shows, and so on. One of the most obvious impacts of mass media is the way people evaluate their appearance. In the United States, adolescent boys are likely to feel that they are not as slender or as muscular as society expects them to be,⁸ and young women frequently exposed to media images are more likely than others to feel that they are overweight and to have eating disorders.⁹ By contrast, in cultures in which people are exposed to relatively few Western media images, eating disorders are less common.¹⁰

Culture

Cultural expectations affect the self-concept in both obvious and subtle ways. As you'll read in [Chapter 3](#), most non-Western cultures, including Asian ones, are traditionally considered to be collective. In collectivistic cultures, a person builds identity by belonging to a group. If you have ever worked on a group assignment and been graded on how well the team as a whole performed rather than on your individual contributions, you have experienced collectivism to some extent. In collectivist cultures, feelings of pride and self-worth are likely to be shaped by the behavior of other members of the community.

Expectations

A **self-fulfilling prophecy** occurs when a person's expectation of an outcome and that person's subsequent behavior make the outcome more likely to occur than would otherwise have been true. One type of self-fulfilling prophecy occurs when your expectations influence your own behavior. For example, if you anticipate having a good (or terrible) time at a party, your expectations might lead you to act in ways that shape the outcome to fit your prediction.

Another type of self-fulfilling prophecy occurs when another person's expectations influence your actions.¹¹ Perhaps an early mentor said you were good (or bad) at sports. You may behave in ways that support that assessment of your abilities, even if you don't realize you are doing so. Of course, self-fulfilling prophecies only go so far. Believing you'll do well in a job interview when you're clearly not prepared or qualified for the position is unrealistic. And individuals may defy expectations, as when a child who is discouraged and belittled grows up to be a confident adult.

All in all, communication is so intertwined with self-concept that it's all but impossible to say which influences the other more. [Figure 2.1](#) on the previous page illustrates how the self-concept both shapes and is shaped by communication behavior. If, for example, one element of your self-concept leads you to be "nervous with authority figures," you'll probably behave in nervous ways during a job interview or interaction with a professor. That nervous behavior is likely to influence how the other person views your personality, which in turn will shape how they respond to you—probably in ways that reinforce the self-concept you

brought to the event. Finally, the responses of others are likely to affect the way you anticipate future events—other job interviews, meetings with professors, and so on. This cycle illustrates the chicken-and-egg nature of communication and the self-concept. ●



PAUSE TO REFLECT

What Shapes Your Self-Concept?

1. Think of someone who has had a significant impact on you, for better or worse. Describe how this person has communicated with you and how their messages have influenced your self-concept and self-worth.

2. What cultural expectations have affected your self-concept in terms of being a “good” daughter, son, friend, student, partner, or any of the other roles you play?

3. If you had to predict how well you will do in the rest of your academic career, what would you say? How might you behave to increase the chances of this becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy? On the other hand, what behaviors might prevent your prediction from coming true?

Mistaken Attributions and Communication



- LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2.3:** Recognize tendencies that lead to distorted perceptions of yourself and others and how those distortions affect communication.

So far, this chapter has covered the way people perceive themselves and others. These perceptions can be highly influential, but they aren’t infallible. In fact, humans are prone to perceptual bias.

Some of the biggest problems that interfere with understanding and agreement arise from errors in interpretation, or what psychologists call **attribution**—the process of attaching meaning to behavior. If you assume that someone who is standing on a street corner in rumpled clothing is homeless, you’re making an attribution. (Someone else might assume that the same person is a jogger or a construction worker.) Individuals attribute meaning both to their own actions and to the actions of others, but they often use different yardsticks. Here we explore four perceptual errors that can lead to inaccurate attributions—and to troublesome

communication.¹² By becoming aware of these errors, you can better guard against them and avoid unnecessary conflicts.

Individuals typically judge themselves more charitably than they judge others.

In an attempt to convince themselves and others that the positive face they show the world is true, people tend to judge themselves in the most generous terms possible. Social scientists have labeled this tendency the **self-serving bias**.¹³ When *you* suffer a setback, you may find explanations outside yourself (“I got fired because my boss is a jerk.”). However, when *others* suffer, you are likely to blame the problem on their personal qualities (“She got fired because she didn’t work hard enough.”). Uncharitable attitudes toward others can, of course, affect communication. Your harsh opinions of others can lead you to send judgmental messages. At the same time, you may feel defensive when others interpret your behavior less charitably than you do yourself.

People often pay more attention to negative impressions than to positive ones.

Consider a time when you received feedback about your contributions to a team project. Even if 9 out of 10 comments were positive, the negative one probably hit you hardest and stayed with you longest. Scientists speculate that humans’ sensitivity to negative information may have a survival advantage. Spotting threatening elements in the environment is sometimes more important than focusing on safe ones.¹⁴ But this sensitivity can hurt your relationships. Focusing on one unappealing quality, especially in someone you barely know, can lead you to reject them for reasons that might not matter very much in the long run.



When individuals do perceive positive qualities, they tend to overgeneralize.

When someone impresses you favorably in some way, you are likely to assume they have other positive qualities as well—an attribution error that scholars call a **halo effect**.¹⁵ For example, individuals often suppose that physically attractive people are more intelligent than others, even when they aren't.¹⁶ Of course, the halo effect may dim over time if the person doesn't turn out to be as remarkable as you initially assumed. And sometimes a halo effect emerges over time. Individuals who didn't strike you as physically remarkable at first may become beautiful in your eyes if they turn out to have great personalities.¹⁷

People gravitate to the familiar.

Individuals tend to judge those who seem similar to them more favorably than those who don't. In one study, participants were more likely to assume that a person profiled on Facebook was likeable if they perceived that they had something in common, as in attending the same university.¹⁸ It pays to remember, however, that people don't always think or behave alike. When there are differences, it's important to make an effort to talk respectfully about them. As one blogger puts it, “Expressing your views is supposed to encourage conversation and gain/provide new perspectives. . . . not to demean and disprove the beliefs of those to whom you do not agree.”¹⁹ ●

Myths About Gendered Communication

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2.4: Counteract myths about gendered communication with more accurate information.

One aspect of the self-concept involves gender. Gendered expectations often begin the moment people are born—or even before, with the selection of a name, clothing, toys, and nursery décor. Yet people don’t often question cultural assumptions. Here are three common misconceptions about gender.



Myth 1: Sex and gender are the same.

In conversation, it’s easy to use the terms *sex* and *gender* interchangeably. In fact, **sex** is a biological category (e.g., male, female), whereas **gender** is a socially constructed set of expectations about what it means to be “masculine,” “feminine,” “transgender,” or so on. It’s antiquated to think that people with certain chromosomes (i.e., women) should communicate exclusively in a stereotypically feminine way and that those with other chromosomes (i.e., men) should always act masculine. Indeed, there are obvious advantages to embodying a range of communication styles regardless of your biological sex.

Myth 2: People are either male or female.

Physical attributes and hormone levels make biological sex a more complicated formula than you might think. *Intersex* individuals are born with physical features that don’t reflect the traditional definition of male or female. And feelings and actions are shaped partly by estrogen and testosterone, which influence how the body and mind develop.²⁰ These hormones are present in everyone in varying degrees. For these reasons, the difference between male and female isn’t strictly an either-or proposition.²¹

Myth 3: Gender is a continuum.

Conceptualizations of gender have advanced through three main stages over time.

The first involved the idea of binary genders. That is, people were considered either male or female. The behaviors associated with being “masculine” or “feminine” were distinct and very often, oppositional. This view gave rise to such notions as the “opposite” gender.

The second phase, which gained acceptance near the end of the 20th century,²² acknowledged that people might also be **androgynous** (combining masculine and feminine traits) or **undifferentiated** (neither masculine nor feminine).

The third phase, emerging now, has some theorists embracing the idea of a **gender matrix** that recognizes gender as a multidimensional collection of qualities.^{23,24} This view proposes that:

- Gender cannot be categorized in just a few words. People are too complex for simplistic labels.²⁵
- Social expectations about “appropriate” behavior related to gender can feel needlessly confining or just plain outdated.²⁶
- People exhibit different gender qualities depending on the context, their mood, and what they are trying to accomplish.²⁷

Most people ages 13 to 34 today agree that “gender doesn’t define a person as much as it used to.”²⁸ And, although most of them identify with traditional gender roles to some extent, they typically say they are supportive of those who don’t.²⁹ ●

Gender cannot be categorized in just a few words.
People are too complex for simplistic labels.

Empathy, Emotional IQ, and Communication

● **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2.5:** Explain dimensions of empathic communication and emotional intelligence, and practice perception checking.

Tiffany Tan has a good friend she describes as unique, creative, and talented. Her friend also has autism. “That might make it seem like she’s different,” says Tiffany, “but let’s be real, we’re all different.”³⁰ One of the most powerful functions of communication is to bridge differences between people, but by now it’s probably clear that faulty assumptions can get in the way. Here are three tips for better understanding yourself and others.

Display empathy.

Although completely understanding another person’s point of view is too difficult a task for humans with different backgrounds, it is possible to get a strong sense of what the world looks like through their eyes.

Empathy is the ability to comprehend and share another person’s perspective. This involves three dimensions.³¹

- *Perspective taking*—understanding the viewpoint of another person. This requires you to set aside your own opinions and suspend judgment of that person.
- *Emotional experience*—understanding what another person is feeling. You know their fear, joy, sadness, and so on. Empathizing allows you to experience the other’s feelings—in effect, to become that person temporarily.
- *Genuine concern*—caring for another person. Tiffany, whom we mentioned above, says she’s frustrated by people who say, “Wow, you are such a good person” as if the friendship she describes is based on pity.³² In reality, she says, it’s based on genuine liking and respect, just like any other friendship.

Understand the difference between empathy and sympathy.

Many people equate empathy with sympathy, but the concepts differ in two important ways. First, **sympathy** means you feel compassion for another person's predicament, whereas empathy means you have a personal sense of what that predicament is like. Consider the difference between sympathizing with a homeless person and empathizing with them—imagining what it is like to be in that person's position. A second difference is that you can empathize with a difficult relative, a rude stranger, or even a criminal without feeling much sympathy for that person. Empathizing allows you to understand other people's motives without requiring you to agree with them.





Cultivate emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a person's ability to understand and manage their own emotions and to deal effectively with the emotions of others. The idea was made famous by psychologist Daniel Goleman,³³ who proposes that EI has five dimensions:

- *Self-awareness*—understanding how you feel. For example, when something great happens to your best friend, you might realize that you feel happy but also a little jealous.
- *Self-regulation*—managing emotions effectively. People who lack self-regulation may lose their temper, say things they wish they hadn't, or be wracked by remorse or envy. Conversely, good self-regulators use emotions in positive ways. For example, you might channel your nervousness about public speaking into being more dynamic before an audience.
- *Internal motivation*—finding the inner strength and determination to accomplish important goals. Consider success as a student. You may assume that people who do well in school are smarter than others, but research shows that a large part of their success arises from EI, in particular the ability to keep trying and to maintain confidence when the going gets tough.³⁴
- *Empathy*—being willing and able to experience things from another person's point of view. This is a crucial factor in developing strong and trusting relationships.³⁵
- *Social skills*—using all of these factors to build strong relationships. For example, organizations led by people with high EI are usually more successful than others, partly because these leaders are self-aware, they exercise emotional control, and they are good at understanding how employees and customers feel.³⁶

Keep reading for tips about a process that can help you build empathy and EI and a self-quiz to see what aspects of EI you are best at. ●

3

Steps to Engage in Perception Checking

Perception checking is a communication technique designed to enhance empathy and emotional intelligence. It can help you understand others accurately instead of jumping to conclusions. Because the goal of perception checking is mutual understanding, it's a cooperative approach that minimizes defensiveness and displays respect. Here are the three steps involved.

1. Describe the behavior you noticed.

The first step is to reference a specific behavior, as in, “I noticed that you left the room during my presentation.” It’s important to avoid jumping to conclusions, making value judgments, or presuming that you know how the other person was feeling. For example, it’s not fair to say, “You are so rude” or “I can tell you didn’t like my ideas.” Such statements are likely to cause defensiveness, and they signal that you have already made up your mind without trying to understand the other person’s feelings.

2. Suggest at least two possible interpretations of the behavior.

Presenting two options that may be true opens the way for conversation and makes it explicit that you don’t presume to know the other person’s motives. For example, you might say, “When you left, I wasn’t sure if something important came up or if you were disappointed in my presentation.”

3. Ask for clarification about how to interpret the behavior.

This step is simple but important. You might simply ask, “What was going on?”

Here are some examples of perception checking that include all three steps:

“Hey, when you slammed the door [behavior], I wasn’t sure whether you were mad at me [first interpretation] or just in a rush [second interpretation]. Are we good, or do you want to talk [request for clarification]?”

“You haven’t laughed much in the last couple of days [behavior]. I wonder whether something’s bothering you [first interpretation] or whether you’re just feeling quiet [second interpretation]. What’s up? [request for clarification]”

As you can see, a perception check takes a respectful approach by implying “I know I’m not qualified to understand your feelings without some help.” Of course, it can succeed only if your nonverbal behavior reflects the open-mindedness of your words. An accusing tone of voice or a hostile glare will suggest that you have already made up your mind about the other person’s intentions no matter what you say.



ASK YOURSELF *How Emotionally Intelligent Are You?*

Answer the questions below for insights about how EI influences you as a communicator.

-
1. A friend says something that hurts your feelings. What are you most likely to say?
 - a. “That is so insensitive! I can’t believe you just said that.”
 - b. “I feel hurt by what you said.”
 - c. “That makes me feel bad. Tell me why you feel that way.”

- _____ d. Say nothing. You'll get over it.
- _____ 2. It's Monday morning and you feel great. What are you most likely to do?
- Take the day off. This feeling is too good to waste at work.
 - Announce to everyone at work, "I feel like a million bucks!"
 - Channel your positive energy into being a great team member.
 - Set your emotions aside and get to work. You'll enjoy yourself later.
- _____ 3. Your usually talkative roommate is quiet today and seems to be looking out the window rather than focusing on the book he's trying to read for school. What are you most likely to do?
- Tell him, "Focus! That book's not going to read itself."
 - Say that you understand because you've had a hard day too.
 - Ask if anything is bothering him and then listen attentively to what he says.
 - Give him some space. He's probably just tired.
- _____ 4. The grade on your research paper is not as high as you had hoped. How are you most likely to respond?
- Fume about what an idiot the professor is.
 - Post on social media that you are sad and discouraged today.
 - Go over the paper carefully to learn what you might do better next time.
 - Tell yourself, "What's done is done" and try to forget about it.

INTERPRETING YOUR RESPONSES !

For insight about your emotional intelligence, see which of the following best describes your answers.

(More than one may apply.)

Emotionally Spontaneous If you answered "a" to two or more questions, you tend to display your emotions boldly and spontaneously. This can be an asset in terms of self-expression, but be careful not to let your emotions get the best of you. Your unfiltered declarations may sometimes offend or overwhelm others, and they may prevent you from focusing on what other people are thinking and feeling. Suggestions for perception checking ([page 22](#)) and self-monitoring ([page 25](#)) may help you strengthen the empathy and self-regulation components of EI.

Emotionally Self-Aware If you answered "b" more than once, you tend to be aware of your emotions and express them tactfully. You score relatively high in terms of EI. Just be careful to pair your self-awareness with active interest in others. You may feel impatient with people who are not as emotionally aware as you are. Stay tuned for listening tips and strategies in [Chapter 5](#).

EI Champion If you answered "c" to two or more questions, you balance awareness of your own emotions with concern for how other people feel. Your willingness to be self-reflective and a good listener will take you far. Communication strategies throughout the book provide opportunities to build on your already-strong EI.

Emotion-Avoidant If you answered "d" more than once, you tend to downplay emotions—yours and other people's. While this may prevent you from overreacting, it may also make it difficult to build satisfying relationships and to harness the benefits of well-managed emotions. You may feel that others are taking advantage of you, when they actually don't know how you feel. The tips for self-disclosure in [Chapter 7](#) may be especially useful to you.

Identity Management

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2.6:** Describe how personal behavior and the actions of others influence identity management.

Andrew Graystone was in a café when he heard a woman who worked there say to him, “Sorry about your weight.” He replied, “Well I am trying to lose a few pounds.” Then he realized that she meant w-a-i-t.³⁷ He shared the incident in an online collection of life’s “embarrassing moments.” This section focuses on **identity management**—the communication strategies people use to influence how others view them. As Andrew’s experience shows, no one is perfect at presenting the self they wish others to see. All the same, many of the messages people send are meant to create desired impressions.

Individuals have public and private selves.

So far, we have referred to the “self” as if each person has only one identity. In truth, everyone has several selves, some private and others public. Often, these selves are quite different.

Your **perceived self** is the person you believe yourself to be in moments of honest self-examination. The perceived self is “private” because you are unlikely to reveal all of it to another person. You can verify the private nature of the perceived self by reviewing the self-concept list you developed at the start of the chapter. You’ll probably find some elements of yourself there that you would not disclose to many people, and some that you would not share with anyone. You might, for example, be reluctant to share some feelings about your appearance (“I think I’m overweight”), your intelligence (“I’m not as smart as I wish I were”), your goals (“The most important thing to me is becoming rich”), or your motives (“I care more about myself than about others”).

In contrast to the perceived self, the **presenting self** is a public image—the way you want to appear to others. In most cases, the presenting self you seek to create is a socially approved image: diligent student, loving partner, conscientious worker, and so on. Social norms often create a gap between the perceived and presenting selves. For example, you may present yourself as more confident than you actually feel.



People engage in facework to manage their identities and the identity of others.

Sociologist Erving Goffman used the word **face** to describe the presenting self and the term **facework** to describe the verbal and nonverbal ways people try to maintain a positive image.³⁸ Goffman argued that each person can be viewed as a kind of playwright who creates roles they want others to believe and as a performer who acts out those roles. Depending on the circumstances, you may behave in ways that suggest to others that you are nice, competent, or artistic, for example.

It may seem logical that people would strive for the best face possible—the “nicest person in the world” or the “best artist in town.” Two factors discourage this, however. One is the embarrassing loss of face you experience if you can’t live up to that image. The other is the way that your face goals make others feel. You have probably known people who acted as if they were “the best,” with the unwelcome implication that others were inferior to them. All in all, although everyone wants to be viewed in positive terms, it’s face-saving not to overdo it.

Identity management is collaborative.

Identity management is not a solo enterprise. Attaining a particular identity relies on how willing other people are to accept it. If they don’t, the results can be frustrating and hurtful. For example, women have traditionally been hindered by colleagues who treat them like sex objects or subordinates rather than as dedicated professionals. Or you may find that people assume unfavorable things about you based on your age, physical abilities, ethnicity, appearance, or some other factor. (We’ll talk more about stereotypes in [Chapter 3](#).)

At other times, however, people are active agents in helping one another save face. Consider, for example, what you might do if someone you know arrives at a party with their fly unzipped. If you know the person well, you might point it out so they can avoid further embarrassment. Or you might pretend you don’t notice. Either way, you are engaged in a cooperative effort to help that person save face, just as you hope others will help you.

People have multiple identities.

In the course of even a single day, you may play a variety of roles: respectful student, joking friend, friendly neighbor, and helpful employee, to suggest just a few. You may even play a variety of roles with the same person. With your parents, for instance, perhaps you acted as a responsible adult sometimes (“You can trust me with the car.”) and at other times as a helpless child (“I can’t find my shoes!”). Sometimes—perhaps on birthdays or holidays—you were a dedicated family member, and at other times you may have been antisocial and locked yourself in your room. People exercise the same level of versatility in different situations. One scholar pointed out that bilingual Latinos in the United States often choose whether to use English or Spanish depending on who they are speaking to and the kind of identity they seek in a given conversation.³⁹



Identity management may be deliberate or unconscious.

Sometimes you are probably highly aware of managing your identities, as when you are on a job interview or a first date. But in other cases, you may act largely out of habit or an unconscious sense of what is appropriate.⁴⁰ For example, people tend to smile and display sympathetic expressions more during in-person conversations than they do on the phone.⁴¹ You probably don't consciously think, "Since the other person can see me, I'll alter my nonverbal displays." Reactions like these are often instantaneous and outside of your conscious awareness. Another kind of unconscious face management involves "scripts" you have developed over time. When you find yourself in familiar situations, such as greeting customers at work or interacting with friends or family members, you probably slip into these scripts quite often.

People differ in their degree of identity management.

Some people are more aware of their identity management behavior than others. So-called **high self-monitors** pay close attention to their own behavior and to others' reactions, adjusting their communication to create the desired impression. By contrast, **low self-monitors** express what they are thinking and feeling without much attention to the impression their behavior creates.⁴² There are pros and cons to both approaches.

High self-monitors are generally:

- Good actors who can act interested when bored, or friendly when they actually feel quite the opposite. This allows them to handle social situations smoothly, often putting others at ease.
- Good "people-readers" who can adjust their behavior to get a desired reaction from others. For example, they tend to post pictures and messages on Facebook that make them seem especially outgoing, which correlates to a higher-than-average number of "likes."⁴³
- Unlikely to experience events completely because a portion of their attention is always devoted to viewing the situation from a detached position. This may be due to their highly analytical nature.
- Unlikely to know how they truly feel sometimes, and difficult for others to know because they change roles often.

Low self-monitors generally:

- Have a limited repertoire of behaviors, so they act in more or less the same way regardless of the situation. This means that they are easy to read. "What you see is what you get" might be their motto.

- Are straightforward communicators with focused ideas about how they feel and who they are. This can make them reliable and honest. But a lack of flexibility often makes them less tactful than high self-monitors.

By now it should be clear that neither extremely high nor low self-monitoring is ideal. There are some situations in which paying attention to yourself and adapting your behavior can be useful, but sometimes, reacting without considering the effect on others is a better approach. This demonstrates again the notion of communicative competence outlined in [Chapter 1: Flexibility is the key to successful communication](#).

Roles influence the identities people display.

Social rules govern your behavior in a variety of settings. It would be impossible to keep a job, for example, without meeting certain expectations. Salespeople are obliged to treat customers with courtesy, employees must appear reasonably respectful when talking to the boss, and some forms of clothing would be considered outrageous at work. By agreeing to take on a job, you are signing an unwritten contract that you will present a certain face at work, whether or not that face reflects the way you might feel at a particular moment.

Identity management can be goal oriented.

People often manage their identities strategically. You might dress up for a visit to traffic court in hopes that your front (responsible citizen) will convince the judge to treat you sympathetically. Or you might be nice to your neighbors so they will agree to keep their dog off your lawn. It's difficult—even impossible—not to create impressions. After all, you have to send some sort of message. If you don't act friendly when meeting a stranger, you have to act aloof, indifferent, hostile, or in some other manner. If you don't act businesslike, you have to behave in an alternative way: casual, goofy, or whatever. Often, the question isn't whether or not to present a face to others; the question is only which face to present.

Identity management isn't necessarily dishonest.

After reading this far, you might think that identity management sounds like an academic label for manipulation or phoniness. If the perceived self is the “real” you, it might seem that any behavior that contradicts it is dishonest. It's true that there are situations in which identity management is dishonest. A manipulative date who pretends to be single, even though they are married, is clearly unethical and deceitful. So are job applicants who lie about their academic records to get hired. But managing identities doesn't necessarily make you a liar. In fact, it is almost impossible to imagine how you could communicate effectively without making decisions about which front to present in one situation or another. It would be ludicrous for you to act the same way with strangers as you do with close friends, and nobody would show the same face to a 2-year-old as to an adult. Each of us has a repertoire of faces—a cast of characters—and part of being a competent communicator is choosing the best role for the situation. ●



PAUSE TO REFLECT

Which Identities Do You Enact?

1. Compare the identity you construct when interacting with older family members (e.g., parents, aunts, or uncles) to the identity you construct when spending time with your best friend. How do they differ? _____

2. What other identities do you construct for different relationships and roles you play? _____

Identity Management and Social Media

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 2.7:** Analyze the challenge of using social media to present a favorable image while still being authentic.

Rachel Leonard had it made. Newly wed to the love of her life, she could relax on her front porch and enjoy a beautiful view of the Blue Ridge Mountains, all the while looking forward to the birth of their first child. Well, to be more accurate, *virtual* Rachel had all of those things.

Rachel's Facebook page included happy wedding pictures, gorgeous mountain scenes, and pregnancy updates. Real-life Rachel was grappling with a difficult pregnancy and a growing realization that she had married the wrong person. And the beautiful scenery? The mountain view straight ahead *was* gorgeous, "but if you looked to the left, you could see this huge factory," she admits, adding, "Of course, I didn't take [or post] pictures of the factory because why would you do that?"⁴⁴

Rachel faced a common dilemma rooted in self-concept, communication, and perception: She wanted to present herself favorably to others. At the same time, she craved the genuine approval of people who understood and accepted her as she was. Concerns such as these are central to the communication choices people make. Here we consider the impact of social media in managing that delicate balance.

Social media can boost self-esteem.

Conventional wisdom suggests that face-to-face communication is richer and more meaningful than mediated messages in terms of boosting self-esteem, but that isn't always true. Research with adults 35 and younger suggests that text-based interactions—such as through emails, texts, and tweets—often contribute to self-esteem more than do in-person and telephone conversations. The reasons are twofold. First, people (at least in that age bracket) tend to disclose things about themselves in writing that they wouldn't share in person. And technology makes it possible to receive support, even from people who aren't available to offer it in person.⁴⁵ The caveat is that self-esteem is not boosted when people present an unrealistically positive image of themselves online.



Being genuine matters most.

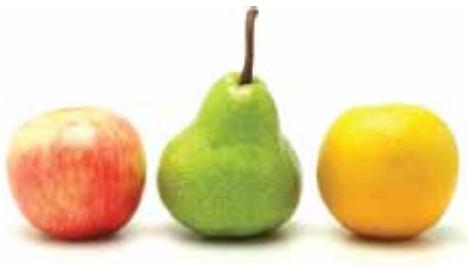
People tend to strategically post photos that make them appear attractive and socially engaged with others.⁴⁶ They may carefully edit emails, posts, and tweets until they make the desired impression.⁴⁷ This is okay within limits. But ultimately, confidence arises from a sense of being accepted for the genuine you. College students who accept their own strengths and weaknesses are more likely to show their true selves on social media. Consequently, they enjoy the security of knowing that others like them for who they really are, imperfections and all.⁴⁸ As one social media analyst puts it, stop *trophy hunting*—trying to find that perfect picture or story that will play well on social media—and enjoy your life.⁴⁹ Share what happens naturally, not what you have manufactured to impress others.

Self-esteem can enhance emotional resilience.

People who feel good about themselves are more likely than others to believe and enjoy compliments.⁵⁰ They are also more resilient in the face of criticism. For example, individuals with healthy self-esteem who are the targets of cyberbullying are more likely than those with low self-esteem to tell others about the bullying and to see bullies as immature and eager to prove their own status.⁵¹ That's not to say that bullying is okay or can always be shrugged off. It does suggest, however, that being silent or self-critical can make unkind comments feel even worse. ●

COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS

Self, Perception, and Communication



The Self-Concept Defined

- Self-concept includes people's sense of what is unique about them and what makes them similar to others.
- Self-esteem involves people's evaluations of self-worth.

Factors That Influence Communication and Self-Concept:

- Significant others
- Mass media
- Culture
- Expectations

Common Errors in Attribution

- Individuals judge themselves more charitably than they judge others.
- People pay more attention to negative impressions than to positive ones.
- When people do perceive positive qualities, they tend to overgeneralize.
- People gravitate to the familiar.



Misconceptions About Gendered Communication

- Myth 1: *Sex* and *gender* are the same.
- Myth 2: People are either male or female.
- Myth 3: Gender is a continuum.

To Communicate Empathy:

- Imagine the other person's perspective.
- Experience what the other person is feeling.
- Show genuine concern.

Emotional Intelligence Includes:

- Self-awareness of emotions
- Self-regulation of emotions
- Internal motivation to persevere
- Empathy
- Social skills



Stages in Perception Checking

- Describe the behavior you noticed.
- Suggest at least two possible interpretations of the behavior.

- Ask for clarification about how to interpret the behavior.

Identity Management Involves:

- Collaboration with others
- Multiple identities
- Conscious or unconscious effort
- Degrees of self-monitoring
- Role expectations
- Goals

Identity and Social Media

- Social media can boost self-esteem.
- The ultimate confidence arises from a sense that people accept you as you are.
- Self-esteem can enhance emotional resilience.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Show Your Communication Know-How



2.1: Explain the self-concept and its relation to self-esteem in human communication.

Consider people who know you best. How do they enhance your self-esteem? Do they ever challenge it? If so, how?

KEY TERMS: [self-concept](#), [self-esteem](#)

2.2: Analyze ways that communication both influences and reflects the self-concept.

How do you compare to “very attractive” people portrayed in the media? Do such comparisons influence the way you think about yourself? If so, how?

KEY TERMS: [reflected appraisal](#), [significant others](#), [self-fulfilling prophecy](#)

2.3: Recognize tendencies that lead to distorted perceptions of yourself and others and how those distortions affect communication.

If you get a parking ticket, you might say the space wasn't well marked or nothing else was available. How might your opinion differ if someone takes *your* parking space? Explain the influence of self-serving bias.

KEY TERMS: attribution, self-serving bias, halo effect



2.4: Counteract myths about gendered communication with more accurate information.

If you knew that the child pictured here is biologically more male or more female, would it affect your opinion or your behavior toward the child? Why or why not? Compare the notion of a gender continuum with a gender matrix.

KEY TERMS: sex, gender, androgynous, undifferentiated, gender matrix

2.5: Explain dimensions of empathic communication and emotional intelligence, and practice perception checking.

Rate yourself from 1 to 10 on each of the five dimensions of emotional intelligence listed on the previous page. Which are you best at? Which worst?

KEY TERMS: empathy, sympathy, emotional intelligence (EI), perception checking



2.6: Describe how personal behavior and the actions of others influence identity management.

Describe a situation in which you were embarrassed—in Goffman's terms, when you lost face. What aspect of your desired social identity was threatened by the episode? How did you respond to save face as much as possible?

KEY TERMS: identity management, perceived self, presenting self, face, facework, high self-monitors, low self-monitors

2.7: Analyze the challenge of using social media to present a favorable image while still being authentic.

If you have a social media presence, does it mostly show you in a genuine way, imperfections and all, or in a way that makes you look as good as possible? What do you think would happen if your social media identity changed?

3

Culture and Communication

Culture

How does communication differ between a culture and a coculture?

What communication factors shape our cultural identities?

Age and Generation

How do communication patterns differ between different age groups?

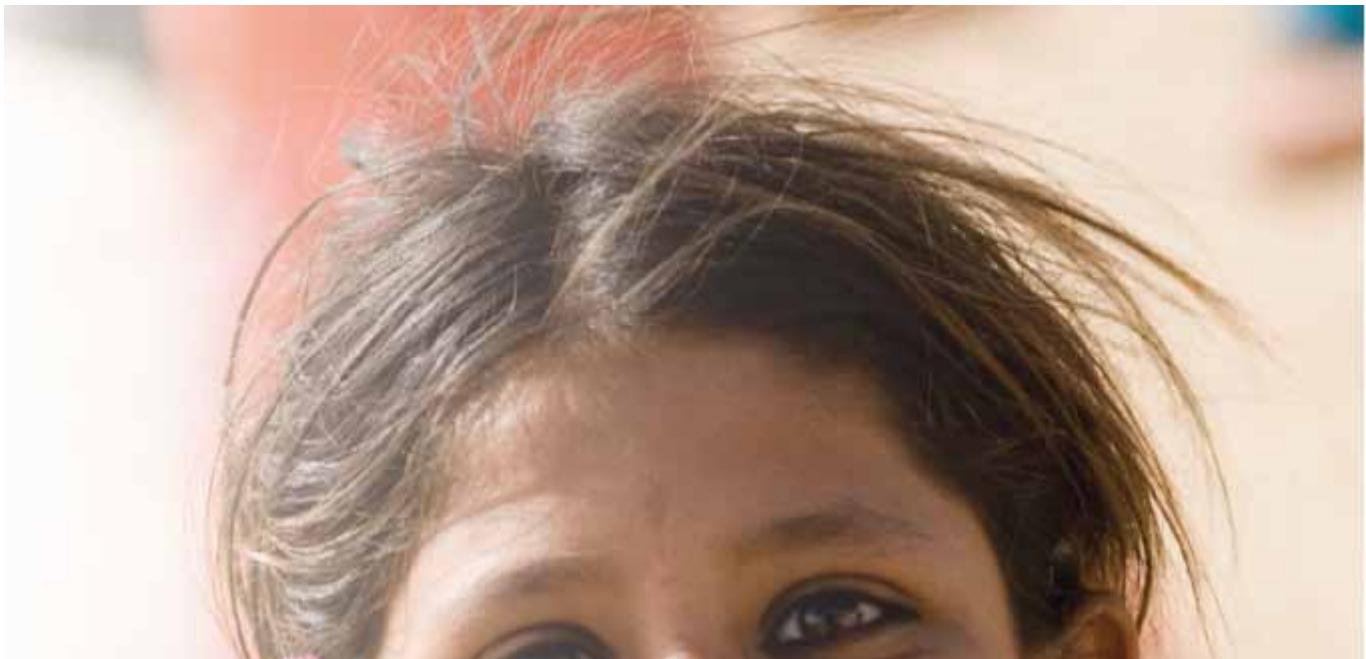
Values and Norms

How do cultures differ?

What factors contribute to and help reduce prejudice?

Culture Shock

What can we expect while adapting to new cultures?





Culture Defined

 LEARNING OBJECTIVE 3.1: Define culture and coculture, and differentiate between in-groups and out-groups.

Cultures may differ even within the same family, neighborhood, or organization. You embody different cultural assumptions throughout the day as you shift between the various roles you play.

While growing up in India, Priya was taught not to smile or make eye contact with strangers, since those actions might be construed as a sexual invitation. On her first day visiting Mexico, she shared the hotel elevator with a man who was also a guest there. “The Mexicans are very warm and friendly people,” Priya says, “He smiled and greeted me with ‘Buenos días,’ which is Spanish for ‘Good day.’ I wanted to greet him back, but just couldn’t. . . . I gave an awkward smile and stayed silent.” The man then used a form of sign language to say hello. Priya realized that the man mistakenly thought she was Deaf. Looking back, although she never summoned the courage to speak to the man, Priya says that she appreciated his friendly manner.¹

Even everyday encounters can be perplexing when different cultures are involved. As we use the term, **culture** is “the language, values, beliefs, traditions, and customs people share and learn.”²

Salience

Depending on the situation, cultural differences may seem nearly insurmountable or practically nonexistent. For example, if you’re on an athletic team with members who are Asian American, African American, Latino, and European American, cultural differences may mean very little compared to the shared goal of winning the league championship. But away from the game, cultural traditions (such as how you express emotions or manage conflict) might influence communication. Social scientists use the term **salience** to describe how much weight we attach to cultural characteristics in a particular situation.



In-Group and Out-Group

Partly because of cultural membership, we identify more closely with some people than with others. Social scientists use the term **in-group** to describe people with whom we identify and are emotionally connected, and **out-group** to describe people we view as different and with whom we have no sense of affiliation.³ This is also situational. At home, your family members may feel in-group to you, but at a rock concert, you may feel that your friends are more in-group than your family members are.

Coculture

There are sometimes greater differences within cultures than between them. You might discover more in common with a traveler raised on another continent whom you meet in a Kathmandu hostel than you would with someone from across town. Nonetheless, cultural norms and values can play a powerful role in shaping how we communicate, both within our in-groups and with people from different backgrounds.

Social scientists use the term **coculture** to describe the perception of membership in a group that is part of an encompassing culture. For example, you may feel like part of an overarching American culture but also feel

membership in youth culture, a Hispanic community, a religious or political group, or many other cocultures.

On the following pages, we consider the implications of intercultural communication—interacting with people from a variety of cultures and cocultures. ●

Communication and Cocultures

● **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 3.2:** Apply the concept of intersectionality to your communication, and identify communication factors that help shape cocultural identity.

Because individuals are members of many cocultural groups simultaneously, their identity arises from a complex interplay of cultural expectations. Here we explore some of the factors at play.



Intersectionality

It's overly simplistic to think of individuals simply as the sum of their identities. If, for example, you identify as an Italian American person raised in the American Midwest who uses a wheelchair, you can't be understood by simply considering the identities associated with each of those groups. For one thing, *your* experience of navigating in a wheelchair is likely to be inherently different from that of someone with similar physiology who grew up in different cultural environments. For another, the complex factors that comprise your identity cannot be easily named or tallied.

Intersectionality theory describes the complex interplay of people's multiple identities. It proposes that each person experiences life at the intersection of multiple factors, whose interplay gives rise to a unique perspective and collection of experiences all their own.^{4,5} Intersectionality theorists argue that it's a mistake to focus on one cultural or cocultural dimension in isolation. Instead, identity is shaped by the interplay of many elements simultaneously.⁶ With that in mind, treat the following descriptions not as a formula for

understanding people, but as a way of exploring qualities that contribute in countless ways to creating cultural diversity.

Race and Ethnicity

Race is a social construct originally created to explain biological differences among people whose ancestors originated in different regions of the world—Africa, Asia, Europe, and so on. Modern scientists acknowledge that, although there are some genetic differences between people with different heritage, they mostly involve superficial qualities such as hair color and texture, skin color, and the size and shape of facial features.

Consequently, race is not a reliable indicator of individual differences. As one analyst puts it: “There is less to race than meets the eye. . . . Knowing someone’s skin color doesn’t necessarily tell you anything else about him or her.”⁷

Rather than thinking about race, it’s more useful to think in terms of ethnicity, which is a social rather than a biological construct. **Ethnicity** refers to the degree to which a person identifies with a particular group, usually on the basis of nationality, culture, religion, or some other unifying perspective. For example, people who identify as Hispanic may look very different from one another but experience a sense of shared identity.

Regional Differences

Researchers in one experiment asked human resource professionals to rate the intelligence, initiative, and personality of job applicants after listening to a brief recording of their voices. The speakers with recognizable regional accents—from the southern United States or New Jersey, for example—were tagged for lower level jobs, whereas those with less pronounced speech styles were recommended for higher level jobs that involved more public contact.⁸ Reactions such as these remind us that the area that you come from can shape how others see you and how see yourself.

Clearly, it’s a bad idea to judge people based on their accents or where they grew up. Individual differences are far too great for that. But seen overall, there are regional cultures. For example, in research about the personality profiles of people in the United States, three “psychological regions” emerged.⁹

- In Middle America (a zone extending southward from Montana and Michigan to Louisiana and over to the Carolinas), people tend to place a high value on being friendly and conventional. That is, they are more likely than residents of other regions to be extroverted, considerate, traditional, and dutiful.
- People on the West Coast and in the Rocky Mountains and Sunbelt (from California and Arizona up through Washington and Idaho) are more often described as relaxed and creative. They are inclined to value new ideas, innovation, and individualism.
- To outsiders, people raised in the Middle Atlantic and Northeast regions of the country (most of New England) may seem temperamental and even a little anxious or irritable. Insiders typically describe themselves in different terms—as passionate, plain talking, and firm in their convictions.

The differences seem to stem from the degree of ethnic diversity in each region (the open-minded Western region being particularly diverse), people’s choice to move to regions that best suit their personalities, and cultural norms that encourage some communication styles and discourage others. Given these differences, it’s easy to imagine how a first-year college student from the Midwest might view a new roommate from Massachusetts as unfriendly, and how the New Englander might view a West Coast native as fickle and unfocused.



Sexual Orientation and Gender

As we discussed in [Chapter 2](#), the traditional concept of two “opposite” genders has given way to a less constrictive, more inclusive notion of gender identity. *Masculine* and *feminine* are but two adjectives in a broad constellation of gender-related qualities. The acronym LGBTQIA stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex (nonbinary physical characteristics), and asexual and/or aromantic (feeling little or no sexual and/or romantic attraction). Other identities include genderfluid, gender independent, gender expansive, and gender diverse,¹⁰ to name just a few.

It is now commonly accepted that gender identity may change over time and is not strictly tied to physical features. For example, transgender individuals don’t feel that their biological sex is a good description of who they are. And people typically describe themselves as queer if they don’t feel that other gender adjectives describe them well or if they dislike the idea of gender categorizations in general.¹¹

Whereas individuals in some cultures are receptive to diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, others are more disapproving. On average, 1 in 5 hate crimes in the United States targets people on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.¹²

One aspect, but certainly not the only one, of gender identity involves sexual orientation. “Every time I meet someone new I must decide if, how, and when I will reveal my sexual orientation”¹³ reflects Jennifer Potter, a physician who is gay. She says it’s often easy to “pass” as heterosexual, but then she experiences the awkwardness of people assuming that she has a boyfriend or husband, and it saddens her when she cannot openly refer to her partner or invite her to take part in social gatherings.



Although they acknowledge the communication dilemmas they face, most LGBTQIA individuals don't want the public to see them in tragic terms. Aside from issues of social acceptance, many say their lives are just as happy and productive as anyone else's.

Religion

In some cultures, religion is a defining factor in shaping in- and out-groups. For example, amid fears of international terrorism, peace-loving Muslims living in the West have often been singled out and vilified. Yasmin Hussein, who works at the Arab American Institute, reflects:

Many Muslims and individuals of other faiths who were thought to be Muslim have been attacked physically and verbally. Young children have been bullied at schools, others told to go back home and social media has become at times (a lot of the time) an ugly place to be on.¹⁴

In an effort to dispel unrealistic stereotypes, tens of thousands of Muslims have joined the #NotInMyName social media movement in which they denounce terrorist groups such as ISIS and condemn violence perpetrated in the name of the religion.

In less extreme but still profound ways, religion may shape how and with whom people communicate. Newcomers to some regions of the United States might find that one of the first questions people ask them is, "What church do you attend?" And members of some religions consider it important to marry within the faith. In a study of young orthodox Jewish women, for example, many of them said that a man's religious preference is as important, or more important, than his personality.¹⁵

Communication plays a large role in negotiating the impact of different religious preferences. Religious teens who respect the viewpoints of multiple religions typically date more frequently than their nonreligious peers.¹⁶ And the odds are good for interfaith couples. Studies show that, if they communicate openly and respectfully about matters of faith, they are just as likely as other couples to stay together.¹⁷

Socioeconomic Status

Social class can affect how people communicate. Individuals living in the United States typically identify as belonging to the working class (hourly wage earners), middle class, or upper class, and say they feel a sense of solidarity with those in the same social stratum.¹⁸ This is especially true for those who identify as working class. They tend to feel that they are united both by common challenges and by their commitment to hard, physical work. One such college student put it this way:

*I know that when all is said and done, I'm a stronger and better person than they [members of the upper class] are. That's probably a horrible thing to say and it makes me sound very egotistical, but . . . it makes me glad that I've been through what I've been through, because at the end of the day, I know I had to bust my a** to be where I want, and that makes me feel really good.*¹⁹

The communication styles people are raised with can have consequences throughout life. College professors often find that students who are raised not to challenge authority can have difficulty speaking up, thinking critically, and arguing persuasively.²⁰ This factors into the workplace as well, where assertiveness and persuasiveness may enhance careers. Individuals may find that new speech and language, clothing, and nonverbal patterns are necessary to gain acceptance.²¹

Even within the same family, education level can create intercultural challenges. First-generation college students often feel the intercultural strain of “trying to live simultaneously in two vastly different worlds” of school and home. Many such students alter their communication patterns dramatically between these two worlds, censoring their speech with classmates and professors to avoid calling attention to their status, and with family members to avoid threatening and alienating them.²²

Political Viewpoints

As one analyst quipped, “Liberals like to have fun. Conservatives like to have fun. Liberals and Conservatives like to have fun with each other . . . unless they’re talking about politics.”²³ Political discussions have become one of the most contentious examples of intercultural communication in the United States.

Conventional wisdom advises people to steer conversations away from politics and religion, recognizing the sensitive nature of talking about deeply held beliefs. Perhaps for that reason, many people use electronic means to express their views. In the United States, nearly 2 out of 3 people who use social media have posted messages encouraging others to join a political or social cause.²⁴ The results are not indicative of a respectful, open exchange of ideas, however. Among frequent social media users, 57% say that people post messages that are insensitive to diverse others, and 42% have blocked users whose views differ from their own.²⁵

Even worse are so-called bots and trolls. **Social media bots** (short for robots) are automated systems that generate and distribute social media posts. **Social media trolls** are individuals whose principal goal is to disrupt public discourse by posting false claims and prejudiced remarks, usually behind a mask of anonymity.

In a recent study by the Pew Research Center, only 1 in 5 people surveyed said they think that online harassment and fake news (defined for this purpose as untrue accounts spread through social media) will decrease in the coming years. All others think they will stay the same or worsen.^{26,27} With this in mind, experts offer three tips (below) for engaging in responsible political discourse on social media.²⁸

Ability and Disability

Although people who are able bodied might view disabilities as unfortunate, those with disabilities often find that belonging to a community of similar individuals can be rewarding. Deaf culture is a good example: The shared experiences of deafness can create strong bonds. Most notably, distinct languages build a shared worldview and solidarity. There are Deaf schools, Deaf competitions (e.g., Miss Deaf America), Deaf performing arts (including Deaf comedians), and other organizations that bring together people who are Deaf.

Regardless of the specifics, it’s important to respect a person’s choice to treat their disability as just one of their features, or part of their identity, as they prefer. Describing someone as “a person who is blind” can be more accurate and less constricting than calling her “a blind person,” but some people with disabilities prefer “identity first” language (as with Deaf culture) to embrace this aspect, differentiate among multiple disabilities, or avoid being treated as an “other.”²⁹ ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

3

Ways to Discuss Politics Responsibly on Social Media

Experts offer the following tips for engaging in responsible political discourse online:³⁰

1. Don't assume that what you read or watch online is true.

Sometimes it's difficult to know which sources to trust. As a general rule, check to see if multiple sources with different perspectives are reporting the same information.

2. Don't flame or troll.

Resist the urge to post messages that are designed to anger or belittle others. As one observer puts it, "Disagreement is perfectly normal," but using those differences to bash or inflame others is unacceptable.³¹

3. Be open minded about different opinions.

Resist the temptation to block responsible messages that differ from your own. You'll never learn anything new if you aren't willing to hear about ideas that differ from your own.

Age and Generation



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 3.3: Explain communication patterns within and between different age groups.

Imagine how odd it would seem if an 8-year-old or a senior citizen started talking, dressing, or otherwise acting like a 20-year-old. We tend to think of getting older as a purely biological process. But age-related communication reflects culture at least as much as it reflects biology. In many ways, we learn how to "do" being various ages—how to dress, how to talk, and what not to say and do—in the same way we learn how to play other roles in our lives, such as student or employee.



Ideas about aging change over time.

At some points in history, older adults have been regarded as wise, accomplished, and even magical.³² At others, they have been treated as “dead weight” and uncomfortable reminders of mortality and decline.³³ Today, for the most part, Western cultures honor youth, and attitudes about aging tend to be negative. On balance, people over age 40 are twice as likely as younger people to be depicted in the media as unattractive, bored, and in declining health.³⁴ And people over age 60, especially women, are still underrepresented in the media. Despite negative stereotypes, the data present a different story. Studies show that, overall, individuals in their 60s are just as happy as those in their 20s.³⁵

Stereotypes discourage open communication.

People who believe older adults have trouble communicating are less likely to interact with them. And when they do interact, it’s common for them to use simple words and speak slowly. Even when these speech styles are well intentioned, they can have harmful effects. Older adults who are treated as incapable tend to perceive *themselves* to be older and less capable than their peers.³⁶ And challenging ageism (hurtful stereotypes based on age) presents seniors with a dilemma: Speaking up can be taken as a sign of being cranky or bitter, reinforcing negative assumptions about seniors.³⁷

Being young has its challenges.

Teens and young adults often experience intense pressure to establish their identity and prove themselves.³⁸ At the same time, adolescents typically experience what psychologists call a **personal fable**, the belief that they are different from everybody else, and **imaginary audience**, a heightened self-consciousness that makes it seem as if people are always observing and judging them.³⁹ These beliefs can lead to some classic communication challenges. Teens often feel that their parents and others can’t understand them because their situations are unique. They may get annoyed when adults seem to butt into their affairs with “overly critical judgments” and “irrelevant advice.” All the while, parents may not understand why their “extensive experience” and “good advice” are being summarily rejected.

Generations regard technology differently.

It probably won’t surprise you that young adults are more likely than older ones to share personal information online. Older adults are typically more concerned with maintaining their own privacy and that of people they

know.⁴⁰ As members of Gen Z (people born in the mid-1990s to mid-2010s, also called PostMillennials, iGen, and Plurals) enter adulthood, they are paradoxically both more tech-savvy than earlier generations and more nostalgic for simpler times—hence a resurgence in vinyl records, board games, and classic TV shows.⁴¹

Differences emerge at work.

In the workplace, Millennials (born between 1980 and 2000) tend to have a stronger need for affirming feedback than do members of previous generations.⁴² Millennials typically want clear guidance on how to do a job correctly, but they don't want to be micromanaged when they do it. To Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980) and Baby Boomer (born between 1946 and 1960) managers, it may seem like a burden to give that much guidance and feedback. They may feel that, “no news is good news,” and that not being told that you screwed up is praise enough.

Review experts' guidance below for ways to increase your knowledge of diverse cultures. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

4 Ways to Learn More About Other Cultures

How can a communicator acquire the culture-specific information that leads to competence? Scholars suggest the following strategies for moving toward a more mindful, competent style of intercultural communication.⁴³

1. Seek out cultural information.

There are two main ways to learn about cultures—passive and active. *Passive observation* involves noticing how members of a culture behave and applying these insights. *Active strategies* include reading, watching films, and asking experts and members of the culture how to behave, as well as taking academic courses related to intercultural communication and diversity.⁴⁴

2. Confess your ignorance.

When you find yourself at a loss, you might say, “This is new to me. What’s the right thing to do in this situation?” While some cultures may not value this sort of candor and self-disclosure, most people are pleased when strangers attempt to learn the practices of their culture, and they are glad to help.

3. Spend time with people from different backgrounds.

Research confirms that, under the right circumstances, spending time with people from different backgrounds can lead to reduced prejudice and better relationships.⁴⁵ The link between exposure and positive attitudes about diversity, called the **contact hypothesis**, has been demonstrated in a wide range of cultural and cocultural contacts.⁴⁶ But exposure alone isn’t enough. To benefit, you must have a genuine desire to know and understand others.

4. Be flexible.

The ability to shift gears and adapt one’s style to the norms of multiple cultures is called **frame switching**.⁴⁷ Frame switching is essential to intercultural communication, and it offers benefits for personal growth as well. Meiga Loho-Noya, who moved to the United States after growing up in Venezuela and Paris, says she feels different interacting with American friends (more outgoing) than with Hispanic friends (more emotionally expressive) or French friends (more formal). Her husband Zac loves that she embodies all of these roles. “Being with someone so different from yourself—it’s like you add another dimension to your life,” he says.

Cultural Values and Norms

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 3.4:** Analyze how values and norms affect communication between members of different cultures.

Growing up in the Netherlands, Daniëlle didn't anticipate that she would fall in love with a Sudanese man. However, she and her now-husband Hussam connected right away. "Even though we were from different continents, we had an insane amount of things in common," she says. "We both loved to read the same books and liked playing around with graphic design. We understood each other."⁴⁸ Even so, Daniëlle was initially nervous, based on stereotypes she had heard about Arab men. Over time, she says, she learned a valuable lesson: "We are not the stereotypes people have about us. . . . We are all just people, with differences and similarities, strengths and weaknesses, habits and customs." One way to reduce the uncertainty about communicating with people from different cultures is to better understand diverse norms and values. Here is a look at six patterns that help distinguish cultures around the world.

Individualism and Collectivism

Chapter 2 explained how individualism and collectivism affect identity. Members of **individualistic cultures**—including the United States, Canada, and Great Britain—tend to view their primary allegiance to themselves; whereas communicators in **collectivistic cultures**—such as China, Korea, and Japan—often feel loyalties and obligations to an in-group such as one's extended family, community, or the organization they work for.^{49,50} Individualistic and collectivistic cultures also have different approaches to communication.

- Individualistic cultures are relatively tolerant of conflicts, whereas members of collectivistic cultures place a greater emphasis on harmony.^{51,52}
- Members of individualistic societies are more likely to tout personal accomplishments that put individuals ahead of the group, whereas members of collectivistic societies are typically less publicly egotistical. This cultural difference can lead to misunderstandings in the classroom and on job interviews. For instance, Americans may mistakenly assume that Asian individuals who are humble lack confidence or achievements.
- Individualistic cultures tend to value independence and are often less adept than members of collectivistic cultures at seeing others' points of view. In one study, Chinese and American players were paired together in a game that required them to take the perspective of their partners.⁵³ By all measures, the collectivist Chinese had greater success in perspective taking than did their individualistic American counterparts.



High and Low Context

Social scientists have identified two distinct ways that members of various cultures share information.⁵⁴ Members of **low-context cultures** use language primarily to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas as directly as possible. By contrast, members of **high-context cultures** rely heavily on subtle, often nonverbal cues—such as behavior, history of the relationship, and general social rules—to maintain social harmony.

Mainstream cultures in the United States, Canada, northern Europe, and Israel fall toward the low-context end of the scale. Longtime residents generally value straight talk and grow impatient with “beating around the bush.” By contrast, people in most Asian and Middle Eastern cultures fit the high-context pattern. For them, maintaining harmony is important, so communicators avoid speaking directly if that threatens another person’s “face,” or dignity.

Partly because of these differences, American managers tend to be less attentive listeners than managers in more high-context cultures, who are more likely to focus on the speaker and to avoid distractions.⁵⁵

Research shows that Americans are likely to state their concerns or complaints directly, whereas persons raised in high-context cultures usually hint at them.⁵⁶ One Chinese exchange student gave this example:

Suppose a guy feels bad about his roommate eating his snacks. If he is Chinese, he may try to hide his food secretly or choose a certain time to say, “My snacks run out so fast, I think I need to buy more next time.” Before this, he also may think about whether his roommate would hate him if he says something wrong. But Americans may point out directly that someone has been eating their food.⁵⁷

The roommate from China may feel his displeasure is obvious, based on the situation and his indirect statement. But the American—who may expect his friend to say outright if he is upset—may miss the point.



It's easy to see how the difference between directness and indirectness can present challenges. To members of high-context cultures, communicators with a low-context style can appear inattentive, overly talkative, redundant, and lacking in subtlety. On the other hand, to people from low-context backgrounds, high-context communicators often seem evasive or even dishonest. As with all cultural influences, however, it's important to remember that members of any culture vary widely.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty may be universal, but cultures have different ways of coping with unpredictable conditions. The term **uncertainty avoidance** is used to reflect the degree to which members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous situations or how much they try to avoid them.⁵⁸ As a group, residents of some countries (including Singapore, Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden, Hong Kong, and the United States) tend to embrace change, while others (such as natives of Belgium, Greece, Japan, and Portugal) tend to find new or ambiguous situations discomforting.

A culture's degree of uncertainty avoidance is reflected in the way its members communicate. In countries that avoid uncertainty, people who are different or who express ideas that challenge the status quo are often considered dangerous, and intolerance is high. In these cultures, people are especially concerned with security, so they feel a strong need for clearly defined rules and regulations. It's easy to imagine how relationships in cultures with a low tolerance for uncertainty—family, work, friendships, and romance—are likely to fit a

predictable pattern. By contrast, individuals in a culture that is less threatened by the new and unexpected are more likely to tolerate—or even welcome—those who don't fit the norm.

Power Distance

Power distance refers to the gap between social groups with substantial power and resources and those with less. Cultures with low power distance believe in minimizing the difference between various social classes. They tend to subscribe to the egalitarian belief that one person is as good as another regardless of their station in life—rich, poor, educated, or uneducated.

Austria, Denmark, Israel, and New Zealand are some of the most egalitarian countries. Most cultures in the United States and Canada value equality, even if that ideal is not always perfectly enacted. For example, Americans may call their bosses by their first names and challenge the opinions of people in higher status positions.

At the other end of the spectrum are countries with a high degree of power distance, such as the Philippines, Mexico, Venezuela, India, Japan, and Singapore.⁵⁹ In these countries, it may seem rude to treat everyone the same way. In the Japanese workplace, for example, new acquaintances exchange business cards immediately, which helps establish everyone's relative status. The oldest or highest ranking person receives the deepest bows from others, the best seat, the most deferential treatment, and so on. This treatment isn't regarded as elitist or disrespectful. Indeed, treating a high-status person the same as everyone else would seem rude.

Talk and Silence

Beliefs about the very value of talk differ from one culture to another.⁶⁰ Members of Western cultures tend to view talk as desirable and use it for social purposes as well as to perform tasks. Silence has a negative value in these cultures. It is likely to be interpreted as lack of interest, unwillingness to communicate, hostility, anxiety, shyness, or a sign of interpersonal incompatibility.

On the other hand, silence is valued in Asian cultures. Taoist sayings propose that “In much talk there is great weariness” and “One who speaks does not know; one who knows does not speak.” Unlike most Westerners, who find silence embarrassing and awkward, traditional Japanese and Chinese individuals tend to believe that remaining quiet is the proper state when there is nothing to be said. To Asians, a talkative person is often considered a show-off or a fake.

Members of some Native American communities also honor silence. For example, traditional members of western Apache tribes maintain silence when others lose their temper to avoid making the situation worse.⁶¹ Apaches also consider that silence has a comforting value. The idea is that words are often unnecessary in periods of grief, and it is comforting to have loved ones present without the pressure to maintain conversations with them.

It's easy to see how these views of speech and silence can lead to communication challenges when people from different cultures meet. Both the “talkative” Westerner and the “silent” Asian and Native American are behaving in ways they believe are proper, yet each may view the other with disapproval and mistrust. Only when they recognize the dissimilarities in their cultural expectations can they adapt to one another, or at least understand and respect their differences.



Competition and Cooperation

Cultures are a bit like people in that they may be regarded as competitive, cooperative, or somewhere in the middle. Competitive cultures—including those in Japan, Italy, Nigeria, and Great Britain—embody qualities

such as independence, competitiveness, and assertiveness.⁶² In those cultures, women are often expected to take care of home and family life, whereas men are expected to shoulder most of the financial responsibilities.

Gender roles are less differentiated in cooperative cultures—which emphasize equality, relationships, cooperation, and consensus building.⁶³ In Iceland, the Netherlands, and Norway, both men and women tend to consider harmony and cooperation to be more important than competition. When doing business, members of cooperative cultures are likely to strive for mutually satisfying outcomes, whereas people from competitive cultures often negotiate to “win” and consider it a “bargain” when a deal is resolved to their benefit. This short-term gain may result in damaged relationships, however, if people on the other side feel disrespected or treated unfairly.

Some countries, such as Taiwan, fall near the midpoint on the scale since they place relatively equal value on cooperative and competitive qualities.⁶⁴ The United States has long been considered a moderately competitive culture, but some feel it is becoming more balanced. In fact, there is speculation that the world is becoming more balanced overall.⁶⁵ This is partly because women have entered the workplace in record numbers and partly because technology now exposes people to a world of new ideas that go beyond traditional gender roles.

Answer the questions below to see how these factors influence you. Then test your cultural knowledge with the quiz on the next page. ●



PAUSE TO REFLECT

What Cultural Norms Do You Embrace?

1. In what ways is your identity shaped by who you are as an individual? In what ways is it shaped by the groups to which you belong (e.g., your family, hometown, college, clubs, religion, and so on)? Do you identify more with the cultural value of individualism or collectivism?

2. If the vice president of the company where you work initiates a conversation with you in the hallway, in what ways do you demonstrate that there is power distance between you (e.g., in terms of your greeting, behaviors, conversation topics, formality, and so on)? In general, do you mostly embody a high power distance or a belief that all people are equal, regardless of their rank or status?

3. Imagine that you are hanging out with friends when a lull occurs in the conversation. Do you appreciate the silence or find it uncomfortable? How does your comfort (or discomfort) with silence affect the way you communicate? Does this vary by relationship? If so, how? _____
-
-
-
-



ASK YOURSELF *How Much Do You Know About Other Cultures?*

Answer the questions below to test your knowledge about what is culturally appropriate around the world.

- _____ 1. Japanese visitors are in town. You've heard that Japanese custom involves gift giving. What should you know?
 - a. It's important that gifts be expensive and of the finest quality.
 - b. Avoid gifts that come in threes, as in three flowers or three candies.
 - c. It's preferable to sign the accompanying card in green ink rather than black.
 - d. It is not customary to wrap gifts in Japan.
- _____ 2. You are interacting with a person who is Deaf and who uses an interpreter. What should you do?
 - a. Address your comments to the interpreter, then look at the Deaf person to see how they react.
 - b. Maintain eye contact with the Deaf person rather than the interpreter.
 - c. Offer to communicate in written form so the interpreter will be unnecessary.
 - d. Speak very slowly and exaggerate the movements your mouth makes.
- _____ 3. While traveling in China, you should be aware of which rule of dining etiquette?
 - a. It's considered rude to leave food on your plate.
 - b. You should put your drinking glass on your plate when you finish eating.
 - c. Cloth napkins are just for show there. Use a paper napkin to wipe your mouth.
 - d. Avoid sticking your chopsticks upright in your food when you are not using them.
- _____ 4. You are meeting with a group of Arab business people for the first time. What should you know?
 - a. They favor greetings that involve shaking hands and kissing on each cheek.
 - b. It's polite to say no if an Arab host offers you coffee or tea.

- c. Men tend to be touch avoidant and to stand at least 3 feet from one another during conversations
- d. They consider the left hand unsanitary and hold eating utensils only with their right hands.

INTERPRETING YOUR RESPONSES !

Read the explanations below to see which questions you got right.

Question 1 Gift-giving is an important ritual in Japan, but gifts needn't be extravagant or expensive. The number 3 is fine, but avoid gifts that involve 4 or 9, as these numbers rhyme with the Japanese words for *death* and *suffering*, respectively, and are considered unlucky.⁶⁶ Black is associated with death or bad luck, so green ink, which symbolizes good luck, is preferred.⁶⁷ Gift wrapping is expected and is even considered an art form. The correct answer is c.

Question 2 Treat Deaf people with the same courtesy as anyone else—maintain eye contact and focus on them. If it may be difficult for the interpreter to see clearly, make arrangements in advance so that is not an issue.⁶⁸ The correct answer is b.

Question 3 Cultures vary in terms of whether it is rude to eat everything or rude not to. In China, leaving a little food on your plate lets your hosts know they have provided plentifully for you. However, sticking your chopsticks upright in your food evokes thoughts of funerals, where it's customary to place a stick of lighted incense upright in a container of rice.⁶⁹ The correct answer is d.

Question 4 Members of Arab cultures may shake hands and kiss on each cheek, but usually only with people they already know well. A handshake is more appropriate for an introductory business meeting.⁷⁰ It's polite to accept a host's offer of coffee or tea. Men tend to speak at close distances (far closer than 3 feet) unless the conversation involves a woman, in which case it is rude to touch or crowd her.⁷¹ It's considered unclean to eat with one's left hand (even if you are left handed),⁷² harkening back to days when the left hand was used for personal hygiene. The correct answer is d.

Overcoming Prejudice



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 3.5: Practice thinking mindfully to overcome prejudiced assumptions that influence communication.

One of the greatest barriers to intercultural communication is the sense that everyone should think and act the same way. We talked in [Chapter 2](#) about perceptual tendencies to judge ourselves and members of our in-group more favorably than we do out-group members. Where intercultural communication is concerned, perceptual biases can lead to intolerance and unfair treatment, but there is hope. Here are four conclusions from the research.

We tend to think our culture is the best.

Ethnocentrism is an attitude that one's own culture is superior to that of others. An ethnocentric person thinks—either privately or openly—that anyone who does not belong to their in-group is somehow strange, wrong, or even inferior.

We often prejudge and stereotype others.

Ethnocentrism leads to an attitude of **prejudice**—an unfairly biased and intolerant attitude toward others who belong to an out-group. (Note that the root term in *prejudice* is “pre-judge.”) An important element of prejudice is **stereotyping**—exaggerated generalizations about a group. Stereotypical prejudices include the

obvious exaggerations that all women are emotional, all men are sex-crazed and insensitive, all older people are out of touch with reality, and all immigrants are untrustworthy.

Judgments can lead to unfair treatment.

Preconceived attitudes toward others can lead people to engage in **unfair discrimination**—depriving people of opportunities or equal treatment based on prejudice, stereotypes, or irrelevant factors such as appearance, age, or race. In 2016, a class action lawsuit against the recruiting firm MVP Staffing alleged that employees marked the applications of African American job candidates with code words to systematically remove them from consideration.⁷³ It's a serious issue. Researchers in another study found that job applicants were nearly twice as likely to make employers' short list if their résumés were "whitened" first by excluding reference to names, interests, or affiliations that might suggest they were people of color.⁷⁴ This was true even when the companies doing the hiring promoted themselves as being diversity friendly.



Mindful thinking can help.

Two decades of research has revealed that many people harbor stereotypes without consciously thinking about them.⁷⁵ However, even when unfair stereotypes are not conscious, they can be overcome.⁷⁶ The answer is not to ignore our differences, but to recognize that each of us reflects such a unique collection of experiences and cultures that generalizations cannot describe us. As Allison Collins, one reviewer of this book, put it:

The issue I find people voicing today is not “don’t hate me because I’m gay” or “don’t hate me because I’m Black,” but more nuanced . . . “Just because I’m gay doesn’t mean I hate sports, so accept me both as an individual and as part of a culture,” or “Being black is a huge part of who I am, so just because I’m now getting an advanced degree or living in an affluent neighborhood doesn’t mean I don’t relate to victims of police brutality or that I don’t sympathize with Colin Kaepernick taking a knee.”

Simply asking yourself whether you might be succumbing to unfair thinking can be surprisingly effective. Look for ways to appreciate others beyond obvious cues such as race, gender, age, ability, and sexual orientation. ●

Coping with Culture Shock

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 3.6: Analyze the stages involved with adapting to communication in a new culture.

When Lynn Chih-Ning Chang came to the United States from Taiwan for graduate school, she cried every day on the way home from class.⁷⁷ Becoming comfortable and competent in a new culture or coculture may be ultimately rewarding, but the process isn't easy.

All her life, Chang had been taught that it was respectful and feminine to sit quietly and listen, so she was shocked that American students spoke aloud without raising their hands, interrupted one another, addressed the teacher by first name, and ate food in the classroom. What's more, Chang's classmates answered so quickly that, by the time she was ready to say something, they were already on a new topic. The same behavior that made her "a smart and patient lady in Taiwan," she says, made her seem like a "slow learner" in the United States.⁷⁸ Communication theorist Young Yum Kim has studied cultural adaptation extensively and offers the advice that follows.



Don't be too hard on yourself.

After a "honeymoon" phase in which you feel excited to be in a new culture, it's typical to feel confused, disenchanted, lonesome, and homesick.⁷⁹ To top it off, you may feel disappointed in yourself for not adapting as easily as you expected. This stage—which typically feels like a crisis—has acquired the labels **culture shock** or **adjustment shock**.⁸⁰

Homesickness is normal.

It's natural to feel a sense of push and pull between the familiar and the novel.⁸¹ Kim encourages people acclimating to a new culture to regard stress as a good sign. It means they have the potential to adapt and grow. With patience, the sense of crisis may begin to wane, and once again, the person may feel energetic and enthusiastic to learn more.

Expect progress and setbacks.

The transition from culture shock to adaptation and growth is usually successful, but it isn't a smooth, linear process. Instead, people tend to take two steps forward and one step back, and to repeat that pattern many

times. Kim calls this a “draw back and leap” pattern.⁸² Above all, she says, if people are patient and keep trying, the rewards are worth the effort.

Reach out to others.

Communication can be a challenge while you’re learning how to operate in new cultures, but it can also be a solution.⁸³ Blogger Benjamin Decker encourages people to open their minds to the diversity around them. “One of the most interesting individuals and someone I would never picture myself being close to is now a best friend of mine,” he says. “You may never know what may come out of a hello, talking to someone you may find odd.”⁸⁴

Chang, the Taiwanese student adapting to life in America, learned this firsthand. At first, she says, she was reluctant to approach American students, and they were reluctant to approach her. Gradually, she found the courage to initiate conversations, and she discovered that her classmates were friendly and receptive. Eventually, she made friends, began to fit in, and successfully completed her degree. ●

COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS

Communication and Culture

Culture

- Culture is “the language, values, beliefs, traditions, and customs people share and learn.”
- Cultural differences are salient in some situations but not in others.
- People with whom we identify are considered in-group and others are out-group.
- A coculture is a group that is part of an overarching, encompassing culture.
- Intersectionality describes the complex interplay of people’s multiple identities.



Examples of Cocultures

- Race and ethnicity
- Regional differences
- Sexual orientation and gender
- Religion
- Socioeconomic status
- Political viewpoints
- Ability and disability

Age and Generation

- Ideas about aging change over time.
- Stereotypes discourage open communication.
- Being young has its challenges.
- Generations regard technology differently.
- Differences emerge at work.



Ways to Learn More About Cultures

- Seek out cultural information.
- Confess your ignorance.
- Spend time with people from different backgrounds.
- Be flexible.

Cultural Variations

- Emphasis on individual or collective identity
- High or low reliance on context for meaning
- Comfort level with uncertainty
- Whether members honor or minimize status differences
- How members feel about silence
- Emphasis on either competition or cooperation



Prejudice

- We tend to think our culture is the best (ethnocentrism).
- We often prejudge and stereotype others.
- Judgments can lead to unfair discrimination.
- Mindful thinking can help reduce bias.

Coping with Culture Shock

- Don't be too hard on yourself.
- Homesickness is normal.
- Expect progress and setbacks.
- Reach out to others.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Show Your Communication Know-How



3.1: Define culture and coculture, and differentiate between in-groups and out-groups.

In what situations do you feel like an in-group member? When do people treat you like an out-group member? How do you feel in each of these situations?

KEY TERMS: [culture](#), [salience](#), [in-group](#), [out-group](#), [coculture](#)

3.2: Apply the concept of intersectionality to your communication, and identify communication factors that help shape cocultural identity.

List 5 to 10 of your social identities (e.g., your gender, race, occupation, sexual orientation, family, and so on). From the perspective of intersectionality, explain how the interface of these identities (e.g., Black female engineer in the South) gives rise to issues that are different than if you considered each of these roles separately (e.g., how being a female engineer is different than the sum total of being a female and an engineer and so on).

KEY TERMS: [intersectionality](#), [race](#), [ethnicity](#), [social media bots](#), [media trolls](#)

3.3: Explain communication patterns within and between different age groups.

In what ways does society stereotype people your age? Are these assumptions mostly true or not? How do they affect the way people communicate with you?



3.4: Analyze how values and norms affect communication between members of different cultures.

How might the students pictured above communicate in this meeting if they embody a collectivist perspective? High reliance on context? Extreme power distance? High tolerance for silence? Low tolerance for ambiguity?



3.5: Practice thinking mindfully to overcome prejudiced assumptions that influence communication.

Speculate about how someone inclined toward ethnocentrism, prejudice, and stereotypical assumptions might regard the woman pictured above. What means might they use to get to know her as a unique individual instead?

3.6: Analyze the stages involved with adapting to communication in a new culture.

Think of a time when you felt homesick or out of place (perhaps at a new job or school). What was most useful to you in terms of adapting to the culture?

4 Language

Language

How do symbols and rules allow us to share meaning?

In what ways does language shape our attitudes?

Misunderstandings

How can we avoid vague and confusing language?

Disruptive Language

What's the difference between facts, inferences, and opinions? And why does the difference matter?

How can we use language responsibly?

Gender and Language

Do men and women use language differently? If so, how?



The Nature of Language

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 4.1: Explain how symbols and linguistic rules allow people to achieve shared meaning.

Language is a collection of symbols governed by rules and used to convey messages between people. Here's an example of how language can be both descriptive and problematic, especially in a changing world.

A *New York Times* writer faced a dilemma while writing about the actor Asia Kate Dillon (shown here), who plays roles in the TV shows *Orange Is the New Black* and *Billions*. Dillon identifies as *nonbinary*, a term adopted by individuals who feel that their identity does not reflect an either/or distinction between male and female. The *Times* article mentioned that “Asia Kate Dillon’s voice was muted as *she* questioned gender norms”¹ (italics added). When some readers pointed out the irony of referring to a self-proclaimed nonbinary individual as “she,” the news staff owned up to being confused about the issue.

A *Times* editor reflected, “American culture is outpacing the language to describe it.”² Some, including Dillon, prefer the pronoun *they*, but the editorial staff felt it would have been confusing to write that “Asia Kate Dillon’s voice was muted as ‘they’ questioned gender norms.” In the end, the *Times* called the decision to use *she* a misstep and vowed to avoid gendered pronouns whenever possible.

Here are some qualities that help explain why sharing understandings through language can be challenging.

Language is symbolic.

There's nothing natural about calling your loyal four-footed companion a *dog* or what you're reading right now a *book*. These words, like virtually all language, are **symbols**—arbitrary constructions that represent a communicator's thoughts. Not all linguistic symbols are spoken or written words. Sign language, as “spoken” by most people who are Deaf, is symbolic in nature and not the pantomime it might seem to non-signers.



Although symbols are arbitrary, they are highly potent. How you react to a stranger depends partly on the symbols you use to categorize that person: *rich* (or poor), *religious* (or not), *attractive* (or unattractive), and so

on.

Gender equality is greater in cultures that have gender-neutral pronouns—such as the Finnish pronoun *hän* that refers to males and females—than in regions where gender differences are built into the language.³ In English, some people advocate for the use of *they* as both a singular and a plural pronoun to avoid labeling people by gender. Others favor a new word entirely—such as *ze* or *e*—in place of *he* and *she*. Some universities have begun allowing individuals to identify the pronouns they want to be used on student records and applications.⁴

Meanings are in people, not in words.

Ask a dozen people what the same symbol means, and you may get 12 different answers. It's possible to have an argument about *environmentalism* without realizing that you and the other person are using the word to represent entirely different things. The same goes for *feminism*, *Republicans*, *rock music*, and other symbols.

Part of the person-centered nature of language involves the difference between denotative and connotative meanings.

Denotative meanings are formally recognized definitions of a term, whereas **connotative meaning** involves thoughts and feelings associated with words. There is usually little confusion about the denotative meaning of words such as *chair* and *desk*. But consider terms such as *survivor* and *victim*. In reference to violent assaults, these terms have nearly synonymous denotative meanings: one who has been harmed. But for many people, *survivor* connotes someone who manages to thrive despite adversity, and *victim* suggests a sense of helplessness. Problems arise when people mistakenly assume that others use words in the same way they do. In the end, words don't mean things; people do—and often in widely different ways.

Language is governed by rules.

Twenty years ago, the statement “she took a selfie” would have been incomprehensible, and abbreviations such as AFK TTYL (away from keyboard, talk to you later) would have confused literally everyone. It turns out that taking English classes in school is just a start. Keeping up to date with vocabulary and grammar is a lifelong process. Here are four types of rules that provide structure for language.

- **Phonological rules** govern how words are pronounced. Can you correctly say *comptroller*, *miniature*, *sherbet*, and *assuage*? If you pronounced them as *con-troller*, *min-ee-a-chore*, *sher-bit*, and *ess-wage*, give yourself top marks in phonology.^{5,6} Phonology is more complex than memorizing sounds of the alphabet because the pronunciation of some words depends on their meaning. To illustrate, say aloud: “A farm can produce produce” and “The present is a good time to present the present.” Although phonological rules can be tricky, it’s worth the effort to learn them. Mispronounced words can change the meaning of a sentence and leave you feeling foolish.
- **Syntactic rules** govern the structure of language—the way symbols can be arranged. Correct English syntax prohibits sentences such as “Have you the cookies brought?”, which is a perfectly acceptable word order in German. Although most of us aren’t able to describe the syntactic rules that govern our language, it’s easy to recognize their existence by noting how odd a statement that violates them appears. Technology is spawning versions of English with their own syntactic rules.⁷ For example, it’s typically considered acceptable to text a friend “Need to study u can call me tho bye” or “K signing off.” However, the same sentence structure would lead to an unfavorable assessment on a college assignment or job application.



- **Semantic rules** are guidelines about the meaning of specific words. They make it possible for us to agree that *bikes* are for riding and *books* are for reading. However, semantic misunderstandings occur when words can be interpreted in more than one way or when they have unfavorable connotations. In 2009, New York made it illegal to use the word *Oriental* in state documents describing people of Asian or Pacific Island descent. The governor of New York explained that many people find the term offensive because it has historically been used to make racist and stereotypical comments.⁸ You can probably think of words you would and wouldn't want used to describe you and the groups to which you belong.
- **Pragmatic rules** govern how people use and understand language in everyday interactions.⁹ You won't typically find these rules written down, but those familiar with the language and culture rely on pragmatic rules to make sense of what is going on. For example, shared pragmatic rules may allow you to tell a friend, "You are so goofy!" in a way that makes it clear to both of you that you are joking. But problems arise when people apply different pragmatic rules. Consider the example of a male manager saying, "You look very pretty today" to a female employee. He may feel that he is being friendly, whereas she may feel he is showing inappropriate interest in her appearance. Without shared pragmatic rules, even apparently clear language can be confusing. ●

The Power of Language

● **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 4.2:** Identify ways in which language shapes our attitudes and reflects how we feel about ourselves and others.

The language we hear and read *shapes* our attitudes. At the same time, the language we use *reflects* our attitudes. This never-ending loop of mutual influence can happen consciously or unconsciously. Here, we reflect on how four linguistic elements—names, accents and dialects, powerful and powerless speech, and affiliative language—influence and reflect social status.



Names

“What’s in a name?” Juliet asked rhetorically. If Romeo had been a social scientist, he would have answered, “A great deal.” Research demonstrates that names are more than just a simple means of identification. They play a role in shaping and reinforcing a sense of personal identity. Naming a baby after a family member (e.g., Junior or Trey) can create a connection between the child and their namesake. Names can also make a powerful statement about cultural identity. Some names suggest a “Black” identity, whereas others sound more “White.”¹⁰ The same could be said for Latino, feminine/masculine, Jewish, and other names.

Names can also be used as the basis for discrimination. When researchers posted more than 6,000 AirBnB requests that were identical except for the users’ names, they found that would-be guests with African American sounding names were 15% more likely to be declined lodging than those whose names sounded White.¹¹

A similar pattern appears in employment decisions. In the United States, job applicants with names such as Mohammed and Lakisha typically receive fewer calls from employers than equally qualified candidates whose names sound more European.^{12,13} Because of this potential for discrimination, some people advocate for applications in which potential employees’ names are masked during the review process.¹⁴

Accents and Dialects

In the classic musical *My Fair Lady*, Professor Henry Higgins transforms Eliza Doolittle from a lowly flower girl into a high-society woman by helping her replace her Cockney accent with an upper-crust speaking style. It’s not a far-fetched idea. Accents and dialects can either enhance or detract from speakers’ social status.

An **accent** involves pronunciation perceived as different from the local speech style.¹⁵ Among English speakers around the world, British accents are typically considered most pleasing to the ear, followed by American, Irish, and Australian accents.¹⁶

Listeners often assume that accents are linked with particular abilities and personality traits. For example, people tend to assume that individuals who speak with British accents are smarter than normal, whereas people who sound if they are from Brooklyn or the Southern United States are believed to be less intelligent.¹⁷ The power of language is so strong that these stereotypes persist with no actual evidence to support them.¹⁸

Intelligence isn’t the only attribute linked to accents. When researchers asked women to listen to audio-recorded voices and then say which speaker they would ask for help if their handbag was stolen, the women

favored people with New York accents. By contrast, the women were more likely to ask people with Midwestern accents for directions. The researchers speculate that people with New York accents seemed tougher and more aggressive, and those with Midwestern accents seemed more approachable and friendly.¹⁹

Unfortunately, we sometimes distrust others on the basis of their accents. In the United States, employers are more likely to hire candidates who sound as if English is their first language than those who have Asian or Hispanic accents, even when the candidates speak English clearly and proficiently.²⁰

In the same vein, a **dialect** is a version of the same language that includes substantially different words and meanings.²¹ For example, depending on where you are from, you might refer to a group of people as *y'all*, *youse guys*, *yinz*, or *you uns*. English includes dozens of dialects, as do the 7,000 or so other languages of the world.

“Powerful” and “Powerless” Speech

Americans typically consider language **powerful** when it is clear, assertive, and direct. By contrast, language is often labeled **powerless** when it suggests that a speaker is uncertain, hesitant, intensely emotional, deferential, or nonassertive.²²

Speech considered powerful can be an important communication tool. In employment interviews, for example, people who seem confident and assertive usually fare better than those who stammer or otherwise seem unsure of themselves.²³

It doesn’t pay to overdo it, however. Just as an extremely “powerless” approach can feel weak, an overly “powerful” one can come off as presumptuous and bossy. Consider the following statements a student might make to a professor:

I hate to say this, but I . . . uh . . . I guess I won’t be able to turn in the assignment on time. I had a personal emergency and . . . well . . . it was just impossible to finish it by today. I’ll have it in your mailbox on Monday, okay?

I won’t be able to turn in the assignment on time. I had a personal emergency, and it was impossible to finish it by today. I’ll have it in your mailbox on Monday.

The first statement seems tentative and powerless. In some situations, however, less assertive speakers seem friendlier, more sincere, and less coercive than more assertive ones.²⁴ The second approach may come across as more direct and “powerful,” or it may seem presumptuous and disrespectful.

Individuals in some cultures admire self-confidence and direct speech. However, in many cultures, saving face for others (Chapter 2) is a higher priority, so communicators tend to use ambiguous, less assertive terms. In traditional Mexican culture, it’s considered polite to add “*por favor?*” (“if you please?”) to the end of requests, such as when ordering food in a restaurant. By contrast, “powerful” declarative statements, such as “I’ll have the fish” or “I’ll take care of that” are likely to seem bossy, rude, and disrespectful—especially when delivered in an assertive tone of voice.²⁵



Affiliative Language

One means of building and demonstrating solidarity with others is through **affiliative language**, which demonstrates a sense of connection between people. Close friends and romantic partners often use nicknames and personal references that signify the nature of their bond.²⁶ The same process works among members of larger groups, ranging from street gangs to military personnel. Fans of the same sports team may share specialized cheers, greetings, and other linguistic rituals that make it clear they are on the same side. Communication researchers call this linguistic accommodation **convergence**.

The opposite is also true. Communicators who want to set themselves apart from others may adopt the strategy of **divergence**, speaking in a way that emphasizes their difference from others. For example, people may use dialect as a way of showing solidarity with one another. Philadelphia natives use the word *jawn* to mean almost anything from a place, to a thing, to a person. Use of the word marks them as locals (or natives), while newcomers are almost certainly confused by statements such as “Pass me the jawn” and “They’re building a new jawn downtown.”²⁷

Divergence also operates in other settings. A physician or attorney, for example, who wants to establish credibility with a client might use specialized language to create a sense of distance. The implicit message is “I’m different from (and more knowledgeable than) you.” ●



PAUSE TO REFLECT

How Does Language Influence You?

1. Do you believe that your name influences the way others see you and/or how you view yourself? If so, how? _____
-
-
-
-

2. How do your accent, dialect, and use of regional vocabulary reflect the cultures you have been part of? Do you change between different dialects and vocabularies when you interact with different types of people? If so, how and why? _____
-
-
-
-

3. Observe a casual conversation and make a mental note of how the participants display “powerful” and “powerless” speech patterns as well as convergence and divergence. Describe the patterns you observe and what effects they seem to have on the conversation. _____
-
-
-
-

Misunderstandings



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 4.3: Recognize and remedy vague and confusing language.

In addition to being a blessing that enables us to live together, language can be something of a curse. We all have known the frustration of being misunderstood, and most of us have been baffled by another person’s overreaction to an innocent comment. In this section, we examine four reasons people might misunderstand each other even when they are trying to communicate well.

Language is equivocal.

Equivocal words have more than one definition. Many equivocal misunderstandings are unintentional. For example, a nurse told a patient that he “wouldn’t be needing” the clothes he requested from home. The patient interpreted the statement to mean he was near death, whereas the nurse meant he would be going home soon.

Other equivocal statements arise from cultural or cocultural differences. In Britain, if someone says, “I’ll knock you up in the morning,” it probably means “I’ll wake you up in the morning.” However, in the United States, referring to someone as “knocked up” generally means that the person is pregnant.

Whereas equivocal misunderstandings are usually unintentional, **equivocation** is a *deliberately vague* statement that can be interpreted in more than one way. If your date asks how you like their new haircut, you might equivocate by saying, “It’s really unusual!” rather than admitting that you don’t like the style.

Some equivocations can spare people the embarrassment that might come from a bluntly truthful answer. But other equivocations can mask deception. For example, consider an employee who calls in sick, saying, “I’m not feeling well” when the whole truth is that she’s exhausted from partying all night.



Meaning is relative.

Relative words gain their meaning by comparison. Is the school you attend large or small? Compared to Ohio State University, with an enrollment of more than 60,000 students, it may seem small, but compared to a smaller institution, it might seem quite large. In the same way, relative words such as *fast* and *slow*, *smart* and *stupid*, *short* and *long* depend on comparisons for their meaning. Using relative words without explaining them can lead to communication problems. For instance, if a new acquaintance says “I’ll call you soon,” when can you expect that to happen? Have you been disappointed to learn that classes you’ve heard were “easy” turned out to be hard, that journeys you were told would be “short” were long, that a “hilarious” movie was just okay? The problem in each case came from failing to anchor the relative word to a more precisely measurable one.

Words are imprecise by nature.

However, there are ways to minimize the confusion that vague and equivocal words can cause.

Language differs by community.

Social and professional groups tend to develop their own vocabularies. **Slang** is language used by a group of people whose members belong to a similar coculture or other group. For instance, cyclists who talk about *bonking* are referring to running out of energy. Social media enthusiasts probably recognize that *hundo p* is

slang for 100 percent, as in: “i’m hundo p into that girl.” Other slang consists of *regionalisms*—terms that are understood by people who live in one geographic region. Residents of the largest U.S. state know that when fellow Alaskans say, “I’m going outside,” they are leaving the state.

In addition to slang, almost everyone uses some sort of **jargon**—the specialized vocabulary that functions as a kind of shorthand for people with common backgrounds and experiences. Whereas slang tends to be casual and changing, jargon is typically more technical and enduring.

Some jargon consists of acronyms—initials used in place of the words they represent. In finance, *P&L* (pronounced P-N-L) translates as “profit and loss,” and military people label failure to serve at one’s post as being *AWOL*, meaning “absent without leave.”

Jargon can be a valuable shorthand for people who understand its use. For example, the trauma team in a hospital emergency room can save time, and possibly lives, by speaking in shorthand, referring to *GSWs* (gunshot wounds), *chem 7* lab tests, and so on, but the same specialized vocabulary that works so well among insiders may mystify outsiders.

Language is nuanced.

A **euphemism** is a pleasant term substituted for a more direct but potentially disquieting one. We use euphemisms when we say *restroom* instead of *toilet* or *full-figured* instead of *overweight*. What advertisers refer to as *direct mail* most of us would call *junk mail*.

Euphemisms often seem more polite and less anxiety provoking than other words. However, they can be vague and misleading. A term such as *domestic disturbance* is easy to hear, but it downplays the harsh realities involved in abusing a loved one. In the same way, being *excessed*, *decrutied*, or *graduated* doesn’t make the reality of losing one’s job any easier.²⁸ Government officials might refer to *enhanced interrogation* instead of the more accurate term “torture,” and *collateral damage* instead of “civilian deaths.”

The tips below can help you prevent misunderstandings by choosing your words carefully. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

6 Ways to Avoid Misunderstandings

It may be tempting to blurt out statements without thinking, but impetuous word choices can be confusing, hurtful, and downright wrong. Here are some tips to help clarify your language and avoid mix-ups.

1. Use slang and jargon with caution.

When you say something such as “I’m all in” or “I’m in the weeds,” make sure others understand what you mean.

2. Explain your terms.

Relative words such as *good*, *bad*, *helpful*, and *happy* mean different things to different people.

3. Be specific.

“It will take me 30 minutes” is better than “It won’t take long.”

4. Clarify whom you represent.

It can be tempting to present your opinions as if other people share them, as in, “We think you have been slacking off lately.” But unless you can say who “we” is and confirm that your opinion is indeed shared, use an “I” statement instead.

5. Focus on specific behaviors.

“It’s important that you arrive by 9 o’clock every morning” is clearer than “Be on time.”

6. Be careful with euphemisms and equivocations.

If you say “He went to a better place,” listeners may wonder if he died, got a better job, or found a higher quality restaurant for dinner.

Disruptive Language

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 4.4:** Distinguish between facts, opinions, and inferences, and avoid using disruptive language.

“Does being a jerk make you more authentic?”²⁹ The answer is no. The data are clear: People who force their opinions on others and treat them disrespectfully are ultimately less successful than their more agreeable and respectful peers.³⁰

Misunderstandings are a fact of life. But irresponsible and uncivil use of language is avoidable. Sadly, there seems to be an epidemic of incivility. More than 3 out of 4 American workers say they are treated rudely by others at least once a week.³¹ And although nearly 100 percent of Americans say it’s important for a president to act in a civil manner, 4 out of 5 felt that the 2016 presidential election was uncivil.³² Here are four tips to remove bad linguistic habits from your communication repertoire.



Don’t confuse fact and opinion.

Factual statements are claims that can be verified as true or false. By contrast, **opinion statements** are based on the speaker’s beliefs. Unlike matters of fact, they can never be proved or disproved. Consider a few examples of the difference between factual statements and opinion statements:

Fact: It rains more in Seattle than in Portland.

Opinion: The climate in Portland is better than in Seattle.

Fact: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is the all-time leading scorer in the National Basketball Association.

Opinion: Kareem is the greatest basketball player in history.

When factual statements and opinion statements are set side by side, the difference between them is clear. In everyday conversation, however, we often present our opinions as if they are facts, and in doing so we invite an unnecessary argument. For example, someone might exclaim, “That was a dumb thing to say!” or “That’s a waste of money!” Notice how much less antagonistic each statement would be if it were prefaced by a qualifier such as “I think . . . ,” or “In my opinion . . . ,” or “It seems to me. . . .”

The guidelines on the next page offer experts’ tips for distinguishing between facts and opinions in the news and in everyday conversations.

Don’t confuse facts with inferences.

Difficulties also arise when we confuse factual statements with **inferential statements**—conclusions arrived at from an interpretation of evidence. Consider a few examples:

Fact: He hit a lamppost while driving down the street.

Inference: He was probably texting when he crashed.

Fact: You interrupted me.

Inference: You don’t care about what I have to say.

There’s nothing wrong with making inferences as long as you identify them as such: “When she stomped out and slammed the door, I thought she was furious.” The danger comes when we confuse inferences with facts and make them sound like the absolute truth.

Don’t present emotions as facts.

Emotive language contains words that sound as if they’re describing something when they’re really announcing the speaker’s attitude. Do you like that old picture frame? If so, you probably call it “an antique,” but if you think it’s ugly, you may describe it as “a piece of junk.”

Emotive words may sound like statements of fact but are always opinions. They convey a subtle (or not so subtle) slant that supports a particular interpretation. For example, a news story might read, “The senator said she was out of the country.” This is relatively straightforward, but consider how emotionally loaded the sentence becomes if we simply change the verb, as in, “The senator *claimed* she was out of the country.” Likewise, word choices may convey underlying biases. The same behavior may be described as “assertive” when a man does it, but “bitchy” when a woman does it.

One problem with emotive language is that it tends to inspire reactions based more on emotion than rational thought. This may lead us to believe an emotionally charged speaker even if the person presents no solid evidence. Or it may cause us to strike out in anger against people whose arguments are different from our own. “Overly strong emotional language antagonizes the receiver and wipes away impulses to listen, to stay friends, or even to talk together any further,” reflects psychologist Susan Heitler.³³

Don’t resort to insults.

The “sticks and stones” nursery rhyme got it wrong. Words *can* hurt, and it’s unfair to engage in name calling and slurs. The **fallacy of ad hominem** (translated as *to the man*) involves attacking a person’s character rather than debating the issues at hand. (For more about fallacies, see Chapter 14.) Language has been used throughout history to stigmatize certain groups.³⁴ It’s easy to see the damage of calling people with mental illness *crazy* or labeling a person with a developmental disability *retarded*. The power of prejudiced language to shape attitudes is clear. In a classic study, even those who disapproved of a derogatory label used against a member of a minority group tended to think less of the group members after encountering the term.³⁵ 

TIPS & REMINDERS

3 *Ways to Distinguish Between Facts and Opinions*

There is a place for personal opinions, but it's troublesome when they are misrepresented as facts. Use the guidelines below to determine if information—whether it be in a social media post, news item, or personal conversation—is fact, opinion disguised as fact, or a responsible opinion.^{36,37}

1. If statements meet the following criteria, they are probably *facts*.

- The evidence presented can be objectively proven or verified.
- The information is current and relevant.
- Valid sources of information are provided.
- An effort is made to encourage additional and emerging information.

2. Opinions disguised as facts tend to include one or more of the following.

- Statements seem designed mostly to stir up people's emotions.
- Claims are not supported with objective information.
- The argument is based on an isolated or unusual case.
- Assertions are overgeneralized or out of date.

3. Responsible opinions usually have the following qualities.

- Statements are clearly acknowledged to be perceptions ("I feel that . . .").
- Assertions are supported with trustworthy information.
- Respect is shown for other opinions.

Gender and Language

 LEARNING OBJECTIVE 4.5: Describe the ways in which traditionally male and female speech patterns are alike and how they differ.

"Why do men want to talk about sex so much?" "Why do women talk on the phone for hours?"

"Why won't he tell me how he feels?" These generalizations appear on websites with titles such as "I Don't Understand Women"³⁸ and "8 Things We Don't Understand About Men."³⁹ Gendered perspectives on language fascinate everyday people as well as researchers. The tricky part can be differentiating between stereotypes and realities. This section explores answers to nine questions about gender and language.

Q Is it true, metaphorically speaking, that men are from Mars and women from Venus?

A There's no denying that gender differences can be perplexing. But the sexes aren't actually "opposite" or nearly as different as the Mars–Venus metaphor suggests. As you read in Chapter 2, the gender matrix includes a nearly infinite array of identities. Keep in mind that generalities don't describe every person, and terms such as *men* and *women*, although common in the literature, don't begin to describe the true diversity among people.

Q Are people of different sexes hardwired to communicate differently?

A There is some truth to this, but the effects are usually small. Research shows that people with high testosterone levels are more competitive than those with lower levels of the hormone,^{40,41} and estrogen is associated with heightened emotional experiences and expression of emotion.⁴² However, hormones do not correlate perfectly with biological sex or behavior. While men typically have more testosterone and women more estrogen, these hormones are present in people of all sexes, and their presence varies by individual. Moreover, hormones' influence is less intense than most people think. For example, only 3% to 8% of women experience hormonal mood swings beyond the range of everyday emotions.⁴³

Q Do women talk more than men?

A Actually, men and women speak roughly the same number of words per day, but women tend to speak most freely when talking to other women, whereas men usually do most of the talking in professional settings.⁴⁴



Q Do men and women talk about different things?

A Yes . . . sometimes. This is most true when women talk to women and when men talk to men. Among themselves, women tend to spend more time discussing relational issues such as family, friends, and emotions. Male friends, on the other hand, are more likely to discuss recreational topics such as sports, technology, and nightlife.⁴⁵ That is not to say that people of different genders always talk about different things. Nearly everyone reports talking frequently about work, movies, and television.⁴⁶

Q We've moved beyond traditional gender roles in terms of dating, right?

A Although expectations have changed dramatically over the decades, powerful vestiges of traditional gender roles persist when it comes to romance. In online chat sites, young men are more likely than young women to post flirtatious comments and bold sexual invitations, and females are more likely to post friendly comments and to ask about and share their feelings.⁴⁷ Likewise, research about first dates and speed dating shows that men are more inclined than women to bring up the topic of sex, and women are more likely than men to think that a date is successful if conversation flows smoothly and if the tone is friendly.^{48,49} Take heart: These differences between gender roles tend to moderate as dating partners get to know each other better.

Q Are women more emotionally expressive than men?

A In the United States, because women frequently use conversation to pursue social needs, they are often said to have an **affective** style, meaning that their language focuses on emotions. Female speech typically contains statements that show support for the other person, demonstrate equality, and keep the conversation going. Because of these goals, traditionally female speech often contains statements of sympathy and empathy: “I’ve felt just like that myself” or “The same thing happened to me!” Instant messages written by women tend to be more expressive than ones composed by men.⁵⁰ They are more likely to contain laughter (“hehe”), emojis, typographical emphasis (italics, boldface, repeated letters), and adjectives. Women are also more inclined than men to ask questions such as “How do you feel about that?” that invite the other person to share feelings. So, the answer is yes, at least in the United States. But there is a caveat: People of all genders are hesitant to share their feelings when they think others will judge them negatively for doing so.⁵¹ In professional settings in the United States, women are likely to hide their emotions for fear of seeming weak or moody.⁵²

Q Does this mean that men are inherently less emotional than women?

A No. The difference in communication style seems to be rooted mostly in social expectations. In some cultures, such as in traditional Arab communities, men are emotionally expressive.⁵³ And whereas men in the United States have traditionally been discouraged from showing sadness or fear, they are encouraged to show emotions in some situations. Expressive behavior at sporting events is a case in point.⁵⁴ And in their private lives, men typically do express emotion, but they may do so through their actions (such as physical affection and favors) more than their words.⁵⁵



Q Men are more inclined to get right to the point, aren't they?

A It depends on the topic. Men in the United States have traditionally been socialized to adopt an **instrumental** use of language, meaning that the focus is on accomplishing tasks. They tend to emphasize giving directions and solving problems. That's why, when someone shares a problem with them, some men are prone to offer advice, such as "That's nothing to worry about . . ." or "Here's what you need to do. . ." There are exceptions, however. In cultures that discourage men from showing sadness, they often cope with such feelings *indirectly*, as when they use humor or distractions to avoid breaking down, especially when they are in public.⁵⁶

Q Women's speech is typically powerless and men's is typically powerful, right?

A Several factors make this a risky assumption. First, you may remember from the discussion of “powerless” speech that, although traditional female speech often includes more hedges than traditional male speech, the less assertive approach can be a powerful means to building relationships and collaborating with others. Second, even when their approach is nearly the same, men and women encounter different conversational climates. People in one study interrupted female speakers more than male speakers, even though all the speakers were trained to say much the same thing.⁵⁷ Third, gender differences are not as great as many people suppose. For example, when men and women described a health episode in their lives, everyday people weren’t able to tell which answers were the men’s and which were the women’s.⁵⁸ When the same researchers asked men, women, and transgender women to describe a painting, the results were the same: Everyday people weren’t able to distinguish a gender difference in their answers. All of this evidence suggests that, in some circumstances, the difference between men and women’s speech is more a perception than a reality.

By now it’s probably clear that neither characteristically male nor female styles of speech meet all communication needs. You can improve your linguistic competence by switching and combining styles.

As we finish this chapter, take the quiz on the next page to see how you typically use language. ●



ASK YOURSELF *How Do You Use Language?*

Answer the questions below to see what orientation is suggested by the way you use language.

- _____ 1. Your best friend is upset upon learning that he was not accepted into graduate school. What are you most likely to say?
 - a. “You seem discouraged. Tell me what’s going through your head.”
 - b. “Grad school is overrated. Tons of successful people don’t have master’s degrees.”
 - c. “There are other great schools. How might I help you apply to them?”
 - d. “You are a great student. Don’t let this get you down. The school that accepts you will be very lucky.”
- _____ 2. You are planning a sales pitch that could earn your company millions of dollars. What is your pitch most likely to include?
 - a. A focus on the client’s most deeply held values
 - b. A list of the reasons your company is better than the competition
 - c. Specific features that make your product highly useful and effective
 - d. Jargon and other language that shows you understand the client’s business
- _____ 3. You hope to meet with a professor to learn more about a topic covered in class. How would you word a meeting request?
 - a. “I’m excited about the ideas you shared in class. Could I meet with you to learn more?”
 - b. “This topic is critical to my long-term success. Can I meet with you to learn more about it?”
 - c. “I’d like to hear what steps you think I should follow to be successful at this. Can we meet?”

- d. “I like what you said in class. I know you’re busy, but would it be possible to meet and talk more about it?”
- _____ 4. Your family is planning a holiday celebration, but you’d like to go skiing with friends instead. How are you most likely to broach the topic with your family?
- “You’ve always been so supportive of me. I think you’ll understand . . .”
 - “Going skiing with my friends is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”
 - “The ski trip is an opportunity to make new friends and maybe even some future business contacts.”
 - “I’d love to go skiing. But I won’t go unless you’re 100 percent okay with it.”

INTERPRETING YOUR RESPONSES !

Read the explanations below to learn more about your use of language. (More than one may apply.)

Affective If you answered “a” to two or more questions, your language tends to focus on emotions—yours and other people’s. This affective approach ([page 58](#)) can make you a sensitive listener and a motivational speaker. Just be sure to balance this strength with awareness of practical concerns.

Emotive If you answered “b” to more than one question, you tend to voice strong opinions. Educated opinions can be useful, but review the discussion about “emotive language” on [page 55](#) to make sure you don’t present your opinions as facts. Doing so can squelch open communication and lead you to overlook alternative ways of understanding the world around you.

Instrumental If you answered “c” to two or more questions, you are inclined to adopt an instrumental approach to language ([page 58](#)). Your focus on strategies and goals can be highly effective, but you may come off as headstrong in some situations. Make sure you don’t lose sight of the emotional (affective) aspects of the issue at hand.

Affiliative If you answered “d” to more than one question, you are disposed toward an affiliative language style ([page 52](#)). You tend to display convergence (alignment) with other people and avoid actions that might place you at odds. Your thoughtfulness is no doubt appreciated. At the same time, make an effort to take a stand when it’s important to do so. The advice on assertive communication in [Chapter 9](#) may be helpful.

COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS

Communication and Language



The Nature of Language

- Language is powerful and indispensable, but also imprecise and evolving.
- Language is symbolic.
- Meanings are in people, not in words.
- Language is governed by rules.
- Phonological rules govern how words are processed.
- Syntactic rules govern the way symbols are arranged.
- Semantic rules suggest the meaning of words.
- Pragmatic rules apply to how people use language in everyday interactions.



The Power of Language

- Names shape and reinforce a sense of personal identity.
- Listeners often associate accents with particular abilities and traits.
- “Powerful” language is clear, assertive, and direct.
- “Powerless” language suggests that a speaker is uncertain and nonassertive, but “powerless” is sometimes a misnomer.
- Affiliative language demonstrates solidarity with others.

Misunderstandings

- Some words are equivocal in that they have more than one definition.
- Equivocation involves a deliberate attempt to be vague.
- Relative words gain their meaning by comparison.
- Slang and jargon differ by community.
- Euphemisms are pleasant alternatives to bolder talk, but they can cause confusion.



6 Ways to Avoid Misunderstandings

- Use idioms, slang, jargon, and abbreviations with caution.
- Explain your terms.
- Be specific.
- Clarify whom you represent.
- Focus on specific behaviors.
- Be careful with euphemisms and equivocations.

Tips for Avoiding Disruptive Language

- Don't confuse fact and opinion.
- Don't confuse facts with inferences (interpretations).
- Don't present emotions as facts.
- Don't resort to insults.



Gender and Language

- The sexes aren't actually "opposite."
- Hormones' influence is less intense than most people think.
- Men and women speak roughly the same number of words per day, but in different situations.
- Among themselves, women tend to talk more about family, friends, and emotions.
- Male friends are more likely to discuss sports and technology.
- Although ideas are changing, traditional gender roles continue to influence dating customs.
- In the United States, women typically use more affective language and men more instrumental language.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Show Your Communication Know-How



4.1: Explain how symbols and linguistic rules allow people to achieve shared meaning.

Analyze a time when someone thought you were being serious when you were really kidding or vice versa. What pragmatic rules were involved? What were the consequences? How did things work out?

KEY TERMS: language, symbols, denotative and connotative meanings, phonological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic rules



4.2: Identify ways in which language shapes our attitudes and reflects how we feel about ourselves and others.

Describe the same person in five different sentences. What do the descriptions suggest about your opinion of this person? How are others likely to view this person based on your word choices?

KEY TERMS: accent, dialect, powerful and powerless language, affiliative language, convergence, divergence

4.3: Recognize and remedy vague and confusing language.

Think of a time when someone misunderstood a word you used. How did what you meant compare to their interpretation of the word? How might you avoid causing similar confusion in the future?



4.4: Distinguish between facts, opinions, and inferences, and avoid using disruptive language.

Find a news article or blog and mark elements of it that are fact and those that are opinion. Are the facts trustworthy and verifiable? Are the opinions acknowledged as such and presented with respect for other viewpoints? What improvements might you suggest to encourage civil discourse about the topic?



4.5: Describe the ways in which traditionally male and female speech patterns are alike and how they differ.

Describe how gender roles influence the way you communicate and what you communicate about. Explain how other factors, such as your major or occupation, influence your communication style. Which factors do you think are most influential?

5 Listening

Listening Process and Outcomes

What can you gain by being a good listener?

Which common beliefs about listening are untrue?

What steps are involved in effective listening?

Challenges

What factors make listening especially difficult?

How do men and women differ in terms of listening behaviors?

What bad habits might you break to improve your listening skills?

Types of Listening

How can you best match your listening approach to the situation?



The Importance of Listening



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 5.1: Summarize the benefits of being an effective listener.

Listening well takes discipline and skill, but the payoffs are substantial in terms of personal growth and career success.



After waiting months to get a meeting with a high-powered CEO, Mark Goulston was frustrated that the executive seemed preoccupied and wasn't listening. Rather than muddle through a disappointing meeting, Goulston shared a hunch: "There is something on your mind."¹ He suggested that they reschedule the meeting for another time. To his surprise, the CEO started to cry. He told Goulston that his wife was undergoing a biopsy that day and he feared a bad outcome. "I'm at work, but I'm not really here," the CEO confessed. "You've known me for five minutes and there are people that have known me for twenty years . . . and they don't know what you know."²

**Listening is essential to professional success.
Recruiters rank listening at the top of employers' wish lists.**

The CEO was so moved by Goulston's perceptiveness and compassion that he set his worries aside and gave Goulston his undivided attention.

Goulston, the author of *Just Listen*,³ is an expert on paying attention and reading between the lines, but anyone can become a better listener by building their skills and avoiding some all-too-common bad habits. Here are several reasons why it's worth the effort.

People with good listening skills are more likely than others to be hired and promoted.

"Listening is more important than speaking," advises a spokesperson for one of the largest career networks sites in the United States. In fact, she ranks the importance of listening among the top five things recruiters wish you knew.⁴ (The other four involve dressing appropriately, handling rejection well, being proactive, and being polite and considerate.) Listening skills are also important once you get a job. Because good listeners

are typically judged to be appealing and trustworthy,⁵ they are especially popular with employers and with customers and clients.^{6,7}

Listening is a leadership skill.

Leaders who are good listeners typically have more influence and stronger relationships with team members than do less attentive leaders.⁸ In fact, leaders' listening skills are often more influential than their speaking skills.⁹ As columnist Doug Larson puts it, "Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you'd have preferred to talk."¹⁰

Good listeners are not easily fooled.

People who listen carefully and weigh the merits of what they hear are more likely than others to spot what some researchers call "pseudo-profound bullshit"—statements that sound smart but are actually misleading or nonsensical, such as "attention and intention are the mechanics of manifestation."¹¹ Mindful listening (a topic we'll discuss further shortly) is your best defense.

Asking for and listening to advice makes you look good.

"Many people are reluctant to seek advice for fear of appearing incompetent," observe researchers who studied the issue.¹² What they found was the opposite—that people think more *highly* of individuals who ask them for guidance about challenging issues than those who fumble through on their own. Of course, that's just the first step. Making the most of that advice requires good listening skills and follow-through.



Listening makes you a better friend and romantic partner.

While you're getting ready for a social gathering, make sure to clean out your ears, metaphorically speaking. Friends and partners who listen well are considered to be more supportive than those who don't.¹³ That probably doesn't surprise you, but this may: Listening well on a date can significantly increase your attractiveness rating.^{14,15} The caveat is that you can't *pretend* to listen. Effective listeners are sincerely interested and engaged.

Despite these advantages, much of the listening people do is not very effective. They misunderstand others and are misunderstood in return. They become bored and feign attention while their minds wander. They engage in a battle of interruptions without hearing the other's ideas. Read on for ways to improve your skills.



PAUSE TO REFLECT

How Can You Improve as a Listener?

1. Check all of the following that apply to you:
 - I frequently feel impatient and wish people would get to the point.
 - I often interrupt when others are speaking.
 - I tend to reach snap judgments about people and their ideas.
 - I am often distracted by my phone or my mental to-do list.
 - I am likely to tune out if I don't agree with what the other person is saying.
2. If you checked several items, you aren't unusual. These are common barriers to good listening. But the benefits of improving your listening skills can be tremendous. Write down three ways you might improve the way you listen.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____

Misconceptions About Listening



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 5.2: Outline the most common misconceptions about listening, and assess how successfully you avoid them.

Comedian Paula Poundstone once quipped, “It’s not that I’m not interested in what other people have to say, it’s that I can’t hear them over the sound of my own voice.”¹⁶ Poundstone is more honest than most in admitting that listening doesn’t come easy. But with attention, it’s possible.

Here’s a good example: Nervous about meeting his wife’s coworkers at a party, Julio fretted about what he might say to impress them. Then he decided to focus instead on what *other* people were saying. He paid close attention to people’s words and body language. He asked questions to learn about his conversational partners, and sought more information in order to understand them better. Throughout the party, people told Julio’s wife how much they enjoyed talking to him, calling him articulate and charismatic.¹⁷ Perhaps without knowing it, Julio didn’t succumb to several myths about listening.

Myth: Hearing and listening are the same thing.

In Chapter 1, we introduced the term *receiving* to describe the process by which a message is decoded. In fact, the process of receiving a message involves multiple stages. **Hearing** is the physiological ability to perceive the presence of sounds in the environment. If you have that physiological ability, hearing occurs automatically when sound waves strike your eardrums and cause vibrations that are transmitted to your brain. By contrast, **listening** occurs when the brain reconstructs these electrochemical impulses into a representation of the original sound and then gives them meaning. Unlike hearing, listening has a psychological dimension: It requires conscious effort and skill. Even when people cannot hear, they can be attentive listeners in other

ways. The phrase “I listen with my eyes” is common in the Deaf community.¹⁸ It refers not only to sign language but to the ability to gain meaning by using all of the senses.



Myth: Listening is a natural process.

Although it may seem that listening is like breathing—a natural activity that people do well—in truth, listening is a skill much like speaking in that everybody does it, but few people excel at it. In the workplace, good listeners are typically more influential than their peers because they are perceived to be more agreeable, open, and approachable than people who listen poorly.¹⁹ However, most people are not the good listeners they think they are. In one survey, 96 percent of professionals rated themselves good listeners, but 80 percent of them admitted to multitasking while on the phone, a sure sign that they do not give callers their full attention.²⁰

Myth: All listeners receive the same message.

When two or more people are listening to a speaker, they tend to assume that they hear and understand the same thing. In fact, such uniform comprehension isn’t the case. Chapter 3 pointed out the many factors that cause people to perceive messages differently. Perhaps they’re hungry, thinking about something else, or just not interested. Their ears might trick them into hearing the wrong words. Or they may perceive the same words but give them different meaning or significance. Your friend might find a joke funny, whereas you consider it silly or even offensive. Misunderstandings are especially likely when remarks are interpreted out of context. When Fifth Harmony member Normani Kordei called one of her groupmates “very quirky” in an interview, she says she meant it in a good way, but some fans interpreted her remark as an insult and attacked Kordei on social media.²¹ ●

The Listening Process

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 5.3:** Describe how each stage in the listening process influences your ability to send and share messages.

Far from being effortless, successful listening consists of six stages. These stages, made memorable with the acronym HURIER, are Hearing, Understanding, Remembering, Interpreting, Evaluating, and Responding.²²

Hearing

In the hearing stage, also called **attending**, people receive and pay attention to signals. Sometimes you can't help but hear the noises around you. At other times, you may ignore them. For example, you might tune out your roommates' conversation until you hear your name mentioned or you notice that they seem to be arguing, in which case you might start *attending* to what they're saying. Hearing also depends on physical abilities. The number of young people with hearing loss is on the rise, partly because earbuds and similar technology make it possible to blast one's eardrums at dangerously high volume.²³ About 1 in 8 children and teens and 1 in 5 adults have suffered permanent damage to their hearing because of exposure to loud noise.²⁴

Understanding

Through **understanding**, you make sense of a message. Communication researchers use the term **listening fidelity** to describe the degree to which what a listener understands corresponds to what the sender is attempting to communicate.²⁵ *High-fidelity listening* occurs when there is a close match between the sender's thoughts and feelings and the receiver's understanding of them. In *low-fidelity listening*, there's a significant mismatch between the two. You might experience low fidelity when your chemistry professor says, "Changes in marine redox structure may be tracked by means of geochemical proxies."²⁶ Then again, if you know the vocabulary, the meaning may be very clear to you.

Remembering

Although **remembering** also happens after an encounter has passed, it begins in the moment, based on how much information you take in and how you store it for future reference. How often have you been introduced to someone and then realized moments later that you have no recollection of the person's name? People remember only about half of what they hear immediately after hearing it and even less as time passes.²⁷ Of course, these amounts vary from person to person and depend on the importance of the information being recalled.²⁸ Given the amount of information you are likely to process every day—from instructors, friends, TV, social media, and other sources—the **residual message** (what you remember) is bound to be a small fraction of what you hear.

Interpreting

Whereas understanding involves grasping the literal meaning of a statement, **interpreting** it requires that you take into consideration the situation, the sender's nonverbal behaviors, and other contextual cues. If your boss says, "See me in my office immediately," the literal meaning is clear, but your interpretation may vary from "I must be getting a raise" to "I'm in big trouble."

Evaluating

By this point in the listening process, you may feel that you *understand* the literal message and can *interpret* it in context. In **evaluating**, you go a step further to make a judgment about the message and/or the speaker. You might ask yourself "Is this person sincere?" and "Can I trust this information?"

Responding

In **responding** to a message, you give observable feedback to the speaker. As discussed in [Chapter 1](#), communication is transactional, meaning that people send messages at the same time they receive them. Many people assume that good listeners stay quiet and don't interrupt. However, one of the most important indications of good listening is feedback—which might include eye contact, appropriate facial expressions, asking questions and exchanging relevant ideas, sitting up straight, and facing the speaker.²⁹ ●



Listening in a Complex World

● **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 5.4:** Recognize and develop strategies to overcome factors that make it challenging to listen well.

Many feel that listening is harder than ever before.³⁰ With the number of people and devices clamoring for your attention, you can't always be a perfect listener. However, you can be aware of factors that tend to interfere. As you read about the following listening hazards, consider how you might minimize their influence when it's important to listen well.

Are any of the following familiar?

- Your phone vibrates while you're listening to a lecture or talking to a friend. You sneak a peek at the screen to see what's up.
- You're binge-watching a long-awaited season of your favorite TV show. A neighbor drops by to warn you about some car break-ins nearby. You know the issue is important, but you find yourself becoming irritated at the interruption.
- Over coffee, a friend complains about having a bad day. You want to be supportive, but you are preoccupied with problems of your own, and you need to get back to work soon to meet a deadline.
- Your boss critiques your work. You think her comments are unfair and feel the need to defend yourself.
- A family member tells the same story you've heard dozens of times before. You feel obliged to act interested, but your mind is far away.

Message Overload

The amount of information most people hear every day makes careful listening to everything they hear impossible. Along with a deluge of face-to-face messages, they may be bombarded by phone calls, emails, tweets, texts, and chats. To be better listeners, experts suggest that people turn off communication technology while they work on complex tasks, send clear and brief emails with specific subject lines, and think twice before sharing trivial information with everyone they know.³¹



Rapid Thought

Although humans are capable of understanding speech at rates up to 600 words per minute, the average person speaks between 100 and 140 words per minute.³² Thus, there is a great deal of mental “spare time” to spend while someone is talking. It’s tempting to use this time thinking about personal interests, daydreaming, planning a rebuttal, and so on. To avoid these temptations, instead try using spare time to understand the speaker’s ideas better: Rephrase their ideas in your own words. Ask yourself how the ideas might be useful to you. Consider other angles that the speaker might not have mentioned.

Psychological Noise

People are often wrapped up in personal concerns that seem more important to them than the messages others send. It’s hard to pay attention when you’re anticipating an upcoming test or thinking about the wonderful time you had last night. Everyone’s mind wanders at one time or another, but excessive preoccupation is both a reason for and a sign of poor listening. It takes conscious effort to turn down the volume of psychological noise and give others the attention they deserve.



Physical Noise

The world around you also presents distractions that make it hard to pay attention. The sound of traffic, music, others' speech, and the like may interfere with your ability to hear well. You can listen better by removing the sources of noise whenever possible. Turn off the television, put away your phone, close the window, and so on. In some cases, you may need to find a more conducive environment for uninterrupted listening. Julian Treasure, who studies sound and human communication, lists silence as the first step to better listening. He proposes that quiet time allows people to relax, regroup, and become sensitive to others' words as well as to their subtle nonverbal cues.³³

Cultural Differences

The behaviors that define a good listener vary by culture. Americans are most impressed by listeners who ask questions and make supportive statements.³⁴ By contrast, Iranians, as members of a high-context culture (see Chapter 3), tend to judge people's listening skills based on more subtle nonverbal indicators such as their posture and eye contact.³⁵ Expectations vary by generation as well. If you grew up texting and tweeting, you may think that glancing at your phone during a conversation is fine. But if you're with someone from an older generation, it can be perceived as a lack of attention and respect. Below, experts offer ways to minimize the distracting influence of social media. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

3 Ways to Limit Social Media Distractions

One challenge to serious listening is the influence of social media. By some estimates, most people swipe, stroke, tap, or click their smartphones hundreds or even thousands of times a day.³⁶ Although social media may make you more tuned in to people who are not near you, it can rob you of presence in the current moment. As a result, you may be a less attentive and less considerate listener. Given that people are not likely to give up their devices any time soon, psychologist and social media analyst Sherry Turkle offers the following tips:³⁷

1. Don't reach for a device every time you get a free moment.

Instead, take stock of what you are seeing, feeling, smelling, and hearing. It will make you more attentive to the people and things around you.

2. Create “device-free zones.”

By committing to setting devices aside at the dinner table, in the car, or in the living room, you can be alone with your thoughts or carry on a conversation without distractions.

3. Share your feelings in person every so often.

Rather than posting or tweeting your thoughts, consider sharing them face to face. Also, be there in person for a friend in need rather than just posting a message of support on social media.

Gender: Listening and Responding

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 5.5: Distinguish between listening/responding approaches commonly associated with gender.

Traditionally, men and women have had different notions about the best way to listen supportively. Understanding those differences can go a long way toward bridging the gaps.



Women tend to disclose similar experiences.

When women share their troubles with other women, the response is often a matching “me too” disclosure. A woman might say, “I understand. My partner *never* remembers my birthday!” Such a response is usually understood between women as a sign of their connectedness and solidarity. Indeed, women may even dig deep to find a matching experience or emotion to share,³⁸ which is one reason that happiness (as well as dissatisfaction) often feels contagious.

Men tend to solve or distract.

Men have traditionally been socialized to focus less on emotional connection and more on competition and emotional control. They may consider it supportive to offer a solution or a distraction such as “Don’t worry about it” or “Here’s what you should do. . . .” Men may consider these responses helpful because they take the emphasis off the speaker’s emotional state and imply that they are capable of making things better.

Empathy from women can feel like a put-down to men.

If a woman responds to a man’s troubles with a matching experience, it may feel to him like a one-up, as if she is implying that his problems are not remarkable or hers are even worse.

A man's well intentioned response can feel like disinterest to a woman.

Women accustomed to social support that focuses on emotions and common experiences may feel that men are being insensitive when they respond with a solution or a distraction. She may wonder, “Why did he cut short my efforts to connect with him by jumping to a conclusion or a different topic?”

Awareness can help.

The result of these different perspectives, observes one researcher, is often a mutual sense of frustration:

*She blames him for telling her what to do and failing to provide the expected comfort, whereas he thinks he did exactly what she requested and cannot fathom why she would keep talking about a problem if she does not want to do anything about it.*³⁹

Of course, we must be careful not to overgeneralize. Gender roles continually evolve, and a number of factors interact with gender to shape how people provide social support.

All the same, understanding traditional patterns may help people avoid the assumption that their way is the only way or the right way to offer comfort. ●

Hurtful Listening Habits

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 5.6:** Identify and manage faulty listening habits that can hurt others and damage relationships.

Although they may be well intentioned, some listening and responding styles can upset others. That's all the more reason to acknowledge and overcome common listening pitfalls.

Shasta was at dinner with a group of friends when she proposed that they take turns sharing one thing about the friendship that they liked and one thing they would like to improve or expand. “Everyone shared really beautiful things,” Shasta recalls. “It was super touching.” Then, right before it was her turn, the conversation shifted to a different topic. No one seemed to realize that Shasta never got a turn to weigh in. “I felt hurt,” she says, looking back.⁴⁰

Here are seven bad habits to overcome if you want to be fully present with the people around you.



Pretending to Listen

Pseudolistening is an imitation of the real thing. When people pseudolisten, they give the appearance of being attentive when they really aren't. They look people in the eye, nod and smile at the right times, and may even answer occasionally. That appearance of interest, however, is a polite way to mask thoughts that have nothing to do with what the speaker is saying.

Tuning In and Out

Selective listeners respond only to the parts of a speaker's remarks that interest them. Everyone is a selective listener from time to time, but it's a habit that can lead to confusion, misunderstandings, and hurt feelings.

Acting Defensively

People who perceive that they are being attacked even when they aren't are **defensive listeners**. Feelings of guilt or insecurity are often at the root of defensive listening, with the effect that casual remarks may be taken as insults, as when "It looks like you really enjoyed lunch, huh?" leads to a response such as "It's not your business if I want to cheat on my diet!"

The *Tips & Reminders* on the next page may help you avoid common pitfalls of defensive listening.

Bad listening habits can become second nature.
Recognizing them is the first step to becoming a better listener.



Avoiding the Issue

Insulated listeners tend to avoid difficult subjects. If you find yourself tuning out when a subject arises that you'd rather not deal with, you might be guilty of this habit.

Ignoring Underlying Issues

Insensitive listeners tend to take remarks at face value rather than looking below the surface. An insensitive listener might miss the warble in a friend's voice that suggests she is more upset than her words let on. Or, when her partner complains, "I always take out the trash," she might miss that what's wanted is a thank you.

Being Self-Centered

The next time you're engaged in conversation, consider who has control. **Conversational narcissists** focus on themselves and their interests instead of listening to and encouraging others.⁴¹ One type of conversational narcissist is the **stage hog**, who actively claims more than their fair share of the spotlight. Other narcissists are more passive. They may not interrupt, but neither do they encourage others with supportive comments such as "uh-huh" and "What happened next?"⁴² Whatever their approach, conversational narcissists tend to discourage the equal give-and-take that is the hallmark of mutually satisfying conversations.

Talking Too Much

You probably know a few people who love nothing more than the sound of their own voice. Not only does talking too much lead to bad listening, it also robs people of the opportunity to learn from others. As playwright Wilson Mizner once observed, "A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while [they get] to know something."⁴³

After reviewing these bad habits, you may feel stunned by the egotism behind many of them. Sometimes people's intentions are truly selfish. More likely, they just haven't learned the skills and discipline involved in being better leaders. Shasta, whose story began this section, says she looks back on the dinner episode and wishes she were more assertive about sharing her feelings. All the same, it would have been nice if her friends had put more effort into listening. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

6 *Tips for Listening Nondefensively*

It's natural to feel uncomfortable when the boss wants to talk about the deadline you missed or when your roommate is upset because you left a mess. Here are some tips for listening nondefensively, even when the heat is on.^{44,45}

1. Take a deep breath or two and remind yourself of your good qualities.

2. Avoid berating yourself with negative self-talk.

Thinking "That was such a dumb mistake" or "He will never forgive me" won't help.

3. Stop expecting perfection.

Let go of the idea that you (or anyone) can be perfect.

4. Thank the speaker for sharing.

Even when the words are hard to hear, it's usually better to know what is on other people's minds.

5. Ask questions.

You might say, "Did you feel taken for granted when you saw my dishes in the sink?"

6. Learn and move on.

At the very least, congratulate yourself for handling a difficult situation with sincerity and openness.

Skills for Different Types of Listening



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 5.7: Adapt listening behaviors to specific situations and engage in mindful listening.

Effective listening comes in many forms, each with particular goals and techniques. Here are five types of listening and experts' tips for doing them well.

Relational Listening

The goal of **relational listening** is to emotionally connect with others. Here are some tips for accomplishing that:

- *Allow enough time.* Encouraging others to share their thoughts and feelings can take more than a moment. If you're in a hurry, it may be best to reschedule a relationally focused conversation for a better time. You might say, "I want to give you my undivided attention. Can we meet at 2 o'clock for coffee?"
- *Listen for unexpressed thoughts and feelings.* People don't always say what's on their minds. They might be confused, fearful of being judged, or trying to be polite. However, these unstated messages can be as important as the spoken ones. Consider whether your friend who says, "It's fine. Don't worry about it," really feels that way or is masking hurt and disappointment—or if the new acquaintance who says, "What are you doing tonight?" is interested in making plans with you.
- *Encourage further comments.* You can often strengthen relationships simply by encouraging others to say more. Great teachers harness this power regularly. They know that students often learn more when they

ask questions and work through problems than when they are given the answers up front.⁴⁶



Supportive Listening

In **supportive listening**, the primary aim is to help the speaker deal with personal dilemmas. Sometimes the problem is a big one: “I’m not sure this marriage is going to work” or “I can’t decide whether to drop out of school.” At other times, the problem is more modest. A friend might be trying to decide what birthday gift to buy or where to spend a vacation. Here are some strategies for being a supportive listener:

- *Consider when and how to help.* Before committing yourself to helping another person—even someone in obvious distress—make sure your support is welcome. People may prefer to handle difficult situations on their own.⁴⁷ Sometimes the most supportive thing you can do is listen quietly. At other times, running an errand or offering to help with a task may be more helpful than anything else you could do.⁴⁸
- *Be cautious about offering advice.* Listeners often assume that distressed individuals want pointers on how to solve their problems. However, this assumption is often faulty and can make things worse. As a general rule, only offer advice if the person welcomes it, if you can offer the advice in a way that doesn’t seem belittling, and if you are well qualified to give the advice. Despite your good intentions, it’s presumptuous to assume that you have the answers based on your own opinions or experiences.
- *Avoid being judgmental.* Judgmental responses aren’t usually helpful, even when they seem to be supportive in the moment. A classic case of this is bashing a friend’s romantic partner after they have broken up or argued. Saying, “That guy is a jerk” may feel great in the moment, but as you have probably experienced, it can lead to hurt feelings and tension if they get back together. It can be even worse when your “supportive” assessment makes the other person feel judged. Statements such as “You’ve clearly chosen the wrong major” and “If I were you, I would quit that job now” can come off as value judgments that make the speaker even more distressed.

Task-Oriented Listening

The purpose of **task-oriented listening** is to secure information necessary to get a job done. This might involve following your boss’s instructions at work, hearing tips for mastering a new game or app, getting tips from a coach—the list goes on. Since success often relies on your ability to be a good task-oriented listener, here are some tips to help you be more effective:



- *Listen for key ideas.* It's easy to lose patience with long-winded speakers, but good task-oriented listeners stay tuned and are able to extract the main points, even from a complicated message.
- *Ask questions.* If you're meeting friends at a restaurant that you've never been to, you might ask "What's the menu like?" or "Is it casual or upscale?" In other situations, questions might include, "When is this project due?" or "Who should I ask for more information?"
- *Paraphrase.* **Paraphrasing** involves restating in your own words the message you thought the speaker sent, without adding anything new. For example, you might say, "You're telling me to drive down to the traffic light by the high school and turn toward the mountains, is that it?" or "Am I right in thinking your goal is to raise sales by 10 percent?"
- *Take notes.* As mentioned, listeners usually forget about half of what they hear, so it's smart to take notes instead of relying on your memory. Sometimes these notes may be simple and brief—an appointment time or a list of things to pick up at the store. In other cases—a lecture, for example—your notes should be much more detailed. Either way, make sure to take notes right away, record only key ideas rather than scrambling to put down every word, and develop a note-taking format that works for you—whether it's an outline or simply using bold letters, underlining, or asterisks to flag especially important information.

Analytical Listening

The goal of **analytical listening** is to fully comprehend a message. Analytical listeners explore ideas and issues from a variety of perspectives to understand them as fully as possible. Analytical listening is particularly valuable when issues are complicated, but it can sometimes be time consuming. Here are some strategies you might use:



- *Listen for information before evaluating.* This principle almost seems too obvious to mention. Yet most people are guilty of judging a speaker’s ideas before they completely understand them. The tendency to make premature judgments is especially strong when the ideas you hear conflict with your own beliefs.
- *Separate the message from the speaker.* At times you may discount the value of a message because of the person who presents it. But even the most boring instructors, the most idiotic relatives, and the most demanding bosses occasionally make good points. If you write off everything a person says before you consider it, you may be cheating yourself out of valuable information.
- *Search for value.* You can find some value in even the worst situations. Consider how you might listen opportunistically when you find yourself locked in a boring conversation with someone whose ideas you believe are worthless. Rather than torture yourself, you could keep yourself amused—and perhaps learn something useful—by considering, “What lessons can I learn from this person that will keep me from sounding the same way myself in other situations?”

Critical Listening

The goal of **critical listening** is to go beyond understanding and analyzing a topic to try to assess its quality. This skill is especially critical in today’s media environment, in which many messages are slanted or inaccurate. Here are some ways to determine if what you’re hearing holds up under scrutiny:

- *Examine the speaker’s evidence and reasoning.* Trustworthy speakers offer support to back up their statements. For example, a reputable car dealer might share performance statistics from *Consumer Reports*. Unfortunately, outrageous and untrue assertions are rampant as well. “Clickbait” teaser lines on social media are often tantalizing but untrue. When a social media post in 2017 falsely declared that the rapper Jay-Z was dead, the “news” quickly spread to nearly 1 million Twitter users.⁴⁹ To avoid falling for faulty logic and made-up stories, consider whether the source of the information is reliable, whether the information is consistent across many sources, and if it is current and reasonable. ([Chapters 12](#) and [14](#) offer additional insights on evaluating evidence.)
- *Evaluate the speaker’s credibility.* The acceptability of an idea often depends on its source. If your longtime family friend, a self-made millionaire, invites you to invest your life savings in jojoba fruit futures, you might be grateful for the tip. If your deadbeat brother-in-law makes the same offer, you would probably laugh off the suggestion. [Chapter 14](#) discusses credibility in detail, but two questions provide a quick guideline for deciding whether or not to accept a speaker as an authority. First, *does the speaker have the experience or expertise to qualify as an authority on this subject?* Second, *is the speaker*

impartial? If the person has a personal stake in the outcome of a topic, consider the possibility of intentional or unintentional bias.

- *Assess emotional appeals.* Sometimes emotion alone may be enough to persuade you. You might “lend” your friend \$20 even though you don’t expect to see the money again soon. In other cases, however, it’s a mistake to let yourself be swayed by emotion when the logic of a point isn’t sound. The too-good-to-be-true promises in an ad or the lure of low monthly payments probably are not good enough reasons to buy a product you can’t afford. The fallacies described in Chapter 14 will help you recognize flaws in emotional appeals.

We have explored various types of listening, but mindful listening will serve you well no matter what the situation. Learn more about mindful listening below and then take the quiz on the next page for insights about your listening skills. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

4 *Tips for Listening Mindfully*

Mindful listening involves being fully present with others—paying close attention to their gestures, manner, and silences, as well as to what they say.⁵⁰ It means paying attention to difficult concepts, even when it would be easier to tune out. Mindful listening also involves a commitment to understand other people’s perspectives without being judgmental or defensive. This can be difficult, especially when you’re busy or when you feel vulnerable yourself. Here are some tips for being more mindful.^{51,52,53}

1. Determine when mindfulness is needed.

Sometimes it’s okay to be mindless about what you hear. Paying attention to every song on your playlist or every commercial around you would distract you from more important matters. The problem is being lazy about listening to things that really matter. For example, a college student hurt by his girlfriend’s poor listening skills wrote in an online forum, “I have opened up to her about really, really personal things and then two weeks later or within the week . . . she’s like, ‘Oh, you never mentioned it to me.’ I just find this really really rude and insulting.”⁵⁴

2. Commit to being fully present.

Minimize distractions, including extraneous thoughts and worries. Of course, this isn’t always easy. Sometimes enthusiasm for the conversation itself can make people poor listeners. Mark Goulston, author of *Just Listen*, recommends that people hit the reset button when they have failed to be as mindful as they would like. For example, he might say to a conversational partner, “In my eagerness to build on what we’re talking about, I’ve raced entirely ahead of the conversation. I’m sorry.”⁵⁵ Goulston then slows down and renews his commitment to being fully present.

3. Mentally acknowledge your own feelings.

Listening with an open mind can be uncomfortable. You may find yourself becoming angry, sad, impatient, or defensive. A good technique is to acknowledge your emotions but not let them hijack the conversation. You might think to yourself, “I’m feeling angry. I’ll set that aside for now and try to understand more fully what this person is sharing with me.” It also helps to remember that other people’s feelings are real, even if their interpretations are different from yours.⁵⁶ Asking questions is a good way to stay curious rather than engaging in knee-jerk emotional reactions.⁵⁷

4. Be patient.

Even when you know the speaker well, resist the temptation to finish their sentences. Instead, allow them the time and freedom to express themselves.⁵⁸ Likewise, don’t rush the speaker or interrupt. Silence can be helpful when the goal is to pause, think, and understand.



ASK YOURSELF

ASK YOURSELF What Are Your Listening Strengths?

Answer the questions below to gauge which listening approaches you use most.

- _____ 1. Which of the following best describes you?
 - a. I'm a quick learner who can hear instructions and put them into action.
 - b. I have an intuitive sense, not just of what people say, but how they are feeling.
 - c. I'm a good judge of character. I can usually tell whether people are trustworthy or not.
 - d. I'm a rapid thinker who is often able to jump in and finish people's sentences for them.
- _____ 2. Imagine you are tutoring an elementary school student in math. What are you most likely to do?
 - a. Focus on clearly articulating the steps involved in solving simple equations
 - b. Begin each tutoring session by asking about the student's day
 - c. Pay close attention to what the student says to see if they really understand
 - d. Feel frustrated if it seems the student isn't listening or isn't motivated
- _____ 3. A friend launches into a lengthy description of a problem with a coworker. What are you most likely to do?
 - a. Offer some ideas for discussing the issue with the coworker
 - b. Show that you are listening by maintaining eye contact, leaning forward, and asking questions
 - c. Read between the lines to better understand what is contributing to the problem
 - d. Pretend to listen but tune out after 5 minutes or so
- _____ 4. If you had your way, which of the following rules would apply to team meetings?
 - a. Chit-chat would be limited to 5 minutes so the team can get to the point at hand.
 - b. Everyone would get a turn to speak.
 - c. People would back up their opinions with clear data and examples.
 - d. There would be no meetings; they're usually a waste of time.

INTERPRETING YOUR RESPONSES!

Read the explanations below to see which listening approaches you frequently take. (More than one may apply.)

Task Oriented If you answered “a” to more than one question, you tend to be an action-oriented listener. You value getting the job done and can become frustrated with inefficiency. Your task orientation ([page 73](#)) can help teams stay on track. Just be careful that you don’t overlook the importance of building strong relationships, which are essential for getting the job done. Tips for group work in [Chapter 12](#) may be especially interesting to you.

Relational/Supportive If you answered “b” more than once, you tend to be a relational and/or supportive listener ([pages 72–73](#)). It’s likely that people feel comfortable sharing their problems and secrets with you. Your strong listening skills make you a trusted friend and colleague. At work, however, this can make it difficult to get things done. Make an effort to set boundaries so people don’t talk your ear off.

Analytical/Critical If you answered “c” to more than one question, you often engage in analytical and/or critical listening ([pages 73–75](#)). You tend to be a skeptical listener who isn’t easily taken in by phony people or unsubstantiated ideas. Your ability to synthesize information and judge its merits is a strength. At the same time, guard against the temptation to reach snap judgements. Take time to consider people and ideas thoughtfully before you write them off. The tips for mindful listening ([page 75](#)) can help.

Impatient If you answered “d” more than once, you have a tendency to be an impatient or distracted listener. Your frustration probably shows more than you think. Review the tips throughout this chapter for ways to become more focused and active in your listening approach.

COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS

Listening Effectively

The Importance of Listening

- People with good listening skills are more likely than others to be hired and promoted.
- Listening is a leadership skill.
- Good listeners are not easily fooled.
- Asking for and listening to advice makes you look good.
- Listening makes you a better friend and romantic partner.

Misconceptions About Listening

- Myth: Hearing and listening are the same thing.
- Myth: Listening is a natural process.
- Myth: All listeners receive the same message.



Stages in the Listening Process

- Hearing
- Understanding
- Remembering
- Interpreting
- Evaluating
- Responding



Common Distractions

- Message overload
- Rapid thought
- Psychological noise
- Physical noise
- Cultural differences

Limiting Social Media Interruptions

- Don't reach for a device every time you get a free moment.
- Create "device-free zones."
- Share your feelings in person every so often.



Gender: Listening and Responding

- Women tend to disclose similar experiences.
- Men tend to solve or distract.
- Empathy from a woman can feel like a put-down to a man.
- A man's well intentioned response can feel like disinterest to a woman.
- Awareness can help.

Hurtful Listening Habits

- Pretending to listen
- Tuning in and out
- Acting defensively
- Avoiding the issue
- Ignoring underlying issues
- Being self-centered
- Talking too much



6 Tips for Listening Nondefensively

- Remember your good qualities.
- Avoid negative self-talk.
- Stop expecting perfection.
- Thank the speaker for sharing.
- Ask questions.
- Learn and move on.

Types of Listening

- Relational
- Supportive
- Task-Oriented
- Analytical
- Critical

4 Tips for Listening Mindfully

- Determine when to be mindful.
- Commit to being fully present.
- Acknowledge your feelings.
- Be patient.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Show Your Communication Know-How



5.1: Summarize the benefits of being an effective listener.

How might being a better listener benefit you in your career? In your personal life?

5.2: Outline the most common misconceptions about listening, and assess how successfully you avoid them.

Which of the listening myths described in the chapter characterize your attitudes about listening? What can you do to change your thinking and behavior?

KEY TERMS: [hearing](#), [listening](#)



5.3: Describe how each stage in the listening process influences your ability to send and share messages.

Think of a time when you heard the words someone said, but you interpreted them differently than was intended. What happened? How did you resolve the misunderstanding?

KEY TERMS: [attending](#), [understanding](#), [listening fidelity](#), [remembering](#), [residual message](#), [interpreting](#), [evaluating](#), [responding](#)

5.4: Recognize and develop strategies to overcome factors that make it challenging to listen well.

Call to mind a time when you were not at your best as a listener. Did any of the challenges described in this chapter play a role? If so, how?

5.5: Distinguish between listening/responding approaches commonly associated with gender.

Describe the different ways that men and women have traditionally shown comfort as listeners. Which pattern is most comfortable for you and why?



5.6: Identify and manage faulty listening habits that can hurt others and damage relationships.

Under what circumstances are you likely to listen selectively or defensively? How might you overcome that tendency?

KEY TERMS: [pseudolistening](#), [selective listeners](#), [defensive listeners](#), [insulated listeners](#), [insensitive listeners](#), [conversational narcissists](#), [stage hog](#)

5.7: Adapt listening behaviors to specific situations and engage in mindful listening.

How would close friends rate your listening skills in various situations? What skills and approaches described in this chapter might increase your effectiveness?

KEY TERMS: [relational listening](#), [supportive listening](#), [task-oriented listening](#), [paraphrasing](#), [analytical listening](#), [critical listening](#), [mindful listening](#)



6 Nonverbal Communication

Functions and Characteristics

How is nonverbal communication defined?

What functions does it serve?

Can you tell if someone is lying by the way they behave?

Types of Nonverbal Communication

What roles do face and body movements play?

In what ways do nonverbal cues involve space, time, and place?

Attraction

How is nonverbal communication linked to attractiveness?

Gender

Are there gender differences in terms of nonverbal communication?





The Nature of Nonverbal Communication



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 6.1: Explain the defining characteristics of nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal communication is indispensable and sometimes even more potent than the words people use. Here are some fundamental characteristics of communication that doesn't involve words.



You have probably noticed that there's often a gap between what people say and what they feel. An acquaintance says, "We should do this again sometime" in a way that leaves you suspecting the opposite. A speaker tries to appear confident but acts in a way that almost screams out, "I'm nervous!" You ask a friend what's wrong, and the "nothing" you get in response doesn't ring true.

Then, of course, there are times when someone's message comes through even though there are no words at all. A look of irritation, a smile, or a sigh can say it all. These examples illustrate communication without words, also known as **nonverbal communication**. Nonverbal communication involves gestures, sounds, facial expressions, touch, clothing, and much more. To test your understanding of this definition, answer the following questions:

- Is American Sign Language mostly verbal or nonverbal?
- How about an email?
- How about laughter?

If you answered verbal, verbal, and nonverbal, respectively, you are correct. American Sign Language doesn't require sound, but it is word based, thus verbal.¹ Emails are usually verbal for the same reason. (If you imagined an email filled with nothing but emojis, that would indeed be nonverbal.) Laughter involves vocal cords, but doesn't rely on words, so it's nonverbal. These distinctions only begin to convey the richness of nonverbal messages. Here are some other observations about communicating without words.

Nonverbal communication is impossible to avoid.

Even if you try not to send nonverbal cues—perhaps by closing your eyes or leaving the room—others may consider those behaviors meaningful. Also think about the last time you blushed, stammered, or cried even though you didn't want to. Scientists think that some nonverbal cues are beyond people's control because the limbic section of the brain, which encodes and decodes these cues, also triggers automatic responses to the environment.² There's a survival advantage to jumping when something scary pops out of the bushes, or getting a burst of adrenaline in a stressful situation. These automatic responses and others like them present cues to the people around you. However, even automatic responses are not easy to interpret. Tears can be a sign of joy or pain, trembling may result from feeling nervous or cold, and so on.

Nonverbal behavior is part of identity management.

Chapter 2 explored the notion that people strive to create images of themselves as they want others to view them. A great deal of this occurs nonverbally. Consider what happens when you attend a party. Instead of projecting your desired image verbally ("Hi! I'm attractive, friendly, and easygoing"), you behave in ways that support that identity. You might smile a lot and adopt a relaxed posture. It's also likely that you will dress carefully—even if you're trying to create the illusion that you haven't given a lot of attention to your appearance.

Nonverbal cues help define relationships.

Think about the wide range of ways you behave when greeting another person. Depending on the nature of your relationship, you might wave, shake hands, nod, smile, pat the other person on the back, give a hug, or avoid all contact. Even trying to *not* communicate can send a message, as when you avoid talking to someone.

Nonverbal behavior is ambiguous.

Occasionally, you may run across a book or website that promises to reveal the hidden meaning of people's nonverbal behavior. Arms crossed? *She's mad.* Eyes looking up? *He's skeptical.* Actually, simplistic interpretations such as these are bogus. The reality is that nonverbal cues are difficult to interpret accurately because they can mean more than one thing. Consider the following factors:

- *The context in which the nonverbal behavior occurs.* A smile might be a sign of mirth or politeness.
- *The history and tone of your relationship with the sender.* An eye roll might convey playfulness or true exasperation.
- *The sender's mood at the time.* A “scowl” when someone is feeling happy may be playful rather than serious.
- *Your own feelings.* When you're feeling insecure, almost anything can seem like a threat.

No matter the meaning you think you detect, you should consider nonverbal behaviors not as facts, but as clues to be checked out.

Nonverbal communication is essential to success.

It's hard to overemphasize the importance of effectively sending, receiving, and responding to nonverbal cues. Nonverbal encoding and decoding skills are strong predictors of popularity, attractiveness, and overall well-being.³ In general, people with good nonverbal communication skills are more persuasive than those who are less skilled, and they have a greater chance of success in settings ranging from careers to poker to romance. Nonverbal sensitivity is a major part of emotional intelligence (Chapter 2), and researchers have come to recognize that it's impossible to fully understand spoken language without paying attention to nonverbal dimensions as well.⁴ ●



PAUSE TO REFLECT

How Nonverbally Savvy Are You?

1. Check all of the following that apply to you:
 - 1. I'm a good storyteller. I enjoy spinning a suspenseful or funny tale.
 - 2. I have a hard time judging whether people like my ideas or not.
 - 3. I can usually tell when someone is upset, even if they say things are okay.
 - 4. When I get nervous, I fidget a lot and have trouble maintaining eye contact with people.
 - 5. I usually make a positive first impression on people.
 - 6. Whatever I'm feeling shows on my face, even when I'd rather hide my emotions.
2. The list above includes nonverbal traits typically considered to be effective (items 1, 3, and 5) and others (items 2, 4, and 6) that can pose challenges. What are your greatest strengths and challenges as a nonverbal communicator? (Think in terms of facial expressions, body language, voice, touching behaviors, clothing selections, posture, use of time, and so on.)

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 6.2: Describe key functions served by nonverbal communication.

Although verbal and nonverbal messages differ in many ways, they operate together on most occasions. Here are key functions of nonverbal communication and how they relate to what people say.

Repeating

If someone asks you for directions to the nearest pharmacy, you could say, “North of here about two blocks” and then point north with your index finger, thereby repeating your instructions nonverbally. This sort of repetition isn’t just decorative: People remember comments accompanied by gestures more than those made with words alone.⁵

Substituting

When a friend asks you what’s new, you might shrug your shoulders to signify “I don’t know” instead of answering in words. **Emblems** are deliberate nonverbal behaviors that have precise meanings known to members of a cultural group. For example, most Americans interpret a head nod as “yes,” a head shake as “no,” and a wave as “hello” or “good-bye.” Beware, however: The meaning of gestures varies by culture. (Test your knowledge of culture-specific gestures with the *Ask Yourself* quiz on page 86.) Nonverbal cues can substitute for words in less precise ways as well, as when you raise your eyebrows after a colleague makes an off-color comment or when you hug someone for longer than usual to show that you missed them.

Complementing

Some nonverbal behaviors reinforce the content of a verbal message. Consider, for example, a friend who apologizes for forgetting an appointment with you. You will be most likely to believe your friend if he uses a sincere-sounding tone of voice and shows an apologetic facial expression. On the other hand, the significance of complementary nonverbal behavior is sometimes most obvious when it’s missing. If your friend delivers the apology with a shrug, a smirk, and a light tone of voice, you would probably not believe him, regardless of what he says verbally.



Regulating

Nonverbal behaviors can also regulate the flow of verbal communication. For example, conversational partners send and receive turn-taking cues.⁶ Speakers may use nonverbal fillers—such as *um* or an audible intake of breath—to signal that they would like to maintain their speaking turn.⁷ Or they may hold up a finger to suggest that the listener wait to speak. Conversely, long pauses are often taken as opportunities for others to speak. Nonverbal regulators also include signs that you would like to wrap up the conversation, such as an extended *okaaay* or a glance at your phone.

Contradicting

It's not unusual for people to say one thing but display nonverbal cues that suggest the opposite. A classic example is when someone with a red face and bulging veins yells, "I'm not angry!" Even when mixed messages are presented in more subtle ways, they have strong impact. When the emotions conveyed via verbal and nonverbal messages are at odds, people tend to believe the nonverbal cues. ●

Deception and Nonverbal Cues



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 6.3: Analyze the likelihood of identifying deception via nonverbal cues.

Do you consider yourself a good judge of character? Can you tell if a person is lying? Read on to see if your lie-detection antennae are as sensitive as you think they are.

Q What cues indicate that someone is lying?

A Decades of research have revealed that there are no sure-fire nonverbal cues that indicate deception.⁸ As one writer put it, “There is no unique telltale signal for a fib. Pinocchio’s nose just doesn’t exist, and that makes liars difficult to spot.”⁹ This helps explain why most people have only a 50–50 chance of accurately identifying a liar.¹⁰ People tend to be worse at catching deceivers when they participate actively in conversations than when they observe from the sidelines, probably because of the mental energy it takes to manage their own participation in the encounters.¹¹

Q What if the deceiver is a child?

A One researcher tested the conventional wisdom that children are clumsy liars who give themselves away. In a series of experiments, an adult told elementary school children (one at a time) that they could win a prize by guessing the numbers on cards lying face down on a table. The adult then left each child alone with the cards for a few minutes. As you might predict, few youngsters could resist taking a peek. When the experimenter returned and asked the children if they had looked at the cards, some answered truthfully and others lied. Researchers then showed the children’s videotaped statements to randomly selected adults to see if they could tell which children were telling the truth. They couldn’t. The participants’ guesses were no better than chance—even when they were child care professionals or parents who interact with children every day.¹² Of course, deception is easier to spot in younger children who haven’t yet gained much experience with deception.

Q Are my odds better if I know the person well?

A Studies show that people’s truth receptors are not as accurate as they think in this regard either. For the most part, close friends and romantic partners are little better than strangers at detecting when their partners are lying.^{13,14}



Q Why is it so hard to detect deception?

A One reason is the ambiguity of nonverbal cues. People who are nervous or defensive may seem cagey even though they are telling the truth. “If someone is asking me a tough question of some sort . . . it can appear as though I am lying,” writes one blog contributor, adding, “I struggle to keep up eye contact, I kinda gulp a lot as well.”¹⁵ The bottom line is that it’s difficult to tell if someone is lying or simply uncomfortable. Another factor involves preconceived notions. Many people harbor a **truth bias**, meaning that they assume people are telling the truth unless they have a compelling reason to suspect otherwise.¹⁶ Conversely, some people have a **deception bias**: Their default assumption is that people (or at least some people) are likely to lie. A deception bias might arise from feelings of insecurity, contact with dishonest people, a personal history of telling lies, or the experience of being hurt by lies.¹⁷ Either way, internal biases influence the degree to which people either overlook or imagine deception by others.

Q When do I have the best chance of catching a lie?

A By now, you probably realize that “common sense” notions about lying are faulty. People tend to believe that liars stutter and stammer, have sweaty palms, and avoid eye contact. But research shows that the opposite is true. Liars often sustain eye contact and remain still to avoid seeming deceitful.¹⁸ With this awareness in mind, it is slightly easier to catch someone in a lie when the deceiver hasn’t had a chance to rehearse, feels strongly about the information being hidden, and/or feels anxious or guilty about lying.¹⁹ ●

Kinesic Nonverbal Communication

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 6.4:** Summarize types of kinesic nonverbal behaviors and their impact on interactions.

Sometimes nonverbal cues are fairly easy to interpret. Facial expressions that reflect emotions such as happiness and sadness are similar around the world.²⁰ Other expressions and gestures are culture specific. How well people interpret nonverbal cues depends on how well they know the person, the situation, and the culture, and on the nature of the nonverbal cues themselves. In this section, we explain seven types of **kinesic** nonverbal behaviors—nonverbal cues that result from the way people use their faces and bodies.



Posture

There's a good reason parents often tell their children to stand up straight. Good posture suggests to the world that you are confident and capable.²¹ Some evidence indicates that good posture can also make you *feel* more confident. Researcher Amy Cuddy has found that adopting a “power pose”—shoulders back hands on hips, head held high—for 2 minutes before a stressful event such as a job interview helps some people perform

better,²² underscoring the power of nonverbal communication. The idea is to “fake it until you become it,” as Cuddy puts it.²³

Fidgeting

You have probably seen a public speaker before who looked visibly nervous. Perhaps she fidgeted with her clothing, clasped and unclasped her hands, or played with a pen or paperclip while she was speaking. Social scientists call these behaviors **manipulators**, in the sense that they involve manipulating or fiddling with things.²⁴ Research confirms what common sense suggests—that increased use of manipulators is often a sign of discomfort. The good news is that you can appear more confident by avoiding the temptation to fidget. If you anticipate a stressful situation, wear clothing that makes you feel confident and comfortable, don’t hold anything in your hands, and try to relax your body and use gestures naturally.

Smiling

People who smile are typically regarded as friendlier and less aggressive than those who don’t.²⁵ This can be a powerful advantage when making friends and working on teams. At the same time, people in some situations and cultures are put off by excessive smiling, especially when whole-face grins are involved. Particularly in professional settings, people who smile “too much” may be regarded as less competent and less assertive than others.²⁶ As with all nonverbal communication, it pays to be mindful of the situations, cultures, and relationships involved.

Eye Contact

The need for eye contact begins at birth. Newborns instinctively lock eyes with their caregivers.²⁷ But the meaning people give eye contact throughout their lives varies by culture. In Euro-American culture, meeting someone’s glance with your eyes is usually taken as a sign of involvement or interest, whereas looking away signals a desire to avoid contact. However, in some cultures—such as traditional Asian, Latin American, and Native American—eye contact with a stranger or authority figure may be interpreted as aggressive or disrespectful.²⁸ It’s easy to imagine the misunderstandings that occur when one person’s “friendly gaze” feels rude to another, and conversely, how “politely” looking away can feel like a sign of indifference.

Expressions of Emotion

The influence of facial expressions and eye contact doesn’t mean that nonverbal messages are always easy to read. This is partly because of the sheer number of expressions people can produce—as many as five per second. **Affect blends** are combinations of two or more simultaneous expressions that show different emotions, such as fearful surprise or angry disgust. This is possible because people tend to display different emotions with different parts of the face: Happiness and surprise usually show in the eyes and lower face, anger in the lower face and brows and forehead, fear and sadness in the eyes, and disgust in the lower face.

Voice

“That kind of joke can get you in trouble,” says the boss with an eye roll. The employee receiving the message wonders if the boss is serious or only kidding. As you have seen, the way people say things can be as important as what they say. Social scientists use the term **paralanguage** to describe nonverbal cues that are vocal. These include tone, speed, pitch, volume, number and length of pauses, and disfluencies (such as stammering, use of *uh*, *um*, *er*, and so on). As we have said, people tend to judge emotions based more on people’s nonverbal cues than their words. That means that it’s important to match a compliment, apology, command, or any other statement with vocal cues that support the message you mean to convey.

Touch

A supportive pat on the back, a high five, or even an inappropriate graze can be more powerful than words. **Haptics**, the study of touch, has revealed that physical contact is even more potent than you might think.

Sometimes, touch is threatening. By law, unwelcome touch that is sexually suggestive, excessive, or inappropriate may constitute harassment.²⁹ One woman describes how she felt when a business person she

asked for career advice pulled his chair alongside hers, put his arm around her, and then kissed her on the head rather than shaking hands when they parted. “I was hurt and annoyed,” she remembers, “and I was frustrated by the fact that my attempts to forge a professional connection were treated this way.”³⁰

In other situations, touch is simply annoying. In one study, shoppers touched by other shoppers (particularly by males) bought less and left the store more quickly than shoppers who were not touched, perhaps because, in that situation, being touched had the unpleasant connotation of being jostled or crowded.³¹

On the other hand, touch can be a real pleasure. Romantic partners who frequently touch each other are typically more satisfied with their relationships than other couples are.³² Even athletes benefit from touch. One study of the National Basketball Association revealed that the touchiest teams had the most successful records, while the lowest scoring teams touched each other the least.³³ Touch can also increase compliance. For example, people are more likely to grant favors to strangers who touch them while they ask than to those who don’t.³⁴ ●



ASK YOURSELF *How Worldly Are Your Nonverbal Communication Skills?*

Answer the questions below to test your knowledge of nonverbal communication in different cultures.

- _____ 1. In the United States, touching your index finger to your thumb while your other fingers point upward means “OK.” But what does it mean elsewhere? (Two of the following are correct.)
 - a. It signifies money in Japan.
 - b. People in Greece and Turkey interpret it to mean 30.
 - c. In France, it means “You’re worth zero.”
 - d. It’s a compliment in Russia, implying that “you and I are close friends.”
- _____ 2. People around the world recognize the sign for “peace” or “victory”—two fingers up, thumb holding down the other fingers, palm facing out. But in many places, the same gesture means something different if you show the back of your hand instead. Which of the following is correct?
 - a. In Hungary, it’s a request for more, as in, “May I have seconds?”
 - b. In Singapore and Thailand, it means “I’ll be right back.”
 - c. If you move your hand from side to side while doing this, it’s a polite way to wave goodbye in Germany.
 - d. In England, New Zealand, and Australia, it’s an aggressive insult meaning “Up yours!”
- _____ 3. In the United States, people convey “come closer” by alternately extending and curling their index finger in someone’s direction. Where might the same gesture be considered a serious insult?
 - a. Egypt
 - b. The Philippines
 - c. Spain
 - d. Saudi Arabia
- _____ 4. The “thumbs up” sign that means “yes” or “job well done” in the United States means something else in other cultures. Two of the following are true. Which ones?
 - a. It means “It’s my turn to talk” in Tahiti and neighboring South Pacific Islands.
 - b. It means “Up yours!” in Australia, Greece, and the Middle East.
 - c. It means the number 5 in Japan.
 - d. In Myanmar, it’s a symbol of mourning, meaning “Someone has died.”

INTERPRETING YOUR RESPONSES !

Read the explanations below to see how many answers you got right.

Question 1 The gesture that means “OK” in the United States means “money” in Japan. But it has a darker meaning in France, where it conveys “You’re worth zero.” It’s risky to use this gesture in others parts of the world as well. In Brazil, Germany, and Russia, it depicts a private bodily orifice; and in Turkey and Greece it’s taken as a vulgar sexual invitation. The correct answers are “a” and “c.”

Question 2 The palm-forward V sign is popular around the world, especially in Japan, where it's customary to flash a peace sign while being photographed.³⁵ But a slight variation makes a big difference. Winston Churchill occasionally shocked audiences during World War II by "flipping them off" (knuckles forward) when he really meant to flash a victory sign (palm forward).³⁶ Years later, U.S. president Richard Nixon made the same mistake in Australia, effectively saying "f— you" to an Australian crowd when he got the gesture wrong.³⁷ The correct answer is "d."

Question 3 The gesture Americans use to mean "come closer" is offensive in many places, including the Philippines, Slovakia, China, and Malaysia. People in those cultures summon a dog that way, so it's a put-down to use it with a person. Answer "b" is correct.

Question 4 "Thumbs up" has a positive connotation in the United States. Meanwhile, people in Germany and Hungary interpret it to mean the number 1, and people in Japan use it for the number 5. However, the gesture is taken as an insult (akin to "Up yours!") in the Middle East. Both "b" and "c" are correct.

Nonverbal Aspects of Space, Time, and Place

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 6.5:** Assess the nonverbal implications of proxemics, chronemics, territoriality, and physical environment.

Nonverbal communication isn't limited to the way people use their faces and bodies. It also involves how they use contextual elements. Here are a few examples.

Space

The study of the way individuals use space is called **proxemics**. Preferred spaces are largely a matter of cultural norms. For example, in mainstream North American culture, people typically converse at a distance of about 4 feet, but people from the Middle East stand much closer.³⁸ It's easy to visualize the awkward pattern that might occur when two people from these cultures meet. The Middle Easterner would probably keep moving forward to close a gap that feels wide, whereas the American would continually back away. Both would feel uncomfortable, probably without knowing why.

Allowing the right amount of personal space is so important that scientists who create interactive robots take proxemics into account. They have found that people tend to be creeped out by robots who get too close, especially if the robot makes consistent "eye contact" with them. However, people don't mind as much if robots whose nonverbal behaviors seem friendly and nonthreatening move into their personal space.³⁹

Time

Chronemics is the study of how people use and structure time. Some cultures (such as North American, German, and Swiss) tend to be **monochronic**, emphasizing punctuality, schedules, and completing one task at a time. Other cultures (such as South American, Mediterranean, and Arab) are more **polychronic**, with flexible schedules in which people pursue multiple tasks at the same time.⁴⁰ When a Brazilian American friend threw a party, she invited her Brazilian friends to show up at 5 p.m. and her American friends to show up at 7 p.m. As she expected, they all arrived just after 7 o'clock. That's not to say the Brazilians were rude. From their perspective, it may have seemed rude to show up at the time specified.



Even within cultures, time is treated differently depending on who is involved. “Important” people—whose time is supposedly more valuable than that of others—may be seen by appointment only, while it’s acceptable to intrude without notice on individuals deemed “less important.”⁴¹

Territory

Territory involves the places and spaces you consider to be more or less your own. These might include your bedroom, house, or the chair you usually occupy in class. People tend to use nonverbal markers to declare which territory is theirs. You might erect a fence around your yard or spread a blanket on the beach to mark the area as yours, at least temporarily. You may feel annoyed or disrespected if someone encroaches on your territory without permission. Indeed, honoring boundaries is one way of showing respect. People of high status are typically granted more personal territory and privacy than others. You may knock before entering the boss’s office, whereas the boss might walk into your work area without hesitating.

Environment

Google, Microsoft, and some other employers have begun to design communication-friendly work environments in which the furniture can be moved at will and there is plenty of space for conversation and group interaction. They know what social scientists have long found to be true: Physical environments shape the communication that occurs within them. Natural light, flexible seating configurations, and views of nature have been shown to enhance learning in the classroom⁴² and productivity at work.⁴³ ●

Nonverbal Cues and Attractiveness

- **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 6.6:** Analyze the relationship between nonverbal communication and attractiveness.

The way someone appears can be just as revealing as the way they sound and move. For that reason, it's important to consider the nonverbal communication power of physical attractiveness, clothing, and tattoos.



Attractiveness Advantage

Most people claim that looks aren't the best measure of desirability or character. However, who is most likely to succeed in business? Place your bet on the attractive job applicant. More than 200 managers in one survey admitted that attractive people get preferential treatment both in hiring decisions and on the job.⁴⁴ And it's probably no surprise that attractiveness is an asset in dating relationships. Although online daters often claim that physical appearance isn't a top priority, they tend to attribute more positive qualities (kindness, confidence, and so on) to people who are physically attractive than to those whose aren't.⁴⁵

Clothing

As a means of nonverbal communication, clothing can be used to convey economic status, educational level, athletic ability, interests, and more. College students in one study judged young women to be more successful and important when they wore a sweatshirt sporting the name of an upscale brand than when the sweatshirt featured a Kmart logo.⁴⁶ But expense isn't the only factor. People with limited budgets and those who wear uniforms to work can make a positive impression by being neat and well-groomed and wearing clothing that fits them properly.⁴⁷

Even the colors people wear may influence how others perceive them. In one study, experimenters asked people to rate the attractiveness of a man and a woman shown in photos. The photos of each person were identical, except that the experimenters had digitally changed the color of the models' shirts in some of them. Participants consistently rated both models to be more attractive when they were wearing red or black compared to yellow, blue, or green.⁴⁸ Before you load your wardrobe with red and black, however, consider that perceptions vary by context. Patients are significantly more willing to share their social, sexual, and psychological problems with doctors wearing white coats or surgical scrubs than those wearing business dress or casual attire.⁴⁹

Body Art

The percentage of Americans with tattoos has increased from 3% to 37% in the last 30 years, making indelible body art a common means of self-expression.⁵⁰ The most popular reasons to get a tattoo are to commemorate an important relationship, life event, or philosophy.⁵¹ When it comes to ink, beauty is in the eye of the beholder *and* the identity of the design wearer. College students tend to consider tattoos more attractive on younger women than on older ones.⁵² And when researchers showed people images of the same men with or without tattoos, the respondents tended to rate the tattooed versions as more masculine and aggressive.⁵³ That can be both good and bad. Women in the study found the tattooed men appealing, but not necessarily good

husband or father material. On the other hand, men did not consider the tattooed males to be any less appealing as long-term partners. So far, a tattoo taboo still reigns in many workplaces. Overall, people with visible tattoos have more difficulty getting hired than others.⁵⁴

Overall Effect

If you aren't extraordinarily gorgeous or handsome by society's standards, don't despair. Evidence suggests that, as people get to know and like one another, they rate each other higher in terms of physical attractiveness.⁵⁵ Moreover, people view others as beautiful or ugly not just on the basis of their "original equipment" but also on how they behave. Posture, gestures, facial expressions, and other behaviors can increase the attractiveness of an otherwise unremarkable person. And occasionally, physical attractiveness has a downside. Employers sometimes turn down especially good-looking candidates because they perceive them to be threats.⁵⁶ All in all, while attractiveness generally gets rewarded, over-the-top good looks can be intimidating.⁵⁷ ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

3 Ways to Interpret Nonverbal Cues More Accurately

By now, it's probably clear that there's no magic formula for deciphering people's nonverbal cues. However, it's possible to get better at interpreting them. Here are three tips for doing that.

1. Become highly observant.

It's easy to overlook important nonverbal cues when you're only listening to the words being spoken. As you've already read, words sometimes hide, or even contradict, a speaker's true feelings. Even when spoken words accurately reflect the speaker's thoughts, nonverbal cues can reveal important information about feelings and attitudes. Sharpen your powers of observation by watching a movie or TV program with the sound off or in a language you don't understand. That way, you can attend to vocal qualities as well as postures, gestures, facial expressions, and other cues. As you get better at recognizing nonverbal cues, you'll find it easier to tune in to them in everyday conversations.

2. Consider the context.

We have made the point that the same nonverbal cue can mean different things. A wink may be a sign of romantic interest, a signal to go along with the joke, or a reaction to dust in the air. To make an educated guess, ask yourself: *Which interpretation is most consistent with the sender's other behaviors?* and *Which seems most likely under the circumstances?* Also remain open to further evidence. Dating coach Eddy Baller remembers feeling that a woman he liked was uninterested. "She kept looking around the room, and she would audibly sigh as if she was going to die of boredom," he recalls. To his surprise, she agreed to a second date and they had a lot of fun. His advice: Don't overestimate your ability to read people's "signals."⁵⁸

3. Use perception checking.

Since nonverbal behaviors are ambiguous, it's important to consider your interpretations as educated guesses, not absolute translations. Someone's yawn that interrupts a story you're telling may signal boredom, or maybe the listener is recovering from a sleepless night. Perception checking (Chapter 2) is one way to explore the significance of nonverbal cues: Describe the behavior you've noted, share at least two possible interpretations, and ask for clarification about how to interpret the behavior. It might sound like this: *"Last night you left the party early*

[behavior]. I wasn't sure whether you were tired or if something was bothering you [two options]. Is anything wrong?"

Gender and Nonverbal Communication

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 6.7:** Illustrate how social ideas about gender influence nonverbal communication.

By now, it's probably clear that cultural expectations have a powerful effect on nonverbal communication. Here we explore patterns related to gender and nonverbal communication.



Gender Differences

Although differences between the sexes are often smaller than people think, women in general are more nonverbally expressive than men, and women are typically better at recognizing others' nonverbal behavior.⁵⁹ More specifically, research shows that, compared with men, women tend to:

- Smile more
- Use more facial expressions
- Use more head, hand, and arm gestures (but fewer expansive gestures)
- Touch others more
- Stand closer to others
- Be more vocally expressive
- Make more eye contact

Most communication scholars agree that these differences are influenced more by social conditions than by biological differences. Of particular influence are the media and social power structures, which we discuss next.

Media's Influence

Media portrayals tend to reinforce stereotypes about gender and nonverbal communication. These stereotypes are often conveyed via appearance and behavior.

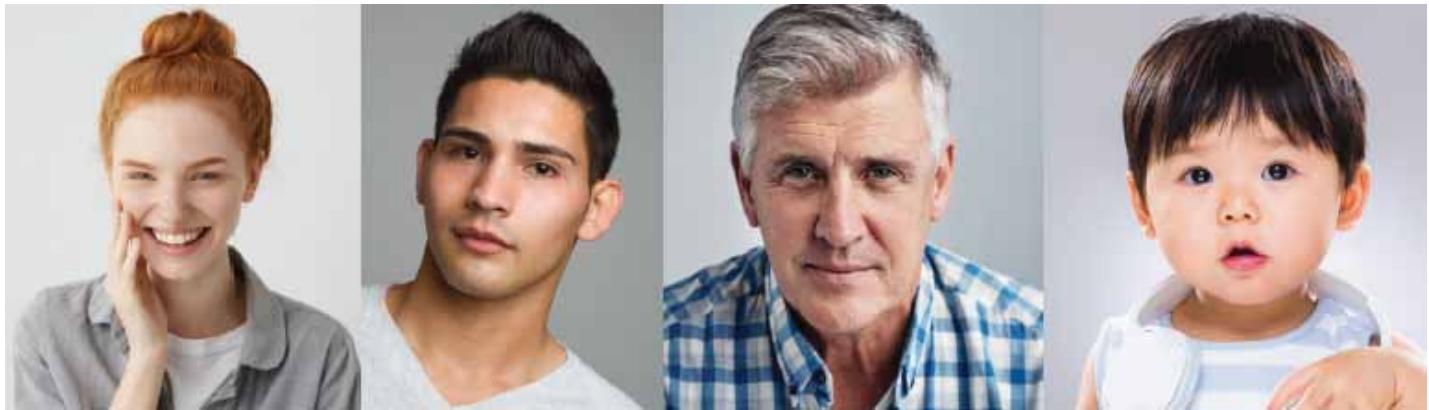
Television programs for children and teenagers commonly define girls in terms of how they look and their ability to attract the attention of boys, and boys in terms of rugged independence and a preoccupation with pursuing girls.⁶⁰ The depictions are overwhelmingly heterosexual and consistent with the stereotype that one should be either a “hot girl” or a “cool dude,” as one research team put it.⁶¹ Television commercials and video games for all ages feature similar, even more extreme, versions of these themes.^{62, 63}

LGBTQ individuals are given disproportionately little screen time, especially in the movies, and gay characters are often treated as comical figures,⁶⁴ as when LeFou in Disney’s 2017 *Beauty and the Beast* clumsily flirts with the hypermasculine Gaston.⁶⁵

Exposure to media is associated with stereotypical beliefs. For example, men who frequently play video games in which women are portrayed as “damsels in distress” are more likely than other men to think women are weak and helpless.⁶⁶ Stereotypes affect people’s self-image as well. Selfies (photos of oneself) on social media tend to correspond closely with images in the media—females suggestively dressed and smiling and men emphasizing their physique and emotional control.⁶⁷

Social Structure

Women may demonstrate greater sensitivity than men to nonverbal cues due to their social status. Because women have historically had less power, they have had greater incentive to read men’s nonverbal cues than the other way around.⁶⁸ You have probably noticed a similar dynamic in work settings, where people are usually more tuned into the boss’s moods than the boss is to theirs. It may also be that, because women have traditionally been responsible for child care, they learn to display and decipher nonverbal cues so they can better communicate with youngsters who are not yet proficient using language.



Commonalities

Despite these differences, men’s and women’s nonverbal communication patterns have a good deal in common.⁶⁹ You can prove this by imagining what it would be like to use radically different nonverbal rules: Standing only an inch away from others, sniffing strangers, or tapping people’s foreheads to get their attention would mark you as bizarre no matter your gender. Moreover, according to a recent study, nonverbal differences are less pronounced in conversations involving gay and lesbian individuals than those involving heterosexuals, presumably because the former feel less constrained by gender-related stereotypes.⁷⁰ All in all, gender and culture have an influence on nonverbal style, but the differences are often a matter of degree and cultural influence. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

3 *Ways to Convey Nonverbal Cues More Mindfully*

Nonverbal communication often escapes people's conscious awareness, as when you sound mad or tired without meaning to. Here are three ways you might become more mindful of the nonverbal cues you send to others.

1. Make eye contact.

Sometimes, locking eyes with someone can come off as aggressive. On the other hand, lack of eye contact can make you seem unconfident or disinterested. In the United States, most people find moderate eye contact to be pleasant and appealing.⁷¹ It signals “You have my attention” and “I’m interested in what you have to say.” To strike a pleasing balance, experts recommend making eye contact but glancing away briefly every 7 to 10 seconds.⁷²

2. Monitor your tone of voice.

People may actually hear your tone of voice when you speak, or they may imagine your tone based on the words you write, as in a text. Either way, tone has four basic dimensions: funny vs. serious, formal vs. casual, respectful vs. irreverent, and enthusiastic vs. matter of fact.⁷³ Even a simple remark such as, “That’s not what I expected” can be interpreted many ways based on the tone. Thinking about these options can help you choose a tone that supports the message you hope to convey.

3. Observe yourself.

Ask a friend to record you giving a speech or interacting with others and then study the video. Most people have blind spots when it comes to their own communication.⁷⁴ You may overestimate how well you hide your anxiety, boredom, or eagerness from others. Consider: *How does your voice sound? How closely does your appearance match what you've imagined? and What messages are suggested by your posture, gestures, and face?*

COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS

Nonverbal Communication



The Nature of Nonverbal Communication

- Nonverbal communication is impossible to avoid.
- Nonverbal behavior is part of identity management.
- Nonverbal cues help define relationships.
- Nonverbal behavior is ambiguous, but it's essential to success.

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

- Repeating
- Substituting
- Complementing
- Regulating
- Contradicting

Deception and Nonverbal Cues

- People have only a 50–50 chance of detecting a lie, even when the deceiver is a child.
- Knowing someone well doesn't usually make it easier to detect deception.
- A preconceived bias to think people are truthful (or not) interferes with people's judgment.
- Lies are easiest to catch when the deception is spontaneous and emotional and the deceiver feels bad about lying.

Kinesic Nonverbal Communication

- Good posture sends a message to others and even to yourself.
- Manipulators are fidgety behaviors.
- Smiling (within certain bounds) is advantageous.
- Eye contact may be perceived as friendly or as aggressive.
- An affect blend involves the expression of multiple emotions.
- Haptics reveals pleasurable and unpleasant dimensions of touch.

Nonverbal Aspects of Space, Time, and Place

- Proxemics involves the use of space and is heavily influenced by culture.
- A monochronic approach emphasizes punctuality and doing one thing at a time.
- A polychronic approach involves simultaneous activities and a fluid sense of time.
- People claim territory in many ways, such as through the use of walls, doors, and personal items.
- Environments either encourage or inhibit open communication.

Nonverbal Cues and Attractiveness

- Good looks are generally an advantage, but extreme attractiveness can intimidate others.
- Clothing colors and style influence perceived attractiveness.
- Tattoos are evaluated differently depending on age and gender but are still discouraged in most work environments.
- People can boost their attractiveness level nonverbally.

Interpret Nonverbal Cues by . . .

- Being highly observant
- Considering context
- Using perception checking



Gender and Nonverbal Communication

- Gender differences are not as great as many people think, but women on average display more expressive (but less expansive) nonverbal cues than men do.
- Media portrayals emphasize women's appearance and men's ruggedness, and they generally underrepresent gender diversity.
- Women may be especially sensitive to nonverbal cues because traditionally they have been less powerful than men and more responsible for child care.

Use Nonverbal Cues Mindfully by ...

- Making eye contact
- Monitoring tone of voice
- Observing yourself

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Show Your Communication Know-How



6.1: Explain the defining characteristics of nonverbal communication.

What might other people assume about you if they could see your nonverbal cues right this moment? Would their assumptions be mostly correct or incorrect? How?

KEY TERM: [nonverbal communication](#)



6.2: Describe key functions served by nonverbal communication.

Think of a recent conversation. In what ways did your nonverbal cues repeat, substitute, complement, regulate, or contradict the words you used?

KEY TERM: [emblems](#)



6.3: Analyze the likelihood of identifying deception via nonverbal cues.

Ask a friend to guess whether you are lying or not when you describe one thing you have in your bag or backpack. (You can either lie or tell the truth.) Was your friend's conclusion correct?

KEY TERMS: [truth bias](#), [deception bias](#)

6.4: Summarize types of kinesic nonverbal behaviors and their impact on interactions.

Before an important meeting or event, take 2 minutes alone to strike a power pose similar to the one shown below. Does it make you feel more confident?

KEY TERMS: [kinesic](#), [manipulators](#), [affect blends](#), [paralanguage](#), [haptics](#)



6.5: Assess the nonverbal implications of proxemics, chronemics, territoriality, and physical environment.

In class or with your family, occupy a seat that someone else usually takes and notice how that person reacts. Do they seem territorial or not?

KEY TERMS: [proxemics](#), [chronemics](#), [monochronic](#), [polychronic](#), [territory](#)



6.6: Analyze the relationship between nonverbal communication and attractiveness.

Do you find tattoos attractive or not? Does it matter who has them?

6.7: Illustrate how social ideas about gender influence nonverbal communication.

What factors have shaped how sensitive (or not) you are to nonverbal cues? Do gender norms play a role in your case?

7

Communicating in Interpersonal Relationships

Defining Qualities

What makes communication interpersonal (or not)?

What types of relational messages enhance relationships?

“Let’s Talk.”

What are the pros and cons of talking about communication patterns in a relationship?

How does self-disclosure influence relationships, and how can you engage in it effectively?

Ups and Downs

What is good and bad about online communication?

What’s the difference between a confirming and a disconfirming message?

What distinguishes an upward relational spiral from a downward one?



Defining Interpersonal Communication

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 7.1: Explain what makes some communication interpersonal.

Not every conversation involves interpersonal communication. To clarify what is and isn't interpersonal, consider a few of the people you are likely to see on a typical day.

Try to guess which of the following encounters exemplifies interpersonal communication.

- In your morning class, you strike up a conversation with a classmate you have just met.
- Later, you take part in a group project meeting that is so lively and productive you can't remember who said what.
- At midday, you pick up lunch and say thanks to the cashier as he hands you your receipt.
- After work, you enjoy a conversation with your roommate, who will understand what a crazy day you have had and no doubt have some funny experiences to share in return.
- Before bed, you text with someone you met online but haven't seen in person yet.

If you picked the scenario with your roommate, you're right. If you also selected the online relationship, score that one as a maybe for now. We'll come back to it in a moment.

The other encounters are important in their own ways, but they don't qualify as interpersonal. That's because, as theorist John Stewart puts it, interpersonal communication "happens when the people involved talk and listen in ways that maximize the presence of the personal."¹ In other words, **interpersonal communication** involves interaction between people who are part of a close and irreplaceable relationship in which they treat each other as unique individuals. Let's consider the implications of that definition by returning to the examples.



You might eventually develop a close relationship with the classmate you just met, but for now, you don't know each other well enough to appreciate one another's unique qualities. The emotional intimacy that characterizes interpersonal relationships doesn't occur instantly. Rather, it evolves over time.

The group project meeting is a good example of effective task-related communication. But since there's no evidence that your colleagues have a close personal attachment, you may assume that it isn't interpersonal communication.

Although interactions with strangers and casual acquaintances serve an important role in life, your exchange with the cashier is not interpersonal. There is no exchange of personal information, and you probably wouldn't mind if a different cashier helps you tomorrow. By contrast, if a different person showed up tomorrow playing the role of your roommate, mother, or brother, you would probably not be okay with that. Part of the sadness when an interpersonal relationship ends is that, even if the relationship had its faults, there will never be another one exactly like it.

The conversation with your roommate is sure to be interpersonal in that you are invested in listening to and sharing personal information with each other as unique individuals.

The relationship with your online friend may or may not be interpersonal. It depends—you guessed it—on how much personal information you each share and whether you treat one another as unique individuals. ●

Relational Messages

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 7.2: Categorize and explain types of relational messages.

Virtually every verbal statement—even the most impersonal—contains both a **content message**, which focuses on the subject being discussed, and a **relational message**, which makes a statement about how the parties feel toward one another.² Here are some of the dimensions communicated on a relational level via interpersonal communication.

Affinity

The degree to which we like or appreciate others is called **affinity**. Sometimes we indicate feelings of affinity explicitly, but more often the clues are nonverbal, such as a pat on the back or a friendly smile.

Respect

The degree to which we admire others and hold them in high esteem is known as **respect**.³ While respect and affinity might seem similar, they're actually different dimensions of a relationship. For example, you might like a 3-year-old child tremendously without respecting them. Likewise, you could respect a boss or teacher's talents without liking them. Respect is a tremendously important and often overlooked ingredient in satisfying relationships.

Immediacy

Communication scholars use the term **immediacy** to describe the degree of interest and attraction we feel toward and communicate to others. Immediacy is different than affinity. You may like someone, but if you don't engage with the other person, the immediacy between you and that person is low.



Control

In every conversation and every relationship there is some distribution of **control**: the amount of influence exercised by each communicator. An uneven distribution of control isn't necessarily problematic in personal relationships, especially if it balances out in other ways. But experts caution that an enduring sense of inequality often leads to resentment.⁴ This is an area in which same-sex couples may benefit. Some evidence suggests that same-sex couples are more likely than their heterosexual peers to treat each other as equals, to be supportive of each other,⁵ and to share household responsibilities equitably.⁶ 

Interpersonal communication is unique.

Affinity, respect, immediacy, and control allow people to achieve what theorist John Stewart calls “the presence of the personal.”

Metacommunication

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 7.3:** Evaluate the advantages and potential pitfalls of engaging in metacommunication.

The term **metacommunication** describes messages that refer to other messages.⁷ In other words, metacommunication is communication about communication. Whenever you discuss a relationship with others, you are metacommunicating, as in, “I appreciate your honesty” or “jk” (just kidding) in a text. Here are some key things to know about metacommunication.

Metacommunication is often below the surface.

Metacommunication not only considers what people say; it often gets at underlying meanings, where the issue often lies. Consider friends arguing because one wants to watch TV, while the other wants to talk. Imagine how much better the chances of a positive outcome would be if they used metacommunication: “Look, it’s not the TV watching itself that bothers me. It’s that I think you’re binge-watching because you’re mad at me. Am I right?” Talking about communication is a great way to bring to the surface issues that might otherwise fester or cause misunderstandings.



“She’s texting me, but I think she’s also subtexting me.”

Metacommunication can be used for more than solving problems.

It is also a good way to reinforce the positive aspects of a relationship, as in “Thank you for praising my work in front of the boss.” Comments such as this let others know that you value their behavior and boost the odds that they will continue those behaviors in the future.

Metacommunication can be risky.

Discussing problems might be interpreted as a sign that the relationship is in trouble, if people assume that “our relationship isn’t working if we have to keep talking about it.” Furthermore, metacommunication involves a certain degree of analysis (“It seems like you’re angry at me”), which can lead to resentment (“Don’t presume to know how I feel.”). This doesn’t mean verbal metacommunication is a bad idea, just that it’s a tool you should use carefully. ●



PAUSE TO REFLECT

What Can Metacommunication Reveal?

1. Think of a recent conversation with someone who is important to you. On a scale of 1 (horrible) to 10 (great), how did the conversation make you feel? _____

2. What about the conversation felt satisfying (or not) to you? _____

3. If you were a relationship coach using this conversation as a teaching tool, what lessons might you share in terms of what worked well and what could have been more effective? _____

Self-Disclosure in Close Relationships

- **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 7.4:** Describe two models of self-disclosure, and apply tips for self-disclosing effectively.

It’s natural to share personal information as a relationship progresses, but doing so involves an element of risk. Insight about the nature and rhythms of self-disclosure can help.

Social Disclosure Defined

“We don’t have any secrets,” some people proudly claim. **Self-disclosure** is the process of deliberately revealing information about oneself that is significant and that would not normally be known by others.

Under the right conditions, self-disclosure can be rewarding.⁸ Talking about your feelings and experiences can yield a greater sense of clarity. It’s validating to feel that others know and like the real you. And self-disclosure often inspires a give and take between people that can foster emotional closeness. All the same, self-disclosure involves an element of vulnerability, and disclosing too soon or too much can make the recipient uncomfortable. Here we consider two models of self-disclosure that offer insights into the methods and reasons that people open up to others.

Social Penetration Model

Social psychologists Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor describe two ways in which communication can be more or less disclosive.⁹ Their **social penetration model** (Figure 7.1) proposes that communication occurs within two dimensions: (a) **breadth**, which represents the range of subjects being discussed; and (b) **depth**, how in-depth and personal the information is.

For example, as you start to reveal information about your personal life to coworkers—perhaps what you did over the weekend or stories about your family—the breadth of disclosure in your relationship expands. The depth may also expand if you shift from relatively nonrevealing messages (“I went out with friends”) to more personal ones (“I went on this awful blind date set up by my mom’s friend. . .”).

What makes the disclosure in some messages deeper than in others? Some revelations are more *significant*. Consider the difference between saying “I love my family” and “I love you.” Other statements qualify as deep disclosure because they are *private*. Sharing a secret you’ve told to only a few close friends is certainly an act of self-disclosure, but it’s even more revealing to divulge information that you’ve never told anyone.

As relationships become more intimate, disclosure tends to increase gradually in terms of both breadth and depth. It can be difficult to know how much to share how soon, however. As a rule of thumb, theorists recommend the “Goldilocks principle”: Judge by the other person’s reaction if you are offering “too much” or “too little” and aim instead for “just right.”¹⁰

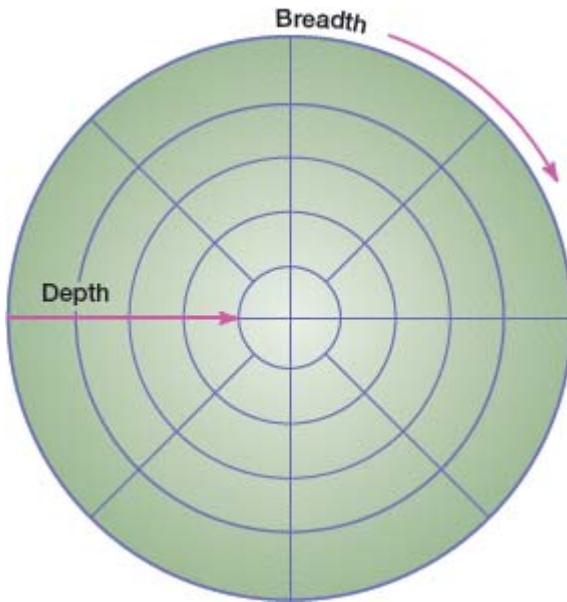


FIGURE 7.1 Social Penetration Model

In the right measure, self-disclosure fosters intimacy. Follow Goldilocks’s lead and aim for “just right” rather than “too much” or “too little.”

The Johari Window

Another model that represents how self-disclosure operates is the **Johari window**.¹¹ Imagine a frame that contains everything there is to know about you: your likes and dislikes, your goals, your secrets, your needs—everything.

Of course, you aren’t aware of everything about yourself. Like most people, you’re probably discovering new things about yourself all the time. To represent this, we can divide the frame containing everything about you into two parts: the part you know about (quadrants on the left in Figure 7.2) and the part you don’t know about (quadrants on the right).

We can also divide this frame in another way: The top row contains the things about you that others know, and the bottom row things about you that you keep to yourself. The full Johari window presents everything about you divided into four parts. It's worth considering each quadrant in the model separately.

- Quadrant 1 represents information about you that both you and the other person are aware of. This part is your *open area*.
- Quadrant 2 represents the *blind area*—information you are unaware of but the other person knows. You learn about information in the blind area primarily through feedback.
- Quadrant 3 represents your *hidden area*—information that you know but aren't willing to reveal to others. Items in this hidden area become known to others primarily through self-disclosure.
- Quadrant 4 represents information that is *unknown* to both you and others. At first, this information seems impossible to verify. After all, if neither you nor others know what it contains, how can you be sure it exists? We can deduce its existence because we are constantly discovering new things about ourselves. It is not unusual to discover, for example, that you have an unrecognized talent, strength, or weakness. Items move from the unknown area into the open area either directly, when you disclose your insight, or through one of the other areas first.

Interpersonal relationships of any depth are virtually impossible if the individuals involved have little open area. You have probably found yourself in situations in which you felt frustrated because you could not get to know someone who was too reserved. Or maybe you have been unsure how much about yourself to share with others. On the next page, we consider experts' suggestions for self-disclosing wisely. ●

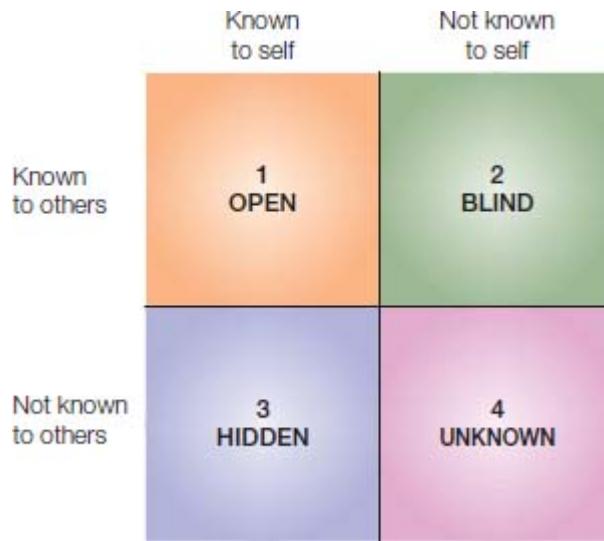


FIGURE 7.2 The Johari Window

Disclosure occurs on many levels.

In the process, people share and learn things about themselves and others.

TIPS & REMINDERS

8 Questions to Consider Before Self-Disclosing

No single style of self-disclosure is appropriate for every situation. However, there are some questions you can ask yourself to determine when and how self-disclosure may be beneficial for you and others.¹²

1. Is the other person important to you?

Disclosure may be the path toward developing a more personal relationship with someone. However, it can be a mistake to share personal information with people you don't trust or know very well.

2. Is the disclosure appropriate?

This is tricky to answer because appropriateness relies on personal preference and culture. North Americans, with their individualistic orientation, are often comfortable disclosing personal information sooner than are people from more collectivistic cultures, such as Japan's.¹³ As a result, North Americans may come off as overly personal, and they may assume that people who do not disclose as quickly are standoffish or uninterested.

3. Is the risk of disclosing reasonable?

You're asking for trouble when you open up to someone who is likely to betray your confidences or make fun of you. On the other hand, knowing that your relational partner is trustworthy and supportive makes it more reasonable to speak up.

4. Are the amount and type of disclosure appropriate?

Telling others about yourself isn't an all-or-nothing decision. Before sharing important information with someone, test their reaction by disclosing something slightly less personal first.

Effective self-disclosure is a balancing act, defined and managed by people within a relationship.

5. Is the disclosure relevant to the situation at hand?

A study of classroom communication revealed that sharing all feelings—both positive and negative—and being completely honest was less effective than having a “relatively” honest climate in which pleasant but less disclosive relationships were the norm.¹⁴ Even in personal relationships—with close friends and family members—constant disclosure isn't a useful goal. Instead, the level of sharing in successful relationships rises and falls in cycles.

6. Is the disclosure reciprocated?

There's nothing quite like sharing vulnerable information about yourself only to discover that the other person is unwilling to do the same. Unequal self-disclosure creates an unbalanced relationship.

7. Will the disclosure be constructive?

Self-disclosure can be a vicious tool if not used carefully. Psychologist George Bach suggests that every person has a psychological “belt line.” Below that line are topics the person is extremely sensitive about. Bach says that jabbing “below the belt” is a sure-fire way to hurt another person, usually at great cost to the relationship. Therefore, it's important to consider the effects of your candor before opening up to others. Comments such as “I've never thought you were very smart” may be devastating—to the listener and to the relationship.

8. Is the self-disclosure clear and understandable?

When you open up to others, it's important that you express yourself clearly. It's far better to describe another's behavior by saying, “When you don't text me back . . .” than to complain vaguely, “When you avoid me. . . .” It's also vital to express your thoughts and feelings clearly. “I feel like you no longer want to spend time with me” is more understandable than “I don't like the way things have been going.”

Interpersonal Communication Online

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 7.5: Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of online interpersonal communication.

People who communicate with each other online can be strangers in many ways. In some cases, however, their emotional connection may feel even more real and powerful than it does with people they see every day. Either way, online interpersonal communication is different than face-to-face exchanges in several ways.

Early definitions of interpersonal communication specified that it had to take place in person.¹⁵ That was presumably because theorists considered face-to-face interactions to have a richness lacking in other channels.

Times have changed. Today, virtually nobody disputes the idea that interpersonal communication can occur via emails, messaging, video chats, and other social media channels.¹⁶ Online communication presents unique advantages and challenges in terms of interpersonal communication. Here are four of the most rewarding aspects and two of its less appealing qualities.

Online communication helps people stay connected.

When relational partners are in different time zones or their routines don't mesh, technology can help them stay in touch. Perhaps for this reason, adolescents who use online communication (in moderation) typically have more cohesive friendships than other teens,¹⁷ and dating couples who talk frequently via phone often feel more loving, committed, and confident about their relationships than couples who don't.¹⁸

Online communication can feel nonthreatening.

For some people, particularly those who are introverted, mediated channels make it easier to build close relationships.¹⁹ Sociolinguist Deborah Tannen remembers when online communication enhanced her relationship with a reserved colleague: "Face to face he mumbled so I could barely tell he was speaking. But when we both got on e-mail, I started receiving long, self-revealing messages; we poured our hearts out to each other."²⁰ Even if you're not shy, you may find some messages easier to send than to say aloud.



Online communication can be validating.

One appealing quality of online communication is its potential to convey social support. Posting news of the A+ you earned in English is likely to be rewarded almost instantly with “likes” and congratulations. University students who use social media typically experience less stress than their peers, especially when they consider their online friends to be supportive, likeable, and trustworthy.²¹

Online communication has a pause option . . . sometimes.

Many forms of online communication are asynchronous, meaning that they allow you to think about messages and then reply when you are ready. This is an advantage in that you can catch mistakes or avoid blurting out something you would regret later.²² However, by the same token, asynchronous electronic communication can feel less spontaneous and more calculated. “Arguing over text messages is cheating,” asserts one man who feels that people can more easily mask their true feelings when technology is in the middle.

Online communication can be distracting.

Excessive use of online communication, as when you interrupt a conversation to respond to a trivial text, can diminish in-person relationships. **Phubbing** refers to episodes in which people snub those around them by paying attention to their phones instead.²³ Researchers in one study found that the mere presence of mobile devices can have a negative effect on closeness, connection, and conversation quality during face-to-face discussions of personal topics.²⁴

Online communication can be overwhelming.

Online communication can encourage quantity over quality. Mobile devices provide a steady stream of information that begs to be read or watched, even though much of it is trivial. And a person can have thousands of online “friends” and followers but few people they can count on during hard times. As a result, there is a point of diminishing rewards. In moderation, social media can boost a person’s sense of connection and identity. However, people who take it to extremes tend to be lonelier than their peers.²⁵ Social media celebrity Essena O’Neill says she minimized her online presence when she began to feel consumed and isolated by it.²⁶



Considering the pros and cons of online communication, most experts agree that moderation is key, and the best relationships often include communication both in person and online.²⁷



PAUSE TO REFLECT

Do You Overuse Social Media?

1. Check all of the following that apply to you:
 - Before I get out of bed in the morning, I check to see what people posted overnight.
 - Even when I should pay attention, such as in class or at work, I can't resist peeking at my phone.
 - I sometimes engage in activities just because I think they'll make good social media posts.
 - I have more friends in cyberspace than I do in real life.
 - I often lose track of time while I'm using social media.
 - I'm very anxious about what I'm missing if I can't use my phone for several hours.
2. To some people's way of thinking, checking numerous items listed in question 1 may be an indication of excessive social media use.^{28,29} Do you feel that social media use interferes with your ability to get things done and to be fully present with the people around you? If so, what might you do to cut down a bit?

Confirming and Disconfirming Messages

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 7.6:** Describe confirming and disconfirming messages and their impact on communication climates.

Personal relationships are a lot like the weather. Some are fair and warm, while others are stormy and cold. Some relationships have stable climates, whereas others change dramatically—calm one moment and turbulent the next. The term **communication climate** refers to the emotional tone of a relationship. A climate doesn't involve specific activities as much as the way people feel about each other as they carry out those activities.

What makes some climates positive and others negative? A short but accurate answer is that the communication climate is determined by the degree to which people see themselves as valued. When you believe that a relational partner considers you to be important, you are likely to feel good about the relationship. By contrast, the relational climate suffers when you feel unappreciated or unliked.

Use confirming messages more than disconfirming ones.

Disconfirming messages deny the value of other people.³⁰ Disagreement can be disconfirming, especially if it goes beyond disputing the other person's ideas and attacks the speaker personally. However, disagreement is not the most damaging kind of disconfirmation. Personal attacks such as "You're crazy" are even tougher to hear. And being ignored can be the most disconfirming behavior of all, since it suggests "You're not even worth my attention."

By contrast, messages that show people that they are valued are called **confirming responses**.³¹ Whether you post confirming responses online or offer them in person, they say “you exist,” “you matter,” “you are important.” However, it’s an oversimplification to talk about confirming messages as if they are all the same. Confirming communication actually occurs on three increasingly positive levels from most basic (showing recognition) to most powerful (agreement).³²



Show recognition.

The most fundamental act of confirmation is to recognize the other person. Recognition seems easy and obvious, and yet there are many times when people don’t respond to others on this basic level. For example, your friends may feel ignored if you fail to say hi at a party or don’t return messages. This lack of recognition may simply be an oversight. You might not notice your friend, or the pressures of work and school might prevent you from staying in touch. Nonetheless, if the other person *perceives* you as avoiding contact, the message has the effect of being disconfirming.

Acknowledge thoughts and feelings.

Acknowledging the ideas and emotions of others is an even stronger form of confirmation than simply recognizing them. Listening is probably the most common form of acknowledgment. Of course, as you read in [Chapter 5](#), pretending to listen when you are actually thinking about something else or gathering ammunition for a rebuttal has the opposite effect of acknowledgment. It’s more confirming to ask questions, paraphrase, and reflect on what people are sharing with you. Not surprisingly, leaders who are supportive of others and their ideas are more successful than those who are more concerned with promoting their own image and ideas.³³

Show that you agree.

Whereas acknowledgment means you are interested in other people’s ideas, endorsement means that you agree with them. It’s easy to see why endorsement is the strongest type of confirming message: It communicates that you have a lot in common and that you are in sync. Not surprisingly, we tend to be attracted to people who agree with us.³⁴ But, it isn’t necessary to agree completely with others in order to endorse their messages. You can probably find something in a message that you agree with. “I can see why you were so angry,” you might reply to a friend, even if you don’t approve of their outburst. Of course, outright praise is a strong form of endorsement and one you can use surprisingly often if you look for opportunities to compliment others.

In summary, it’s hard to overstate the importance of confirming messages. People who offer confirmation generously are considered to be more appealing candidates for marriage than their less appreciative peers.³⁵

This preference is well founded. One of the most accurate ways to predict whether a marriage will last is to consider how positive a couple's communication is while they are dating.³⁶ This applies to both spoken words such as "thank you" and "I love you" and to nonverbal cues such as smiles and signs of affection.³⁷ Positive, confirming messages are just as important in other relationships. Family members are most satisfied when they regularly encourage each other, joke around, and share news about their day.³⁸ And in the classroom, motivation and learning increase when teachers demonstrate a genuine interest and concern for students.³⁹ Conversely, the tips below point to some destructive patterns it's best to avoid. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

4 *Ways to Avoid Damaging Your Relationships*

Here are four disconfirming communication strategies to avoid for the sake of your relationships.⁴⁰

1. Avoid hurtful evaluations.

Most people become irritated at judgmental statements such as "You don't know what you're talking about" or "You drink too much." These are often described as "**you**" language because they typically contain an accusatory use of that word. Much better is **descriptive communication** that focuses on the speaker's thoughts and feelings. To use descriptive "**I**" language,⁴¹ explain how the other's action makes you feel rather than judging them. Instead of saying, "You talk too much," you might say, "When you don't let me say what's on my mind, I get frustrated." Statements such as this include an account of the other person's behavior plus an explanation of its effect on you and a description of your feelings.

2. Don't be manipulative.

One of the surest ways to make people defensive is to get caught trying to manipulate them. Even well-meant manipulation can cause bad feelings. For example, if your friends drop by unannounced with someone they think you will like, you may feel ambushed and wish that they had asked your permission first, even if you know they were trying to be helpful. Other attempts at manipulation are less thoughtful. You've probably accepted connections to people on social media only to find yourself bombarded with posts about products they want you to buy or political viewpoints that leave no room for discussion. Whether they mean well or not, you'd probably feel less manipulated if your friends were up front about their motives from the beginning.

3. Don't act superior.

When people act as if they think they are better than you are, there's a tendency to respond defensively. Of course, there will be circumstances when a person's knowledge or talents are greater than others'. But an attitude of superiority can still be annoying. No matter what your relative attributes, it's important to realize that everyone has equal worth as a human being.

4. Don't be dogmatic.

Statements such as, "Only an idiot would vote for him" can come off as arrogant and dismissive. A better alternative is to acknowledge that you don't have a monopoly on the truth. You might say, "My impression is that the candidate has very little experience. What do you know about him?"

Relational Spirals



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 7.7: Distinguish between positive and negative relational spirals.

After a relationship climate is formed, it can take on a life of its own and give rise to a self-perpetuating **spiral**—a reciprocating communication pattern in which each person’s message reinforces the other’s.⁴²

Positive Spirals

In positive spirals, one person’s confirming message leads to a similar response from the other person. Then this positive reaction leads the first person to be even more reinforcing. Howard Atteberry and Cynthia Riggs experienced this in their real-life love story. Howard fell in love with Cynthia when they were young adults. They sent notes back and forth as friends, but never became sweethearts. Eventually, their lives went in different directions. Then, 62 years later, Howard sent Cynthia a surprise package in the mail containing the notes they had exchanged back in 1950, along with a new note proclaiming his love. It was the beginning of a positive spiral for them. They have been together ever since.⁴³

Negative Spirals

Unfortunately, negative spirals can be just as powerful, although they leave people feeling worse about themselves and each other. **Escalatory conflict spirals** are the most visible way that disconfirming messages reinforce one another.⁴⁴ One attack leads to another until the communication escalates into a full-fledged argument. Although they are less obvious, **avoidance spirals** can also be destructive.⁴⁵ Rather than fighting, individuals slowly lessen their dependence on one another, withdraw, and become less invested in the relationship. In some cases, partners pass a “point of no return,” leading to the breakup of their relationship.

Cyclical Spirals

Spirals rarely go on indefinitely. Most relationships pass through cycles of progression and regression. If the spiral is negative, partners may switch from negative to positive messages without discussing the matter. In other cases, they may engage in metacommunication. “Hold on,” one person might say. “We’re not getting anywhere.” Overall, the important thing is to aim for more positive than negative momentum. People in satisfying relationships tend to maintain at least a 5:1 ratio of positive to negative statements.⁴⁶ ●



PAUSE TO REFLECT

Is Your Relationship Spiraling Up or Down?

1. Check all of the following that apply to you:
 1. Small disagreements tend to become big arguments.
 2. We often surprise each other with a thoughtful message or favor.
 3. If I don’t hear from my partner for a while, my tendency is to become quiet and emotionally distant.
 4. I get a smile when I think about my partner and the fun we have together.

2. The first and third items in question 1 are consistent with a negative spiral and the second and fourth with a positive spiral. What are your thoughts as you consider which items you checked (if any)? How might you strengthen positive spirals in your relationship? How might you slow or reverse negative spirals?
-
-
-



ASK YOURSELF

What's the Forecast for Your Communication Climate?

Think of an important person in your life—perhaps a friend, a roommate, a family member, or a romantic partner. Choose the option in each group below that best describes how you communicate with each other.

- _____ 1. When I am upset about something, my relational partner is most likely to:
- Listen to me and provide emotional support
 - Say I should have tried harder to fix or avoid the problem
 - Ignore how I feel
- _____ 2. When we are planning a weekend activity and I want to do something my partner doesn't want to do, I tend to:
- Suggest another option we will both enjoy
 - Beg until I get my way
 - Cancel our plans and engage in the activity with someone else
- _____ 3. When my partner and I disagree about a controversial subject, we usually:
- Ask questions and listen to the other person's viewpoint
 - Accuse the other person of using poor judgment or ignoring the facts
 - Avoid the subject
- _____ 4. If I didn't hear from my partner for a while, I would probably:
- Call or text to make sure everything was okay
 - Feel angry about being ignored
 - Not notice
- _____ 5. The statement my partner and I are most likely to make during a typical conversation sounds something like this:
- "I appreciate the way you . . ."
 - "You always forget to . . ."
 - "Were you saying something?"

INTERPRETING YOUR RESPONSES |

Read the explanations below for a climate report about your relationship.

Warm and Sunny If the majority of your answers are “a,” your relational climate is warm and sunny, with a high probability of confirming messages (pages 103–104). You seem to be experiencing a positive spiral (page 105). Use suggestions throughout this chapter to strengthen and nurture your relationship even more.

Stormy If you answered mostly “b,” your relationship tends to be turbulent, with outbreaks of controlling or defensive behavior (page 103). Storm warning: You seem to be in a downward escalatory conflict spiral (page 105) that can damage your relationship. That’s not to say it’s hopeless, but you may want to consider underlying feelings—yours and the other person’s. Guidance on self-disclosure (pages 98–100) may be helpful.

Chill in the Air If most of your answers are “c,” beware of falling temperatures. It’s natural for people to drift apart sometimes, but your relationship shows signs of chilly indifference and avoidance spiraling (page 105). Consider whether you are guilty of the damaging patterns described on page 104. You may be able to change the weather by engaging in more supportive communication (pages 103–104).

COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS

Interpersonal Communication



Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication involves two-way interaction between people who are part of a close and irreplaceable relationship in which they treat each other as unique individuals.

Relational Messages Communicate . . .

- Affinity
- Respect

- Immediacy
- Control

Metacommunication . . .

- Looks below the surface.
- Can be used for more than solving problems.
- Brings relational issues out in the open, which can be risky.

Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure is the process of deliberately revealing information about oneself that is significant and that would not normally be known by others.

Social Penetration Model

This perspective holds that communication occurs within two dimensions: *breadth*, which represents the range of subjects being discussed; and *depth*, how in-depth and personal the information is.

Johari Window

This model proposes that everything about a person may be categorized as either:

- Open, known to self and to others
- Blind, known to others but not to self
- Hidden, known to self but not to others
- Unknown by both self and others.

Disclosure Decisions

In deciding whether to disclose, it's important to consider:

- How important and trustworthy the other person is
- How risky and how appropriate the disclosure is
- Whether disclosure will be reciprocated, constructive, and understandable.

Interpersonal Communication Online Can . . .

- Help people stay connected.
- Feel nonthreatening.
- Be validating.
- Lead people to neglect those around them.
- Be overwhelming.

Confirming and Disconfirming Messages

Confirming messages demonstrate respect and approval, whereas disconfirming messages deny the value of other people.

Levels of Confirming Messages

- Show recognition.
- Acknowledge thoughts and feelings.
- Show that you agree.

Avoid . . .

- Hurtful evaluations
- Manipulation
- Acting superior
- Behaving like a know-it-all



Relational Spirals

- A spiral is a reciprocating communication pattern in which each person's message reinforces the other's.
- Positive spirals occur when confirming messages lead to similar responses.
- Negative spirals may involve escalatory conflict or avoidance.
- Most relationships pass through both types of cycles, but a balance toward the positive is necessary for relational satisfaction.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Show Your Communication Know-How



7.1: Explain what makes some communication interpersonal.

List five instances in which you have communicated with other people in the last week. Which, if any, of these episodes meet the definition of interpersonal communication?

KEY TERM: interpersonal communication



7.2: Categorize and explain types of relational messages.

Do the women pictured here appear to have affinity and respect for each other? What relational cues lead you to that conclusion?

KEY TERMS: [content message](#), [relational message](#), [affinity](#), [respect](#), [immediacy](#), [control](#)

7.3: Evaluate the advantages and potential pitfalls of engaging in metacommunication.

Think of a time when your feelings were hurt but you didn't say anything. Rewrite the scene using metacommunication to bring your feelings into the open.

KEY TERM: [metacommunication](#)

7.4: Describe two models of self-disclosure, and apply tips for self-disclosing effectively.

List some topics (breadth) and details (depth) you might self-disclose to a close friend but probably wouldn't tell your boss or grandparent. Explain why.

KEY TERMS: [self-disclosure](#), [social penetration model](#), [breadth](#), [depth](#), [Johari window](#)



7.5: Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of online interpersonal communication.

In what ways might online communication allow you to maintain close relationships? In what ways might it interfere with them?



7.6: Describe confirming and disconfirming messages and their impact on communication climates.

Identify several disconfirming messages from your own experience and rewrite them as confirming ones. How might these encounters have gone differently if the tone were more positive?

KEY TERMS: communication climate, disconfirming messages, confirming responses, “you” language, descriptive communication, “I” language

7.7: Distinguish between positive and negative relational spirals.

Think of a close relationship. Is it mostly spiraling up or down? How might you initiate or continue a positive spiral?

KEY TERMS: spiral, escalatory conflict spirals, avoidance spirals

8

Communicating with Friends and Family

Defining Qualities

What makes communication in friend and family relationships unique?

Friendships

How and why do people choose their friends?

What communication patterns make some relationships different than others?

How do gender roles influence friendship?

How do online friendships differ from those in person?

Families

How do family dynamics and parenting styles influence the way people communicate?

What factors shape communication between siblings?



Friendships and Family Ties

 LEARNING OBJECTIVE 8.1: Describe factors that influence communication in friend and family relationships.

“You are more than just my best friend—you are the sister I never knew I needed—you are family.” With these words, poet Marisa Donnelly acknowledges the powerful influence of both friends and family.¹ In this chapter, we explore these relationships, which are some of the longest and most influential of people’s lives.

Friendships

Aware that his best friend Anthony Martinez was discouraged about not having a date to their high school prom, Jacob Lescenski decided to take action. Martinez is gay and Lescenski is straight, but Lescenski asked Martinez to the prom in the school hallway with a huge homemade banner that read, “you’re hella gay, I’m hella str8, but you’re like my brother, so be my d8?” Martinez called it “the sweetest, coolest thing that has ever happened.”² Their remarkable friendship became the toast of social media, and the friends appeared on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* to share their story.³

Everyone has a story about a friend who has said or done something that made a powerful difference to them. Friendships are unique for a number of reasons:

- Friends typically treat each other as equals, unlike parent-child, teacher-student, or doctor-patient relationships, in which one partner has more authority or higher status than the other.⁴
- People can have as many friends as they want or have time for, in contrast to family and romantic relationships, which are limited in number.
- Friends are relatively free to design relationships that suit their needs. You may have close friends you talk to every day and others you see only once in a while.

Good friends help keep people healthy, boost their self-esteem, and make them feel loved and supported.⁵ They also help one another adjust to new challenges and uncertainty.⁶ It’s not surprising then that people with strong and lasting friendships are happier than those without them.⁷



Family Relationships

In today’s world, it’s not easy to define what makes a family. Theorist Martha Minnow proposes a solution: She suggests that people who share affection and resources as a family and who think of themselves and present themselves as a family *are a family*.⁸

Your own experiences probably tell you that this concept of a family might encompass (or exclude) bloodline relatives, adopted family members, stepparents, honorary aunts and uncles, and blended families in which the siblings were born to different parents. This makes it easy to understand why people can be hurt by questions such as “Is he your natural son?” and “Is she your real mother?” Calling some family members “natural” or “real” implies that others are fake or that they don’t belong.⁹

Friends and Family

We can’t close this overview of family and friends without acknowledging that some people are *both*. Sometimes, a parent, uncle, or sibling is also a friend. At other times, as poet Marisa Donnelly reflects, “people with whom we don’t share DNA or a roof over our heads” become so close that they are family.¹⁰ This chapter explores how communication influences the way people choose friends, the influence of gender and online communication, and the communication dynamics involving parents and siblings. ●

How People Evaluate Friendship Potential



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 8.2: Explain how people use communication to choose friends.

When she returned to her car after class one day, Jennie found a note on her window that said: *You are beautiful inside and out.*¹¹ “I never did find out which one of my friends left it for me,” Jennie says, “but it is still on my dashboard and means more than anything to me.” Friends have a special way of making us feel valued. Following are seven of the most common reasons to befriend someone.

You have a lot in common.

People typically consider acquaintances friendship material if they remind them of themselves. Coworkers in one study were most likely to pursue friendships with colleagues they perceived had commonalities.¹² A quick survey of your friends probably shows that you share many common interests and perspectives.

You balance each other out.

Differences can strengthen a relationship when they are **complementary**—that is, when each partner’s characteristics satisfy the other’s needs. For example, when introverts and extroverts pair up as friends, they typically report that the quieter person serves as a steady anchor for the friendship, and the more gregarious partner propels the other to take part in activities they might otherwise avoid.¹³

You like and appreciate each other.

Of course, you aren’t drawn toward everyone who seems to like you, but to a great extent, you probably like people who like you and shy away from those who seem to dislike you or feel indifferent. It’s no mystery why this is so. Approval tends to bolster people’s self-esteem. It is rewarding in its own right, and it can confirm the part of your self-concept that says, “I’m a likable person.”¹⁴



You admire each other.

It’s natural to admire people who are highly competent in something you care about.¹⁵ Forming friendships with talented and accomplished people can inspire you and offer the validating knowledge that someone you admire admires you back.

You open up to each other.

People who reveal important information about themselves often seem more likable, provided that what they share is appropriate to the setting and the stage of the relationship.¹⁶ Self-disclosure (Chapter 7) is appealing partly because people enjoy a sense of similarity, either in experiences (“I broke off an engagement, myself”) or in attitudes (“I feel nervous with strangers, too”). And when people share private information, it suggests that they respect and trust each other.

People like those who like them back.

This is especially true when they admire the other person and feel they have a lot in common.

You interact frequently.

In many cases, proximity leads to liking.¹⁷ You’re more likely to develop friendships with close neighbors than with distant ones. Proximity allows you to learn about one another and to engage in relationship-building behaviors. Also, people in close proximity may be more similar to you than those who live, work, and play in different places. At the same time, social media allow you to experience “virtual proximity” with people online even if they are not physically nearby.¹⁸

You find the relationship rewarding.

Some social scientists argue that all relationships are based on a semi-economic model called **social exchange theory**,¹⁹ which suggests that people invest in relationships with those who can give them rewards that are greater than or equal to the costs they encounter in dealing with them. The *rewards* of being with someone may be tangible (a nice place to live, a high-paying job) or intangible (prestige, emotional support, companionship). By contrast, *costs* are undesirable outcomes, such as a sense of obligation, putting up with annoying habits, emotional pain, and so on. According to social exchange theory, people use this formula (usually unconsciously) to decide whether dealing with another person is a “good deal” or “not worth the effort.”

At this point, it may seem that individuals who are practically perfect have the best chance of building strong relationships. Actually, perfection isn’t required or even desirable. Read on to see why. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

4 Reasons You Don’t Have to Be Perfect to Be a Good Friend

Having just pointed out common considerations when choosing relational partners, a few caveats are in order. Read the following before you fall into the trap of thinking you must be supermodel stunning, Mensa smart, or Olympic-level talented for people to find you appealing.

1. First impressions can mislead.

While it’s true that people gravitate to those whose interests and attitudes seem similar to their own, they tend to overestimate how similar they are to their friends and underestimate how similar they are to people they don’t know well.²⁰ In reality, there is strong evidence that superficial similarities such as appearance do not predict long-term happiness with a relationship, and when

you are willing to communicate with a range of diverse people, you are likely to find that your differences are not as great as you thought.^{21,22}

2. Perfection can be a turn-off.

People tend to like individuals who are attractive and talented, but be uncomfortable around those who are *too* perfect. Let's face it: No one wants to look bad by comparison. In the end, it's more important to be nice than to be flawless. College students in one study were twice as likely to choose a very nice stranger over a very smart one. The researchers concluded that, if people had to choose, most would rather spend time with a "lovable fool" than a "competent jerk."²³

3. It's not all about communication, but it's a *lot* about communication.

The online dating service eHarmony matches couples based on "29 dimensions of compatibility," and other online dating sites make similar promises. You can imagine such compatibility algorithms for finding friends. However, the long-term success of people matched by computer algorithms is no greater than that of people who meet on their own.²⁴ That's because long-term compatibility relies mostly on how people interact with one another once they start a relationship and encounter stressful issues.

4. Making an effort can bridge differences.

A few lessons emerge from these observations. One is to break free of your comfort zone and give new people a chance. Another is that, when you are the person who seems different from others, you can help reduce the stranger barrier by being friendly and approachable and letting people get to know the real you. Finally, don't be discouraged if you aren't "perfect" by society's standards. Being perfect is overrated. In the end, being nice matters much more.

Types of Friendships



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 8.3: Identify communication patterns that make friendships different from one another.

A quick survey of your social network will confirm that friendships come in many forms. Think of several friends in your life—perhaps a new friend, a longstanding friend, and a colleague at work. Then see how they compare on the dimensions described here.

Short-Term Versus Long-Term

Short-term friends tend to change as your life does. You may say goodbye because you move, graduate, or switch jobs. Or perhaps you party less or spend more time off the ball field than you used to. It's natural for your social networks to change as a result. However, long-term friends are with you even when they aren't. Particularly today, with so many different ways to stay in touch, people report that—as long as trust and a sense of connection are there—they feel as close to their long-term friends who live far away as to those who are nearby.²⁵

Low Disclosure Versus High Disclosure

As you learned in [Chapter 7](#), self-disclosure is associated with greater levels of intimacy such that only a few trusted confidantes are likely to know your deepest secrets. One interesting exception occurs among people

who are highly self-disclosive online. They might announce personal news to hundreds of friends and acquaintances with a single post or tweet. This isn't necessarily bad, since personal announcements can lead to an outpouring of support.²⁶ However, it's easy to cross the line and go public with information you might later wish you had kept private. As one blogger points out, the average Facebook user has several hundred online "friends," but not all of them need or want to hear "that your significant other cheated on you."²⁷



Doing-Oriented Versus Being-Oriented

Some friends experience closeness "in the doing." That is, they enjoy performing tasks or attending events together and feel closer because of those shared experiences.²⁸ In these cases, different friends are likely to be tied to particular interests—a golfing buddy or shopping partner, for example. Other friendships are "being-oriented." For these friends, the main focus is on simply spending time together, and they meet up just to talk or hang out.²⁹ Long-distance friends may send texts or photos to "be" together even when they are miles apart.

Friends come in many forms.

Some become long-term confidantes. Others come and go as your lifestyle changes.

Low Obligation Versus High Obligation

There are probably some friends for whom you would do just about anything—no request is too big. For others, you may feel a lower sense of obligation, both in terms of what you would do for them and how quickly you would do it. There is a cultural element at play, as well. For example, friends raised in low-context cultures such as the United States are more likely than those raised in high-context cultures such as China to express their appreciation for a friend out loud ([Chapter 3](#)). The latter are more likely to express themselves indirectly—most often by doing favors for friends and by showing gratitude and reciprocity when friends do favors for them.³⁰ It's easy to imagine the misunderstandings that might occur when one friend puts a high value on words and the other on actions.

Frequent Contact Versus Occasional Contact

Although it's difficult to begin a friendship without frequent interaction, once friendships are well established, the people involved may or may not stay in close contact. You probably see some of your friends on a regular basis. Perhaps you work out, travel, socialize, or FaceTime daily with them. You may connect with others only

at reunions or via the occasional call or message. Some friends go years without seeing each other and then reconnect as if they were never apart. Following are suggestions by communication experts for keeping friendships strong over time. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

8 *Communication Strategies for Being a Good Friend*

Experts suggest the following communication strategies to strengthen your friendships.

1. Be a good listener.

Listen not only to what is said but to what isn't said; pay close attention to your friend's nonverbal cues. Put aside distractions to show how much you care.

2. Give advice sparingly.

A defining feature of friendship is treating each other as equals. Offering advice—especially when it's not requested—can come off as condescending. A better option is to listen attentively and, if appropriate, ask your friend what options they imagine and what the pros and cons might be of each.

3. Share feelings respectfully.

Although it may be tempting to make a snide remark or say "It's nothing" when you feel upset, those strategies are likely to damage friendships.³¹ Instead, speak up without attacking the other person.

4. Apologize and forgive.

If you slip up, such as by forgetting an important date or saying something that embarrasses your friend, admit the mistake, apologize sincerely, and promise to do better in the future.³² Remembering your goof may inspire you to offer forgiveness rather than harboring a grudge when the tables are turned and your friend makes a mistake.³³

5. Be validating and appreciative.

Friends have a special ability to make people feel good about themselves. Hugs and validating statements such as "You're the best" and "Thank you" enhance friends' satisfaction, as do favors and small tokens of appreciation.³⁴ Love isn't limited to romantic relationships, and it's important to show your close friends how much you care.

6. Stay loyal in hard times.

People who believe their friends are loyal to them typically experience less everyday stress and more physical and emotional resilience than other people.³⁵ Saying "I'll always be there for you" and backing that up with attentive behaviors makes the difference.

7. Be trustworthy.

Two of the most dreaded violations of trust are sharing private information with others and saying unkind things about a friend behind their back.³⁶ Maintain confidentiality and stand up for your friends, even when they aren't around.

8. Give and take equally.

Friends are usually happiest when there is equal give and take between them.³⁷ It's nice to feel that you make a difference in someone's life, not just that they make a difference in yours.



ASK YOURSELF *What Kind of Friendship Do You Have?*

Think of a particular friend and select the answers below that best describe your relationship.

- _____ 1. Which of the following best describes the time you spend with this friend?
 - a. We see each other a lot. I'd really miss our time together if something prevented that.
 - b. Sometimes we spend time together and sometimes not. It's not a big deal either way.
 - c. We don't see each other very often, but when we do, we're as in sync as if no time has passed.
 - d. We haven't spent much time together yet, but I hope we will.
- _____ 2. If you were on a long car ride together, what would you most likely talk about?
 - a. Whatever is on my mind. I can tell this friend anything.
 - b. Current events or what we've been up to at school or work.
 - c. Funny memories. We've had many adventures together through the years.
 - d. Where we grew up, what we're studying in school, and other topics to get to know each other better.
- _____ 3. If your friend were in bed with the flu for several days, what you would be most likely to do?
 - a. Stop by to cheer them up and help out.
 - b. Send a "get well soon" text.
 - c. Call to say I wish I could be there in person.
 - d. It's unlikely that I'd know about it until later.
- _____ 4. If this friend said something that hurt your feelings, what would you probably do?
 - a. Talk about it together and repair the rift.
 - b. Avoid them for a while.
 - c. Let it go. It's nothing compared to all we've been through together.
 - d. Rethink my desire to be friends.

INTERPRETING YOUR RESPONSES!

Read the explanations below to reflect on the qualities of your friendship. More than one may apply.

Loyal If you answered “a” more than once, this is a close friend you can count on. You are likely to disclose a great deal to each other ([page 113](#)) and to back each other up, even when things are difficult. This is likely to be a long-term relationship ([page 113](#)) with the rewards that come from knowing that someone who knows you well is there for you no matter what.

Independent If you answered “b” two or more times, this is a friendship that doesn’t involve a great deal of obligation. You are able to get together when you feel like it without feeling pressured to do so if you don’t ([page 114](#)). Although not as close as some friendships, this one may be valuable, particularly if other commitments claim a lot of your time right now. Not every one has to be a best friend. Just be careful not to let your desire for independence distance you from forming strong bonds with one or two friends you can always count on.

Far Yet Close If you answered “c” more than once, this seems to be an enduring, long-term friendship ([page 113](#)) that remains strong even though you’re not able to be together in person as much as you would like. You are likely to enjoy the benefits of being emotionally connected without much obligation to do things together or for each other ([page 114](#)). It can be a great feeling to know that distance and time cannot dim the memories you have shared together. At the same time, be sure not to take this friendship for granted. A thoughtful text or call may help you feel close even when you’re not together physically.

Evolving If you answered “d” two or more times, it’s likely that your friendship is still developing. Your sense of obligation is likely to be low at this stage, as you venture to disclose more about yourselves to each other ([page 113](#)). It remains to be seen if this will be a short- or long-term relationship ([page 113](#)), but the benefits of having strong friendships suggest that it may be worth the effort to find out.

Gender and Friendship

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 8.4:** Analyze the impact of gender-related expectations on communication between friends.

“Whenever you sense I’m in a bad mood, rather than having me talk it out, you try to make me feel better—usually with jokes and terrible singing.”³⁸ In this open letter to her best friend, Samantha Smith sings the praises of male friends. Here we explore answers to some common questions about friendship and gender.

Q Do men and women do friendship differently?

A Although there are many similarities, there are some common differences, especially in same-sex friendships. Male-male friendships typically involve good-natured competition and a focus on tasks and events, whereas female friends are more likely to treat each other as equals and to engage in emotional support and self-disclosure.³⁹

Q Can heterosexual men and women be *just* friends?

A Women typically say yes, but men often give a decidedly iffy answer. In a study of 88 college-age male-female friendship partners, most of the women said the friendship was purely platonic, with no romantic interest on either side.⁴⁰ However, heterosexual men in the study were more likely to say that they secretly harbored romantic fantasies about their female friends, and they suspected (often wrongly, it seems) that the feeling was mutual.

Researchers speculate that heterosexual men and women get their wires crossed partly because they communicate differently. Women usually expect friends to be emotionally supportive and understanding.⁴¹ From the male perspective, this may feel more like romance than friendship. By contrast, men tend to emphasize independence and friendly competition.⁴² Those behaviors may not strike women as particularly romantic.



Q Are there advantages to other-sex friendships?

A Yes. Men often say that they find it validating when female friends encourage them to be more emotionally expressive than usual, and women say they appreciate the opportunity to speak assertively with their guy friends.⁴³

There also seems to be some truth to the idea that straight women and gay men make good friends.⁴⁴ This may be because gay men and straight women tend to trust each other's advice about love and romance. Both sides typically say they enjoy getting a different perspective without the complications of a hidden sexual agenda.⁴⁵

Q How does gender diversity figure into friendship?

A Perhaps the greatest byproduct of friendship is a sense of mutual acceptance and respect. The **contact hypothesis** proposes that prejudice tends to diminish when people have personal contact with individuals they might otherwise stereotype.⁴⁶ For example, gay men who have close friends that are straight are less likely than their peers to perceive that society judges them harshly for being gay.⁴⁷

Likewise, college students with at least one friend who is transgender are far less likely than their peers to harbor negative attitudes about transgender people.⁴⁸ For those who shy away from transgender or gender-transitioning individuals for fear of causing offense, the advice is clear: “Treat them like you usually do; they’re still people. Try to use their preferred pronouns and treat them like they’re your friend—because they still are!”⁴⁹ ●

Communicating with Friends Online

- LEARNING OBJECTIVE 8.5: Compare the way friends communicate in person and online.

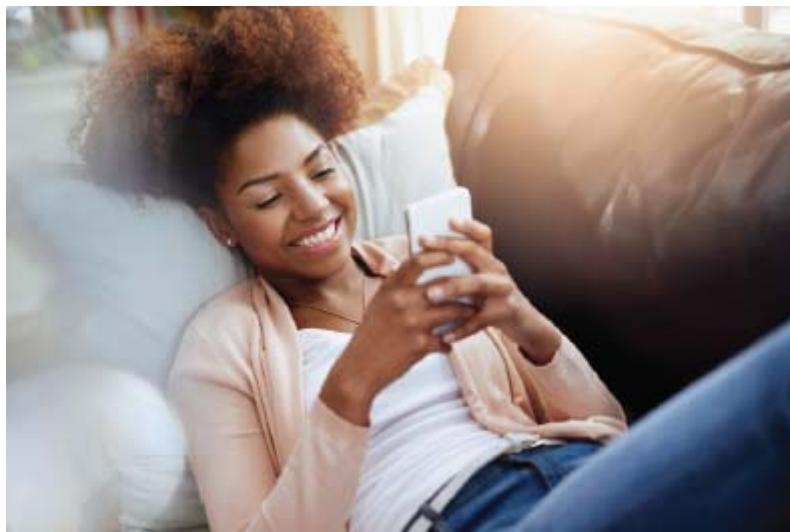
The average person has many more online friends than physical ones—double the amount, according to one report.⁵⁰ Quantity isn't the only distinction between mediated and offline friendships, however. Here are five common differences.

There is greater diversity online.

"I grew up in a fairly small town, so being a sci-fi and comics nerd who loved makeup, '80s and '90s pop music, fancy cake, and sushi pretty much made me a peer group of one," reflects Rachel. Online, however, she had access to "an entire world's worth of people," including many who shared her interests and passions.⁵¹ Whereas your in-person networks are limited to people in a relatively small geographic region, the number and diversity of people you may befriend online is virtually endless.

Many people share more in person, at least at first.

Face-to-face friends are typically more likely than online friends to talk about topics in depth and to share a deep understanding and commitment, especially during the early stages of their relationships.⁵² However, as online friendships develop, these differences tend to diminish. There is also some evidence that online relationships can become even more personal, as time goes on, than the in-person variety.⁵³



Online communication can be less anxiety provoking.

Online communication can be a comfortable means of befriending people who might otherwise seem intimidating. For example, when a researcher in Turkey interviewed college students from four different parts of the world, they said they would like to have more international friends, but they felt anxious about approaching them in person.⁵⁴ Given the chance, the students were enthusiastic about communicating with people from other countries online. They later reported that online communication reduced their anxiety about saying the wrong thing or encountering communication difficulties. At the same time, although online communication was a good ice-breaker, many students said they would like to have in-person relationships with their new international friends as well.

Online communication transcends time and space.

Many friendships thrive by making use of both social media *and* quality in-person time. Especially when busy schedules or distance prevents people from spending as much time together as they would like, staying in touch via social media platforms may keep their relationships alive and well.⁵⁵ A college student determined to remain in touch with childhood friends observes, "There's beauty in knowing friendships can last a lifetime, so long as you choose to preserve them."⁵⁶

More online communication isn't always better.

The reality is that you probably aren't really friends with all of your online "friends." You may not even know who some of them are. Anthropology professor Robin Dunbar inspired what has become known as **Dunbar's**

Number when he documented evidence that, for the most part, people have the mental and emotional energy to keep up with no more than 150 friends at a time.⁵⁷ This is not a hard and fast number, of course. At different times in your life, you may have energy for fewer or more friends. The point is that, whereas your online social networks can involve an unlimited number of friends and followers, the number of close friendships you can actually maintain at one time is limited, whether you interact with them online or in person. ●

Parenting Relationships

● **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 8.6:** Distinguish between different patterns of parent-child communication.

Power and influence play a role in any relationship, but especially in the dynamic between parents and children. Following are some parenting communication patterns with varying power differentials.



Family Dynamics

Imagine establishing the curfew for teenage members of a family.

- If the family communication pattern emphasizes **conversation**, teens and their parents probably negotiate the curfew by talking openly about it and listening to each other.
- However, if the emphasis is on **conformity**, teens will be expected to follow their parents' rules, beliefs, and values without challenging them.⁵⁸

Most evidence suggests that children who grow up with the *conversation* approach are better at expressing their emotions confidently and effectively as they grow older.^{59, 60} As you might imagine, children who don't engage in much give-and-take communication with their parents are usually less comfortable using that style with other people as well.

Among children who grow up with a *conformity* pattern, the advantage goes to those who perceive that their parents are motivated by love and concern. They tend to grow up to be more emotionally resilient than children who believe their parents control their behavior for selfish reasons.⁶¹

Parenting Styles

Now let's focus on specific parenting styles.⁶²

- **Authoritarian** parents expect unquestioning obedience. You might characterize this as a “do it because I said so” style.
- **Authoritative** parents are also firm, clear, and strict, but they encourage children to communicate openly with them. These parents have high expectations. But at the same time, they are willing to discuss them, listen to children’s input, and even negotiate the rules.
- **Permissive** parents do not require children to follow many rules.

Most evidence favors the *authoritative* style in terms of fostering children’s happiness and adaptability throughout life.⁶³ As two researchers in this field put it, authoritative parents provide the dual benefits of structure and compassion—they are “warm, responsive, assertive without being overly intrusive or restrictive.” ●

Sibling Relationships

● **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 8.7:** Compare communication patterns in five types of sibling relationships.

In the midst of what some theorists call the “playing and arguing, joking and bickering, caring and fighting” of sibling life, children learn a great deal about themselves and how to relate to others.⁶⁴



A sibling relationship isn’t limited to people who share biological parents. It’s much more about shared life experiences. As one person who grew up in a blended family puts it, “You feel beyond annoyed when explaining your family structure and someone says, ‘Oh, so you’re only half-sisters.’” It’s tempting, she says, to reply, “Only? ONLY? Well, you’re my half-friend now.”⁶⁵

Whatever the origin, sibling relationships involve an interwoven, and often paradoxical, collection of emotions. People are likely to feel both intense loyalty and fierce competition with their brothers and sisters and to be both loving and antagonistic toward them.

Here are five types of sibling relationships people usually settle into as they become adults.⁶⁶

Supportive

Siblings classified as **supportive** talk regularly and consider themselves to be accessible and emotionally close to one other. Supportive relationships are most common among siblings who are of similar ages, particularly if they come from large families.⁶⁷

Longing

Longing siblings typically admire and respect one other, but they interact less frequently and with less depth than they would like. This can be especially difficult for younger siblings who watch older ones move out. “[I] look at his empty desk, the table where we would sit and talk, and start bawling . . . I know I’ll see him again, but nothing will be the same,” lamented one teen when his brother left home.⁶⁸

Competitive

Sibling rivalry usually diminishes as people emerge from adolescence into adulthood.⁶⁹ However, some siblings remain **competitive** in their adult years, most often if they perceive that their parents continue to play favorites.⁷⁰

Apathetic

Siblings classified as **apathetic** only communicate with one another on special occasions, such as holidays or weddings.

Hostile

Siblings who feel **hostile** often stop communicating.⁷¹ Unlike apathetic siblings, who may drift apart without hard feelings, hostile siblings usually feel a sense of jealousy, resentment, and anger toward one another. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

6 *Communication Tips for Strengthening Family Ties*

Communicating with family members can be a challenge, but it’s vital. Following are some strategies for successful family communication based on experts’ advice.

1. Share family stories.

Family stories contribute to a shared sense of identity. They also convey that adversity is an inevitable part of life, and they can suggest strategies for overcoming it.⁷²

2. Listen to each other.

People who are involved in reflection and conversation learn how to manage and express their feelings better than those who don’t. They tend to have better relationships as a result.^{73,74}

3. Negotiate privacy rules.

When family members feel that their privacy has been violated, they often experience that something uniquely theirs has been stolen.⁷⁵ At the same time, too much privacy can mean overlooking dangerous behavior and avoiding distressing but important topics. Experts suggest that families talk about and agree on privacy expectations and rules. These might involve whether children “friend” their parents on Facebook, how much the children are allowed to know about their parents’ health and financial status, or when a secret shouldn’t be kept secret.

4. Coach conflict management.

Effective conflict management doesn't just happen spontaneously.⁷⁶ It's a sophisticated process that often goes against one's fight-or-flight instincts. Families can help by creating safe environments for discussing issues and striving for mutually agreeable solutions. It's usually more helpful for parents to coach their children through this process than to take a hands-off approach to conflict.⁷⁷

5. Share confirming messages.

Supportive messages from family members can give people the confidence to believe in themselves. Compliments such as "You are a very thoughtful person" and "I know you will do a great job" tend to be self-fulfilling. For example, teens whose parents frequently compliment and encourage them are less likely than others to drop out of high school.⁷⁸

6. Have fun together.

Happy families make it a point to minimize distractions and spend time together on a regular basis. They establish togetherness rituals that suit their busy lives, such as sharing dessert even when they can't eat dinner together,⁷⁹ and they share adventures, both large and small.



PAUSE TO REFLECT

How Does Your Family Communicate?

1. While you were growing up, were decisions such as teen curfews decided mostly through conversation (authoritative) or through conformity with rules set by your parents or guardians (authoritarian)? How do you think that pattern affects the way you communicate as an adult? _____

2. If there is anyone in your life you consider to be a sibling, which of the styles described on page 119 best describes your relationship? How does the nature of your relationship influence the way you communicate? _____

COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS

Communicating with Friends and Family

Importance of Friends and Family

- People typically treat friends as equals, can have numerous friendships, and can design friendships to suit their mutual needs.
- People who share affection and resources as a family and who think of themselves and present themselves as a family *are* a family.

People Typically Choose to be Friends if They . . .

- Have a lot in common
- Balance each other out
- Like and appreciate each other
- Admire each other
- Open up to each other
- Interact frequently
- Find the relationship rewarding

4 Reasons You Don't Have to Be Perfect to Be a Good Friend

- First impressions can mislead.
- Perfection can be a turn-off.
- It's not all about communication, but it's a *lot* about communication.
- Making an effort can bridge differences.



Types of Friendships

- Short-term or long-term
- Low or high disclosure
- Doing- or being-oriented
- Low or high obligation
- Frequent or occasional contact



7 Communication Strategies for Being a Good Friend

- Be a good listener.

- Give advice sparingly.
- Share feelings respectfully.
- Apologize and forgive.
- Be validating and appreciative.
- Stay loyal in hard times.
- Be trustworthy.
- Give and take equally.

Gender and Friendship

- Male friendships often involve good-natured competition and a focus on activities, whereas female friends tend to treat each other more as equals and to engage in emotional support and self-disclosure.
- Can heterosexual men and women be just friends? Women typically say yes, but men are less certain.
- Men often find it validating when female friends encourage them to be emotionally expressive, and women say they appreciate the opportunity to be concrete and direct with their guy friends.
- Friendships with diverse people can diminish prejudice.

Online Friendships Differ from Those in Person in That:

- There is greater diversity online.
- Many people share more in person, at least at first.
- Online communication can be less anxiety provoking.
- Online communication transcends time and space.
- You're likely to have more online friends than you can actually keep up with.



Parenting Relationships

- Families may make decisions based on conversations or on conformity with parents' wishes.
- Parenting styles vary from authoritarian, to authoritative, to permissive.

Types of Sibling Relationships

- Supportive
- Longing
- Competitive
- Apathetic
- Hostile

6 Communicating Tips for Strengthening Family Ties

- Share family stories.
- Listen to each other.
- Negotiate privacy rules.
- Coach conflict management.
- Share confirming messages.

- Have fun together.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Show Your Communication Know-How



8.1: Describe factors that influence communication in friend and family relationships.

How does communication help you establish a sense of mutual affection and shared resources with the people you consider family?

KEY TERM: [family](#)

8.2: Explain how people use communication to choose friends.

Name five qualities you value in a friend. What role does communication play in choosing friends with those qualities?

KEY TERMS: [complementary](#), [social exchange theory](#)

8.3: Identify communication patterns that make friendships different from one another.

Think of an important friendship in your life. How would you rate your communication in terms of listening, sharing feelings, apologizing, and forgiving? How would you rate your friend in each of these categories?



8.4: Analyze the impact of gender-related expectations on communication between friends.

8.4: In terms of your closest friends, do you most value being together or doing things together? Being emotionally expressive or providing a distraction from worries? Being with a person who is similar to you or connecting with someone who is different? Do you think gender norms play a role in your preferences?

KEY TERM: [contact hypothesis](#)

8.5: Compare the way friends communicate in person and online.

Has an online connection ever allowed you to form or strengthen a friendship? If so, what were the advantages and disadvantages of communicating via technology?

KEY TERM: [Dunbar's Number](#)

8.6: Distinguish between different patterns of parent–child communication.

Think of a family on television or in the movies that involves interaction between parents and children. Which of the parenting styles described in this chapter best describes them and how?

KEY TERMS: [conversation](#), [conformity](#), [authoritarian](#), [authoritative](#), [permissive](#)



8.7: Compare communication patterns in five types of sibling relationships.

How might siblings communicate during family gatherings if they have a longing relationship? An apathetic one? A hostile one?

KEY TERMS: [supportive](#), [longing](#), [competitive](#), [apathetic](#), [hostile](#)

9

Communicating with Romantic Partners

Relationship Development

What communication stages do intimate relationships typically progress through?

Expressing Love

How do gender roles influence romantic communication?

What love languages influence romantic relationships?

How do couples negotiate me-time versus us-time and other relational dimensions?

Fighting Fair

What's the difference between an altruistic lie, an evasion, and self-serving deception?

What methods of dealing with conflict are constructive and which are destructive?

What communication strategies lead to win-win solutions?



Stages of Romantic Relationships

 LEARNING OBJECTIVE 9.1: Distinguish between stages of coming together, staying together, and coming apart as a romantic couple.

By definition, romantic **intimacy** requires that partners express themselves through some combination of physical contact, shared experiences, intellectual sharing, and emotional disclosures.¹ Some romances ignite quickly, whereas others grow gradually. Either way, couples are likely to progress through a series of stages as they define what they mean to each other and what they expect in terms of shared activities, exclusivity, commitment, and their public identity.



Communication scholar Mark Knapp's **developmental model** depicts five stages of intimacy development (coming together) and five stages in which people distance themselves from each other (coming apart).² Other researchers have suggested that the middle phases of the model can also be understood as **relational maintenance**—keeping stable relationships operating smoothly and satisfactorily.³ Figure 9.1 shows how Knapp's 10 stages fit into this three-part view of communication in relationships. Consider how well these stages reflect communication in the close relationships you have experienced.

Initiating

The initiating stage occurs when people first encounter one another. Knapp restricts this stage to conversation openers such as “It’s nice to meet you” and “How’s it going?” During this stage, people form first impressions and have the opportunity to present themselves in an appealing manner.

Experimenting

People enter the experimenting stage when they begin to get acquainted through “small talk.” They may ask: “Where are you from?” or “Do you know Josephine Mendoza? She lives in San Francisco, too.” Comments during this stage are generally pleasant and uncritical, and commitment is minimal. Though small talk might seem meaningless, Knapp points out that it presents opportunities to interact with a wide range of people so you may determine who is worth getting to know better.

Intensifying

In the intensifying stage, truly interpersonal relationships develop as people begin to express how they feel about each other. It’s often a time of strong emotions. If couples are in sync, they may experience heightened intimacy. But if they aren’t, they may feel either pressured or rejected. Dating couples often navigate this uncertainty by flirting, hinting around, asking hypothetical questions, giving compliments, and being affectionate. They may become bolder and more direct if their partners seem receptive to these gestures.⁴

Integrating

In the integration stage, couples begin to take on an identity as a social unit. They are likely to be pictured together in social media and to meet each other’s families. Couples begin to share possessions and memories —our apartment, our car, our song. As one observer puts it, you know a relationship is on stable ground when you can have a fight but know that you’ll still be together afterward.⁵

Bonding

The bonding stage is likely to involve a wedding, a commitment ceremony, or some other public means of communicating to the world that this is a relationship meant to last. Bonding generates social support for the relationship and demonstrates a strong sense of commitment and exclusivity.

Not all relationships last forever, however. And even when the bonds between partners are strong and enduring, it's sometimes desirable to create some distance. The following stages accomplish that.

Differentiating

In the differentiating stage, the emphasis shifts from “how we are alike” to “how we are different.” For example, a couple who moves in together may find that they have different expectations about doing chores, sleeping late, what to watch on TV, and so on. This doesn’t necessarily mean the relationship is doomed. Differences remind partners that they are distinct individuals. To maintain a balance, couples may claim different areas of the home as their personal space and reduce their use of nicknames, gestures, and words that distinguish the relationship as intimate and unique.⁶

Circumscribing

In the circumscribing stage, communication decreases in quantity and quality. Rather than discuss a disagreement, which requires some degree of energy on both parts, partners may withdraw mentally by using silence, daydreaming, or fantasizing. They may also withdraw physically by spending less time together, indicating reduced interest and commitment.

Stagnating

If circumscribing continues, the relationship begins to stagnate. Partners behave toward each other in old, familiar ways without much feeling. Like workers who have lost interest in their jobs yet continue to go through the motions, some couples unenthusiastically repeat the same conversations, see the same people, and follow the same routines without any sense of joy or novelty.

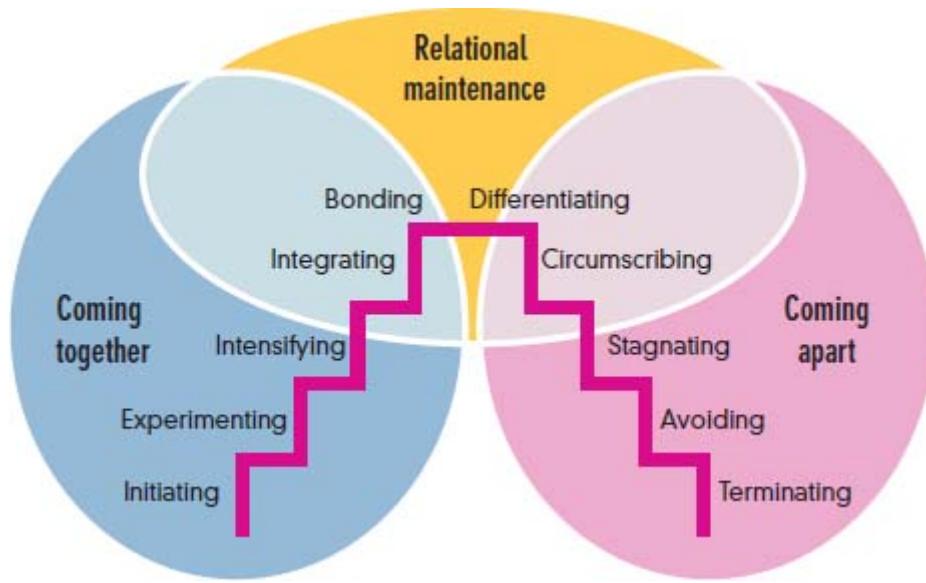


FIGURE 9.1 Relational Development Model

Avoiding

When stagnation becomes too unpleasant, partners distance themselves in more overt ways. They might use excuses, such as “I’ve been busy lately,” or direct requests, such as “Please don’t call. I don’t want to talk to you.” In either case, the writing about the relationship’s future is clearly on the wall.

Terminating

Characteristics of this final stage include attempts to explain where the relationship went wrong and the desire to break up. Relationships end in many ways—with a cordial conversation, a text, a note left on the table, or a legal document stating the dissolution. This stage can be quite short or drawn out over time. ●

Communication, or the lack of it, can decrease intimacy.

Stages of “coming apart” may not spell the end of a relationship, but they do signal emotional distance, at least for the time being.

TIPS & REMINDERS

3 *Ways That Communication Influences Romantic Potential*

It’s easy to assume that, if your relationship shows signs of “coming together” or “coming apart,” you can predict what will happen next. But couples differ in terms of how quickly they move through the stages, and just because you’ve drifted apart lately, the relationship isn’t necessarily hopeless.

Communication plays a significant role in the process.

1. Communication differs in each stage.

If you don’t find yourself sharing secrets on your first date, don’t worry. Partners may find that talking about highly personal issues deepens their bond in the intensifying stage of a relationship, but it can feel overwhelming sooner than that. Likewise, the polite behavior of the first two stages may seem cool and distant as intimacy increases. Every relationship, and every stage of involvement, has its own pace and rhythm.

2. Partners can shape relational trajectories.

The direction a relationship takes isn’t inevitable. Partners sometimes recognize the early signs of “coming apart” in time to reverse the trend. For example, if they realize they are differentiating or stagnating, they might refresh their relationship by doing more of the things they did while “coming together,” such as going on dates, sharing feelings, and pursuing new experiences together.⁷

3. Relational development involves risk and vulnerability.

At any stage—even those associated with coming together—the relationship may falter. Intimacy only evolves if both people are willing to take a chance at becoming gradually more interdependent and self-disclosive.⁸ Your knowledge of relational stages can help you understand whether the relationship is trending more toward the positive or the negative.



PAUSE TO REFLECT

Where Does Your Relationship Stand?

1. Think about the early stages of a past or current relationship. What did you say and do to get better acquainted? How did the way you communicated early on affect what happened between you? Looking back, is there anything you would change? _____

2. The intensifying stage can be both exciting and unsettling. Is there a time when you felt vulnerable and wondered if you were setting yourself up to get hurt? Conversely, have you ever been so cautious that you lost the chance to get to know someone better? What lessons would you like to remember for the future?
-
-

3. Have you ever experienced a sense of drifting apart? What communication strategies did you use to either increase or decrease the emotional distance? Will you do anything differently if you find yourself in that situation again?
-
-

Gender and Intimacy

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 9.2:** Describe options for conveying intimate messages that tend to differ by gender.

The Internet is loaded with advice on understanding your romantic partner better. It ranges from “just because she says things are fine, don’t assume she means it”⁹ to “we [men] crave hugs and hand-holding too. And no, it doesn’t always have to lead to sex.”¹⁰ Here’s what research shows about the connection between gender and romantic communication.

Q Is it true that women are better at the lovey-dovey stuff than men are?

A Until recently most social scientists believed that women were better at developing and maintaining intimate relationships than men. This belief grew from the assumption that the most important ingredients of intimacy are sharing personal information and showing emotions. Most research does show that women (taken as a group, of course) *are* more willing than men to share their thoughts and feelings.¹¹ However, male–female differences aren’t as great as they seem,¹² and emotional expression isn’t the only way to develop close relationships. (Keep reading.)

Q My boyfriend considers it quality time when we do yard work or go fishing together. Am I missing something?

A Whereas women typically value personal talk, men often demonstrate caring by doing things for their partners and spending time with them. Jackie Bledsoe, who wrote a book about happy marriage, says men may show their love by mowing the lawn, enjoying a ball game together, or other actions that some women might consider “just plain weird.”¹³ It’s easy to imagine the misunderstandings that result from different expectations. Indeed, women’s most frequent complaint is that men don’t stop to focus on “the relationship” enough.¹⁴ Men, however, are more likely to complain about what women do or don’t do in a behavioral sense. For example, they may consider it highly significant if a woman doesn’t call when she says she will.



Q What about sex? Are men and women on the same page?

A Some are. But whereas many women think of sex as a way to express intimacy that has already developed, men are more likely to see it as a way to *create* that intimacy.¹⁵ In this sense, the man who encourages sex early in a relationship or after a fight may view it as a way to build closeness. By contrast, the woman who views personal talk as the pathway to intimacy may resist the idea of physical closeness before the emotional side of the relationship has been discussed.

Q Much of the research talks about male–female couples. What happens when partners are of the same sex?

A Research is limited so far, but much of it suggests that, on average, long-term same-sex partners typically match up well in terms of supportive communication¹⁶ and emotional closeness,¹⁷ and the effort each partner puts into maintaining the relationship. Researchers speculate that, while same-sex couples face mostly the same challenges as anyone else, they have probably been socialized to communicate in similar ways and to have similar expectations. ●

Speaking the Languages of Love

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 9.3: Elaborate on the difference between popular love languages.

Some intimacy styles have less to do with sex or gender than with personal preferences. Relationship counselor Gary Chapman observes that people typically orient to one of five love languages.¹⁸ The odds are that you value all of these to some degree, but you probably give some love languages greater weight than others. Good intentions may lead you astray, however, if you assume that your partner feels the same way you do. The golden rule—do unto others as you would have them do unto you—isn’t very useful when your partner’s love language preferences differ from yours.¹⁹



Affirming Words

This language includes compliments, thanks, and statements that express love and commitment. Even when you know someone loves and values you, it’s often nice to hear it in words. The happiest couples continue to flirt with each other, even after they have been together for many years.²⁰



Quality Time

Some people show love by completing tasks together, talking, or engaging in some other mutually enjoyable activity. The good news is that, even when people can’t be together physically, talking about quality time can be an important means of expressing love. For example, partners separated by military deployments often say they feel closer to each other just talking about everyday activities and future plans.²¹



Gifts

It's no coincidence that people often buy gifts for loved ones on Valentine's Day and other occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries. For some people, receiving a gift—even an inexpensive or free one such as a flower from the garden or a handmade card—adds to their sense of being loved and valued.²²

Physical Touch

Loving touch may involve a hug, a kiss, a pat on the back, or having sex. For some people, touch is such a powerful indicator of intimacy that even an incidental touch can spur interest. In one study, a woman asked men in a bar for help adding a key to her key ring.²³ She lightly touched some of the men but not others. Afterwards, the men who had been touched were more romantically interested in the woman than the other men were.

Touch is potent even in long-term relationships. Researchers in one study asked couples to increase the number of times they kissed each other. Six weeks later, the couples' stress levels and relational satisfaction, and even their cholesterol levels, had significantly improved.²⁴



Acts of Service

People may show love by performing favors such as caring for each other when they are sick, doing the dishes, making meals, and so on. Committed couples report that sharing daily tasks is the most frequent way they show their love and commitment.²⁵ Although each person need not contribute in exactly the same ways, an overall sense that they are putting forth equal effort is essential to long-term happiness.²⁶ ●



ASK YOURSELF

What's Your Love Language?

Answer the questions below to learn more about the love languages you prefer.

- _____ 1. You have had a stressful time working on a team project. The best thing your romantic partner can do for you is:
- Set aside distractions to spend time with you

- b. Do your chores so you can relax
 - c. Give you a big hug
 - d. Pamper you with a dessert you love
 - e. Tell you the team is lucky to have someone as talented as you
- _____ 2. What is your favorite way to show that you care?
- a. Go somewhere special together
 - b. Do a favor for your partner without being asked
 - c. Hold hands and sit close together
 - d. Surprise your partner with a little treat
 - e. Tell your loved one how you feel in writing
- _____ 3. With which of the following do you most agree?
- a. The most lovable thing someone can do is give you their undivided attention.
 - b. Actions speak louder than words.
 - c. A loving touch says more than words can express.
 - d. Your dearest possessions are things your loved one has given you.
 - e. People don't say "I love you" nearly enough.
- _____ 4. Your anniversary is coming up. Which of the following appeals to you most?
- a. An afternoon together, just the two of you
 - b. A romantic, home-cooked dinner (you don't have to lift a finger)
 - c. A relaxing massage by candlelight
 - d. A photo album of good times you have shared
 - e. A homemade card that lists the qualities your romantic partner loves about you

INTERPRETING YOUR RESPONSES !

For insight about your primary love languages, see which of the following best describes your answers.

Quality Time If you answered "a" to one or more questions, you feel loved when people set aside life's distractions to spend time with you. Keep in mind that everyone defines quality time a bit differently. It may mean a thoughtful phone call during a busy day, a picnic in the park, or a few minutes every evening to share news about the day.

Acts of Service Answering "b" means you feel loved when people do thoughtful things for you such as washing your car, helping you with a repair job, bringing you breakfast in bed, or bathing the children so you can put your feet up. Even small gestures say "I love you" to people whose love language involves acts of service.

Physical Touch Options labeled "c" are associated with the comfort and pleasure you get from physical affection. If your partner texts to say, "Wish we were snuggled up together!" they are speaking the language of touch.

Gifts If you chose "d," you treasure thoughtful gifts from loved ones. Your prized possessions are likely to include items that look inconsequential to others but have sentimental value to you because of who gave them to you.

Words of Affirmation Options labeled "e" refer to words that make us feel loved and valued, perhaps in a card, a song, or a text. To people who speak this love language, hearing that they are loved (and why) is the sweetest message imaginable.

Dialectical Perspective

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 9.4: Explain dialectical continua and strategies for managing them.

The **dialectical model** suggests that relationships are a balancing act. Partners must continually negotiate between opposing forces, both within themselves and with one another.²⁷ How they manage these challenges defines the nature of their relationship and communication with each other.

Openness Versus Privacy

As you may remember from [Chapter 8](#), disclosure is one characteristic of interpersonal relationships. Yet, along with the need for intimacy, it's also important to maintain some emotional space between yourself and others. These sometimes-conflicting drives create the *openness–privacy dialectic*.

Openness contributes to intimacy, but in even the strongest interpersonal relationships, partners are likely to go through periods of sharing and times of relative withdrawal.

Connection Versus Autonomy

The conflicting desires for togetherness and independence are embodied in the *connection–autonomy dialectic*. One of the most common reasons for breaking up is that one partner doesn't satisfy the other's need for connection.²⁸

“We barely spent any time together.”

“My partner wasn’t committed to the relationship.”

“We had different needs.”

But couples split up for the opposite reason as well:²⁹

“I felt trapped.”

“I needed freedom.”

Individuals are faced with this dilemma even within themselves. You may desire intimacy, but also feel the need for some time to yourself.

Managing dialectic tensions is tricky because people's needs change over time. Author Desmond Morris suggests that partners repeatedly go through three stages:



*“Hold me tight,”
“Put me down,” and
“Leave me alone.”*³⁰

In marriages, for example, the “Hold me tight” bonds of the first year are often followed by a desire for independence. This can manifest in a number of ways, such as the desire to make friends or engage in activities that don’t include the spouse, or making a career move that might disrupt the relationship. Movement toward autonomy may lead to a breakup, or it can redefine the relationship in ways that allow partners to recapture or even surpass the closeness that existed previously. You might find that spending some time apart makes you miss and appreciate your partner more than ever. Although these examples point to patterns that couples often experience, partners are not always in sync, of course. Sometimes one partner is in the “hold me tight” stage while the other is more inclined to say “leave me alone.” *Tips & Reminders* on the next page describes strategies that people use (productively or not) to manage dialectical continua.

Predictability Versus Novelty

Stability is an important need in relationships, but too much predictability can lead to staleness and boredom. People differ in their desire for stability and surprises—even from one time to another. The classic example is becoming engaged just before graduation or military deployment, when life may seem particularly novel and uncertain. Commitment may balance some of the uncertainty people feel in those situations. However, things may feel *too* predictable once life settles into a new routine. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

9

Strategies for Managing Dialectical Tensions

Dialectical tensions are a fact of life in intimate relationships, and there are a number of ways partners can deal with them. As you have probably experienced, some of these strategies are more productive than others.³¹

1. Denial

One of the least functional responses to dialectical tensions is to deny that they exist. People in denial insist that “everything is fine” even if it isn’t. They may refuse to deal with conflict, ignoring problems or pretending that they agree about everything.

2. Disorientation

When people feel so overwhelmed and helpless that they are unable to confront their problems, they are said to be disoriented. In the face of dialectical tensions, they might fight, freeze, or even leave the relationship. A couple who discovers soon after the honeymoon that living a “happily ever after” conflict-free life is impossible might view their marriage as a mistake and seek a divorce.

3. Selection

When partners employ the strategy of selection, they respond to one end of the dialectical spectrum and ignore the other. For example, a couple caught between the conflicting desires for stability and novelty may decide that predictability is the “right” or “responsible” choice and put aside their longing for excitement.

4. Alteration

Communicators sometimes alternate between one end of the dialectical spectrum and the other. For example, partners may spend time apart during the week but reserve weekends for couple time.

What means of negotiating dialectical tensions do you use most often, and how well do they work?

5. Polarization

In some cases, couples find a balance of sorts by each staking a claim at opposite ends of a dialectic continuum. For example, one partner might give up nearly all personal interests in the name of togetherness, while the other maintains an equally extreme commitment to being independent. In the classic *demand–withdraw pattern*, the more one partner insists on closeness the more the other feels suffocated and craves distance.³²

6. Segmentation

In segmentation, couples compartmentalize different areas of the relationship. For example, a couple might manage the openness–privacy dialectic by sharing almost all their feelings about mutual friends with one another but keeping certain parts of their past romantic histories private.

7. Moderation

The moderation strategy is characterized by compromises in which couples back off from expressing either end of the dialectical spectrum. A couple might decide that taking separate vacations is too extreme for them, but they will make room for some alone time while they are traveling together.

8. Reframing

Communicators can also respond to dialectical challenges by reframing them in ways that redefine the situation so that the apparent contradiction disappears. Consider partners who regard the inevitable challenges of managing dialectical tensions as “exciting opportunities to grow” instead of as “relational problems.”

9. Reaffirmation

A final strategy for handling dialectical tensions is reaffirmation—acknowledging that dialectical tensions will never disappear, and accepting or even embracing the challenges they present. Communicators who use reaffirmation view dialectical tensions as part of the ride of life.

What means of negotiating dialectical tensions do you use most often, and how well do they work?

Deception in Romantic Relationships

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 9.5:** Analyze the functions served by altruistic lies, evasions, and self-serving lies.

Partners are likely to experience deceit in every stage of their relationship. In fact, people lie more than you might think. Research shows that most people lie, on average, once or twice per day, and even more when they meet someone new.³³



Altruistic Lies

Altruistic lies are defined, at least by the people who tell them, as being harmless, or even helpful, to the person to whom they are told.³⁴ For example, you might tell the host of a dinner party that the food was delicious even if it wasn't. Or you might compliment your loved one's new haircut to avoid hurting their feelings. For the most part, white lies such as these fall in the category of polite ways to communicate about small matters without causing offense.

Evasions

Evasions, sometimes called *gray lies*, aren't outright mistruths. Rather, people may evade full disclosure by being deliberately vague. Often motivated by good intentions, gray lies are based on the belief that less clarity can be beneficial for the sender, the receiver, or sometimes both.³⁵

One type of gray lie is **equivocation**—deliberately ambiguous statements with two or more equally plausible meanings.³⁶ As you read in [Chapter 4](#), people sometimes send equivocal messages without meaning to, resulting in confusion. By contrast, an equivocation is deliberately vague. For example, when someone asks what you think of an awful outfit, you could say, “It’s really unusual—one of a kind!”

Hinting is a second type of evasion. Hints are intended to bring about a desired response without asking for it directly. Some hints are designed to save people from embarrassment. For example, a face-saving guest might hint to her host by saying, “It’s getting late,” rather than, “I’m bored and want to leave now.” Clearly, hints only work if people pick up on them.

Equivocations and hints are generally offered in an effort to avoid hurting people’s feelings. If your friend hits on you and you are not romantically interested, you might be evasive with an equivocal statement such as, “Your friendship means a lot to me, and I wouldn’t want anything to ruin that.”

Self-Serving Lies

Self-serving lies are attempts to manipulate a listener into believing something that is untrue—not primarily to protect the listener, but to advance one’s own agenda. For example, people might lie on their income tax returns or deny that they have been drinking if a cop pulls them over.

Self-serving lies involve an **omission** or a **fabrication**—withholding information that someone deserves to know, or deliberately misleading another person for one’s own benefit. For example, a romantic partner may keep a love affair secret.

It’s no surprise that such lies can destroy trust. They may lead the deceived person to wonder if anything the other person says is true. However, some couples rebound from serious deceptions, particularly if the lie involves an isolated incident and the wrongdoer’s apology seems sincere.³⁷

Ways That Partners Express Conflict



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 9.6: Compare and contrast methods of dealing with interpersonal conflict.

Regardless of what people may wish for or dream about, a conflict-free relationship just doesn’t exist. For many people, the inevitability of conflict is depressing. However, effective communicators realize that, although it’s impossible to eliminate conflict, there are ways to manage it effectively. The first step is to understand the wide range of communication options available. As you read on, ask yourself which styles you use most often and how they affect the quality of your close relationships.

Nonassertiveness

The inability or unwillingness to express thoughts or feelings in a conflict is known as **nonassertion**. A partner may insist that “nothing is wrong” even when it is. Sometimes nonassertion comes from a lack of confidence. At other times, people lack the awareness or skill to use a more direct means of expression.

Nonassertion can take a variety of forms. One is *avoidance*—either steering clear of the other person or avoiding the topic. People who avoid conflicts usually believe it’s easier to put up with the status quo than to face the problem head-on and try to solve it. *Accommodation* is another type of nonassertive response. Accommodators deal with conflict by giving in, putting others’ needs ahead of their own.

While nonassertion won’t solve a difficult or long-term problem, there are situations in which accommodating or avoiding is a sensible approach. Avoidance may be the best choice if a conflict is minor and short-lived. For example, you might forgive your partner for being grumpy if they have had a particularly difficult day. For important or longstanding issues, though, nonassertion rarely helps.

Indirect Communication

Indirect communication conveys a message in a roundabout manner without being hostile. The goal is to get what one wants without causing hard feelings. As you read earlier in the chapter, hinting is a common way for partners to make their point without threatening or challenging the other person. In addition, hints can allow the initiator to avoid expressing uncomfortable feelings or thoughts.

The risk of an indirect message, of course, is that the other party will misunderstand or will fail to get the message at all. There are also times when the importance of an idea is so great that hinting lacks the necessary punch.



Assertiveness

When clarity and directness are your goals, an assertive approach is in order. Being **assertive** means directly expressing your needs, thoughts, or feelings in a way that does not attack the other person's dignity.

Assertive partners make it clear that the problem at hand is theirs by using the kinds of "I" language described in [Chapter 4](#). They describe their concerns without judging others or dictating to them. For example, a partner who has noticed that arguments erupt early in the week might approach the issue by saying:

I've noticed that we're often impatient with each other on Monday mornings. I think I'm especially tense because I dread the weekly staff meeting. I'd like to spend some time Sunday preparing for that meeting. I think that will make me less stressed, and maybe that will help us start the week together on a positive note. Is there something we can do to make Monday mornings less stressful for you?

As this scenario suggests, being respectfully assertive usually means talking about an issue when you have cool heads rather than in the heat of the moment and abstaining from accusations and assumptions. The extra effort is usually worth it. Couples who approach conflict in a patient and loving way often feel closer to each other as a result.³⁸

Passive Aggression

Passive aggression is far more subtle and sometimes even more damaging than direct aggression. **Passive aggression** occurs when a communicator expresses hostility in an ambiguous way. For example, someone may pretend to agree with something ("I'll be on time from now on.") with no intention of actually doing so.

Other ways to express aggression indirectly include trying to make the other person feel guilty ("I really should be studying, but I'll give you a ride.") and making hurtful jests and then claiming innocence ("Where's

your sense of humor?”).

What some researchers call “trivial tyrannies” (seemingly small but hurtful actions) can also be used as weapons. For example, you might “forget” to clean the kitchen or you might tease someone about a sensitive issue. Another indirect way to punish someone is to withhold courtesy, affection, or humor.

Direct Aggression

Whereas nonassertive people avoid conflicts, communicators who use direct aggression embrace confrontation. A **directly aggressive message** confronts the other person in a way that attacks their position, or even their dignity. Many directly aggressive responses are easy to spot:

“*You don’t know what you’re talking about.*”

“*That was a stupid thing to do.*”

“*What’s the matter with you?*”

Other forms of direct aggression rely more on nonverbal cues. It’s easy to imagine a hostile way of expressing statements such as:

“*What’s wrong now?*”

“*I need some peace and quiet.*”

Aggressive messages between romantic partners are most common when one feels that they are contributing more than the other.³⁹ If you are generally tempted to make aggressive statements, see what happens if you bring up an issue in a calm manner instead. Verbal aggressiveness may get you what you want in the short run, but it generally makes a relationship worse over time.⁴⁰

In some cases, aggressive behavior crosses the line. Following is experts’ advice on what to do if a partner is abusive. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

3 Ways to Protect Yourself from an Abusive Partner

There are no magic communication formulas to prevent or stop the behavior of an abusive person, but there are steps you can take to protect yourself.

1. Don’t keep abuse a secret.

Abusers often isolate their partners from friends and loved ones because it’s easier to control them if they don’t have a strong network of people who know what’s going on.⁴¹ Avoid this trap by keeping close contact and open communication with people you trust. At the very least, tell someone what’s happening and ask that person to assist you in getting help.

2. Have a plan for defense.

Program emergency numbers into your phone, and keep it handy. Agree on code words you can mention to trusted people in a conversation, message, or call to let them know you need help without calling attention to your alert. Also avoid sharing passwords that will allow the abuser to access your communication with others or learn your whereabouts.

3. Don’t blame yourself.

Abused people often believe they are at fault and that they “had it coming.” Remember—*no one deserves abuse*. Abusive people make the choice to be abusive. No one makes them behave that way or prevents them from making that choice.⁴² Many resources are available to help you. One source of information and assistance is www.healthyplace.com/abuse.

Conflict Patterns That Destroy Relationships

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 9.7:** Describe the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” in terms of conflict management.

After four decades of studying how couples communicate, psychologist John Gottman can predict with a rate of accuracy approaching 90% whether or not a couple is headed toward a breakup.⁴³ He has identified types of abusive communication that he terms the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” because their continued presence signals that a relationship faces decline and doom.⁴⁴

Criticism

Whereas complaints focus on the other person’s behavior (“I wish you would let me know when you’re running late.”), **criticism** is all-encompassing and accusatory (“The only person you think about is yourself.”).

Contempt

Contempt reflects a sense of disapproval and disdain for the other person (“You’re disgusting.”). Expressions of contempt may be explicit, but more commonly they are expressed nonverbally by facial nonverbal cues such as sneering and eye rolling and through a condescending or mocking tone of voice. Gottman flatly states that the single best single predictor of divorce is contempt.⁴⁵

Defensiveness

When faced with criticism and contempt, it’s not surprising that partners react with **defensiveness**—protecting their self-worth by counterattacking (“You’re calling me a careless driver? You’re the one who got a speeding ticket last month.”) Once a pattern of attack-and-defend develops, communication often turns into the kind of escalatory and avoidance spirals described in [Chapter 7](#).



Stonewalling

Arguably one of the more harmful disconfirming messages is **stonewalling**—a form of avoidance in which one person refuses to engage with the other. Giving one's partner the silent treatment conveys the message that “you aren't even worth my time.” Disengagement may seem like a better alternative than arguing, but taken to extremes, it creates distance between partners and can convey that the stonewaller doesn't value the other partner or the relationship. ●



PAUSE TO REFLECT

How Do You Handle Conflict as a Couple?

1. If your partner says something that hurts your feelings, how are you likely to respond? _____

2. How might you react if your partner is upset with you and you don't think you have done anything wrong? _____

3. Do your answers suggest that you are ever guilty of criticism, contempt, defensiveness, or stonewalling? If so, how might you behave differently to avoid damaging your relationship? _____

Applying Win–Win Problem Solving

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 9.8: Identify the steps and communication skills involved in win–win problem solving.

Win–win problem solving is typically the most satisfying and relationship-friendly means of resolving conflict. In **win–win problem solving**, the goal is a solution that satisfies both partners’ needs. Neither tries to win at the other’s expense. Win–win problem solving is a highly structured activity. However, after you have practiced the approach a number of times, it will become more comfortable. You’ll then be able to approach conflicts without the need to follow the exact step-by-step approach presented here.

Identify your problem and unmet needs.

Before you speak out, it’s important to realize that the problem that is causing conflict is *yours*. Perhaps you are bothered by your partner’s tendency to yell at other drivers. Because *you* are the person who is dissatisfied, the problem is yours. Realizing this will make a big difference when the time comes to approach your partner. Instead of feeling and acting in an evaluative way, you’ll be more likely to share your problem in a descriptive way, which will not only be more accurate but also will reduce the chance of a defensive reaction.

The next step is to identify the factors that leave you feeling dissatisfied. Perhaps you’re afraid your partner will offend someone you know. Maybe you’re worried that excess emotion will lead to unsafe driving. Or it might be that you would love to use the car ride as an opportunity for conversation.

The ability to identify your real needs plays a key role in solving interpersonal problems. For now, the point to remember is that before you voice your problem to your partner, you ought to be clear about which of your needs aren’t being met.

Make a date.

Unconstructive fights often start because the initiator confronts a partner who isn’t ready. There are many times when a person isn’t in the right frame of mind to face a conflict—perhaps owing to fatigue, being busy with something else, or not feeling well. At times like these, it’s unfair to insist on having a difficult discussion without notice and expect to get the other person’s full attention.

After you have a clear idea of the problem, approach your partner with a request to try to solve it. For example: “Something’s been bothering me. Can we talk about it?” If the answer is “yes,” then you’re ready to go further. If it isn’t the right time for a serious discussion, find a time that’s agreeable to both of you.



Describe your problem and needs.

Your partner can't possibly meet your needs without knowing why you're upset and what you want. It's up to you to describe your problem as specifically as possible. When you do, use terms that aren't overly vague or abstract. You might say, "I look forward to riding home from work together because I like the chance to hear about your day and make plans for later [need/desire]. I know you get frustrated with city traffic [empathy], but it bothers me when you yell at other drivers instead of talking with me [problem]."

Check your partner's understanding.

After you've shared your problem and described what you need, it's important to make sure that your partner has understood what you've said. As you may remember from the discussion of listening in [Chapter 5](#), there's a good chance—especially in a stressful conflict situation—of your words being misinterpreted.

Solicit your partner's needs.

After you've made your position clear, it's time to find out what your partner needs in order to feel satisfied about this issue. There are two reasons why it's important to discover your partner's needs. First, it's fair. After all, the other person has just as much right as you to feel satisfied, and if you expect help in meeting your needs, then it's reasonable that you behave in the same way. Second, just as an unhappy partner will make it hard for you to become satisfied, a happy one will be more likely to cooperate in letting you reach your goals. Thus, it's in your own self-interest to discover and meet your partner's needs.

You can learn about your partner's needs simply by asking about them: "Now that you know what I want and why, tell me what you need from me." After your partner begins to talk, your job is to use the listening skills discussed in [Chapter 5](#) to make sure you understand.

Check your understanding of your partner's needs.

Paraphrase or ask questions about your partner's needs until you're certain you understand them. The surest way to accomplish this is to use the paraphrasing skills you learned in [Chapter 5](#). Perhaps the conversation reveals that your partner is frustrated because of work, or because they do all the driving, or because they are hungry.

Negotiate a solution.

Now that you and your partner understand each other's needs, the goal becomes finding a way to meet them. This is done by first trying to develop as many potential solutions as possible. The key word here is *quantity*. Write down every thought that comes up, no matter how unworkable it seems at first.

Next, evaluate the alternative solutions. This is the time to talk about which solutions will work and which won't. If a solution is going to work, you both have to support it.

Then, after looking at all the alternatives, pick the one that looks best to both of you. Your decision doesn't have to be final, but it should seem potentially successful. It's important to be sure you both understand the solution and are willing to try it out.

To go back to the driving example, perhaps you decide to meet for dinner and then drive home once the rush-hour traffic has subsided. Or, perhaps you decide to alternate who drives each day. The point is that the solution should meet both of your needs.



Follow up on the solution.

You can't be sure the solution will work until you try it out. After you've tested it for a while, it's a good idea to set aside some time to talk over how things are going. You may find that you need to make some changes or even rethink the whole problem. The idea is to keep on top of the problem and to keep using creativity to solve it.

All of this being said, win-win solutions aren't always possible. There will be times when even the best-intentioned people simply won't be able to find a way of meeting all their needs. When that happens, compromising may be the most sensible approach. You will even encounter instances when pushing for your own solution is reasonable, and times when it makes sense to willingly accept the loser's role. But even when that happens, the steps we've discussed haven't been wasted. A genuine desire to learn what the other person wants and to try to satisfy those desires will build a climate of goodwill that can help you improve your relationship. ●

COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS

Communicating with Romantic Partners



Relational Stages

Romantic relationships tend to progress through stages of development, and sometimes, decline.

Toward Greater Intimacy

- Initiating
- Experimenting
- Intensifying
- Integrating
- Bonding

Toward Greater Distance

- Differentiating
- Circumscribing
- Stagnating
- Avoiding
- Terminating

Communication and Romantic Potential

- Communication differs in each stage of a relationship.
- Partners can shape relational trajectories.
- Relational development involves risk and vulnerability.

Gender and Intimacy

- Women tend to share their feelings more through words and men more through actions.
- Women often regard sex as a way to express intimacy, whereas men are more likely to think that it creates intimacy.
- Same-sex couples often have similar shared expectations and communication styles.



Love Languages

- Affirming words
- Quality time
- Gifts
- Physical touch
- Acts of service



Dialectical Perspective

Relationships involve continual negotiation between:

- Openness and privacy
- Connection and autonomy
- Predictability and novelty

Strategies for Managing Dialectical Continua

- Denial
- Disorientation
- Selection
- Alternation
- Polarization
- Segmentation
- Moderation
- Reframing
- Reaffirmation

Types of Deception

- Altruistic lies
- Evasions
- Self-serving lies

Ways to Express Conflict

- Nonassertiveness

- Indirect communication
- Assertiveness
- Passive aggression
- Direct aggression



Protect Yourself from Abuse

- Don't keep it secret.
- Have a plan for defense.
- Don't blame yourself.

Hurtful Conflict Patterns

- Criticism
- Defensiveness
- Contempt
- Stonewalling



Steps in Win–Win Problem Solving

- Identify the problem and unmet needs.
- Make a date.
- Describe your problem and needs.
- Check your partner's understanding.
- Solicit your partner's needs.
- Check your understanding.
- Negotiate a solution.
- Follow up on the solution.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Show Your Communication Know-How

9.1: Distinguish between stages of coming together, staying together, and coming apart as a romantic couple.

Think of a romantic relationship you or someone you know has experienced. What stages did you or they experience?

KEY TERMS: intimacy, developmental model, relational maintenance

9.2: Describe options for conveying intimate messages that tend to differ by gender.

Are you more likely to show people you love them using words or kind deeds? How might gender-related expectations influence how you and others interpret your behavior?



9.3: Elaborate on the difference between popular love languages.

Which of the love languages described in this chapter resonate most strongly with you? How might you identify the love languages of someone important to you and express yourself that way?



9.4: Explain dialectical continua and strategies for managing them.

Draw a line and label one end “connection” and the other end “autonomy.” Think of a particular relationship (it needn’t be romantic) and indicate where you are most comfortable on that continuum and where your relational partner is most comfortable. Do the same with the continua of openness and privacy and novelty and predictability. How do you negotiate your differences?

KEY TERM: dialectical model

9.5: Analyze the functions served by altruistic lies, evasions, and self-serving lies.

Consider a self-serving lie you have communicated in a close relationship. Looking back, would you do anything differently?

KEY TERMS: altruistic lies, equivocation, hinting, omission, fabrication

9.6: Compare and contrast methods of dealing with interpersonal conflict.

Are you more likely to talk about your feelings directly or indirectly? Are you satisfied with this approach?

KEY TERMS: nonassertion, indirect communication, assertive message, passive aggression, directly aggressive message

9.7: Describe the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” in terms of conflict management.

Have you ever been guilty of contempt or stonewalling? If so, what effect did it have on the relationship?

KEY TERMS: criticism, contempt, defensiveness, stonewalling



9.8: Identify the steps and communication skills involved in win-win problem solving.

Describe an instance of successful conflict management. Which of the steps in win-win problem solving did you use?

KEY TERM: win-win problem solving

10 Communicating to Land a Job

Building a Network

What are the best ways to build a career-related network?

How can you ensure that your online presence impresses employers?

Preparing for Job Interviews

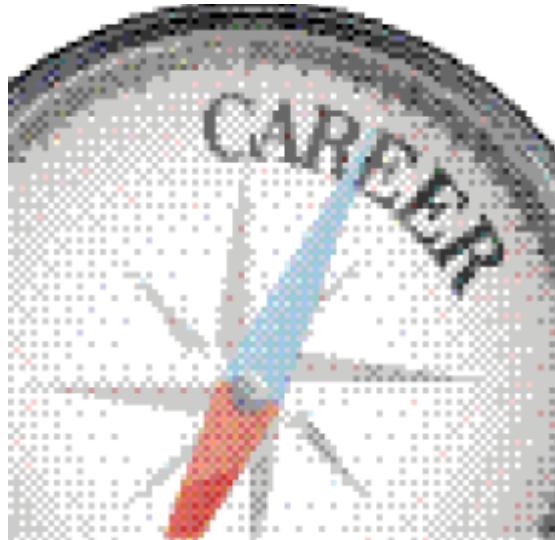
How can you prepare in advance to make a good impression?

Which interview questions are illegal and how might you respond to them?

Participating in Interviews

What communication strategies might you use during an interview?

When interviewing via phone or videoconference, what strategies work best?



Networking Strategies to Find a Job

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 10.1: Engage in networking behaviors conducive to finding a job that matches your skills.

Finding and landing a job you love starts with **networking**—the process of meeting people and maintaining relationships that result in information and advice that might enhance your career.

Courtney Baxter (shown at right in photo) was in a state of what she calls “post-graduation anxiety.” She was eager to land a job relevant to her degree in gender and international studies, but she didn’t know where to begin. On a whim, she emailed an author, Courtney E. Martin (at left in photo), whose work about women’s issues she had long admired. To her surprise, Martin wrote back and the two met in person soon after. Baxter arrived with questions about getting into the field. Martin was so impressed that she arranged for Baxter to meet a colleague at the OpEd Project, who hired Baxter as a personal assistant. It’s an entry-level position, but Baxter is in the door and thrilled to be there. “I feel lucky that, at 23, I look forward to work every day,”¹ Baxter says of her big break.¹

As this story shows, in today’s competitive workplace, good jobs go to proactive communicators who locate opportunities and develop relationships with people in the industry. A whopping 3 out of 4 people in the workplace today obtained their jobs with the help of personal networking.²

A little reflection explains why networking is such a valuable approach. If you’re looking for a job, personal contacts can tell you about positions that may not even be public yet. After you’ve identified a position you want, people you know can put in a good word for you and give you tips on how to pursue the position most effectively.

Networking will only work, of course, if you are the kind of person others recognize as being worth endorsing. If you are willing to work hard and you have the necessary skills to do a job (or are willing to learn those skills), here are several steps you can take to create and benefit from a personal network.



View everyone as a networking prospect.

Besides the people in your everyday networks, you have access to a wealth of other contacts. These include former coworkers, schoolmates, alumni from your university, teammates, people you’ve met at social and

community events, professional people whose services you have used . . . the list can be quite long and diverse.

Network online.

Numerous websites offer professional networking opportunities. A few of the most popular are LinkedIn, BranchOut, and Plaxo. It may be useful to join at least a few of these and set up a personal profile. Most offer basic memberships for free. Your online profile might include a worthy project you have been part of, volunteer work, awards, accomplishments, and interests. Above all, consider how your information will look to viewers. You may be proud of your membership in the National Rifle Association, Planned Parenthood, or a religious or political group, but a prospective employer might not find your affiliations so admirable. (We'll talk more about managing your online identity in a moment.)

Seek referrals.

Each contact in your immediate network has connections to other people who might be able to help you. Social scientists have verified that the “six degrees of separation” hypothesis is true. The average number of links separating any two people in the world is indeed only half a dozen.³ You can take advantage of this by seeking people removed from your personal network by just one degree: If you ask 10 people for referrals, and each of them knows five others who might be able to help, you have the potential of support from 50 people.

Conduct informational interviews.

Courtney Baxter, whose story begins this section, had the courage to reach out and ask for an **informational interview**—a structured meeting in which someone seeks answers from a source whose knowledge can help enhance their success. Informational interviews are usually conducted in person, but you might also use the phone or an online meeting format. A good informational interview will help you achieve the following goals:

- Conduct research that helps you understand a job, organization, or field.
- Make a positive impression on the person you are interviewing.
- Gain referrals to other people who might be willing to help you.

Unless you know a prospective interviewer well, it's usually best to send your request for a meeting in a letter or email. Introduce yourself, explain your reason for wanting the interview, and emphasize that you're seeking information, not asking for a job. Request a specific amount of time for a meeting. (The shorter the better in terms of your odds of being seen.)

Prepare questions ahead of time that focus on career-related information, such as “What are the three fastest-growing companies in this field?” and “What do you think about the risks of working for a start-up company?” Most of the time, the best way to get information is to ask straightforward questions, but there are times when it's more gracious to be indirect. For instance, instead of asking “What's your salary?” you might say, “What kind of salary might I expect if I ever held a position like yours?” Listen closely and ask follow-up questions. If the primary question is “Who are the best people to ask about careers in the financial planning field?”, a secondary question might be, “What do you think is the best way for me to go about meeting them?”

Show appreciation.

Don't forget to thank the people in your network. Beyond a sincere thank you, take the time to maintain relationships and let your contacts know when their help has made a difference in your career advancement. Besides being the right thing to do, your thoughtfulness will distinguish you as the kind of person worth hiring or helping again in the future.●

Strategies to Build a Career-Enhancing Network

5

1. Take part in volunteerism and service learning.

In addition to gaining experience you may use in a career, working in the community is likely to bring you in contact with civic and business leaders.

2. Attend lectures, forums, and networking events.

Make it your goal to speak personally with several people whose interests are similar to yours. Although it's natural to feel a little nervous and out of place at first, networking coach Darrah Brustein says, "Be yourself . . . The people you connect with when you are authentic are the ones you'll want to stay in touch with."⁴ Afterward, send a personal note thanking the presenters and others you meet at the event.

3. Keep up with local news.

There's no better way to know who is involved and what the latest issues are. This can help you identify potential mentors and speak knowledgeably about current topics when you meet them.

4. Join career-related organizations.

Many professional groups offer discounted membership fees for students. Take advantage of the opportunity to meet people in the career field you hope to join. And don't just sit in the back of the room. Volunteer to serve on committees or hold an office. Your hard work won't go unnoticed.

5. Use online resources.

In addition to cultivating a professional presence of your own online, use online resources to identify people who can guide you. Search LinkedIn for people who have something in common with you—perhaps you attended the same school or majored in the same discipline. Common interests can be great conversation starters.

Managing Your Online Identity



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 10.2: Cultivate an online identity that appeals to prospective employers.

"Like it or not, your social media accounts are your brand," says one savvy media user.⁵ Just as companies have brands that tell the public what makes them unique, your online identity has the power to shape how others see you. A digital presence is critical in today's job market, but it's important to get it right. According to the *New York Times*, 70% of U.S. recruiters have rejected job candidates because of personal information online.⁶ Here are experts' tips for creating an online presence that works in your favor.



Take stock of strengths and goals.

Creating an online identity is not about fooling anyone—it's about portraying yourself in an authentic and favorable way. Take stock of your interests, talents, and goals. Make sure that people who encounter you online have a clear sense of those.⁷

Build a professional identity.

Make sure your online photos and information create a sense that you are ready for the career of your choice. For example, Joseph Cadman, hoping to land a job in Washington, DC, posted a LinkedIn profile of himself in a suit and tie in front of the Capitol Building.⁸ Also, choose an email address and screen name that are dignified. Silly or overly personal names may give the wrong message right off the bat.⁹

Avoid embarrassing posts.

When employers review candidates' online presence, the most common deal breakers are statements or video posts that are disrespectful toward others, show evidence of drinking or partying, or criticize a current or former employer.¹⁰ Even if an off-color meme seems like a harmless joke, do you want it to represent you? Think carefully about everything you post.

Embody professionalism online.

At least 7 out of 10 employers have ruled candidates out based on their online presence.

Monitor your online presence.

Even information you think is private may be accessible online. Google yourself and see what comes up. Then expand your search to include other search engines such as Yahoo!, Bing, Baidu, DuckDuckGo, and Ask.com because no individual search index will find everything on the Internet. Also, double-check the privacy settings on your social media accounts and sign up for Google Alerts to receive a notification when your name pops up online. (While you're at it, create Google Alerts for potential employers to stay current about them.)

Do damage control.

Remove incorrect, unfair, and potentially damaging information about yourself online, if you can. If you can't remove it, consider a service such as ReputationDefender.com that will monitor your online identity and ask the managers of offending websites to remove unflattering information. Of course, a far less expensive and burdensome approach is to minimize the chances of reputation damage by being on your best public behavior.

Beware mistaken identities.

You might find that unfavorable information pops up about someone with the same name as you. One job seeker Googled herself out of curiosity, only to find that the first hit was the Facebook page of a person with the same name whose personal profile was loaded with immature comments. To minimize the chances of mistaken identity, you might distinguish yourself by including your middle name or middle initial on your résumé and all other information you post where online seekers might find it.

Don't be scared off.

With all these warnings, you may be tempted to avoid having a digital footprint at all. That's probably not a good idea. The latest numbers show that 7 in 10 employers check out candidates online, and nearly 6 in 10 are reluctant to interview people who have no online presence.¹¹ The odds are that cultivating an impressive and honest online identity will work in your favor.

Don't stop when you get hired.

Your social media conduct remains important once you land a job. Be sure not to post information that disparages your employer or clients, reveals confidential information, or makes you (hence your employer) look bad.¹² Some people are so accustomed to posting on social media that they forget to think it through first. "People are looking," cautions a hiring manager.¹³ ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

5 Steps to Follow When Applying for a Job

Once you have identified an interesting position, consider whether you are right for the job and vice versa. If it doesn't seem like the relationship will be mutually beneficial, keep looking. But if it seems like a good match, establish yourself as an interested and qualified candidate. Here are some strategies that should serve you well.

1. Create a résumé.

A good résumé provides a snapshot of your professional strengths and achievements. You might use the sample in [Figure 10.3 \(page 154\)](#) as a content guide, but keep in mind that there are different formats for different purposes. Type "create résumé" into your favorite search engine to see various options. Since some employers keep applications on file for the future, be sure to include a permanent email address.

2. Write a cover letter.

As one expert put it, a cover letter is "an introduction, a sales pitch, and a proposal for further action all in one."¹⁴ Write a letter that provides a brief summary of your interests and experience. The sample cover letter in [Figure 10.2 \(page 153\)](#) may be useful.

- If possible, direct your letter to a specific person. (Be sure to get the spelling and title correct.)
- Indicate the position you are applying for and introduce yourself.
- Briefly describe your accomplishments as they apply to qualities and duties listed in the job posting.

- Demonstrate your knowledge of the company and your interest in the job.
- State the next step you hope to take—usually a request for an interview.
- Conclude by expressing appreciation to the reader for considering you.

3. Edit thoroughly.

Many employers put cover letters and résumés that include typos or grammatical errors in the “no” stack. If possible, have a staff member at your school’s career center critique your materials. The final documents should be clear, honest, succinct, and free of errors.

4. Follow application instructions.

There are stories of people who do something so unusual that it catches a hiring manager’s attention, but in most cases, you will be rejected if you don’t follow instructions. If the posting asks you to submit your materials in PDF format, don’t send them in Word. If it says “no phone calls,” then don’t call. As one recruiter puts it: “If you can’t follow clear, simple directions, how can I trust that you will be able to give great attention to the details of your job?”¹⁵

5. Keep organized records of your communications.

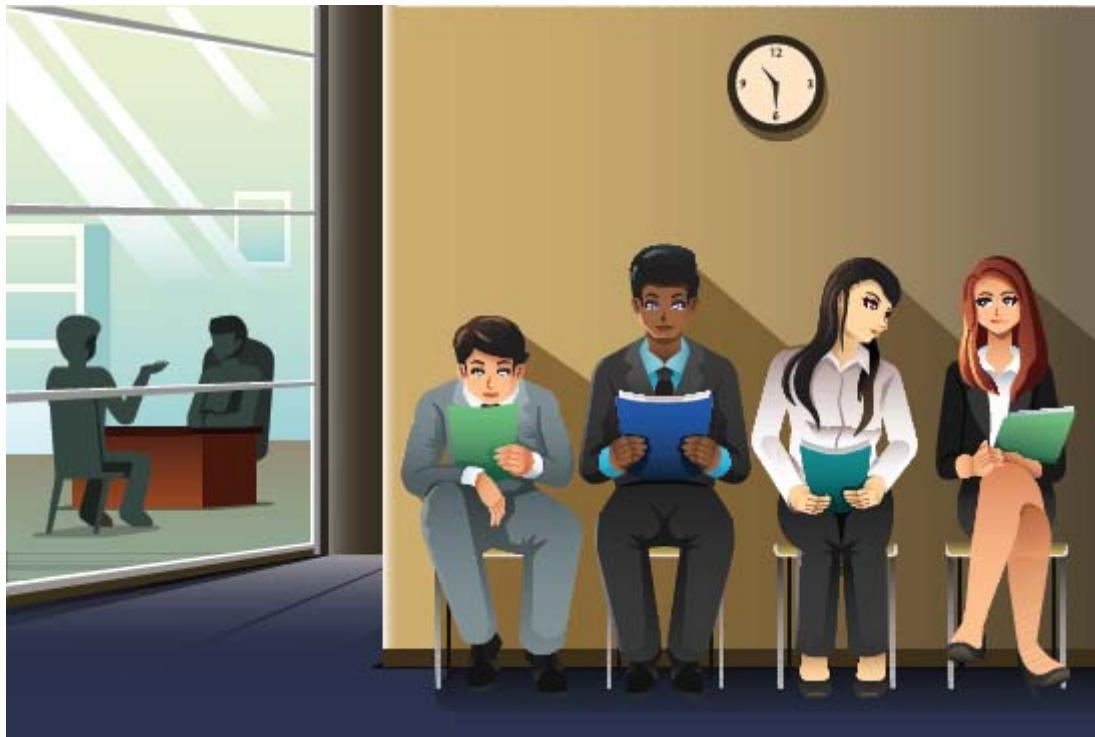
Keep a record of everyone you have communicated with (along with their contact information), when the message was sent or received, and what the exchange was about.

Preparing for a Job Interview



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 10.3: Prepare in advance to make a good impression during employment interviews.

A successful job interview can be a life-changing experience. It’s worth preparing for carefully. In this section, we consider experts’ suggestions for engaging in a **selection interview**, which is a discussion during which you are being considered for an opportunity. We focus on employment interviews here, but the same principles apply if you are interviewed for a promotion, an award, a scholarship, and so on.



Do your research.

Displaying your knowledge of an organization in an interview is a terrific way to show potential employers that you are a motivated and savvy person. In some organizations, failure to demonstrate familiarity with the organization or job is an automatic disqualifier. Along with what you've learned from informational interviews, online research can reveal information about a prospective employer and the field in which you want to work. In your search engine, type the name of the organization and/or key people who work there. Use your research to prepare questions to ask during the interview such as:

What would you like to achieve in the next 5 years as a company [or a department or division]?

What do you consider your greatest challenges and opportunities in the year ahead?

Prepare for likely questions.

Regardless of the organization and job, most interviewers have similar concerns, which they explore with similar questions. Some also ask nontraditional questions to see how well candidates think on their feet, how they handle problems, and how creative they are.¹⁶ Some examples include:

If you could have any superpower, what would it be?

Name five uses for a stapler with no staples in it.

If you were a sweater, what kind would you be?

If asked one of these, it's important to maintain your composure and use your answers to demonstrate qualifications you would like to showcase. For example, one response to the sweater question might be, "I would be stylish and classy, but not flashy, so I would have enduring value as trends change. I would give great value for the price . . . not too cheap, but not too expensive. I would be flexible, so I could be used in many different situations." Notice that the attributes of the sweater would make the candidate a good person to hire. *Tips & Reminders* below and the Q&A on the next page suggest strategies for responding to a range of interview questions.

Dress for success.

Interviewers tend to form their opinions about applicants within the first four minutes of conversation,¹⁷ so it makes sense to look your best. No matter what the job or company: Be well groomed and neatly dressed, and don't overdo it with makeup or accessories. The proper style of clothing can vary from one type of job or organization to another, so do some research to find out what the standards are for appropriate attire. What would be appropriate for a job as, say, a bank teller would be different than for a wildlife manager or a software engineer. One rule of thumb is to dress the way you would on the first day of work if you were hired. If in doubt, especially for a desk job, dress formally and conservatively.

Bring along copies of your résumé and portfolio.

Arrive a few minutes before the appointed time with materials that will help the interviewer learn more about why you are ready, willing, and able to do the job. Bring extra copies of your résumé. If appropriate, also bring copies of your past work, such as reports you have helped prepare, performance reviews by former employers, drawings or designs you have created for work or school, letters of recommendation, and so on. Besides showcasing your qualifications, items such as these demonstrate that you know how to sell yourself. Also bring the names, addresses, and phone numbers of any references you haven't listed in your résumé.

You may be asked or allowed to make a digital presentation about yourself as well. Tips for doing so appear on page 148.

Know when and where to go.

Don't sabotage an interview before it begins by showing up late. Be sure you are clear about the time and location of the meeting. Research parking or public transportation to be sure you aren't held up by delays. There's virtually no good excuse for showing up late. Even if the interviewer is forgiving, a bad start is likely to shake your confidence and impair your performance.

Reframe anxiety as enthusiasm.

Feeling anxious about a job interview is natural. Managing your feelings during an interview calls for many of the same strategies as managing your apprehension while giving a speech (see Chapter 13). Realize that a certain amount of anxiety is understandable. If you can reframe those feelings as *excitement* about the prospect of landing a great job, the energy can work to your advantage. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

4 Ways to Answer “What Is Your Greatest Weakness?”

It's a common question in job interviews and one of the toughest to answer. Whatever answer you give, try to show how your awareness of your flaws makes you a desirable person to hire. Here are four ways you might respond, but keep in mind that there are endless possibilities. Be sure your answers reflect your own experiences.

1. Discuss a weakness that can also be viewed as a strength.

You might say, “When I'm involved in a big project I tend to work too hard, and I can wear myself out.”

2. Discuss a weakness that is unrelated to the job and then relate it to the job.

That might sound something like this: “I'm not very interested in accounting. I'd much rather work with people selling a product I believe in.”

3. Discuss a weakness the interviewer already knows about.

"I don't have a lot of experience in multimedia design at this early stage of my career. But based on my experience in computer programming and my internship in graphic arts, I know that I can learn quickly."

4. Discuss a weakness you have been working to remedy.

"I know being bilingual is important for this job. That's why I've enrolled in a Spanish course."

Responding to Common Interview Questions

Following are some of the most challenging interview questions asked by potential employers. Review experts' tips for answering them effectively, and then brainstorm how you might respond based on your own experiences and career goals.

Q Tell me something about yourself.

A This broad opening question gives you a chance to describe what qualities you possess that can help the employer (e.g., enthusiastic, motivated, entrepreneurial). Keep your answer focused on the job for which you're applying. This isn't a time to talk about irrelevant hobbies, your family, or pet peeves.

Q What makes you think you're qualified to work for this company?

A This question may sound like an attack, but it's really another way of asking, "How can you help us?" It gives you a chance to show how your skills and interests fit with the company's goals. Prepare in advance by making a table with three columns: in one, list your main qualifications; in the next, list specific examples of each qualification; and in the last, explain how these qualifications would benefit the employer.

Q What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?

A Your accomplishments might demonstrate creativity, perseverance, self-control, dependability, or other desirable attributes. The accomplishments you describe should demonstrate qualities that would help you succeed in the job.

Q Why do you want to work for us?

A This offers you the chance to demonstrate your knowledge of the organization and to show how your talents fit with the organization's goals. Employers are impressed by candidates who have done their homework about the organization.



Q Where do you see yourself in five years?

A This often-posed query is really asking: “How ambitious are you?” “How well do your plans fit with this company’s goals?” and “How realistic are you?” Answer in a way that shows you understand the industry and the company. Share your ambitions, but also make it clear that you’re willing to work hard to achieve them.

Q What major challenges have you faced, and how have you dealt with them?

A What (admirable) qualities did you demonstrate as you grappled with the problems you have chosen to describe? Perseverance? Calmness? Creativity? The specific problems aren’t as important as the way you responded to them. You may even choose to describe a problem you didn’t handle well to show how the lessons you learned can help you in the future.

Q What are your greatest strengths?

A The “strength” question offers another chance to sell yourself. Link what you say to the job. “I’m a pretty good athlete” isn’t persuasive in itself, but you might talk about being a team player, having competitive drive, or having the ability to work hard and not quit in the face of adversity.

Q What are your salary requirements?

A Name a salary range and back up your numbers with reasons you think you would be a valuable member of the team. Do advance research to determine the prevailing compensation rates in the industry and in your region. Shooting too high can knock you out of consideration, whereas shooting too low can cost you dearly.

TIPS & REMINDERS

7

Strategies for Creating a Presentation About Yourself

It is becoming increasingly popular for employers to ask (or allow) candidates to present a PowerPoint, Prezi, or other type of digital presentation about themselves during employment interviews. Ask in advance if this would be welcome, and if so, follow this advice to present yourself most favorably:^{18,19}

1. Be audience oriented.

Ask who will be present at the interview and what information is most important to them.

2. Consider technology needs.

Inquire in advance if a projector (and speakers, if necessary) are available in the interview room, or if you might bring your own. Many university media centers or libraries will allow you to check out portable projectors. If the interview will occur via video chat, investigate how you might best share your presentation that way.

3. Craft a well-organized presentation.

Read [Chapters 12 through 14](#) for tips on creating an impressive presentation, such as beginning with an attention getter, developing clear points, presenting strong evidence, and ending memorably.

4. Focus on relevant accomplishments.

The bottom line is how well your talents and accomplishments fit the needs of the organization. Without embellishing, demonstrate with clear evidence how you embody desired qualifications.

5. Keep visuals simple.

Keep wording to a minimum and use photos, graphics, and video (if applicable) that are professional and simple. If the position involves projects, you might post a photo of you engaged in a professional-quality project overlaid with the words “Project Management Experience.” Use your spoken words to convey the details.

6. Make it brief.

Your presentation should occupy a small fraction of the time available for the interview. Avoid giving the impression that you are a stage hog. Instead, present yourself clearly and concisely, with professionalism and enthusiasm.

7. Practice!

Rehearse many times in advance, using a mirror and/or recording device to see how you sound and look to others. Practicing will allow you to speak without notes in a conversational tone during the actual presentation.



PAUSE TO REFLECT

What Do You Have to Offer?

1. Find a posting for a job you would like to have one day. What talents and experiences make you a good candidate for the position? _____

2. What can you do to increase your chances of being hired and then succeeding in the position? _____

3. What would potential employers learn about you if they looked you up online? What might worry them? What might impress them? _____

Interviewing and the Law

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 10.4:** Develop a strategy for responding to illegal interview questions.

When the interviewer asked, “Do you have children?” Monika was caught off guard. She believed the question was an innocent attempt at small talk. The interviewer may not have realized that it’s illegal to ask that. All the same, Monika worried that her answer might jeopardize her chances of getting the job.



Know the law.

Going into an interview, it's important to understand the law and your options as an applicant. Most legislation governing what topics can be covered in job interviews boils down to two simple principles.

The first is employers cannot ask questions about a person's race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, national origin, or age. It is illegal to judge a candidate based on these qualities, and even asking about them innocently may suggest discrimination.

The second principle is that employers' questions must be related to what the U.S. government's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) calls *bona fide occupational qualifications*. In other words, prospective employers may only ask about topics that are related to the job at hand. Examples of illegal questions include those that ask about any unrelated physical impairments you may have, whether you have children, your religion, or your political affiliation.

Prepare in advance.

Despite the law, there's a good chance that interviewers will ask illegal questions. They are probably uninformed rather than malicious. Still, it's a good idea to prepare in advance for how you might respond. Here are several options:

- *Answer without objecting.* Even though a question is unlawful, you might choose to answer if you believe the interviewer is unaware of what is and isn't appropriate. If you do answer, you might also address likely concerns behind the question, as in, "I have a three-year-old daughter. She's been in day care since she turned two, and I've always been able to meet my job responsibilities." In some cases, choosing not to answer may jeopardize your chances of getting hired. Recognize, though, that answering one unlawful question could open the door for other illegal queries.
- *Seek an explanation.* Ask the interviewer firmly and respectfully to explain why this question is related to the job: "I'm not sure how my marital status relates to my ability to do this job."
- *Redirect.* Shift the focus of the interview away from a question that isn't job related and toward the requirements of the position itself: "What you've said so far suggests that age is not as important for this position as knowledge of accounting. Can you tell me more about the kinds of accounting that are part of this job?"
- *Refuse.* Explain politely but firmly that you will not provide the information requested. You might say, "I'd rather not talk about my religion. That's a very private and personal matter for me" or "That question is illegal and not relevant to the job."
- *Withdraw.* End the interview immediately and leave, stating your reasons firmly but professionally: "I'm uncomfortable with these questions about my personal life, and I don't see a good fit between me and this organization. Thank you for your time."

There's no correct way to handle illegal questions. The option you choose will depend on several factors including the likely intent of the interviewer, the nature of the questions, your desire for the job—and finally, your "gut level" of comfort with the whole situation. Knowing your options going in may help you make an effective split-second decision if the need arises. ●

Participating in a Job Interview

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 10.5: Demonstrate effective job interviewing skills.

Once the time comes for your interview, it's your chance to shine. You have prepared well, and now it's time to present yourself in a positive and confident light. Here are some suggestions for doing your best.

Mind your manners.

It's essential to demonstrate proper business etiquette from the moment you arrive for an interview. "You may be riding on the elevator with the head of your interview team," advises one business etiquette expert.²⁰ Turn off your phone before you enter the building, smile at people, put your shoulders back and head up, and don't fiddle with your clothing, hair, or belongings. In short, behave at all times as the sort of engaged, professional, and attentive coworker everyone wants on their team.

When you meet people, look them in the eye, shake hands firmly, and demonstrate an attentive listening posture—shoulders parallel to the speaker's, eyes focused on the speaker, and facial expressions that show you are paying attention. If multiple people are present, be sure to shake hands with all of them and include them in your comments and eye contact throughout the interview.

Follow the interviewer's lead.

Let the interviewer set the tone of the session. Along with topics and verbal style, pay attention to the kinds of nonverbal cues described in [Chapter 6](#): the interviewer's posture, gestures, vocal qualities, and so on. If they are informal, you can loosen up a bit too, but if the interviewer is formal and proper, you should act the same way.

Keep your answers succinct and specific.

It's easy to ramble in an interview, either out of enthusiasm, a desire to show off your knowledge, or nervousness. But in most cases, long answers are not a good idea. Generally, it's better to keep your responses concise, but provide specific examples to support your statements.



Describe relevant challenges, actions, and results.

Most sophisticated employers realize that past performance can be the best predictor of future behavior. For that reason, there is an increasing trend toward **behavioral interviews**—sessions that explore specifics of the

applicant's past performance as it relates to the job at hand. Typical behavioral questions include the following:

Describe a time you needed to work as part of a team.

Tell me about a time when you had to think on your feet to handle a challenging situation.

Describe a time when you were faced with an ethical dilemma, and discuss how you handled it.

When faced with behavioral questions, answer in a way that shows the prospective employer how your past performance demonstrates your ability to handle the job you are now seeking. [Figure 10.1](#) offers some strategies for constructing such answers.

Ask good questions of your own.

Near the end of the interview, you will probably be asked if you have any questions. You might feel as if you already know the important facts about the job, but asking questions based on your knowledge of the industry, the company, and the position can produce more information and show the interviewer that you have done your research and are realistically assessing the fit between yourself and the organization. In addition to generating questions specific to the organization, here are some that often work well:

What are the primary results you would like to see me produce?

What is the biggest challenge or opportunity facing your team now?

How would you describe the management style I could expect from my supervisors?

It's important to note that most experts feel it's bad form to ask about salary or benefits during a selection interview unless you have been offered the position, as many employers may view this as presumptuous or arrogant. You'll have a chance to negotiate after an offer is made.

Follow up after the interview.

After the interview, send a prompt, sincere, and personalized note of thanks. A thoughtful and well-written thank-you message can set you apart from other candidates, whereas failing to send one can eliminate you from the running.

- Express your appreciation for the chance to become acquainted with the interviewer(s) and the organization.
- Explain why you see a good fit between you and the job, highlighting your demonstrated skills.
- Finally, let the interviewer know that the conversation left you excited about the chance of being associated with the organization.

Since employment decisions may be made quickly, send a gracious thank-you email the same day as your interview. One recruiter suggests sending the email after 5 p.m., because "by sending the note after working hours you are intimating that you go the extra mile no matter what."²¹ This is one circumstance in which you might also send a handwritten message of thanks. Reread everything you write carefully several times before sending it, and if possible, have a skilled proofreader review it too. One job seeker ruined her chances of employment by mentioning the "report" (instead of "rapport") that she felt with the interviewer. ●

One format for constructing answers to behavioral questions has three parts.

1. Offer specific examples of a situation and how you handled it.

2. Show the results of your behavior.

3. Draw a connection between the incident you've described and the job you are seeking.

1. Last year I was chairperson of the committee that organized a triathlon that raised money for a friend who had enormous medical bills after being in a car accident. When I took on the job, I had no idea how big it was: logistics, publicity, fund-raising, legal—it was huge. And some of the people who originally offered to help backed out halfway through the planning. At first I tried to do everything myself, but after a while I realized that this was not going to work.

2. So I wound up recruiting more people, and my job turned out to be supporting and encouraging them rather than doing it all.

3. If I'm lucky enough to get this job, that's the approach I'd take as a manager.

1. A very talented teammate in my Marketing class team project kept making somewhat culturally insensitive jokes, even after I told the individual that the comments made me uncomfortable. Changing teams wasn't possible, and I figured complaining to the professor would jeopardize our success on the project. So I did my best to act professionally, even in the face of these jokes.

2. We got the job done, and I received an outstanding evaluation, so I guess my discomfort was worth it.

3. What I learned from this experience is that we don't always get to choose the people we work with, and that sometimes you have to put the job ahead of personal feelings.

FIGURE 10.1 Strategies for Responding to Behavioral Questions

Interviewing by Phone or Video



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 10.6: Effectively prepare for long-distance employment interviews.

In an age when budgets are tight, communication technology is pervasive, and work teams are geographically distributed, it's no surprise that a growing number of interviews are conducted via phone and video conference. All of the guidelines discussed previously apply to mediated interviews. In addition, several additional tips can help you succeed when communication technology is involved.

Present a professional identity.

As mentioned, your screen name should be professional and appropriate, not flirty or edgy. Likewise, pay attention to what you wear if it's a video conference. Even if you're at home, dress professionally for the interview. In addition, think about the background of the room in which you will take part in the interview. A

neutral backdrop without distractions is ideal. Also minimize background noise: A barking dog or noisy roommate won't increase your odds of impressing a potential employer.

Practice with technology in advance.

Tech problems can end a distance interview before it begins.

- Make sure you have the right software and are comfortable using it.
- Confirm that you have a solid Internet connection with enough speed to handle the conversation.
- Double-check your camera, microphone, and speakers to confirm that they function properly.
- Make sure lighting is sufficient to allow the interviewer at the other end to see you clearly.
- If you're using a phone or tablet, set it up on a tripod or other stable device to avoid distracting jiggles.
- If you're using a laptop, make sure the camera captures you head-on rather than at an unflattering angle.



Ensure that you have the right time for the interview.

There is nothing worse than being an hour late. Confirm the time in advance, especially when different time zones are involved (if unsure, search the web for “world clock”). You might say, “I’m looking forward to speaking with you next Tuesday at 8 a.m. Pacific/11 a.m. Eastern.”

Ask in advance how long the interview will last.

“Long distance interviews are sometimes meant to be a brief candidate introduction, not a thorough vetting session,” says one job search coach. She advises, “If this is the case, be prepared to make the most of this brief first impression!”²²

Look at the camera, not at the screen.

Looking at your monitor may feel natural. However, it creates the impression that you’re not making eye contact with the interviewer. Instead, look directly at the camera on the device you’re using for the interview. Also remember to smile.

Conduct a dress rehearsal.

Practicing is the best way to ensure that you are prepared. Recruit a trusted friend (or, even better, someone at your school's career center) to play the role of interviewer. Be sure to practice under the actual circumstances of the interview—remotely and with the same equipment and services you'll use for the real thing. Besides ironing out potential glitches, rehearsals should leave you feeling more confident. ●

January 28, 2019

Rose Magnon
[mailing address]
[permanent phone number]
[permanent email address]

Renée Robinson, Executive Director
International Society for the Advancement of Children
2525 West 37th Avenue
Landersville, MD 55555

Dear Ms. Robinson,

I am interested in the public relations assistant position at the International Society for the Advancement of Children, as advertised in *The Philanthropy Newsletter*. I currently serve as a Communication Coordinator at the University of East Florida, in which position I have gained experience that would allow me to make significant contributions to your organization and its mission.

I believe I would be effective in the public relations assistant position at ISAC for three main reasons.

- I am a skilled communicator who crafts messages carefully and adapts well to different audiences and formats. I currently author several newsletters, each designed to reach a specific stakeholder group. I also curate content on numerous social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. I believe my success in these endeavors would allow me to recruit sponsors for ISAC, coordinate and publicize ISAC events, such as your annual Children's Festival, and share your success stories.
- I have demonstrated success in fundraising. As a volunteer workplace campaign manager, I coordinated fund-raising efforts involving 100 volunteers. The result was a portfolio worth more than \$800,000. I would enjoy the chance to help coordinate and promote your semiannual Education for All event and other fundraisers.
- I am an accomplished speaker who enjoys interacting with audiences of all sizes. In the last few years, I have won a regional Toastmasters Competition and ranked in the Top 3 at state collegiate debate and forensics tournaments. I would like to use this skill at conferences and civic events to share stories about the good work that ISAC does.

I became interested in the International Society for the Advancement of Children while working on an international project with United Way. I particularly admire your efforts to provide education to children in impoverished areas of the world. My career goal is to coordinate collaborative humanitarian efforts, and I would be honored by the chance to help with the good work that you do.

I have attached my résumé, which includes links to my online portfolio and my LinkedIn profile, where you can see samples of my work. I hope you will consider me for the assistant public relations position. I am available for an interview at your convenience. Thanks very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Rose Magnon

FIGURE 10.2 Sample Cover Letter

Rose Magnon

[mailing address]
[permanent email address]
[permanent phone number]
[URLs for online portfolio, LinkedIn page, or other online presence]

PROFILE AND GOALS

I am experienced in using social media to promote mutually beneficial collaborations in the community and with members of other cultures. I hope to pursue a career in the nonprofit sector coordinating humanitarian efforts and securing funding for international partnerships.

EDUCATION

University of East Florida, Oceanview, FL

B.A. in Communication/Public Relations and Minor in Marketing expected in May 2020, 3.86 GPA

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Communication Coordinator, University College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities

2017 to present

- Responsible for internal and external college and departmental communication, including production of semi-annual dean's report, social media management, creation and distribution of monthly newsletter, and university/community lecture series.

Director of Student Recruitment (temporary contract)

January to August 2016

- Led nationwide marketing effort to recruit university accounting majors to take part in a new online employment platform. My efforts helped to attract 50 new students in 8 months.

ACTIVITIES & VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Co-Chair of Cultural Team for United Way Global Resident Fellowship Program October to December 2017

- Developed partnerships with United Way organizations in Western Australia, France, and South Africa. Wrote influential whitepaper detailing lessons learned and recommendations for future programs.

Workplace Campaign Manager

August 2008 to March 2012

- Managed \$830,000 workplace campaign portfolio representing 120+ accounts with 130 volunteers. Secured new sponsorships and developed sponsorship campaign materials.

ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS

- Oceanview Young Professionals, Government Affairs Council, 2016 to 2017
- Florida Public Relations Society of America, 2015 to present
- University of East Florida Forensics and Debate Team, 2016 to present

HONORS & AWARDS

- Top 3 finalist in Florida's State Collegiate Debate and Forensic Competition, 2016 and 2017
- Toastmasters Regional Impromptu Speaking Contest, 1st place 2017
- Dean's and President's List every semester since entering college in 2016

FIGURE 10.3 Sample Résumé

COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS

Communicating to Land a Job



Networking Strategies

- View everyone as a networking prospect.
- Network online.
- Seek referrals.
- Conduct informational interviews.
- Show appreciation.

5 Ways to Build a Career-Enhancing Network

- Take part in volunteerism and service learning.
- Attend lectures, forums, and networking events.
- Keep up with local news.
- Join career-related organizations.
- Use online resources.

Managing Your Online Identity

- Take stock of your strengths and goals.
- Build a professional identity.
- Avoid embarrassing posts.
- Monitor your online presence.
- Do damage control.
- Beware mistaken identities.
- Don't be scared off.
- Don't stop when you get hired.

5 Steps When Applying for a Job

- Create a résumé.

- Write a cover letter.
- Edit thoroughly.
- Follow application instructions.
- Keep organized records of your communications.



Preparing for a Job Interview

- Do your research.
- Prepare for likely questions.
- Dress for success.
- Bring along copies of your résumé and portfolio.
- Know when and where to go.
- Reframe anxiety as enthusiasm.

4 Ways to Answer “What Is Your Greatest Weakness?”

- Discuss a weakness that can also be viewed as a strength.
- Discuss a weakness that is unrelated to the job, and end your answer with a strength that is related to the job.
- Discuss a weakness the interviewer already knows about from your résumé, application, or the interview.
- Discuss a weakness you have been working to remedy.

7 Strategies for Creating a Presentation About Yourself

- Be audience oriented.
- Consider technology needs.
- Craft a well-organized presentation.
- Focus on relevant accomplishments.
- Keep visuals simple.
- Make it brief.
- Practice!

Interviewing and the Law

- It's illegal for potential employers to ask questions about a person's race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, national origin, or age. Instead, they are allowed only to ask about topics that are related to the job at hand.
- If you are asked an illegal question, you may choose to answer, redirect the topic, refuse to answer, or withdraw from the interview.



Participating in a Job Interview

- Mind your manners.
- Follow the interviewer's lead.
- Keep your answers succinct and specific.
- Describe relevant challenges, actions, and results.
- Ask good questions of your own.
- Follow up after the interview.

Interviewing by Phone or Video

- Present a professional identity.
- Practice with technology in advance.
- Ensure that you have the right time for the interview.
- Ask in advance how long the interview will last.
- Look at the camera, not at the screen.
- Conduct a dress rehearsal.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Show Your Communication Know-How



10.1: Engage in networking behaviors conducive to finding a job that matches your skills.

Make a list of several people you might interview to learn more about your dream job, and brainstorm a list of questions you might ask them.

KEY TERMS: [networking](#), [informational interview](#)



10.2: Cultivate an online identity that appeals to prospective employers.

Search for your name on Google, Yahoo!, and several other search engines. Do you feel that the photos and information revealed by the search would impress prospective employers? If not, how might you change your online image to be more professional? If your search leads to information about other people with the same name as you, how might you help prospective employers find the real you? If nothing much shows up about you online, how might you cultivate a greater presence?



10.3: Prepare in advance to make a good impression during employment interviews.

Rehearse how you might respond to the following questions in a job interview: *What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses? Why should we hire you? What have been your greatest challenges and victories? What do you want to be doing in five years?*

KEY TERM: [selection interview](#)

10.4: Develop a strategy for responding to illegal interview questions.

You are in the middle of an interview for a job you really want when the interviewer asks, “Are you married?” You are afraid your answer might hurt your chances of getting the job. How might you respond?

10.5: Demonstrate effective job interviewing skills.

Brainstorm a list of questions you might ask a prospective employer to show that you understand the industry and organization and are a good candidate for your dream job.



 **10.6: Effectively prepare for long-distance employment interviews.**

Imagine you are being interviewed via videoconference for a job you really want. Rehearse how you might respond to the question, “Tell us more about yourself.” Remember to pay attention to your posture, facial expressions, and where your gaze falls. Do you feel well prepared for a video interview? Why or why not?

11

Communicating in the Workplace

Communicating for Success

How can good communication give you an advantage in the career world?

What communication gaffes might derail your career?

Leaders Good and Bad

How can you develop your leadership skills?

What communication strategies might you use if your boss is difficult?

Power and Problem Solving

How can communication help you gain and use power effectively?

What factors make it rewarding to be on some teams and dreadful to be on others?

When is it useful to address problems as a group?

How can you make the most of team meetings?

What's a good process for handling tough problems as a team?



Communication Skills Boost Career Success

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 11.1:** Explain why communication skills are essential to success in the workplace.

“Being an excellent communicator can help you land that first job in your new career and ensure a positive future,” says a career advisor.¹ Employers across the board agree. Communication skills consistently comprise 7 of the 10 qualities employers value most highly. Communication skills even outrank technical knowledge on employers’ wish lists.² And it’s no wonder. Here are five reasons why good communicators flourish in the professional world.

Good communicators work well in teams.

“Life is a team sport,” observes human resource specialist Robert Half.³ This is especially true in the workplace, where effective teamwork is linked to successful outcomes and high morale, efficiency, problem solving, satisfaction, and loyalty to the organization.⁴ Employers rank the ability to work well on teams second only to outstanding verbal communication skills.⁵

Good communicators enhance client satisfaction.

When Lego learned that a young boy had lost his beloved figurine at the mall after his father urged him to leave it home, they did more than send him a free replacement. Lego also sent him a personalized letter saying that his father was “a very wise man” and praising the boy for saving his money to buy the figurine in the first place.⁶ The boy’s family shared the letter online, proclaiming themselves Lego customers for life. This is just one example of how thoughtful communication can build goodwill. Pleasing communication is the number one factor in consumer satisfaction.⁷ Of particular importance are employees’ listening skills, empathy, and cultural sensitivity.^{8,9}

Good communicators build public awareness.

Skilled communicators not only promote the organization during one-on-one interactions; they may also serve as brand ambassadors in front of audiences large and small. Team members might make sales pitches, inform audiences about the value of a product or service, or advocate for change or public policies. Analyzing audience needs and crafting ethical and effective messages are crucial at every level.¹⁰ Chapters 12 through 14 will help you refine these skills.



Good communicators make good leaders.

Leaders spend most of their time communicating—mostly about organizational problems that boil down to poor communication, observes business analyst Matt Myatt.¹¹ The upshot is that communication is central to what leaders do and what they care about. Research shows that the best leaders are attentive listeners who focus on both tasks and relationships.¹²

Good communicators inspire others.

You have probably been inspired by a communicator you would like to emulate. Phil Dourado remembers a boss who offered to resign rather than lay off employees. When the board of directors refused her resignation, his boss went to the team and said, “They’ve given me two months to come up with something else. So, what shall we do?” The staff worked together to cut costs by 20 percent and avoid the need for layoffs. “We were all fiercely loyal to that boss for ever after,” Dourado remembers.¹³

In this chapter, we explore communication strategies that enhance career success, and conversely, some missteps that might cost you a job. As you read about being a good colleague, leader, team member, and decision maker, consider how you might use this knowledge to reach your career goals. ●

Communication Mistakes to Avoid at Work

● **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 11.2:** Identify and avoid communication blunders at work.

After considering how good communicators can flourish in the workplace, it may be helpful to consider what *not* to do. **Social intelligence** is the capacity to behave appropriately in a range of social relationships and environments, including professional settings.¹⁴ Here are some blunders to avoid.

Making Fun of People

When two women walked into the diner where he worked, Rik wisecracked to a coworker: “Oh look! Fat old ladies in baseball caps!”¹⁵ Then he realized that they were his coworker’s mother and aunt. Rik’s colleague forgave him, but he says he learned a valuable lesson and swore off insensitive humor forever. It’s a good idea. Wisecracks at someone else’s expense can be hurtful in any situation. At work, they can be cause for a reprimand, dismissal, or even a lawsuit.

Oversharing

It may seem important to “be yourself,” but there are times when disclosing information about your personal life can damage your chances for professional success—or just flat out annoy people.¹⁶ The “don’t overshare” rule applies to online communication, too (see [Chapter 10](#)). Photos of your wild vacation aren’t likely to impress the boss or potential employers. The best rule is to disclose cautiously, especially if the topic is a sensitive one such as religion, sexual relationships, or health.¹⁷ A trusted colleague may be able to offer advice about how much to share.

Overlooking Cultural Differences

Many Americans display what researchers call “instant intimacy.”¹⁸ They often address even new acquaintances, elders, and authority figures by first name. They engage in a great deal of eye contact, touch their conversational partners, and ask personal questions. To people from different backgrounds, these behaviors may seem disrespectful. An Australian exchange student in the United States reflected on her experience: “There seemed to be a disproportionate amount of really probing conversations. Things I normally wouldn’t chat about on a first conversation.”¹⁹ Review [Chapter 3](#) for more guidance on being culturally considerate.



Gossiping

Communicating with integrity isn’t always easy. The culture in some organizations favors gossiping, bad-mouthing, and even lying about others. Nevertheless, principled communication means following your own set of ethics rather than relying on the approval of others. It may be helpful to know if someone was promoted, reprimanded, or fired, and why—but malicious gossip can mark you as untrustworthy and can damage team spirit.²⁰ One executive proposed this test: Before you start talking, stop and ask yourself, “Is it kind?”²¹

Watch what you say at work.

Gossip and jokes that may seem okay with friends are often inappropriate in a professional environment.



Doing Less Than Your Best

You may have heard the phrase “don’t sweat the small stuff.” In fact, making a good impression requires paying attention to every detail. Show up for work well-groomed and professionally dressed. Another method for standing out is to do more than is required.²² For example, you might finish a job sooner than anticipated or volunteer to work on a weekend or after hours (if it’s allowed), offer to deliver a presentation, or tackle a project that keeps getting delayed. The time that jobs like this take may be well worth the reputation they earn you.

Losing Your Cool

Losing control under pressure can jeopardize your career. Consider the extreme case of a JetBlue flight attendant who was fired after he became frustrated with a passenger, grabbed two beers, and jumped off the (parked) plane via an evacuation chute.²³ Even less dramatic freakouts—raising your voice or dashing off an angry email or text message—can damage your career or land you among the unemployed. To stay collected when you feel yourself getting agitated, take a few deep breaths or a break, stop to listen and ask questions before responding, and vent your emotions to trusted friends while you are off the clock.²⁴ Also be careful not to vent about work-related matters on social media.

Fixating on a Mistake

What if you accidentally say “I love you” while ending a call with your boss? Or your eyes fill with tears during a stressful business meeting? Minor lapses in professionalism are bound to occur, even among people who have been in the workplace for many years. You can usually recover your dignity and your reputation by following these four steps: don’t panic, acknowledge the gaffe, apologize, and return to life as usual.²⁵ For example, you might say, “Sorry about that! I’m in the habit of saying ‘I love you’ when I talk to my family. Obviously, I didn’t mean to end our call that way. I’ll be more careful in the future.” It’s okay to laugh if the

other person does, but don't dwell on the mistake. You want other people's opinion of you to be centered on your impressive performance, not on your goof.

Professionalism is also important online. See *Tips & Reminders* on the next page for more. ●

Pay attention to your nonverbal communication.

Cues that suggest you are confident, calm, and detail oriented are essential to success.

TIPS & REMINDERS

8 *Ways to Communicate in a Professional Manner Online*

Computer-mediated communication is indispensable in the workplace. Business professionals send or receive an average of 122 emails per day,²⁶ and videoconferencing is considered a vital means of communication in 86% of North American companies.²⁷ Here are experts' tips for maintaining professionalism in an online environment.

1. Take part in training.

Even if you are familiar with many types of communication technology, software and practices differ. A good strategy when you get a new job is to ask what communication platforms you will use so you can brush up on them in advance. If possible, also undergo technology training once you are on the job.

2. Develop camaraderie.

Communication technology can make it easy to exchange information but harder to make a real connection. That's important to consider, because people often feel less committed and less accountable if they don't know their teammates well.²⁸ Take time to get acquainted with online team members, and if possible, meet in person from time to time.

3. Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Messages such as "i gotta go now" or "thanx tho" may be fine among friends, but they can cause clients, coworkers, and managers to doubt your professionalism and your literacy skills. Before hitting send, consider how you would feel if you received a message from your boss or a job applicant riddled with grammar and spelling errors.²⁹

Have you ever had an online moment you'd like to take back? If so, what advice would you give others?

4. Beware of curt-sounding messages.

You may mean a brief reply such as "OK" to sound upbeat, but with no other cues to go by, recipients may assume you are frustrated or impatient. It's all right to get to the point online, but do so in a courteous manner.

5. Read the entire message before clicking "forward" or "reply to all."

Imagine being the boss who sent an email asking everyone to welcome a new team member—but accidentally included past correspondence that disclosed the new person’s sign-on salary, which was higher than that of other, more experienced employees.³⁰ The lesson is clear: Take time to be sure that what you send is meant for all recipients.

6. Don’t convey sensitive information electronically.

Bad news, criticism, and private information are best delivered in person—or if that’s not possible, by phone. And never forget that information sent electronically may end up in the wrong inbox. If you wouldn’t be comfortable having your words become public knowledge, don’t send them electronically.³¹

7. Dress for the camera.

Don’t be the telecommuter who logged onto a videoconference wearing a business jacket and pajama pants and then realized once the cameras were on that she had left important papers on the other side of the room. Dress for video conferences as you would for in-person meetings.

8. Pay attention.

Although it may be tempting to try to get other work done during a long-distance meeting, doing so may signal that you are a poor listener. Also, avoid typing during a videoconference. “It’s probably the biggest faux pas,” according to Angie Hill, a Skype general manager.³² Click-clacking while others are talking is rude. (This excludes text-based chat sessions in which people type rather than talk.)

Communication Strategies for Leaders

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 11.3:** Demonstrate effective leadership skills based on the situation, goals, and team members’ needs.

“If you want to become a leader, don’t wait for the fancy title or the corner office,” advises human resources expert Amy Gallo. “You can begin to act, think, and communicate like a leader long before that promotion.”³³ With that in mind, let’s consider answers to some essential points about leadership.

Characteristics of Effective Leaders

It may seem that the best leaders are brimming with charisma and self-importance, but leaders who achieve long-term success are not usually like that.^{34,35} To the contrary, most are remarkably humble. They are content to let others take the spotlight and quick to say that they are still learning and growing. Leaders as diverse as corporate titans Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, and civil rights heroes Rosa Parks and Nelson Mandela won hearts and minds through their ideas and actions, not their commanding personalities.

In nearly every environment, successful leaders embody the following characteristics, mostly involving good communication skills:³⁶

- good listeners
- open to innovation
- able to work well with teams
- good at facilitating change

- appreciative of diversity
- honest and ethical

Trait Theories of Leadership

Some people believe that leadership skill is something people are born with. **Trait theories of leadership**, sometimes labeled the “great man” or “great woman” approach, suggest that some people are born with qualities that will make them good leaders, but others are not. In reality, leaders of any personality type can be effective, and the leadership skills people acquire are typically more important than anything they are born with.³⁷



Situational Leadership

Most contemporary scholarship supports the principle of **situational leadership**, which holds that a leader’s style should change with the circumstances.³⁸ Those who exercise situational leadership consider the nature of the task, including how prepared team members are to accomplish it, and the team involved, including their relationships with each other and with the leader.³⁹ The **Managerial Grid** developed by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (Figure 11.1) portrays leadership on the basis of these two considerations: low to high emphasis on tasks, and low to high emphasis on relationships.^{40,41} Here are the management approaches portrayed in the model.

- *Impoverished managers* have little interest in either tasks or relationships. It probably won’t surprise you that this approach isn’t usually effective.
- *Country club managers* exhibit high regard for relationships but little emphasis on accomplishing tasks. This can be successful, but only if the team is well prepared and highly motivated.
- *Authority-obedience managers* focus almost entirely on tasks and very little on relationships. These types of leaders like to call the shots. This can be useful in emergencies, as when inexperienced team members are handling crises. But over time, most team members prefer to be treated as unique individuals with

talents and ideas of their own. Plus, change happens so quickly in today's environment, that centralized decision making is usually too slow.

- *Middle-of-the-road managers* display a moderate interest in both tasks and relationships. They're not usually horrible leaders, but they're not great either.
- *Team managers* are typically the most successful of all. They exhibit high regard for both tasks and relationships. This approach has a great deal in common with the model of transformational leadership.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is defined by leaders' devotion to helping teams fulfill their full potential.⁴²

Here are the central assumptions of transformational leadership:

- *People want to make a difference.* Transformational leaders believe that if the right people are on board, they will be motivated to accomplish important goals. Therefore, these leaders cultivate strong teams, actively listen to members, consider their feelings, and honor their contributions.
- *Empowerment is essential.* Transformational leaders aren't micromanagers who feel they have all the answers. Instead, they know that the best results come from well-prepared team members with the talent, training, and authority to make most decisions for themselves. The motto of transformational leaders could be, "It's not about me. It's about the *team* and what we accomplish together."
- *Mission is the driving force.* Transformational leaders expect 100% effort from everyone on the team because, otherwise, teams cannot live up to their full potential or accomplish their mission.
- *Transparency is key.* Although transformational leaders empower team members to make decisions for themselves as much as possible, when a tough decision is needed, these leaders aren't afraid to make it.⁴³ In those circumstances, they listen to diverse viewpoints, weigh all the factors, and when they announce a decision, they explain *why* they made it.⁴⁴

It's probably clear that transformational leadership isn't easy. It requires putting one's ego aside and focusing on the team and the mission. Because they are willing to make tough calls, transformational leaders aren't popular with everyone all the time, but even in tough times, team members typically hold these leaders in high regard as being effective, trustworthy, and fair.⁴⁵

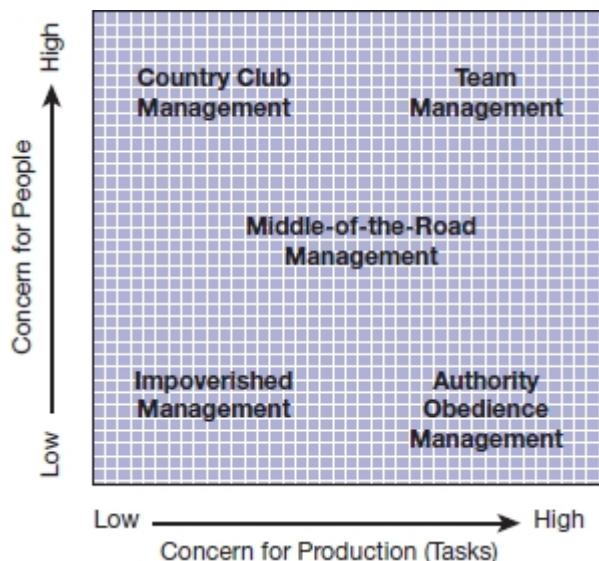


FIGURE 11.1 Managerial Grid

Behaviors That Demonstrate Leadership Potential

The following behaviors are good ways to show others that you have strong leadership potential.

- *Staying engaged.* Getting involved won't guarantee that you'll be recognized as a leader, but failing to speak up will almost certainly knock you out of the running.

- *Demonstrating competence.* Make sure your comments identify you as someone who can help the team succeed. Talking for its own sake will only antagonize other members.
- *Being assertive, not aggressive.* It's fine to have a say, but don't try to overpower others. Treat every member's contributions respectfully, even if they differ from yours.
- *Providing solutions in a time of crisis.* How can the team obtain necessary resources? Resolve a disagreement? Meet a deadline? Members who find answers to problems such as these are likely to rise to positions of authority. ●



ASK YOURSELF *What's Your Leadership Style?*

Choose the item in each group that best characterizes your beliefs as a leader.

- _____ 1. I believe a leader's most important job is to:
 - a. make sure people stay focused on the task at hand
 - b. take a hands-off approach so workers can figure things out on their own
 - c. make sure the workplace is a friendly environment
 - d. help team members build strong relationships so they can accomplish a lot together

- _____ 2. When it comes to being an employee, I believe that people:
 - a. accomplish most when leaders set clear expectations
 - b. should do their work and let leaders do theirs
 - c. are most productive when they are enjoying themselves
 - d. have a natural inclination to work hard and do good work

- _____ 3. As a leader, when a problem arises, I am most likely to:
 - a. announce a new policy or procedure to avoid the same problem in the future
 - b. ignore it; it will probably work itself out
 - c. try to smooth things over so no one feels upset about it
 - d. ask team members' input on how to solve it

- _____ 4. If team members were asked to describe me in a few words, I hope they would say I am:
 - a. competent and results oriented
 - b. removed enough to make decisions without letting my emotions get in the way
 - c. pleasant and friendly
 - d. respectful and innovative

- _____ 5. When I see team members talking in the hallway, I am likely to:
 - a. feel frustrated that they are goofing off
 - b. close my door so I can work without interruption
 - c. share my latest joke with them
 - d. feel encouraged that they get along so well

INTERPRETING YOUR RESPONSES !

For insight about your leadership style, consider which of the following best describes your answers.

Authority-Obedience If most of your answers were “a,” you feel that people should stay focused on the job at hand, and you are frustrated by inefficiency and signs that people are “wasting time.” The danger is that you will overlook relationships in your zeal to get the job done. This can be counterproductive in the long run since teams often accomplish more than individuals working alone.

Impoverished If the majority of your answers were “b,” you tend to take a hands-off approach as a leader, investing neither in relationships nor tasks. You may take pride that you aren’t a micromanager, but you’re probably going too far in the opposite direction. Team members often need guidance. And even those who work well without much supervision probably crave your attention and appreciation.

Country Club If you selected “c” more than other options, your focus on strong relationships and a pleasant work environment is likely to make you likeable as a person. However, team members may be frustrated by less-than-optimal results. A focus on both relationships *and* tasks may ultimately be more rewarding for everyone involved.

Team or Transformational If you chose “d” most often, you balance an emphasis on results with a respect for the people involved. Although your expectations are high, your support and empowerment are likely to bring out the best in people. Most people consider this to be the ideal leadership style.

Working with a Difficult Boss

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 11.4: Describe strategies for dealing with frustrating leaders.

Sooner or later you’re likely to encounter a difficult boss. This person may be unreasonably demanding, blast you with verbal abuse, or engage in passive-aggressive behavior—perhaps being nice to you in person but sabotaging you behind your back. Or your boss may simply be incompetent. What should you do if you encounter such a manager? While every job and situation is different, here are a few strategies that may help you manage the relationship.⁴⁶

Put in extra effort.

Meeting your boss’s expectations can make your life easier. If she’s a micromanager, invite her input. If your boss is a stickler for detail, provide more information than you otherwise would. If your manager values hard work, try to show up before he does and/or leave after him. The extra effort may show your boss that you care and take the job seriously.

Make up the difference.

Filling in for your boss’s weaknesses is another way to manage an imperfect situation. If he’s forgetful, diplomatically remind him of important details. If she’s disorganized, provide the necessary information before she even asks. As one consultant points out, “Making yourself indispensable and someone your boss can rely on to help him do his job is a valuable asset.”⁴⁷

Seek advice from others.

Gratuitous complaining about your boss is a bad idea. But if other people in your organization have encountered the same problems, you might discover useful information by seeking their advice.



OKAY, STAFF... TELL ME FRANKLY WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT

MY SUGGESTION. I WANT TO HEAR YOUR SINCERE OPINIONS.

IGNORE THE FACT THAT I CAN FIRE YOU AND THAT I'M

EXTREMELY UNFORGIVING.

Try to clarify and improve the situation.

If your best efforts don't solve the problem, consider requesting a meeting with your boss to discuss the situation. It's essential that you communicate in a professional manner using the strategies we have outlined throughout this book. Rather than blaming, use "I" language ([Chapter 4](#)). Solicit your boss's point of view, and listen nondefensively to what she has to say ([Chapter 5](#)). Paraphrase and use perception checking to clarify your understanding ([Chapter 2](#)). As much as possible, seek a win-win outcome. After all, having a boss who approves of you will make your work life more satisfying.

Manage your expectations.

You may not be able to change your boss's behavior, but you can control your attitude about the situation. Sometimes accepting that there are things over which you have little control can help you adjust your attitude and expectations.

Keep a professional demeanor.

Even if your boss has awful interpersonal skills, you will gain nothing by sinking to the same level. It's best to take the high road, practicing the professional communication skills described elsewhere in this chapter.

Consider moving on.

A well-known maxim makes the point concisely: "People join companies, but they leave managers." If you can't fix an intolerable situation, the smartest approach may be to look for more rewarding employment. Even though you may be tempted to have a "take this job and shove it" moment, it's far wiser to use the job-seeking tips discussed in [Chapter 10](#) to plan a strategic move. See *Tips & Reminders* on the next page for advice on leaving in a courteous way. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

5 Steps to Leave a Job Without Burning Bridges

Many professionals make the mistake of leaving a bad impression when they exit a job. To ensure that a bad reputation and unfavorable reference don't haunt you in the future, follow these steps.⁴⁸

1. Put it in writing.

Write a brief, gracious resignation letter. Include the date you will leave (allow at least two weeks for the transition), a diplomatic explanation for why you are leaving ("... new opportunities for growth"), and a statement of appreciation for what you have learned on the job.

2. Deliver the news personally.

Deliver the letter in person to your boss. Make sure to tell your boss that you're leaving before they hear the news from someone else. Be professional and calm in the meeting, even if you are leaving under less-than-ideal conditions.

3. Share the news graciously.

Unless instructed otherwise, let your coworkers know you are leaving. When you deliver the news, don't engage in criticism or complaints.

4. Make the change as easy as possible.

Help during the transition. You may be asked to finish key projects, create to-do lists and guides, or train new staff members, and you should do these things graciously and to the best of your ability as time allows.

5. Stay positive.

Even after you leave, don't complain about your employer. Badmouthing your old boss or the company you used to work for won't improve anything, and it's likely to make new colleagues wonder if you might criticize them in the future.



PAUSE TO REFLECT

What Has Shaped Your Leadership Approach?

1. Think of a leader (either good or bad) who has influenced you in a powerful way. Describe that person's communication style and leadership philosophy. How have they influenced your leadership approach? _____

2. Describe a difficult decision you have made involving other people. How did you share your decision with the people involved? What communication and leadership lessons did you learn that you can use in the future? _____

Power in the Workplace



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 11.5: Analyze six types of power in professional settings.

When Omar joined the staff, his great attitude and talent influenced everyone around him. His presence was a good reminder that power is not vested solely in leaders. Rather, **power**, the ability to influence others, comes in many forms. Here are six types of power common in the workplace.^{49,50}

Legitimate Power

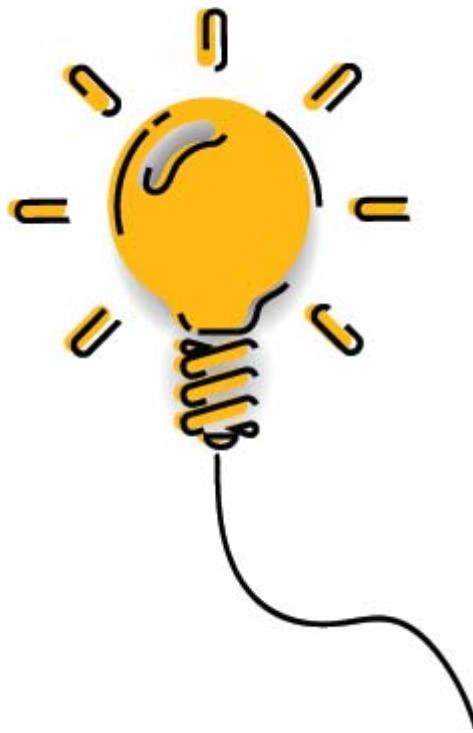
Sometimes called position power, **legitimate power** arises from the title one holds, such as supervisor, professor, or coach. People with legitimate power are said to be **nominal leaders**. Nominal comes from the Latin word for *name*, meaning that these leaders have been officially named to leadership positions. You can increase your legitimate power by becoming an authority figure, speaking up without dominating others, demonstrating competence on the subject, following group norms and showing that you respect the group's customs, and gaining the visible support of influential members.

Expert Power

People have **expert power** when others perceive that they have valuable talents or knowledge. If you're lost in the woods, it makes sense to follow the advice of a group member who has wilderness experience. If your computer crashes at a critical time, you turn to the team member with IT expertise. To gain expert power, make sure members are aware of your qualifications, be certain that what you convey is accurate, and don't act as if you are superior to others.

Connection Power

As its name implies, **connection power** comes from a member's ability to develop relationships that help the group reach its goals. For instance, a team seeking guest speakers for a seminar might rely on a well-connected member to line up candidates. To gain connection power, seek out opportunities to meet new people, nurture relationships through open and regular communication, and don't allow petty grievances to destroy valued relationships.



Reward Power

A person with the ability to grant or promise desirable consequences has **reward power**. Rewards come in a variety of forms, including the appreciation we show others. For example, you might offer sincere, positive feedback to a classmate about a presentation they made in class. Your thoughtful words may ultimately be more treasured and memorable than the grade they receive from the instructor.

Coercive Power

The threat or imposition of unpleasant consequences gives rise to **coercive power**. Bosses can coerce members via the threat of a demotion, an undesirable task, or even loss of a job. But peers also possess coercive power. Working with an unhappy, unmotivated teammate can be punishing. For this reason, it's important to keep members feeling satisfied . . . as long as it doesn't compromise the team's goals. As a general rule, use rewards as a first resort and punishment as a last resort, make rewards and punishments clear in advance, and be generous with praise.

Referent Power

The basis of **referent power** is the respect, liking, and trust others have for a member. If you have high referent power, you may be able to persuade others to follow your lead because they believe in you or because they are willing to do you a favor. Members acquire referent power by behaving in ways others in the group admire and by being genuinely likeable. To gain referent power, listen to others' ideas and honor their contributions, do what you can to be likable and respected without compromising your principles, and present your ideas clearly and effectively to boost your credibility.●

Communication in Small Groups



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 11.6: Identify factors that influence communication in small groups and either help or hinder their success.

Group work can be immensely gratifying, but it can also be unrewarding or even downright miserable. In some cases, it's easy to see why a group succeeds or fails, but in others, the reasons aren't immediately clear.⁵¹ In many cases, the differences between success and failure, between satisfaction and frustration, involve communication.

Definition of a Small Group

Groups probably play a bigger role in your life than you realize. Some groups are informal, such as friends and family. Others are part of work and school. Project groups, sports teams, and study groups are common types, and you can probably think of more examples that illustrate how central groups are in your life.

For our purposes, a **small group** consists of a limited number of people who interact with one another over time in order to reach goals. More precisely, small groups embody the following characteristics:

- *Interaction.* Without interaction, a collection of people isn't a group. Students who passively listen to a lecture don't constitute a group until they begin actively to communicate with one another. This partly explains why some students feel isolated even though they spend a great deal of time on a crowded campus.
- *Interdependence.* In groups, members don't just interact; they are interdependent.⁵² The behavior of one person affects all the others.⁵³ When one member behaves poorly, their actions shape the way the entire group functions. On the bright side, positive actions may have ripple effects, too.
- *Time.* A collection of people who interact for a few minutes doesn't qualify as a group. True groups work together long enough to develop a sense of identity and history that shapes their ongoing effectiveness.
- *Size.* Our definition of groups includes the word *small*. Most experts in the field set the lower limit at three members.⁵⁴ There is less agreement about the maximum number of people.⁵⁵ As a rule of thumb, an effective group is small enough for members to know and react to every other member, and no larger than necessary to perform the task at hand effectively.⁵⁶ Small groups usually have between 3 and 20 members.

Motivational Factors

Two underlying motives—group and individual goals—drive small-group communication.

- *Group goals* are the outcomes members collectively seek by joining together. A group goal might be to win a contest, create a product, or provide a service. Some group goals are social, such as meeting other people and having fun.
- *Individual goals* are the personal motives of each member. Your individual goals might be to impress the boss, build your résumé, or develop a new skill.

Sometimes individual goals can help the larger group. For example, a student seeking a top grade on a team project will probably help the team excel. However, problems arise when individual motives conflict with the group's goal. Consider a group member who monopolizes the discussion to get attention, or one who engages in **social loafing**—lazy behavior some people use to avoid doing their share of the work.

Rules in Small Groups

All groups and teams have guidelines that govern members' behavior, whether or not members are conscious of them. You can appreciate this fact by comparing the way you act in class or at work with the way you behave with your friends.

Rules are official guidelines that govern what the group is supposed to do and how the members should behave. They are usually stated outright. In a classroom, rules include how absences will be treated, the

firmness of deadlines, and so on.

Norms are equally powerful, but they are conveyed by example rather than in words.

- **Social norms** govern how members interact with one another (e.g., what kinds of humor are/aren't appropriate, how much socializing is acceptable).
- **Procedural norms** guide operations and decision making (e.g., "We always start on time" or "When there's a disagreement, we try to reach consensus before forcing a vote").
- **Task norms** govern how members get the job done (e.g., "Does the job have to be done perfectly, or is an adequate, if imperfect, solution good enough?").

It's important to realize two things about norms. First, a group's norms don't always match members' ideals. Consider punctuality, for example. People may feel that meetings should begin at the scheduled time, yet the norm in some groups is to delay talking about real business until 10 or so minutes into the meeting. Second, group norms don't emerge immediately or automatically. *Tips & Reminders* on page 171 describes the stages groups typically experience as they learn to work together.

Roles in Small Groups

The next time you see people working in small groups or teams, observe how they behave. Some may seem stuck in silence, with no one willing to speak up. In others, one or two members may dominate the discussion. In still others, all members may be actively engaged—sharing ideas and enjoying the give-and-take. The character of small group interaction depends a great deal on the roles people play.

Roles define patterns of behavior expected of members. Just like norms, some roles are officially recognized. **Formal roles** are explicitly assigned by an organization or group. They usually come with a label, such as assistant coach, treasurer, or customer service representative. By contrast, **informal roles** (sometimes called "functional roles") are rarely acknowledged by the group in words.⁵⁷ Informal group roles fall into two categories: task and maintenance.

- **Task roles** help the group accomplish its goals. These roles include information seeker, opinion giver, energizer, critic, and so on.
- **Social roles** (also called "maintenance roles") help the relationships among members run smoothly. For example, someone might encourage shy members to voice their opinions (an encourager), while another might help members with opposing viewpoints reach a consensus (harmonizer).

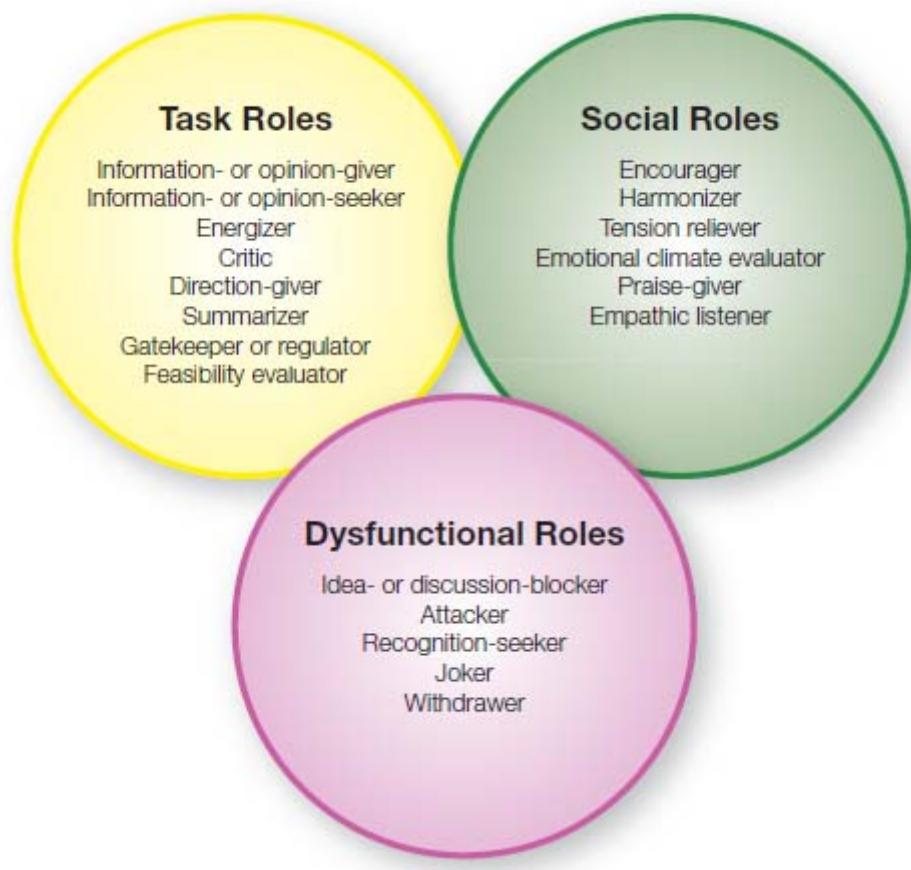


FIGURE 11.2 Roles That Team Members Play

Not all informal roles are constructive. For example, some participants may be aggressive toward others (attackers) or refuse to offer opinions or ideas (withdrawers). Dysfunctional roles such as these prevent a group from working effectively. As you might expect, research suggests that groups are most effective when people fulfill positive social roles and no one fulfills the dysfunctional ones.⁵⁸ See Figure 11.2 for a summary of group roles, good and bad.

Cohesiveness

Cohesiveness is the degree to which members feel connected with and committed to a group. In highly cohesive groups, members spend more time interacting and express more positive feelings for one another than in groups that lack cohesion. They also report more satisfaction and loyalty. Groups can enhance cohesiveness in the following ways.

- *Focusing on shared goals.* People draw closer when they share a similar aim or when their goals can be mutually satisfied.
- *Celebrating progress.* While a group is making progress, members tend to feel highly cohesive; when progress stops, cohesiveness decreases.
- *Minimizing competition.* Sometimes competition arises within groups. Perhaps there is a struggle over who will be the leader or decision maker. Whether the threat is real or imagined, the group must neutralize it or face the consequences of reduced cohesiveness.
- *Establishing interdependence.* Groups become cohesive when their needs can be satisfied only with the help of other members.
- *Building relationships.* Groups often become close because members like one another. It's a good idea to devote time and energy to building camaraderie and friendship within the group. ●

Advantages of Group Problem Solving

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 11.7:** Assess the advantages and stages of group problem solving.

Perhaps because most people aren't aware of the problem-solving techniques available to them, groups sometimes get a bad name. Yet years of research show that, in most cases, groups can produce higher quality solutions than individuals working alone.⁵⁹ Here's why.



Groups have more resources than individuals.

Resources may include space, equipment and supplies, time, interpersonal connections, brain power, and more. Imagine trying to raise money for an important cause. Together, a group is likely to know far more potential contributors than any one person does.

Group members can catch errors.

At one time or another, everyone makes stupid mistakes, like the man who built a boat in his basement and then wasn't able to get it out the door. Working in a group increases the chance that errors like this won't slip by.

Group work enhances buy-in.

Besides coming up with superior solutions, groups also generate a higher commitment to carrying them out. Members are most likely to accept solutions they have helped create and to work harder to carry out those solutions.

Groups benefit from diverse ideas.

Although we tend to think in terms of "lone geniuses" who make discoveries and solve the world's problems, most breakthroughs are actually the result of collective creativity—people working together to create options no one would have thought of alone.⁶⁰

Groups are best at solving some problems.

Group work isn't always the quickest way to accomplish a task or make a decision. It takes time and effort. But under certain conditions, groups can accomplish more than one person could. Group work is especially effective under the following conditions:⁶¹

- The job is beyond the capacity of one person.
- Members are in a good position to help one another.
- The issue is important and presents implications for a large number of people.
- There is more than one solution and no easy answer. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

4 *Stages in Decision-Making Groups*

Successful groups often follow a four-stage process when arriving at a decision: orientation, conflict, emergence, and reinforcement.⁶² These stages are sometimes characterized as forming, storming, norming, and performing.⁶³ Knowing them can help curb your impatience and help you feel less threatened when inevitable and necessary conflicts take place.

1. Orientation Stage (Forming)

In the **orientation stage**, members approach the problem and one another tentatively. There is little outward disagreement at this stage. Rather than state their own positions clearly and unambiguously, members test out possible ideas cautiously and politely. This doesn't mean that they agree with one another. Rather, they are probably sizing up the situation before asserting themselves.

2. Conflict Stage (Storming)

After members understand the problem and become acquainted, a successful group enters the **conflict stage**. Members take strong positions and defend them against those who oppose their viewpoints. Coalitions are likely to form, and the discussion may become polarized. The conflict needn't be personal, however, and it should preserve the members' respect for one another. Even when the climate does grow contentious, conflict seems to be a necessary stage in group development. The give and take of discussion tests the quality of ideas, and weaker ones may be justly eliminated.⁶⁴

3. Emergence Stage (Norming)

After a period of conflict, effective groups move to an **emergence stage**. One idea might emerge as the best one, or the group might combine the best parts of several plans into a new solution. As they approach consensus, members back off from their dogmatic positions. Statements become more tentative again: "That seems like a pretty good idea," "I can see why you think that way."

4. Reinforcement Stage (Performing)

Finally, groups may reach the **reinforcement stage**. At this point, not only do members accept the group's decision, they also endorse it. Even if members disagree with the outcome, they may not voice their concerns at this stage.



PAUSE TO REFLECT

How Do You Feel About Group Work?

1. There are a number of advantages to working in small groups, but there can also be pitfalls. Describe three potential disadvantages of working in small groups. For each, describe a communication strategy you might use to avoid or minimize that disadvantage. _____

2. Think of the best experience you have had working in a small group. What factors made it a rewarding experience? What role did communication play? _____

Making the Most of Group Meetings

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 11.8:** Strategize ways to communicate effectively during group discussions.

Even groups with the best of intentions often find themselves unable to reach decisions. At other times, they make decisions that later prove to be wrong. Though there's no foolproof method of guaranteeing high-quality group work, you can avoid common challenges by using the following approaches.



Encourage equal participation.

Domination by a few vocal or high-status members can reduce a group's ability to solve a problem effectively. You can encourage useful contributions by all members in a variety of ways:

- *Keep the group small.* In groups with three or four members, participation is roughly equal, but after the size increases to five or more, there is often a dramatic gap between the contributions of members.⁶⁵
- *Encourage quiet members.* It isn't necessary to go overboard by gushing about a quiet person's brilliant remark, but a word of thanks and acknowledging the value of the person's idea may increase the odds that they will speak up again in the future. You might also assign specific tasks to normally quiet members. The need to report on these tasks guarantees that they will speak up.
- *Ask to hear from other members.* Particularly if one member is talking too much, politely express a desire to hear from others.
- *Question the relevance of off-topic remarks.* If nothing else works, you might say something such as, "I'm sure Saturday's party was awesome! But if we're going to meet the deadline, I think we'd better save those stories for later."

Avoid information underload and overload.

- *Provide adequate background.* Make sure team members know the information and nuances that bear on a problem.
- *But don't overwhelm people.* Too much information makes it hard to sort out what is essential from what isn't. In such cases, experts suggest parceling out areas of responsibility.⁶⁶ Instead of expecting all members to explore everything about a topic, assign groups to explore particular aspects of it and share what they learn with the group at large.

Avoid pressure to conform.

Groupthink describes the tendency of some groups to support ideas without challenging them or providing alternatives.⁶⁷ Members might want to avoid a conflict or to seem like supportive "team players." Or they may overestimate the group's good judgment or its privileged status, fear retribution if they speak up, or just want to get the discussion over with.⁶⁸

If you have ever supported an idea because everyone else seemed to like it or you were tired of debating the issue, you have engaged in groupthink. The results can range from disappointing to downright tragic. In the *Challenger* explosion in 1986, seven astronauts died when their spacecraft exploded shortly after launch. An investigation revealed that, in the days leading up to the event, NASA engineers who were concerned that freezing temperatures might cause a catastrophic malfunction were discouraged from voicing their objections.⁶⁹

Groups can minimize the risk of groupthink by adopting the following practices:⁷⁰

- *Recognize the signs of groupthink as they begin to manifest.* If agreement comes quickly and easily, the group may be avoiding a tough but necessary search for alternatives.
- *Minimize status differences.* If the group includes leaders or other high-status members, they should be careful not to intimidate members into agreeing with them.
- *Develop a group norm that legitimizes disagreement.* After members recognize that questioning one another's positions doesn't signal personal animosity or disloyalty, a constructive exchange of ideas can lead to top-quality solutions.
- *Designate someone to play "devil's advocate."* It's this person's job to remind the others about the dangers of groupthink and to challenge group members to consider potentially adverse outcomes of a decision.



Make the most of diversity.

Here are experts' tips for maximizing the benefits and minimizing the challenges of working in multicultural teams:

- *Allow more time than usual.* When members have different backgrounds and perspectives, it can take extra time and effort to understand and appreciate where each person is coming from.
- *Agree on clear guidelines for discussions, participation, and decision making.* If members come to the group with different expectations, it may be necessary to negotiate mutually acceptable ground rules.
- *Use a variety of communication formats.* People may be more or less comfortable speaking to the entire group, putting their thoughts in writing, speaking one on one, and so on. Variety will help everyone have a voice.
- *If possible, involve a distribution of people from various cultures.* Research shows that being a "minority member" is especially challenging and not conducive to open communication.⁷¹
- *Educate team members about the cultures represented.* People are less likely to make unwarranted assumptions (that a person is lazy, disinterested, overbearing, or so on) if they understand the cultural patterns at play.

- *Open your mind to new possibilities.* Assumptions and too-quick solutions short-circuit the advantage of diverse perspectives. ●

A Structured Problem-Solving Approach

● **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 11.9:** Practice the steps involved in systematic problem solving.

As early as 1910, John Dewey introduced his famous **reflective thinking method** as a systematic, multistep approach to solving problems.⁷² Since then, other experts have suggested modifications, although it's still generally known as Dewey's method. Although no single approach is best for all situations, a structured procedure usually produces better results than "no pattern" discussions.⁷³

The problem-solving model described here includes the elements common to most structured approaches developed in the last century. Although these steps provide a useful outline for solving problems, they are most valuable as a general set of guidelines and not as a precise formula. Certain parts of the model may need emphasis depending on the specific nature of a problem (Figure 11.3), but the general approach will give virtually any group a useful way to consider and solve a problem.

Identify the problem.

Sometimes a group's problem is easy to identify. There are many times, however, when the challenge isn't so clear. If a group is meeting to discuss a low-performing employee, it may be helpful to ask why that person is underperforming. It may be because they have personal problems, feel unappreciated by members, or haven't been challenged. The best way to understand a problem is to look below the surface and identify the range of factors that may be involved.

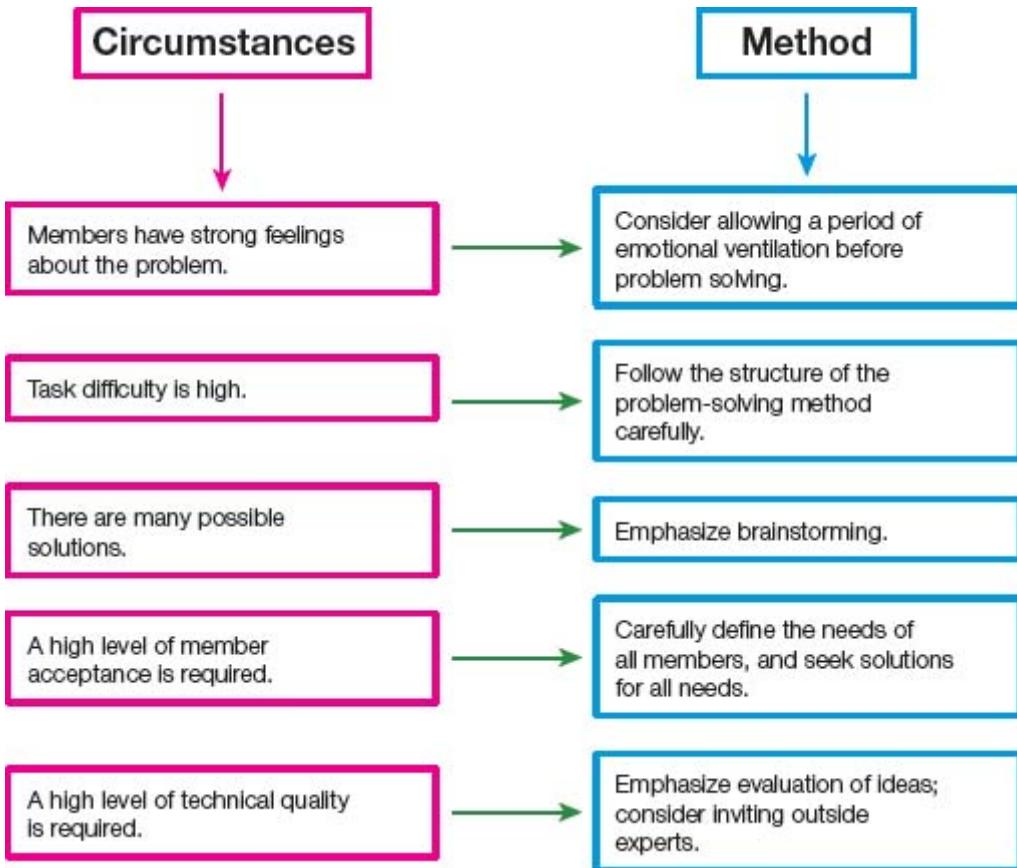


FIGURE 11.3 Problem-Solving Options

Analyze the problem.

After you have identified the general nature of the problem, examine it in more detail. Word the problem as a broad, open question. For example, if your group is trying to understand why turnover (the number of employees who leave) is high, you might ask yourselves: *What factors might be causing employees to feel dissatisfied here?* Open-ended questions like this encourage people to contribute ideas and work cooperatively.

Identify criteria for success.

Decide what factors will constitute success. After analyzing the problem, you may set the goal of keeping employee turnover equal to or lower than what's typical for your business and community. Once you know what you're trying to achieve, you have a better chance of creating goal-oriented solutions and measuring your success.

Gather relevant information.

It's foolish to choose a solution before you know all the options and factors at play. In this stage, you might seek answers to questions such as: *How does our current turnover compare to similar companies in this community? How can we measure employee satisfaction? What can we learn from current employees and those who have recently left? and What can we learn from companies with less turnover?*

Identify supporting and restraining forces.

A force field analysis involves listing the forces in favor of a desired outcome and those that will probably make it difficult to achieve.⁷⁴ For example, forces that help you retain good employees might include offering better pay and training. Challenges might include a transient workforce and the inherent difficulty of the job.

Develop creative solutions.

The next stage involves proposing solutions through brainstorming or by contributing written ideas anonymously. Avoid criticism at this stage. The more ideas generated, the better. Welcome outlandish ideas, since they may trigger more workable ones, and encourage members to “piggyback” by modifying or combining ideas already suggested.

Evaluate possible solutions.

A good way to evaluate solutions is to ask the following questions: *Which solution will best produce the desired changes? Which solution is most achievable? and Which solution contains the fewest serious disadvantages?*

Implement the plan.

Everyone who makes New Year’s resolutions knows the difference between making a decision and carrying it out. There are several important steps in developing and implementing a plan of action. You should identify specific tasks, determine necessary resources, define individual responsibilities, and provide for emergencies.

Follow up on the solution.

Even the best plans usually require some modifications after they’re put into practice. You can improve the group’s effectiveness and minimize disappointment by meeting periodically to evaluate progress and revise the approach as necessary. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

5 Ways to Reach a Group Decision

There are several approaches a group can use to arrive at decisions. We’ll look at each of them now, examining their advantages and disadvantages.

1. Reach consensus.

Consensus occurs when all members of a group support a decision. Full participation can increase the quality of the decision as well as members’ willingness to support it. However, consensus building can take a great deal of time, which makes it unsuitable for emergencies.

2. Let the majority decide.

Many people believe the democratic method of majority rule is always superior. It has advantages when the support of all members isn’t necessary, but in more important matters it’s risky. Even if a 51% majority of members favors a plan, 49% might oppose it—hardly sweeping support for any decision that needs the support of all members in order to work. Decisions made under majority rule are often inferior to decisions hashed out by a group until the members reach consensus.⁷⁵

3. Rely on the experts.

Sometimes one group member is considered an expert and given the power to make decisions. This can work well when that person’s judgment is truly superior. However, a member may think they are the best qualified to make a decision even when that is not the case.

4. Let a few members decide.

This works well with noncritical questions that would waste the whole group’s time. But when an issue needs more support, it’s best to at least have a subgroup report its findings for the approval of all members.

5. Honor authority rule.

Though it sounds dictatorial, there are times when this approach has advantages. Sometimes there isn't time for a group to decide, or the matter is so routine that it doesn't require discussion. However, much of the time, group decisions are of higher quality and gain more support from members than those made by an individual.

COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS

Communicating in the Workplace

Good Communicators . . .

- Work well in teams
- Enhance client satisfaction
- Build public awareness
- Make good leaders
- Inspire others

Mistakes to Avoid at Work

- Making fun of people
- Oversharing
- Overlooking cultural differences
- Gossiping
- Doing less than your best
- Losing your cool
- Fixating on a mistake

Ways to Communicate in a Professional Manner Online

- Take part in training.
- Develop camaraderie.
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- Avoid curt-sounding messages.
- Email with caution.
- Don't convey sensitive information electronically.
- Dress for the camera.
- Pay attention.

Leadership Strategies

- Leaders needn't be born with particular traits.
- The Managerial Grid defines leaders in terms of their emphasis on tasks and relationships.
- Transformational leaders recruit strong team members and support their efforts.



Working with a Difficult Boss

- Put in extra effort.
- Make up the difference.
- Seek advice from others.
- Try to clarify and improve the situation.
- Manage your expectations.
- Keep a professional demeanor.
- Consider moving on.

Steps to Leave a Job Without Burning Bridges

- Put it in writing.
- Deliver the news personally.
- Share the news graciously.
- Help with the transition.
- Stay positive.

Types of Power in the Workplace

- Legitimate (formal role)
- Expert (knowledge)
- Connection (relationships)
- Reward (positive reinforcement)
- Coercive (bad consequences)
- Referent (likeable)

Communication in Small Groups

- Group members are motivated by group and individual goals.
- Rules and roles (both official and unspoken) influence teams.

Groups Can Be Good Problem Solvers Because They . . .

- Have resources
- Can catch errors
- Enhance buy-in
- Have diverse ideas
- Can solve some problems very well



Stages in Decision-Making Groups

- Orientation
- Conflict
- Emergence
- Reinforcement

Make the Most of Group Meetings

- Encourage equal participation.
- Avoid information underload and overload.
- Avoid pressure to conform.
- Make the most of diversity.

Structured Problem Solving

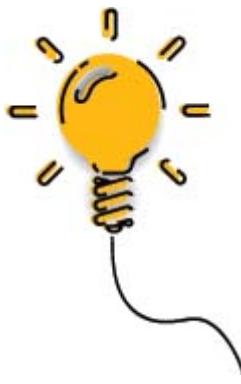
- Identify the problem.
- Analyze the problem.
- Identify criteria for success.
- Gather relevant information.
- Consider forces for and against.
- Develop creative solutions.
- Evaluate possible solutions.
- Implement the plan.
- Follow up on the solution.

Ways to Reach a Group Decision

- Reach consensus.
- Let the majority decide.
- Rely on the experts.
- Let a few members decide.
- Honor authority rule.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Show Your Communication Know-How



11.1: Explain why communication skills are essential to success in the workplace.

Consider the communication career boosters in this chapter. In what ways would you most like to improve?

11.2: Identify and avoid communication blunders at work.

Think of the worst teammate or coworker you have encountered. Was that person guilty of any of the communication mistakes described in this chapter?

KEY TERM: [social intelligence](#)

11.3: Demonstrate effective leadership skills.

Imagine working in an environment that requires you to juggle online and in-person communication. How might you show that you have what it takes to be a leader?

KEY TERMS: [trait theories of leadership](#), [situational leadership](#), [Managerial Grid](#), [transformational leadership](#)

11.4: Describe strategies for dealing with frustrating leaders.

If you find yourself working with a boss who is hard to please, what communication strategies might you use to improve the situation?

11.5: Analyze six types of power in professional settings.

Recall the passage “When Omar joined the staff, his great attitude and talent influenced everyone around him.” What types of power does Omar seem to have?

KEY TERMS: [power](#), [legitimate](#), [nominal](#), [expert](#), [connection](#), [reward](#), [coercive](#), and [referent power](#)



11.6: Identify factors that influence communication in small groups and either help or hinder their success.

Think of a group you have encountered with an underperforming member. What communication strategies might have helped?

KEY TERMS: [small group](#), [social loafing](#), [rules](#), [social](#), [procedural](#), and [task norms](#), [roles](#), [formal](#), [informal](#), [task](#), and [social roles](#), [cohesiveness](#)

 **11.7: Assess the advantages and stages of group problem solving.**

Think of a poorly designed process that frustrates you at school or work. What might the advantages be of having a team look into the problem?

KEY TERMS: [orientation stage](#), [conflict stage](#), [emergence stage](#), [reinforcement stage](#)

 **11.8: Strategize ways to communicate effectively during group discussions.**

You are part of a group asked to look into the parking problem on campus. One person proposes that the university raise the price of parking tickets, and everyone seems inclined to go along with that idea. What might you do to make sure the group carefully considers a range of options before reaching a decision?

KEY TERM: [groupthink](#)



 **11.9: Practice the steps involved in systematic problem solving.**

Consider again the parking problem on campus. Brainstorm how you might structure a team meeting based on the systematic problem solving method.

KEY TERM: [reflective thinking method](#)

12 Preparing Speeches

Audience Analysis

How do you seek out information about your audience?

What are the steps involved in analyzing an audience?

Speech Planning

How can you save time and effort in planning a speech?

What is a purpose statement and why is it important?

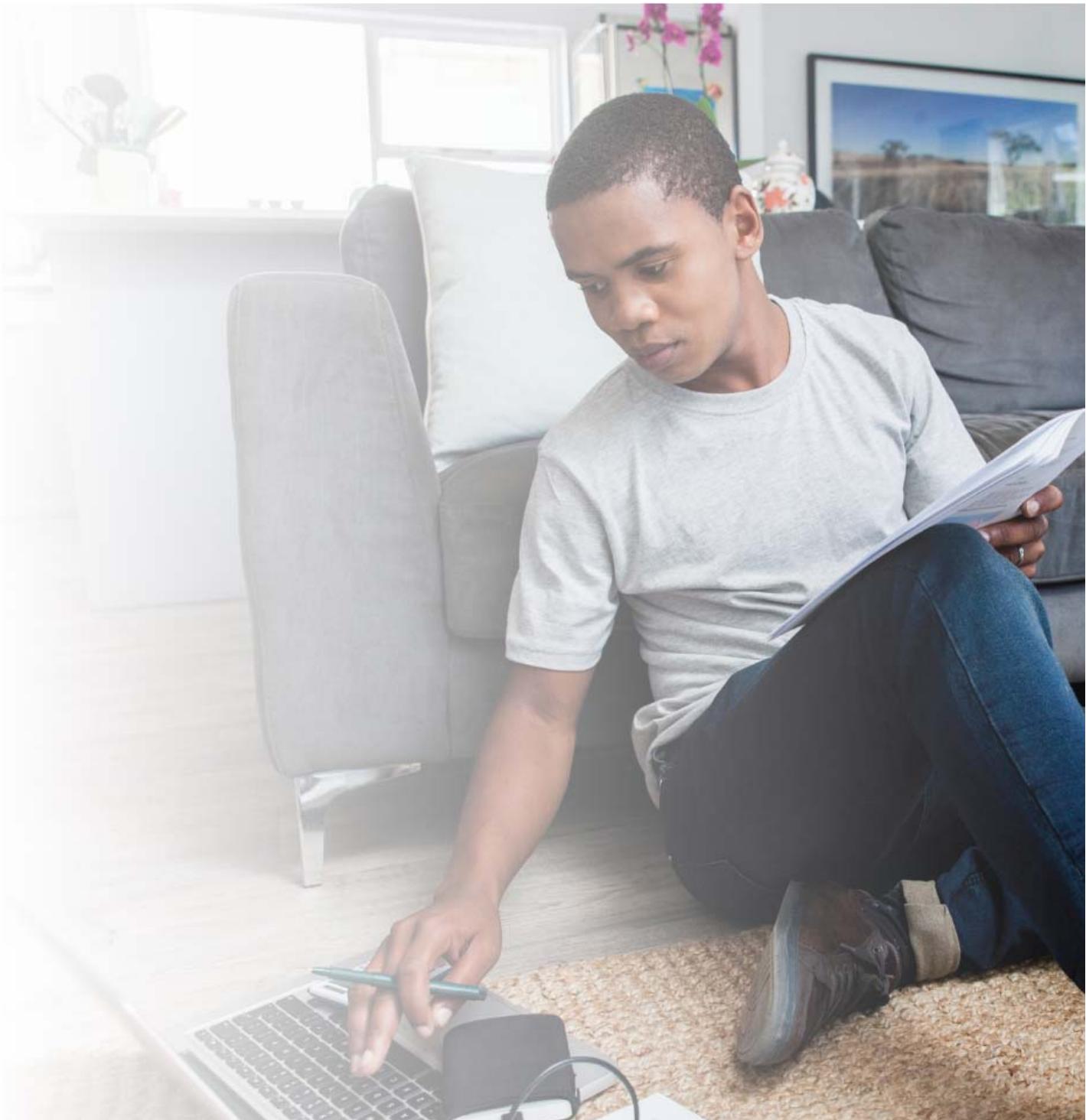
Why are organization and structure so important?

Components to Keep in Mind

How do you make an effective introduction and conclusion?

What role do transitions play in a speech?

How can you be sure your supporting material will be memorable and convincing?



Analyzing Your Audience

- LEARNING OBJECTIVE 12.1: Understand the audience in a given speaking situation.

The United States today is paralyzed by political polarity.¹ There seem to be two sides that can't believe or communicate with each other. They live in different perceptual universes, in which each side has not just its own set of opinions, but also its own set of facts.²

The practice of public speaking was designed to tackle this kind of problem. At its best, public speaking is a process of putting together and presenting messages that bring people together by seeking common ground. That process begins with a clear and meaningful analysis of the audience.

The purpose of **audience analysis** is to develop remarks that are appropriate to the characteristics and goals of your listeners. Just as you have a purpose for speaking, audience members have a reason for gathering. Understanding their demographics and political affiliation, as well as their attitudes, beliefs, and values, may help you to discern their motives.

Demographics and Political Affiliation

Demographics are characteristics of your audience that can be categorized, such as age, gender, cultural background, educational level, and economic status. In a college class, demographics such as hometown, year in school, and major subject might also be important. In addition, political affiliation has increasingly become a factor that affects how receptive audiences may be to discussions of certain topics. This information about your audience will help you mention specific ways your information will be interesting or useful to them. Demographic characteristics and political affiliation might affect your speech planning in a number of ways. For example:



- *Cultural diversity.* Do audience members vary in terms of race, religion, or national origin? The guideline here might be: *Do not exclude or offend any portion of your audience on the basis of cultural differences.* If one cultural group predominates, you might decide to address it, but remember that the point is to analyze, not stereotype, your audience. If you talk down to any segment of your listeners, you have probably stereotyped them.
- *Gender.* Although masculine and feminine stereotypes are declining, it is still important to think about how gender can affect the way you choose and approach a topic.
- *Age.* Our interests vary and change with our age. These differences may run relatively deep; our approach to literature, films, finance, health, and long-term success may change dramatically over just a few years, perhaps from graphic novels to serious literature, from punk to classical music, or from hip-hop to epic poetry.
- *Group membership.* Groups generally form around shared interests among the members. By examining the groups to which they belong, you may be able to surmise audience members' religious beliefs (Catholic Youth Organization, Hillel, or Muslim Students' Association), or occupation (Bartenders Union or National Communication Association). Group membership is often an important consideration in college classes. Consider the difference between a "typical" college day class and one that meets in the evening. At many colleges, the evening students are generally older and tend to belong to civic groups, church clubs, and the local chamber of commerce. Daytime students are more likely to belong to sororities and fraternities, sports clubs, and social action groups.

- *Political affiliation.* One of the most important audience distinctions today involves liberal versus conservative political inclinations. Johnathan Haidt, a psychologist who has studied this phenomenon, suggests that liberals place a higher priority on providing help for people in need, fairness, diversity/inclusivity, and openness to new experiences, whereas conservatives score higher in terms of valuing group membership and loyalty, respecting authority, and maintaining traditions.^{3,4}

Analyzing demographics and political affiliations of audience members will help you make an educated guess about their attitudes, beliefs, and values—in essence, what they think.⁵ In turn, this will help you develop a speech that speaks to and not at them.

Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values

Attitudes, beliefs, and values reside in human consciousness like the layers of an onion (see [Figure 12.1](#)).

Attitudes lie closest to the surface and reflect a predisposition to view you or your topic in a favorable or unfavorable way. **Beliefs** lie a little deeper and deal with a person’s underlying conviction about the truth of an idea. **Values** are deeply rooted feelings about a concept’s inherent worth or worthiness.

While attitudes, beliefs, and values are all important, experts in audience analysis, such as professional speechwriters, often try to concentrate on values. As one team of researchers pointed out, “Values have the advantage of being comparatively small in number, and owing to their abstract nature, are more likely to be shared by large numbers of people.”⁶ To demonstrate the usefulness of appealing to values, one team of researchers conducted a pair of studies. One study dealt with messages surrounding same-sex marriage, while the other dealt with messages pertaining to military spending.⁷

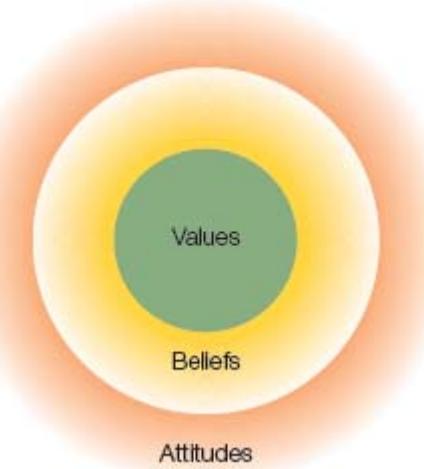


FIGURE 12-1 Structure of Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values

In the first experiment, the researchers shared two messages in favor of same-sex marriage with liberals and conservatives. One message was framed in terms of equality and fairness, while the other was framed in terms of patriotism and loyalty. According to the researchers, “Liberals showed the same support for same-sex marriage regardless of which message they encountered. But conservatives supported same-sex marriage significantly more if they read the patriotism message rather than the fairness one.”⁸

In the second experiment, the researchers shared with liberals and conservatives two messages in support of increased military spending. One message was framed in terms of pride and patriotism, while the other was framed in terms of fairness and helping the poor and disadvantaged. According to the researchers, “For conservatives, it didn’t matter which message they read; their support for military spending was the same. However, liberals expressed significantly greater support for increasing military spending if they read the fairness message rather than the patriotism one.”⁹ We look at further ramifications of the process of persuasion in [Chapter 14](#).

Audience Perception of the Occasion

Your audience's perception of the occasion of your speech is based on their expectations. A speech presented in a college class is usually expected to reflect a higher level of thought and intelligence than if you were discussing the same subject with a group of friends over coffee. But this doesn't mean that your speech should be boring or humorless. In fact, wit and humor are indicative of intelligence and may also help you develop a connection with your audience. One way to fulfill expectations in a college class is to gather interesting and effective information that will help you build a successful speech. ●



PAUSE TO REFLECT

Where Do You Stand?

1. What are your own political opinions about issues like business regulation, welfare, gun rights, and religious freedom? How would those opinions be interpreted by someone on the opposite end of the political spectrum?

Planning Your Speech



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 12.2: Follow the steps involved with planning a successful speech.

Having analyzed your audience, it's now time to adapt to that audience as you plan your speech. You should choose a topic, define your purpose, write a purpose statement, state your thesis, and gather information with that audience in mind.

Step 1: Choose a topic.

The first question many student speakers face is "What should I talk about?" Try to pick a topic that interests you, that your audience will care about, and that is right for the situation.

Step 2: Define your purpose.

No one gives a speech or expresses *any* kind of message without having a reason to do so. There are three **general purposes** for presenting a public speech:

- *To inform:* To enlighten audience members by teaching them something.
- *To persuade:* To move your audience toward a new attitude or behavior.
- *To entertain:* To relax audience members by providing them with a pleasant listening experience.

While there are distinctive differences among the three basic purposes, there is also considerable overlap. A speech designed to inform an audience will almost certainly need to be entertaining enough to hold audience members' interest. And to persuade audience members, you will most likely have to inform them about your arguments. Even a speech designed purely to entertain might change audience attitudes or teach that audience something new.

[Chapter 14](#) will explore informative and persuasive speaking in more depth. In all types of speaking, however, you should formulate a clear and precise statement of your specific reason for speaking.

Step 3: Write a purpose statement.

Your **purpose statement** should be expressed in the form of a complete sentence that describes your **specific purpose**—exactly what you want your speech to accomplish. There are three criteria for an effective purpose statement:

- *A purpose statement should be result oriented.* Having a result orientation means that your purpose is focused on the outcome you want to accomplish with your audience members.
- *A purpose statement should be specific.* To be effective, a purpose statement should have enough details so that you will be able to measure or test your audience, after your speech, to see if you have achieved your purpose.
- *A purpose statement should be realistic.* It's fine to be ambitious, but you should design a purpose that has a reasonable chance of success. If your purpose is to “convince your audience to make federal budget deficits illegal,” unless audience members happen to be a joint session of Congress, they won't have the power to do this. A better purpose statement might be something like this: *After listening to my speech, my audience members will be able to list four simple steps to lower their college expenses.*

It's not generally necessary to include your purpose statement word for word in your actual speech. Rather, a purpose statement usually is a tool to keep you focused on your goal as you plan your speech.

Step 4: State your thesis.

After you have defined the purpose, you are ready to start planning what is arguably the most important sentence in your entire speech. The **thesis statement** tells your listeners the central idea of your speech and is the one idea that you want audience members to remember after they have forgotten everything else you had to say. The thesis statement for a speech about winning in small claims court might be worded like this:

Arguing a case on your own in small claims court is a simple, five-step process that can give you the same results you would achieve with a lawyer.

Unlike your purpose statement, your thesis statement is almost always delivered directly to your audience.

Step 5: Gather information.

It takes time, interest, and knowledge to develop a topic well. Setting aside a block of time to reflect on your own ideas is essential. However, you will also need to gather information from outside sources. Your first instinct may be to do an online search, and that can be a good place to start. However, while you might be tempted to go to Wikipedia as a starting point for inspiration, keep in mind that many professors forbid its use as a primary source because anyone can edit the information found there.

One place to go to gather valid information for a speech is the library. Most college libraries have catalogs, reference works, periodicals, and databases users otherwise would need to pay hefty subscription fees to access. In addition, library experts can help you make sense of and determine the validity of the information you find.

Another method for gathering information is to conduct a survey of your audience members beforehand to determine their attitudes about a topic. Finally, you might want to interview an expert for facts and perspectives to use in your speech.

Step 6: Double-check your sources.

When gathering information for a speech, particularly when doing online research, keep in mind that a global online disinformation epidemic is now raging. “Fake news” is generated as clickbait to make money or to gain political advantage. People on all sides of the political divide tend to accept disinformation if it conforms to their preconceived prejudices. Sometimes, partisans insist that it doesn't matter to them if the information is

true or not, as long as it proves their point. Experts call this **confirmation bias**.¹⁰ Confirmation bias may be so strong that people in its grip will reject information from experts; this has led to a general tendency today to devalue expertise.¹¹

Social media has exacerbated this problem with confirmation bias by allowing all of us to exist in what some researchers call a **filter bubble**, in which search engines and social media create echo chambers of information that conforms with our beliefs.¹² All of this leads to two guidelines for evaluating information:



- If it seems too good to be true, it's probably false.
- If it conforms to your preconceived beliefs, double-check it for accuracy. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

3 *Ways to Evaluate Online Information*

Consider answers to the following questions when judging whether to use information you find online.

1. Credibility: Is the information trustworthy?

- Who created the site? Don't use anonymous sources.
- If the sources *are* listed, are their credentials listed?
- What institution sponsors the site? What is their purpose?
- Are there obvious proofreading errors/grammatical mistakes? Remember that a sleek site design doesn't guarantee high-quality information, but misspellings and grammatical mistakes are good signs of low quality.

2. Objectivity: Is the information unbiased?

- What is the domain name of the site? The domain names .edu, .gov, and .org are generally more reliable than sites using .com.
- What opinions (if any) does the author express?

- If a topic is controversial, are opposing sides equally represented/covered?
- Does the site have advertising? If so, how much, and what types?

3. Currency: Is the information up to date?

- When was the site created?
- When was the site last updated?
- How up to date are any links? If any are dead, that is a sign that the information might not be current.

Structuring Your Speech

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 12.3:** Create an effective and well-organized speech structure and outline.

Having a clear purpose and thesis as well as interesting and credible information to speak about is important. But if the material is not well organized, your audience will not understand your message. In addition to making your message clear to your audience, structuring a message effectively is essential to refining your ideas and making them persuasive.

Every speech outline should follow the **basic speech structure** that includes an introduction, body, and conclusion. This structure demonstrates the old aphorism for speakers: “Tell what you’re going to say, say it, and then tell what you said.” The finer points of your speech structure will be shown in your outlines.



Outlines

Outlines come in all shapes and sizes. Your **working outline** is for your eyes only, and you’ll probably create several drafts of it as you refine your ideas. On the other hand, a **formal outline** uses a consistent format and set of symbols to identify the structure of ideas. Another person should be able to understand the basic ideas included in your speech by reading the formal outline. In fact, that’s one test of the effectiveness of your outline. [Figure 12.2](#) provides a template for a formal speech outline.

Speaking Notes

Like your working outline, your speaking notes are for your use only, so the format is up to you. Many teachers suggest that speaking notes be in the form of a brief keyword outline, with just enough information listed to jog your memory but not enough to get lost in. They also suggest that you fit your notes on one side of a 3-by-5-inch note card. Others recommend having only your introduction and conclusion or longer quotations on note cards.

Organizational Patterns

An outline should reflect a logical order for your points and one that best develops your thesis. You might arrange your key points from newest to oldest, largest to smallest, best to worst, or in a number of other ways, including by time. For example, if you were discussing airline food, you could arrange your main ideas in terms of time period:

- I. Early airline food: a gourmet treat
- II. The middle period: institutional food at thirty thousand feet
- III. Today's airline food: the passenger starves

[Chapter 14](#) will discuss a number of organization patterns specifically designed for persuasion. ●

INTRODUCTION

- I. Introduce your speech topic to your audience:
 - A. **Attention-getter:** This statement should make people pay attention and clue them to your topic. It might be a question, quotation, example, anecdote, or statistic.
 - B. **Relevance:** Explain why your audience should care about your topic and/or how the information you will impart affects them.
 - C. **Credibility:** Tell your audience why they should listen to you and why you are qualified to speak on the topic: personal experience, research, etc.
 - D. **Thesis Statement:** Summarize for your audience, in one sentence, the purpose of your speech.
- II. **Preview:** Clue your audience to the main points you will hit upon in your speech. In some instances, this may also serve as a transition to the body of the speech.

BODY: Discuss all of the main and supporting points. Be sure to include transition sentences.

- I. **First Main point:** A single sentence (labeled I., II., III., etc.)
 - A. **Subpoint:** A single sentence supporting the main point (labeled A., B., C., etc.)
 1. **First sub-subpoint:** A single sentence supporting the subpoint (labeled 1., 2., 3., etc.)
 2. **Second sub-subpoint:** A single sentence supporting the subpoint (labeled 1., 2., 3., etc.)
 - B. **Second Subpoint:** A single sentence supporting the main point (labeled A., B., C., etc.)
- II. **Second Main point:** A single sentence (labeled I., II., III., etc.)
- III. **Third Main point:** A single sentence (labeled I., II., III., etc.)

CONCLUSION

- I. **Thesis Restatement:** Restate your thesis, perhaps in different words.
- II. **Main Point Review:** Remind your audience of the main points you discussed in your speech.
- III. **Closing Statement:** Provide closure in a memorable way.

WORKS CITED/BIBLIOGRAPHY: List all of the references you have used and cited in your speech.

This template does not have to be copied verbatim. Every speech has its own unique structure. See for example, the outlines for the sample speeches in Appendices A (p. 226) and B (p. 231).

FIGURE 12-2 Speech Outline Template

Creating the Introduction

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 12.4: Develop an effective introduction.

The introduction is probably the most important part of your speech. Listeners form their impression of a speaker early. It is therefore essential to make those few moments at the beginning of your speech work to your advantage.



There are five functions of the speech **introduction**. It serves to capture the audience's attention, preview the main points, set the mood and tone of the speech, demonstrate the importance of the topic, and establish credibility.

Capture attention.

There are several ways to capture an audience's attention. *Tips & Reminders* on the next page shows how you might capture an audience's attention in a speech titled "Communication Between Plants and Humans."

Preview the main points.

After you capture the attention of the audience, an effective introduction will almost always state the speaker's thesis and give the listeners an idea of the upcoming main points.

- Sometimes your preview of main points will be straightforward:

"I have three points to discuss: They are _____, _____, and _____.

- Sometimes you will not want to refer directly to your main points in your introduction. Perhaps you want to create suspense or a humorous effect, or perhaps you are stalling for time to win over a hostile audience. In that case, you might preview only your thesis:

"I am going to say a few words about _____."

"Did you ever wonder about _____?"

"_____ is one of the most important issues facing us today."

Set the tone of your speech.

The introduction is where you establish the mood of your speech. For example, in the sample speech in [Appendix B](#) of this book, Emma González began her speech with a solemn moment of silence. Sabrina Singh, a student at Hofstra University, began her speech on end-of-life-care discussions this way:

*Sara Monopoli was expecting her first child when she learned she was going to die. . . . The question then became, how should Sara and her doctors proceed as time was running out? Put another way, if you had metastatic cancer, what would you want your doctors to do?*¹³

Demonstrate the importance of your topic to your audience.

Your audience members will listen to you more carefully if your speech relates to them as individuals. Based on your audience analysis, you should state directly *why* your topic is of importance to your audience members. For example, Stephanie Hamilton, a student at North Dakota State University, presented a speech about loopholes in the justice system when crimes of violence occur on cruise ships. After telling the story of a rape aboard ship, she established the importance of her topic this way:

*Each year, millions of people take to the seas on cruises. Many of us have taken cruises of our own or plan to take one someday, and practically everyone knows at least someone who has taken a cruise. Even if we will never take a cruise, we are a part of society and a possible target for crime. If someone were found guilty of a crime, would we want them free? That is exactly what is happening without laws of recourse in place for our protection. We don't need to let our family, friends, neighbors or ourselves be taken advantage of and never given justice.*¹⁴

Establish credibility.

One final consideration for your introduction is to establish your credibility to speak about your topic. One way to do this is to be well prepared. Another is to appear confident as soon as you face your audience. A third technique is to tell your audience about your personal experience with the topic, in order to establish why it is important to you.

Chapter 14 will examine the concept of credibility in more detail, especially in terms of persuasive speeches. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

9 Ways to Capture the Audience's Attention

1. Refer to the audience.

The technique of referring to the audience is especially effective if it is complimentary: “Julio’s speech last week about how animals communicate was so interesting that I decided to explore a related topic: whether people can communicate with plants!”

2. Refer to the occasion.

A reference to the occasion could allude to the event of your speech: “Our assignment is to focus on an aspect of *human* communication. Given this guideline, it seems appropriate to talk about whether humans can communicate with plants.”

3. Refer to the relationship between the audience and the subject.

“It’s fair to say that all of us here believe it’s important to care for our environment. What you’ll learn today will make you care about that environment in a whole new way.”

4. Refer to something familiar to the audience.

Most of us have talked to our pets. Today, you'll learn that there are other conversational partners around the house."

5. Cite a startling fact or opinion.

"See that lilac bush outside the window? At this very moment, it might be reacting to the joys and anxieties that you are experiencing in this classroom." Or "There is now actual scientific evidence that plants appreciate human company, kind words, and classical music."

6. Ask a question.

"Have you ever wondered why some people seem able to grow beautiful, healthy plants effortlessly, whereas others couldn't make a weed grow in the best soil? Perhaps it's because they have better relationships with those plants."

7. Tell an anecdote.

"The other night, while taking a walk in the country, I happened on a small garden that was rich with vegetation. But it wasn't the lushness of the plants that caught my eye. There, in the middle of the garden, was a man who was talking quite animatedly to a giant sunflower."

8. Use a quotation.

"Max Thornton, the naturalist, recently said, 'Psychobiology has proven that plants can communicate. Now humans need to learn how to listen to them.'"

9. Tell an (appropriate) joke.

"We once worried about people who talked to plants, but that's no longer the case. Now we only worry if the plants talk back."

Designing Conclusions and Transitions

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 12.5:** Develop an effective conclusion and integrate smooth transitions.

If the introduction is the most important part of your speech, the conclusion and your transitions are a close second and third. Listeners tend to remember best what they hear last, and they tend to understand main points when they are tied together well.

The Conclusion

The conclusion, like the introduction, is an especially important part of your speech. The conclusion has three essential functions: to restate the thesis, to review your main points, and to provide a memorable final remark.

You can review your thesis either by repeating it or by paraphrasing it. Or, you might devise a striking summary statement for your conclusion to help the audience remember your thesis. Grant Anderson, a student at Minnesota State University, gave a speech against the policy of rejecting blood donations from gay and lesbian individuals. He ended his conclusion with this statement:

The gay community still has a whole host of issues to contend with, but together all of us can take a step forward by recognizing this unjust and discriminatory measure. So stand up and raise whatever arm they

*poke you in to draw blood and say “Blood is Blood” no matter who you are.*¹⁵

Grant’s statement was concise but memorable.

Transitions

Transitions are phrases that connect ideas in your speech by showing how each idea relates to the other. They keep your message moving forward by referring to previous and upcoming points and showing how they relate to one another and the thesis. Transitions usually sound something like this:

“Like [previous point], another important consideration in [topic] is [upcoming point].”

“But _____ isn’t the only thing we have to worry about.
_____ is even more potentially dangerous.”

“Yes, the problem is obvious. But what are the solutions? Well, one possible solution is . . .”

Sometimes a transition includes an internal review (a restatement of preceding points), an internal preview (a look ahead to upcoming points), or both:

“So far we’ve discussed _____, _____, and
_____. Our next points are _____,
_____, and _____. ●



PAUSE TO REFLECT

How Did You Come to That Conclusion?

1. Think back to an effective speech that you heard, and then search for the transcript online. On close inspection, did the conclusion play an important role in helping you recall this speech as effective?

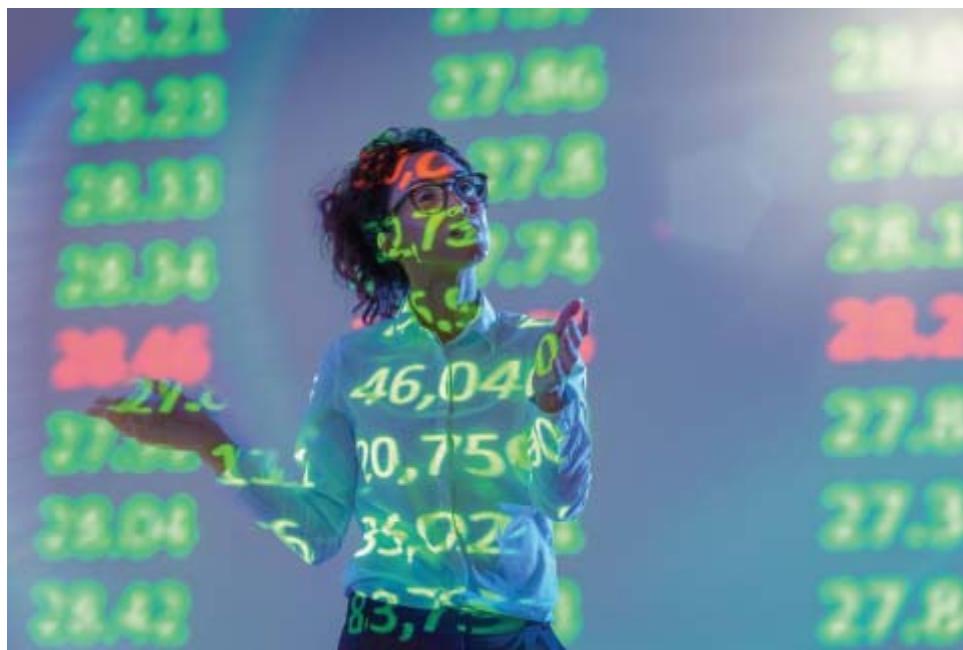
2. In what way did the speaker try to make the conclusion effective? Why did it affect you the way it did?

Types of Supporting Material



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 12.6: Choose supporting material that makes your ideas clear, memorable, and convincing.

It is important to organize ideas clearly and logically. But clarity and logic by themselves won't guarantee that you'll amuse, enlighten, or persuade others; these results call for the use of supporting materials. The facts and information that back up and prove your ideas and opinions are the flesh that fills out the skeleton of your speech.



Supporting material clarifies your ideas, proves your points, and generally makes your speech more interesting and memorable. Supporting material can take the form of definitions, examples, statistics, analogies/comparison–contrast, anecdotes, and quotations/testimonies.

Definitions

It's a good idea to give your audience members definitions of your key terms, especially if those terms are unfamiliar to them or are being used in an unusual way. A good definition is simple and concise. In the sample speech in [Appendix A](#) of this book, Marily Oppezzo defines “brainstorming” in one phrase: “Coming up with a new idea.”

Examples

An **example** is a specific case that is used to demonstrate a general idea. Examples can be either factual or hypothetical, personal or borrowed. Anthony Adams, a student at Monmouth College, used the following example in his speech “On Neurodiversity and Race”:

Kayleb Moon-Robinson was in the sixth grade when he was arrested for, charged with, and convicted of a felony for pushing away an officer who came to arrest him for . . . kicking a trash can. Kayleb is both autistic and Black, and serves as a grim reminder of the consequences of the intersection between race and neurotypicality.¹⁶

Hypothetical examples can often be more powerful than factual examples, because hypothetical examples ask audience members to imagine something, thus making them active participants in the thought. Stephanie Wideman of the University of West Florida used a hypothetical example to start off her speech on oil prices:

The year is 2020. One day you are asked not to come into work, not because of a holiday, but instead because there is not enough energy available to power your office. You see, it is not that the power is out, but that they are out of power.¹⁷

Statistics

Statistics are numbers that are arranged or organized to show that a fact or principle is true for a large percentage of cases. Statistics are actually collections of examples, which is why they are often more effective as proof than are isolated examples. Fernando Chivela, a student at Methodist University in North Carolina, used statistics in his speech about depression among college students to make two important points:

*According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, depression is a serious medical illness that negatively affects how we feel, the way we think, and how we act. The 2016 study, “Mental Health in College by the Numbers,” found that 44% of American college students reported having symptoms of depression; 75% of these students did not seek help for mental health problems. Why? Because according to the American Psychiatric Association, depression is still seen as weakness—in other words, it is still highly stigmatized.*¹⁸

Because statistics can be powerful proof, you should make sure that they make sense and that they come from a credible source. You should also cite the source of the statistic when you use it. And to achieve maximum effect, you should reduce the statistic to a concrete image if possible. For example, \$1 billion in \$100 bills would be about the same height as a sixty-story building. Using concrete images such as this will make your statistics more than “just numbers” when you use them. One observer expressed the idea of Bill Gates’s wealth by combining statistics with a memorable analogy:

*Examine Bill Gates’s wealth compared to yours: Consider the average American of reasonable but modest wealth. Perhaps he has a net worth of \$100,000. Mr. Gates’s worth is 400,000 times larger. Which means that if something costs \$100,000 to him, to Bill it’s as though it costs 25 cents. So for example, you might think a new Lamborghini Diablo would cost \$250,000, but in Bill Gates dollars that’s 63 cents.*¹⁹

Analogies/Comparison–Contrast

We use **analogies**, or comparisons, all the time, often in the form of figures of speech, such as similes and metaphors. A simile is a direct comparison that usually uses *like* or *as*, whereas a metaphor is an implied comparison that does not use *like* or *as*. So if you said that the rush of refugees from a war-torn country was “like a tidal wave,” you would be using a simile. If you said “a tidal wave of refugees,” you would be using a metaphor.

Analogies are extended metaphors. They can be used to compare or contrast an unknown concept with a known one. For example, here’s how one writer made her point against separate Academy Awards for men and women:

*Many hours into the 82nd Academy Awards ceremony this Sunday, the Oscar for best actor will go to Morgan Freeman, Jeff Bridges, George Clooney, Colin Firth, or Jeremy Renner. Suppose, however, that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented separate honors for best white actor and best non-white actor, and that Mr. Freeman was prohibited from competing against the likes of Mr. Clooney and Mr. Bridges. Surely, the Academy would be derided as intolerant and out of touch; public outcry would swiftly ensure that Oscar nominations never again fell along racial lines. Why, then, is it considered acceptable to segregate nominations by sex, offering different Oscars for best actor and best actress?*²⁰

Anecdotes

An **anecdote** is a brief story with a point, often (but not always) based on personal experience. The word *anecdote* comes from a Greek term meaning “unpublished item.” Aaron Sorkin, a film and television producer, used an anecdote to make an important point in a commencement address at Syracuse University:

I’ve made some bad decisions. I lost a decade of my life to cocaine addiction. You know how I got addicted to cocaine? I tried it. The problem with drugs is that they work, right up until the moment that they decimate your life. Try cocaine, and you’ll become addicted to it. Become addicted to cocaine, and you will either be dead, or you will wish you were dead, but it will only be one or the other. My big fear was that I wasn’t going to be able to write without it. There was no way I was going to be able to write without it. Last year I

*celebrated my 11-year anniversary of not using coke. (applause) Thank you. In that 11 years, I've written three television series, three movies, a Broadway play, won the Academy Award and taught my daughter all the lyrics to "Pirates of Penzance." I have good friends.*²¹

Quotations/Testimony

Using a familiar, artistically stated saying will enable you to take advantage of someone else's memorable wording. For example, if you were giving a speech on personal integrity, you might quote Mark Twain, who said, "Always do right. This will gratify some people, and astonish the rest." A quotation like that fits Alexander Pope's definition of "true wit": "What was often thought, but ne'er so well expressed."

You can also use quotations as **testimony**, to prove a point by using the support of someone who is more authoritative or experienced on the subject than you are. When Rajiv Khanna, a student at Newman University in Kansas, wanted to prove that the distortion of history was a serious problem, he used testimony this way:

*Eugene Genovese, Professor Emeritus of History at Emory University, states in the July 11 issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education, "The distortion of history remains a serious problem to the academic community and the country at large." He continues, "As individuals who are history-making animals, we remain rooted in the past, and we are shaped by our society's version of its history."*²²

Sometimes testimony can be paraphrased. For example, when one business executive was talking on the subject of diversity, he used a conversation he had with Jesse Jackson Sr., an African American leader, as testimony:

*At one point in our conversation, Jesse talked about the stages of advancement toward a society where diversity is fully valued. He said the first stage was emancipation, the end of slavery. The second stage was the right to vote and the third stage was the political power to actively participate in government to be part of city hall, the Governor's office and Capitol Hill. Jesse was clearly focused, though, on the fourth stage which he described as the ability to participate fully in the prosperity that this nation enjoys. In other words, economic power.*²³

Styles of Support

Most of the forms of support discussed in the preceding section could be presented in either of two ways: through narration or through citation. **Narration** involves telling a story with your information. You put it in the form of a small drama, with a beginning, middle, and end. For example, Abbie Perry, a student at the University of Nebraska, Omaha, used narration in her speech on the dangers of alcoholism:

*Melissa Carter is a single mother of three and works overtime to make ends meet. Every night she makes dinner and stops at a store to pick up a bottle of wine. But when she gets home and starts drinking, she can't stop. For years, Melissa has been battling alcohol addiction. She told me in a personal interview last week that her binges would get so bad at times she once ended up in a hospital with a .5 blood alcohol level and is lucky to be alive.*²⁴

Citation, unlike narration, is a simple statement of the facts. Citation is shorter and more precise than narration, in the sense that the source is carefully stated. Citation should always include such phrases as "According to the July 25, 2018, edition of *Time* magazine," or "As Mr. Smith made clear in an interview last April 24." Abbie Perry cited testimony later in her speech on alcoholism:

*In her 2016 book, A Prescription for Alcoholics, author Linda Burlison reminds us that there are medical reasons for addiction and approved medications to treat them. But we don't prescribe them, making alcoholism the most dangerous disease in the United States that doesn't get treated.*²⁵

Some forms of support, such as anecdotes, are inherently more likely to be expressed as narration. Statistics, on the other hand, are nearly always cited rather than narrated. However, when you are using examples,

quotation/testimony, definitions, and analogies, you often have a choice. ●



PAUSE TO REFLECT

What Kind of a Gatherer Are You?

1. What is your own style of gathering material for a school assignment, whether it be a speech, a paper, or simply curiosity about something that came up in class? Which type of supporting material do you think you prefer, and use most often? _____

2. Think ahead to a speech you gave or might give in this class or elsewhere. What personal experiences do you have that would make an interesting example or anecdote? _____

3. When speaking to a friend, did you ever search online for an answer to a question that came up in your conversation? What was it about the question that made you curious enough to look it up? _____

COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS

Preparing Speeches



Analyzing Your Audience

- Audience demographics are used to analyze characteristics of your audience that can help you mention specific ways your information will be interesting or useful to your listeners.
- Audience attitudes and beliefs are important, but experts in audience analysis suggest that speakers concentrate on values because they are more likely to be shared by large numbers of people.
- Audience perception of the occasion, in a college class, requires a high level of thought and intelligence without being boring or humorless.
- Consider your audience members' political affiliations, and how they differ from your own.

Planning Your Speech

- Choose a topic that is appropriate to you, your audience, and the occasion.
- Define your purpose with a well-worded purpose statement.
- Write a purpose statement that is result oriented, specific, and realistic.
- State your thesis as the most important take-away for your audience.
- Gather information that is credible, objective, and current.
- Beware of fake news and misinformation!

3 Ways to Evaluate Online Information

- Is the information trustworthy?
- Is the information unbiased?
- Is the information up to date?

Structuring Your Speech

- Outline your speech as you plan it so your ideas will be effectively organized.
- Use notes to help you remember key information while you are speaking.
- Organize your ideas in a logical pattern that will help you effectively develop your thesis.

An Introduction Should . . .

- Capture the audience's attention.
- Preview your main points.
- Set the mood and tone of your speech.
- Demonstrate the importance of your topic.
- Establish your credibility.

9 Ways to Capture the Audience's Attention

- Refer to the audience.
- Refer to the occasion.
- Refer to the relationship between the audience and the subject.
- Refer to something familiar to the audience.
- Cite a startling fact or opinion.
- Ask a question.
- Tell an anecdote.
- Use a quotation.
- Tell an (appropriate) joke.

Conclusions and Transitions

- Your conclusion should restate your thesis, review your main points, and provide a memorable final remark.
- Transitions connect the ideas in your speech by showing how each idea relates to the other.



Types of Supporting Material

- Definitions
- Examples
- Statistics
- Analogies/comparison–contrast
- Anecdotes
- Quotations/testimony

Style of Supporting Material

- Narration (telling a story with your information)
- Citation (a simple statement of the facts)

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Show Your Communication Know-How



12.1: Understand the audience in a given speaking situation.

Think about the class you are in now. If your classmates were an audience, which of their characteristics would you consider when planning a speech to deliver to them? What would be their purpose in listening and their demographics, attitudes, beliefs, values, and perception of the occasion?

KEY TERMS: audience analysis, demographics, attitudes, beliefs, values

● **12.2: Follow the steps involved with planning a successful speech.**

What topic would you choose for the next speech you will or would present in your class?

What would your purpose be? How would you formulate your thesis statement?

KEY TERMS: general purpose, purpose statement, specific purpose, thesis statement, confirmation bias, filter bubble

● **12.3: Create an effective and well-organized speech structure and outline.**

Describe the process you would use to structure your next speech for this class.

KEY TERMS: basic speech structure, working outline, formal outline

● **12.4: Develop an effective introduction.**

In your next speech introduction, how will you gain your audience's attention, preview your main points, set the mood and tone of the speech, demonstrate the importance of your topic to the audience, and establish your credibility?

KEY TERM: introduction



● **12.5: Develop an effective conclusion and integrate smooth transitions.**

Outline the main points you might include if you were writing a speech about the process you follow to study for a test. How would you use transitions to show how one point relates to the others?

KEY TERM: transitions



● **12.6: Choose supporting material that makes your ideas clear, memorable, and convincing.**

Think about your next speech for this class. How could you use each of the following: definitions of key terms, examples, statistics, analogies, anecdotes, quotations, and testimony?

KEY TERMS: [example](#), [hypothetical example](#), [statistics](#), [analogy](#), [anecdote](#), [testimony](#), [narration](#), [citation](#)

13 Presenting Speeches

Stage Fright

What causes stage fright?

How can you beat stage fright?

Visual Aids

Why should you use visual aids?

What are the best types of visual aids to use?

Practice, Practice, Practice

What's the best type of delivery for your speech?

What are the best strategies and procedures for practicing a speech?



Managing Speech Anxiety

- LEARNING OBJECTIVE 13.1: Understand the sources of debilitating stage fright and ways to overcome speech anxiety.

The terror that strikes many beginning speakers at the mere thought of giving a speech is commonly known as *stage fright*, and is called *speech anxiety* by communication scholars.¹ Whatever term you choose, it's important to realize that this fear of speaking in front of others can be managed.



Facilitative and Debilitative Anxiety

The first step in feeling less apprehensive about speaking is to realize that a certain amount of nervousness is not only natural but also helpful. Just as totally relaxed actors or musicians aren't likely to perform at the top of their potential, speakers think more rapidly and express themselves more energetically when they experience **facilitative speech anxiety**.

It is only when the level of anxiety is intense that it becomes unhelpful in two ways. First, the strong emotion keeps you from thinking clearly.² This has been shown to be a problem even in the preparation process: Students who are highly anxious about giving a speech often find the preliminary steps, including research and organization, to be more difficult.³ Second, intense fear leads to an urge to do something, anything, to make the problem go away. This urge to escape often causes a speaker to speed up delivery, which in turn leads to mistakes, which only add to the speaker's anxiety.

A certain amount of nervousness is normal:
Make it work for you.

Debilitative speech anxiety occurs when an intense level of apprehension about speaking before an audience results in poor performance. The two main sources of debilitative speech anxiety are past negative experiences and irrational thinking.⁴

Past Negative Experiences and Irrational Thinking

Many of us are uncomfortable doing *anything* in public, especially if we know others are going to be evaluating our talents and abilities. An unpleasant experience in one type of performance can cause you to expect a future similar situation to be unpleasant.⁵ You might come to expect paralyzing mental blocks, for example, or rude audience members. These expectations can become reality through the self-fulfilling prophecies discussed in [Chapter 2](#).

A traumatic failure at an earlier speech and low self-esteem from critical parents during childhood are common examples of experiences that can cause later speech anxiety. But not everyone who has bungled a speech or had critical parents is debilitated in the future. To understand why some people are affected more strongly than others by past experiences, we need to consider another cause of speech anxiety: irrational thinking. ●

4 Types of Irrational Fears About Public Speaking

Cognitive psychologists argue that it is not events that cause people to feel nervous but rather the beliefs they have about those events. Certain irrational beliefs leave people feeling unnecessarily apprehensive. Psychologist Albert Ellis lists several such beliefs, or examples of **irrational thinking**, which we will call “fallacies” because of their illogical nature.⁶

1. Fallacy of Catastrophic Failure

People who succumb to the **fallacy of catastrophic failure** assume that, if something bad can happen, it probably will. One way to escape this fallacy is to take a more realistic look at the situation. Will audience members really boo you off the stage? Will they really think your ideas are stupid? Even if you do forget your remarks for a moment, will that make your entire speech a disaster? It helps to remember that nervousness is more apparent to the speaker than to the audience.⁷ Beginning public speakers, when congratulated for their poise during a speech, are apt to say, “Are you kidding? I was dying up there.”

2. Fallacy of Perfection

Speakers who succumb to the **fallacy of perfection** expect to deliver a flawless presentation. While such a standard of perfection might serve as a target and a source of inspiration, it is not realistic to believe you will write and deliver a perfect speech, especially as a beginner. And, remember, audiences don’t expect you to be perfect either.

The hardest but most important time to think rationally is when you’re nervous.

3. Fallacy of Approval

The **fallacy of approval** is based on the idea that it is vital to gain the approval of everyone in the audience. It is rare that even the best speakers please everyone, especially on topics that are at all controversial. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, you can’t please all the people all the time, and it is irrational to expect you will.

4. Fallacy of Overgeneralization

The **fallacy of overgeneralization** might also be labeled the fallacy of exaggeration, because it occurs when a person blows one poor experience out of proportion, or when a speaker treats occasional lapses as if they were the rule rather than the exception. This sort of mistake usually involves extreme labels, such as:

“I always forget what I want to say.”

“I can never come up with a good topic.”

“I can’t do anything right.”



PAUSE TO REFLECT

Are You Thinking Rationally?

- When you get up to give a speech, do you experience any of the fallacies just discussed? _____

-
2. How can you use a previous negative experience to your advantage in your next speaking opportunity? _____



ASK YOURSELF *Do You Suffer from Speech Anxiety?*

Answer these questions to measure your speech anxiety.

- _____ 1. What is your overall level of anxiety about speechmaking?
 - a. What anxiety? I love being the center of attention.
 - b. I won't lie. I don't relish the idea of making a speech, but I'll be fine as long as I'm prepared.
 - c. I am terrified! I would literally rather do anything else besides give a speech.
- _____ 2. Are you in control of your speech anxiety, or is your speech anxiety in control of you?
 - a. I'm definitely in control. I've got nerves of steel!
 - b. I feel like I'm in control some of the time, but anxiety could take over if something goes wrong.
 - c. What control? Anxiety definitely takes over when it comes to making speeches.
- _____ 3. What level of sweating/sweaty palms do you experience while speaking?
 - a. I'm dry as can be. No sweaty palms here.
 - b. I might sweat a little but it's nothing that a little deodorant or hand washing won't cure!
 - c. Get me another shirt, please! I tend to sweat a ton when I'm speaking.
- _____ 4. What level of rapid breathing do you experience while speaking?
 - a. None. I'm breathing slow and steady . . . it's like meditation to me.
 - b. Sometimes my breathing speeds up, but if I take a few deep breaths I can calm right down.
 - c. Anyone have an oxygen mask? I feel like I am hyperventilating!
- _____ 5. What level of restless energy do you experience while speaking?
 - a. I'm in the zone, poised and ready with just the right amount of energy.
 - b. A little. I just want to get started and get it over with.
 - c. I feel like I need to run a marathon in the opposite direction of this speaking engagement.
- _____ 6. Do you ever forget what you want to say while speaking?
 - a. Never. I know exactly what I want to say and I say it.

- b. Sometimes I forget the exact words I practiced, but as long as I have my notes handy I can quickly get back on track.
- c. Did I even write a speech? I go blank . . . like I didn't even prepare at all.

INTERPRETING YOUR RESPONSES !

Give yourself one point for every A, two points for every B, and three points for every C.

6 to 9 Points You have nerves of steel. You love being the center of attention and having everyone's eyes on you, and you're probably a natural public speaker. Regardless, the strategies in the next section can help you be even better.

10 to 13 Points You are the typical public speaker. While it's not your favorite thing to do, you will likely be okay as long as you are well prepared. Read the strategies discussed in the next section to learn how to further improve your skills.

14 to 18 Points It's probably no surprise to you that you experience a significant amount of anxiety about public speaking. But the good news is you can use the strategies in the next section to get over your fears and get better. Believe it or not, some of the greatest speakers of all time have considered themselves highly anxious.

TIPS & REMINDERS

5

Ways to Overcome Debilitative Speech Anxiety

While irrational thinking or bad past experiences may make you apprehensive about speaking, you can take several steps to manage and often minimize speech anxiety.

1. Use nervousness to your advantage.

A little nervousness can actually help you deliver a successful speech. Being completely calm can take away the passion that is one element of a good speech. It's important to control your anxiety but not eliminate it completely.

2. Understand the difference between rational and irrational fears.

Fears based on irrational thinking aren't constructive. It's not realistic to expect that you'll deliver a perfect speech, and it's not productive or rational to indulge in catastrophic fantasies about what might go wrong. If you haven't prepared for a speech, however, that is a legitimate and rational fear.

3. Maintain a receiver orientation.

Paying too much attention to your own feelings, even when you're feeling good about yourself, will take energy away from communicating with your listeners. Concentrate on your audience members rather than on yourself. Focus your energy on keeping them interested and on making sure they understand you.

What's the best way to deal with your own stage fright?

4. Keep a positive attitude.

Build and maintain a positive attitude toward your audience, your speech, and yourself as a speaker. Some communication consultants suggest that public speakers should concentrate on three statements immediately before speaking:

I'm glad I have the chance to talk about this topic.

I know what I'm talking about.

I care about my audience.

Repeating these statements (until you believe them) can help you maintain a positive attitude.

Another technique for building a positive attitude is known as **visualization**.⁸ This technique has been used successfully with athletes. It requires you to use your imagination to visualize the successful completion of your speech. Visualization can help make the self-fulfilling prophecy discussed in [Chapter 2](#) work in your favor.

5. Be prepared!

Preparation is the most important key to controlling speech anxiety. You can feel confident if you know from practice that your remarks are well organized and supported and your delivery is smooth. Researchers have determined that anxiety peaks just before speaking, reaches its second highest level at the time the assignment is announced and explained, and is lowest while you prepare your speech.⁹ You should take advantage of this relatively low-stress time to work through the problems that would tend to make you nervous during the actual speech. For example, if your anxiety is based on a fear of forgetting what you are going to say, make sure that your note cards are complete and effective and that you have practiced your speech thoroughly. If, on the other hand, your great fear is “sounding stupid,” then get started early with lots of research.

Choosing a Type of Delivery

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 13.2:** Distinguish among four different types of speech delivery.

One of your first considerations in being prepared is selecting the right way to deliver your speech. There are four basic types of delivery: extemporaneous, impromptu, manuscript, and memorized. Each type creates a different impression and is appropriate under different conditions. Any speech may incorporate more than one of these types of delivery.



Extemporaneous

An **extemporaneous speech** is planned in advance but presented in a direct, spontaneous manner.

Extemporaneous speeches are conversational in tone, which means that they give the audience members the impression that you are talking to them, directly and honestly. Extemporaneous speaking is the most common type of delivery in the “outside” world, and for most instructors, it is the *only* type of delivery allowed in the classroom.



Impromptu

An **impromptu speech** is given off the top of one’s head, without preparation. This delivery style is spontaneous by definition, but is necessary for informal talks, group discussions, and comments on others’ speeches. It is also a highly effective training aid that teaches you to think on your feet and organize your thoughts quickly.



Manuscript

Manuscript speeches are read word for word from a prepared text. They are necessary when you are speaking for the record, as when speaking at legal proceedings or when presenting scientific findings. The greatest disadvantage of a manuscript speech is the lack of spontaneity that may result.



Memorized

Memorized speeches are those learned by heart. Like manuscript speeches, they may be necessary on special occasions. They are often used in oratory contests and also as training devices for memory. Of all the delivery types, memorized speeches are the most difficult. And, because of their excessive formality, they may often be the least effective. ●

Selecting Visual Aids

● **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 13.3:** Describe the different types of visual aids that may be used in a speech.

No matter which type of delivery you use, another integral part of the preparation process is deciding whether or not to use visual aids. **Visual aids** are graphic devices that may be used to illustrate and support speech ideas. There are many types of visual aids. The most common are objects and models, diagrams, and word and number charts.

Objects and Models

Sometimes the most effective visual aid is the actual *object* you are talking about. This is true when you are talking about something that is portable enough to carry and simple enough to use during a demonstration, such as a small piece of weight-training equipment if you are talking about physical training. **Models** are scaled representations of the object you are discussing and are used when that object is too large (the new campus arts complex) or too small (a DNA molecule) or simply doesn't exist anymore (a *Tyrannosaurus rex*).

Diagrams

A **diagram** is any kind of line drawing that shows the most important properties of an object. Blueprints and architectural plans are common types of diagrams, as are maps and organizational charts. A diagram is most appropriate when you need to simplify a complex object or phenomenon and make it more understandable to the audience. **Figure 13.1** is a diagram depicting the true size of Africa. By superimposing the United States, China, India, Japan and most of Europe over an outline of Africa, it demonstrates that the continent is larger than those land masses combined. Coincidentally, **Figure 13.1** is also a **pictogram**—a visual aid that conveys

its meaning through images of an actual object. The sample informative speech in [Appendix A](#) of this book uses a number of pictograms.

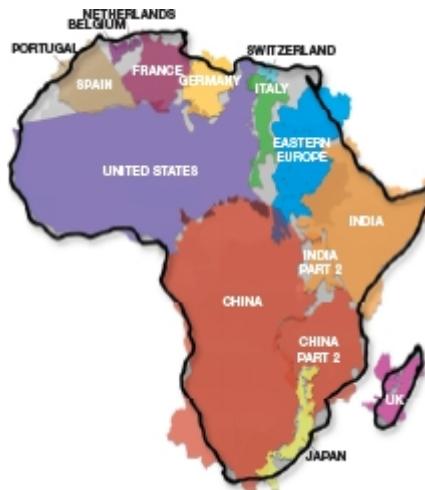


FIGURE 13.1 The True Size of Africa

Word and Number Charts

Word charts and **number charts** are visual depictions of key facts or statistics. Your audience will understand and remember these facts and numbers better if you present them. Many speakers arrange the main points of their speech, often in outline form, as a word chart. Other speakers list their main statistics. Charts can depict just words, just numbers, or a combination of the two. In the informative speech in [Appendix A](#), Marily Oppezzo used a word chart that included a cartoon and animated stick figure to list her suggestions for brainstorming.

- *Pie charts.* **Pie charts** are shaped as circles with wedges cut into them. They are used to show divisions of any whole: where your tax dollars go, percentages of the population involved in various occupations, and so on. Pie charts are often made up of percentages that add up to 100%. Usually, the wedges of the pie are organized from largest to smallest. The pie chart in [Figure 13.2](#) represents one's person's perception of the spending patterns of a typical college student.
- *Bar charts.* **Bar charts** compare two or more values by stretching them out in the form of horizontal rectangles. **Column charts**, such as the one shown in [Figure 13.3](#), perform the same function as bar charts but use vertical rectangles.
- *Line charts.* A **line chart** maps out the direction of a moving point; it is ideally suited for showing changes over time. The time element is usually placed on the horizontal axis so that the line visually represents the trend over time. [Figure 13.4](#) is a line chart.
- *Flow charts.* A **flow chart** is a diagram that depicts a process with boxes and arrows that represent the steps in a process. [Figure 13.5](#) represents one speaker's perception of how to decide what to watch on Netflix. ●

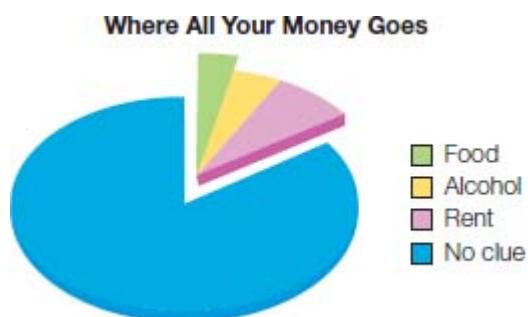


FIGURE 13.2 Pie Chart

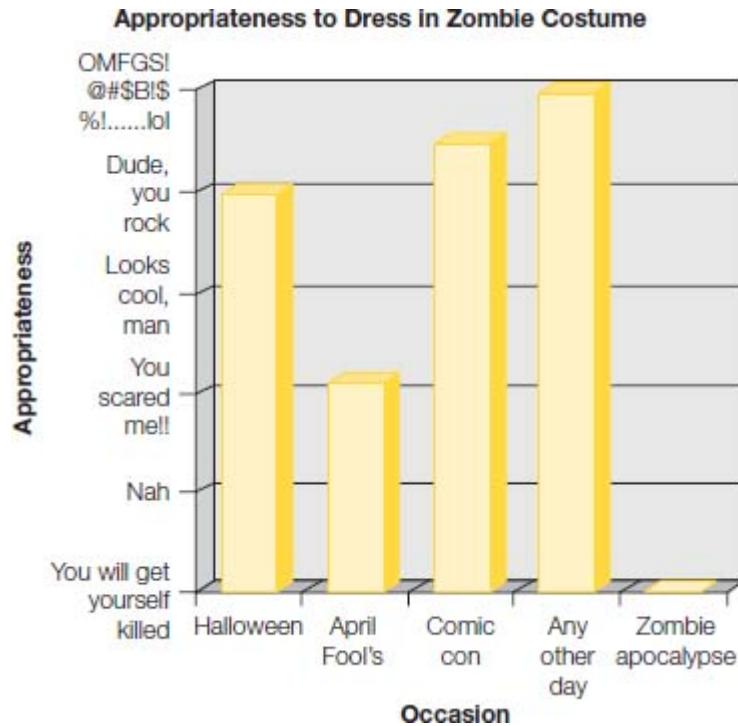


FIGURE 13.3 Column Chart

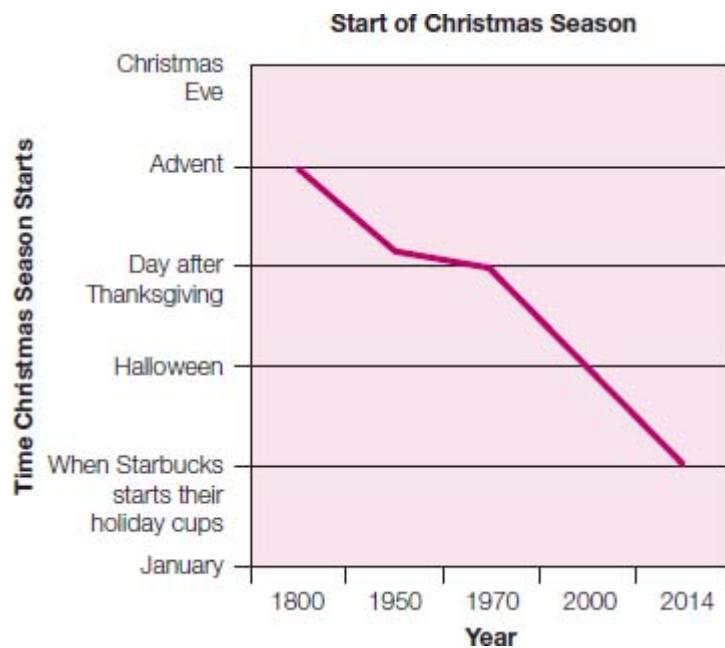


FIGURE 13.4 Line Chart

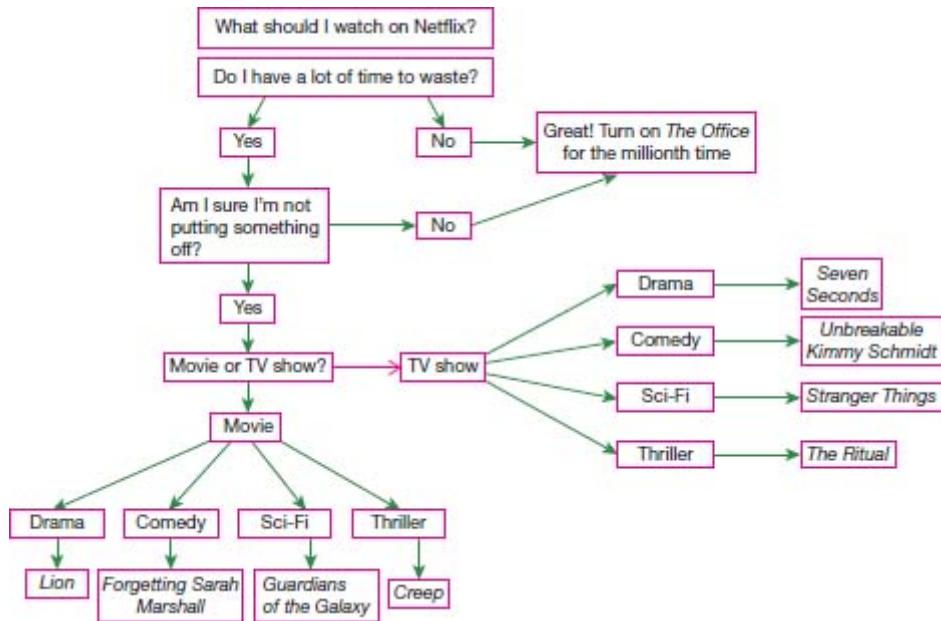


FIGURE 13.5 Flow Chart

Using Visual Aids

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 13.4: Understand how to use visual aids effectively.

Obviously, many types and variations of visual aids can be used in any speech. And a variety of materials can be used to present these aids. These presentation materials have advantages and disadvantages. See the *Tips & Reminders* at the end of this section for guidelines on effectively using visual aids and also for practicing your speech delivery.

Chalkboards, Whiteboards, and Polymer Marking Surfaces

The major advantage of these write-as-you-go media is their spontaneity. With them you can create your visual aid as you speak, including items generated from audience responses. Along with the odor of whiteboard markers and the squeaking of chalk, a major disadvantage of these media is the difficulty of preparing visual aids on them in advance, especially if several speeches are scheduled in the same room at the same hour.

Flip Pads and Poster Boards

Flip pads are like oversized writing tablets attached to a portable easel. Flip pads enable you to combine the spontaneity of the whiteboard with a portability that enables you to prepare them in advance. If you plan to use your visuals more than once, you can create them ahead of time on rigid poster board and display them on the same type of easel. However, flip pads and poster boards are bulky, and preparing professional-looking exhibits on them requires a fair amount of artistic ability.

Handouts

The major advantage of handouts is that audience members can take away the information they contain after your speech. For this reason, handouts are excellent memory and reference aids. The major disadvantage is that they are doubly distracting when distributed during a speech: first, when they are passed out, and second,

when they are in front of audience members while you have gone on to something else. It's best, therefore, to pass them out at the end of the speech so audience members can take them when they leave.

Projectors

When your audience is too large to view handheld images, projectors are an ideal tool. Digital projectors allow you to display a computer screen directly, making them the most immediate way to share software presentations. Projectors allow you to use room-sized images, rather than displaying images on screens that are too small for audiences to see well, such as laptops.

Other Electronic Media

A wide range of other electronic media are available as presentation aids. Audio and video files can supply information that could not be presented any other way. For example, you might include a brief YouTube clip to show the audience what divers found in an underwater shipwreck, if that's what your speech is about. But in most cases, you should use video and audio clips sparingly. The general rule when using these media is: *Don't let them get in the way of the direct, person-to-person contact that is the primary advantage of public speaking.*

Presentation Software

Several specialized programs exist just to produce visual aids. Among the most popular of these programs are Microsoft PowerPoint, Apple Keynote, Google Drive Presentation, and Prezi. These programs are known as slideware because they are composed of individual slides, arranged into **slide decks**. In its simplest form, presentation software lets you build an effective slide show out of your basic outline. You can choose color-coordinated backgrounds and consistent formatting that match the tone and purpose of your presentation. Most presentation software programs contain a clip art library that allows you to choose images to accompany your words. They also allow you to import images from outside sources and to build your own charts.

When you design visual aids with software, avoid making the content redundant with what you're saying—a phenomenon known as “death by PowerPoint.” Instead, use presentation software to present examples, illustrations, and key points that help your audience keep track of your ideas.

The sample informative speech in [Appendix A](#) uses a deck of PowerPoint slides that include clip art.

If you would like to learn more about using presentation software, you can find several Web-based tutorial programs online.¹⁰

TIPS & REMINDERS

5 *Rules for Using Visual Aids Effectively*

No matter which visual aids you use, you should talk to your audience, not to your visual aid. Some speakers become so wrapped up in their props that they turn their backs on their audience and sacrifice eye contact. Here are some additional guidelines.

1. Keep visual aids simple.

Your goal is to clarify, not confuse. Use only key words or phrases, not sentences. The “rule of seven” states that each exhibit you use should contain no more than seven lines of text, each with no more than seven words. Keep all printing horizontal. Omit all nonessential details.

2. Consider the size of visual aids.

Visual aids should be large enough for your entire audience to see at one time but portable enough for you to get them out of the way when they are no longer pertinent.

3. Make visual aids attractive.

Visual aids should be visually interesting and as neat as possible. If you don't have the necessary artistic or computer skills, try to get help from a friend or from the audiovisual center at your college.

4. Be sure visual aids are appropriate.

Visuals must be appropriate to all the components of the speaking situation—you, your audience, and your topic—and they must emphasize the point you are trying to make. Don't make the mistake of using a visual aid that looks good but has only a weak link to the point you want to make, such as showing a map of a city transit system while talking about the condition of the individual cars.

5. Be in control of your visual aids at all times.

Test all electronic media in advance, preferably in the room where you will speak. Just to be safe, have non-electronic backups ready. Be conservative when you choose demonstrations: Wild animals, chemical reactions, and gimmicks meant to shock a crowd can often backfire.

TIPS & REMINDERS

4 *Steps to Practicing a Speech*

Preparation is one of the keys to controlling speech anxiety, and one of the best ways to be prepared is to practice. To get to know your material and feel comfortable with your presentation, we recommend that you go through these steps.

1. Present the speech to yourself.

"Talk through" the entire speech, including your examples and forms of support. Don't skip through parts of the speech as you practice by using placeholders such as "This is where I present my statistics."

2. Record yourself.

Because we hear our own voices partially through our cranial bone structure, we are sometimes surprised at what we sound like to others. Video is an effective way to gauge what you look and sound like.¹¹

Practice: The best way to beat stage fright before it occurs.

3. Present the speech in front of a small group of friends or relatives.¹²

A friendly audience can be honest without being discouraging!

4. Give the speech to at least one listener in the room (or a similar room) in which you will present the final speech.

It's good to get a feel for your actual venue, and to make sure there's enough ventilation.

Visual Aspects of Delivery

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 13.5: Understand the visual components of delivery and use them to improve your performance.

As audience members watch your speech, they will take into account the visual aspects of your delivery. They are more likely to trust your nonverbal communication than the words you speak. If you tell them, “It’s great to be here today,” but you stand slouched over with your hands in your pockets and a bored expression on your face, they are likely to discount what you say. If, instead, you approach a subject with genuine enthusiasm, your audience is likely to sense it and to feed off of that enthusiasm. You can show enthusiasm through the visual aspects of your delivery, including your appearance, movement, posture, facial expression, and eye contact.

Appearance

Appearance is not a presentation variable as much as a preparation variable. Some communication consultants suggest new clothes and new hairstyles for their clients. In case you consider any of these, be forewarned that you should be attractive to your audience but not flashy. Research suggests that audiences like speakers who are similar to them, but they prefer the similarity to be shown conservatively.¹³ Speakers, it seems, are perceived to be more credible when they look businesslike. Part of looking businesslike, of course, is looking like you took care in the preparation of your clothes and appearance.

Movement

The way you walk to the front of your audience will express your confidence and enthusiasm. And after you begin speaking, nervous energy can cause your body to shake and twitch, and that can be distressing both to you and to your audience. One way to control involuntary movement is to move voluntarily when you feel the need to move. Don’t feel that you have to stand in one spot or that all your gestures need to be carefully planned. Simply get involved in your message, and let your involvement create the motivation for your movement. That way, when you move, you will emphasize what you are saying in the same way you would emphasize it if you were talking to a group of friends.

Movement can also help you maintain contact with all members of your audience. Those closest to you will feel the greatest contact. This creates what is known as the “action zone” in a typical classroom—the center area at the front of the room. Movement enables you to extend this action zone, to include in it people who would otherwise remain uninvolved. Without overdoing it, you should feel free to move toward, away from, or from side to side in front of your audience.



Posture

Generally speaking, good posture means standing with your spine relatively straight, your shoulders relatively squared off, and your feet angled out to keep your body from falling over sideways. In other words, rather than standing at military attention, you should be comfortably erect.

Good posture can help you control nervousness by allowing you to breathe properly; when your brain receives enough oxygen, it's easier for you to think clearly. Good posture also increases audience contact

because audience members will feel that you are interested enough in them to stand formally, yet relaxed enough to be at ease with them.

Your nonverbal behavior can mean more to your audience than your words.

Make sure they match.



Facial Expression

The expression on your face can be more meaningful to an audience than the words you say. Try it yourself with a mirror. Say, “You’re a terrific audience,” for example, with a smirk, with a warm smile, with a deadpan expression, and then with a scowl. It just doesn’t mean the same thing. Like your movement, your facial expressions will reflect your genuine involvement with your message.

Your face matters.

The expression on your face can be more meaningful to an audience than the words you say.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is perhaps the most important nonverbal facet of delivery. Eye contact not only increases your direct contact with the audience but also can be used to help you control your nervousness. Direct eye contact is a form of reality testing. The most frightening aspect of speaking is the unknown. How will the audience react? Direct eye contact allows you to test your perception of the audience as you speak. By deliberately establishing contact with any apparently bored audience members, you might find that they are interested; they just aren’t showing that interest because they don’t think anyone is looking.

To maintain eye contact, you could try to meet the eyes of each member of your audience squarely at least once during any given presentation. After you have made definite eye contact, move on to another audience member. You can learn to do this quickly, so you can visually latch on to every member of a good-sized group in a relatively short time. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

6 *Tips for Online/Virtual Delivery of Speeches*

Increasingly, people may be asked to deliver online presentations, sometimes referred to as webinars (when they are interactive) and webcasts (when they are one-way). Many of the guidelines for presenting speeches in person apply to online presentations as well, but online presentations often use more visual aids. They also require a greater awareness of all the ingredients of effective online video, such as lighting, framing, and clear audio. Several online sites provide tutorials for giving online presentations, but here are just a few general guidelines:

1. Try out various web-conferencing platforms.

Collaborative software such as GoToMeeting or Skype enables you to see who is online and ensure that everyone is literally on the same slide.

2. Schedule a run-through before the actual event.

This will help you ensure the presentation is not too long or too short, and it will enable you to iron out any technical issues or glitches.

3. Use dynamic visuals.

Action shots are better than still images when possible. If you plan to show video, keep it short and on point.

4. Keep the slides simple.

Avoid slides with a lot of text.

5. Keep it entertaining.

Employ stories and/or humor to keep the audience engaged.

6. Start and end on time.

People are busy, and many may have other activities or meetings before or after your presentation; show them respect by sticking to the allotted time.

Auditory Aspects of Delivery

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 13.6:** Understand the auditory components of delivery and use them to improve your performance.

As you read in [Chapter 6](#), your paralanguage—the way you use your voice—says a good deal about you, especially about your sincerity and enthusiasm. Controlling your vocal characteristics will also decrease your nervousness. You can control your voice by recognizing and using appropriate volume, rate, pitch, and articulation.

Volume

The loudness of your voice is determined by the amount of air you push past the vocal folds in your throat. The key to controlling volume, then, is controlling the amount of air you use. The key to determining the right volume is audience contact. Your delivery should be loud enough so audience members can hear everything you say, but not so loud that they feel you are talking to someone in the next room. Too much volume is seldom the problem for beginning speakers. Usually they either are not loud enough or have a tendency to fade out or mumble at the end of a thought. Keep in mind that words you whisper or scream will be emphasized by their volume.



Rate

There is a range of personal differences in speaking speed, or **rate**. Daniel Webster, the 19th-century American statesman, is said to have spoken at around 90 words per minute, whereas one actor who is known for his fast-talking commercials speaks at about 250. Normal speaking speed is between 120 and 150 words per minute—about the same rate as a television newscaster would speak. If you talk much more slowly than that, you may lull your audience to sleep. Faster speaking rates are sometimes stereotypically associated with speaker competence,¹⁴ but if you speak too rapidly, you will be unintelligible. Once again, your involvement in your message is the key to achieving an effective rate. If you pause or speed up, your rate will suggest emphasis.



Pitch

The highness or lowness of your voice—**pitch**—is controlled by the frequency at which your vocal folds vibrate as you push air through them. Because taut vocal folds vibrate at a greater frequency, pitch is influenced by muscular tension. This explains why nervous speakers have a tendency occasionally to “squeak,” whereas relaxed speakers seem to be more in control.



Pitch will tend to follow rate and volume. As you speed up or become louder, your pitch will have a tendency to rise. If your range in pitch is too narrow, your voice will have a singsong quality. If it is too wide, you may sound overly dramatic. You should control your pitch so that your listeners believe you are talking with them rather than at them. Once again, your involvement in your message should take care of this naturally for you.

Articulation

The final auditory nonverbal behavior, articulation, is perhaps the most important. For our purposes here, **articulation** means pronouncing all the parts of all the necessary words and nothing else. Careful articulation means using your lips, teeth, tongue, and jaw to bite off your words, cleanly and separately, one at a time. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

4 Ways to Improve Your Articulation

A considerable amount of research suggests that regional dialects can cause negative impressions.¹⁵ However, we do not seek to condemn regional or ethnic dialects here. Instead, what follows are some tips for careful, not standardized, articulation.

1. Say the entire word.

The most common mistake in articulation is **deletion**, or leaving off part of a word. The most common deletions occur at the ends of words, especially *-ing* words. *Going*, *doing*, and *stopping* become *goin'*, *doin'*, and *stoppin'*. Parts of words can be left off in the middle, too, as in *terr'iss* for *terrorist*, *Innernet* for *Internet*, and *asst* for *asked*.

2. Pronounce each sound correctly.

Substitution takes place when you replace part of a word with an incorrect sound. The ending *-th* is often replaced at the end of a word with a single *t*, as when *with* becomes *wit*. The *th-* sound is also a problem at the beginning of words, as *this*, *that*, and *those* have a tendency to become *dis*, *dat*, and *dose*. (This tendency is especially prevalent in many parts of the northeastern United States.)

3. Don't add extra sounds.

The articulation problem of **addition** is caused by adding extra parts to words, such as *incentative* instead of *incentive*, *athalete* instead of *athlete*, and *orientated* instead of *oriented*. Sometimes this type of addition is caused by incorrect word choice, as when *irregardless* is used for *regardless*. Another type of addition is the use of “tag questions,” such as *you know?* or *you see?* or *right?* at the end of sentences. To have every other sentence punctuated with one of these barely audible superfluous phrases can be annoying. Probably the worst type of addition, or at least the most common, however, is the use of *uh*, *umm*, *like*, and *anda* between words. *Anda* is often stuck between two words when *and* isn’t even needed. If you find yourself doing that, you might want to pause or swallow instead.¹⁶

4. Speak clearly.

Slurring is caused by trying to say two or more words at once—or at least overlapping the end of one word with the beginning of the next. Word pairs ending with *of* are the worst offenders in this category. *Sort of* becomes *sorta*, *kind of* becomes *kinda*, and *because of* becomes *beacusa*. Word combinations ending with *to* are often slurred, as when *want to* becomes *wanna*. Sometimes even more than two words are blended together, as when *that is the way* becomes *thatsaway*.



PAUSE TO REFLECT

How Is Your Articulation?

1. Go over the guidelines for good articulation, and think about your circle of friends and acquaintances. Who among them has the best articulation? By what criteria? _____

2. Among that same group, who has the worst articulation? By what criteria? _____

3. Finally, where do you place yourself among the best and the worst? Again, what are the criteria you use to judge yourself? _____

COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS

Presenting Speeches



Managing Speech Anxiety

- Speakers think more rapidly and express themselves more energetically when they experience facilitative speech anxiety.
- Debilitative speech anxiety is detrimental and stems from negative past experiences or irrational fears.

4 Types of Irrational Fears About Public Speaking

- Fallacy of catastrophic failure
- Fallacy of perfection
- Fallacy of approval
- Fallacy of overgeneralization

5 Ways to Overcome Debilitative Speech Anxiety

- Use nervousness to your advantage.

- Be rational.
- Be receiver oriented.
- Be positive.
- Be prepared.

Types of Delivery

- Extemporaneous
- Impromptu
- Manuscript
- Memorized

Types of Visual Aids

- Objects and models
- Diagrams
- Word and number charts
- Pie charts
- Bar and column charts
- Line charts
- Flow charts

Media for Presenting Visual Aids

- Chalkboards, whiteboards, polymer surfaces
- Flip pads and poster boards
- Handouts
- Projectors
- Electronic media
- Presentation software



5 Rules for Using Visual Aids Effectively

- Keep them simple.
- Consider their size.
- Make them attractive.
- Be appropriate.
- Control them at all times.

4 Steps to Practicing a Speech

- Present it to yourself.
- Record it.

- Present it to a small group of friends.
- Present it in the room in which it will be given.

Visual Aspects of Delivery

- Appearance
- Movement
- Posture
- Facial expression
- Eye contact



6 Tips for Online/Virtual Speeches

- Try out various web-conferencing platforms.
- Schedule a run-through before the actual event.
- Use dynamic visuals.
- Keep the slides simple.
- Keep it entertaining.
- Start and end on time.

Auditory Aspects of Delivery

- Volume
- Rate
- Pitch
- Articulation

4 Ways to Improve Your Articulation

- Say the entire word.
- Pronounce each sound correctly.
- Don't add extra sounds.
- Speak clearly.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Show Your Communication Know-How



13.1: Understand the sources of debilitating stage fright and ways to overcome speech anxiety.

Everyone experiences a certain degree of stage fright. Explain your personal process for making it work in your favor, rather than against you.

KEY TERMS: facilitative speech anxiety, debilitating speech anxiety, irrational thinking, fallacy of catastrophic failure, fallacy of perfection, fallacy of approval, fallacy of overgeneralization, visualization

13.2: Distinguish among four different types of speech delivery.

Explain why you chose the type of delivery that you did for a speech you gave or might give.

KEY TERMS: extemporaneous speech, impromptu speech, manuscript speech, memorized speech

13.3: Describe the different types of visual aids that may be used in a speech.

For a speech that you gave or might give, explain what visual aids would be most effective and why.

KEY TERMS: visual aids, model, diagram, pictogram, word chart number chart, pie chart, bar chart, column chart, line chart, flow chart



13.4: Understand how to use visual aids effectively.

Think back to a speech you witnessed in which the visual aids were particularly effective or ineffective. What made the difference?

KEY TERM: slide deck



13.5: Understand the visual components of delivery and use them to improve your performance.

Practice your speech using at least three of the methods discussed in this chapter. How could you improve your performance visually?

KEY TERM: visual aspects of delivery

13.6: Understand the auditory components of delivery and use them to improve your performance.

Practice your speech using at least three of the methods discussed in this chapter. How could you improve your performance in terms of its sound?

KEY TERMS: [rate](#), [pitch](#), [articulation](#), [deletion](#), [substitution](#), [addition](#), [slurring](#)

14

Speaking to Inform and Persuade

Informative Versus Persuasive

What makes a speech informative versus persuasive?

The Basics of Informing

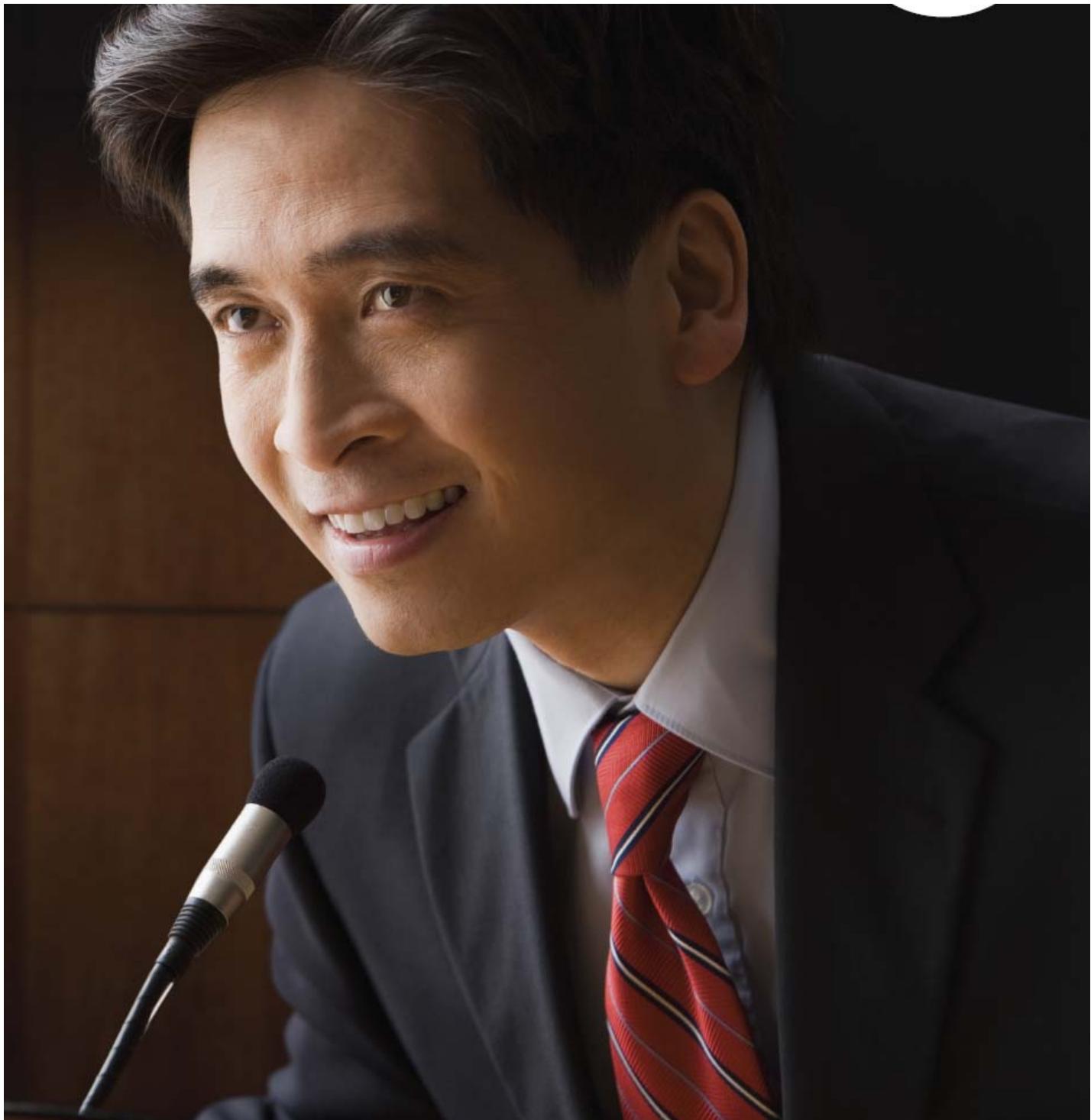
How do you incorporate informative speaking techniques in a speech?

The Basics of Persuasion

How do you structure a persuasive speech?

How do you make a persuasive speech logical and ethical?

How do you structure an argument within a persuasive speech?



Informing Versus Persuading

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 14.1: Distinguish between speeches to inform and to persuade.

In this time of political disunity, there is some confusion over the difference between informative and persuasive messages. Online “news reports” and “informative messages” are often blatantly, and sometimes sneakily, persuasive, while some well-written editorials can be profoundly informative. When it comes to speeches, however, there are relatively straightforward guidelines for distinguishing between the two.

Informative Speeches

Informative speaking goes on all around you, whether it’s a professor giving a lecture, a news anchor detailing the latest budget stalemate, or a friend giving you a play-by-play of last night’s game. Speeches are considered informative if their primary purpose is to describe, explain, or instruct. In addition, informative speeches tend to be noncontroversial and informative speakers do not try to change the audience’s attitudes.

- *An informative topic tends to be noncontroversial.* For example, if you were to give a speech about hospital births and home-based midwife births, you would describe what the practitioners of each method believe and do without criticizing either method or boosting one over the other. The goal is to present information that is objective and will not engender conflict. If speakers *do* present a controversial topic, they will explain all sides of the issue and will not ask the audience to pick a side.
- *The informative speaker does not intend to change audience attitudes.* For example, an informative speaker might explain how a new social media app works but not try to “sell” that app to the audience. Persuasive speaking, on the other hand, seeks to change audience attitudes or behavior.

Persuasive Speeches

Persuasion is the process of motivating someone, through communication, to change a particular belief, attitude, or behavior. It is not the same as coercion or forcing someone to do something. **Persuasive speaking** can be classified three different ways. First, it can be classified by type of proposition, such as facts (whether something is true or false), value (whether some idea, person, or object has worth), or policy (whether a specific course of action should be taken). Persuasion can also be categorized based on the desired outcome, whether it is to convince an audience of something or to go further and move audience members to behave in a certain way. Finally, persuasion can be classified based on the directness of the appeal, whether it is an outright request or a more indirect one.



- *Persuasion is usually incremental.* When it is successful, persuasion generally succeeds over time. One persuasive speech may be but a single step in an overall persuasive campaign. The best example of this is the various communications that take place during the months of a political campaign. Candidates watch the opinion polls carefully, adjusting their appeals. The best persuaders are always building on the persuasion that came before.
- *Persuasion can be ethical.* Even when they understand the difference between persuasion and coercion, some people are still uncomfortable with the idea of persuasive speaking. They may associate it with

pushy salespeople or unscrupulous politicians. And it's true; persuasive speaking can be and often is used by unethical speakers for unethical purposes. However, it is also through persuasion that we may influence others' lives in worthwhile ways. Whether it's convincing a loved one to seek treatment, friends to volunteer for a worthwhile cause, or an employer to hire you for a job, persuasion can be ethical. Persuasion is considered ethical if it is in the best interests of the audience and it does not depend on false or misleading information to change the audience's attitude or behavior. ●

Techniques of Informative Speaking

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 14.2:** Explain the techniques of informative speaking and use them to present an effective informative speech.

The techniques of informative speaking are based on a number of principles of human communication in general, and public speaking specifically, that help an audience understand and care about your speech. The first step is to make it easy for your audience to listen.

Define a specific informative purpose.

As mentioned in [Chapter 12](#), any good speech must be based on a purpose statement that is result oriented, specific, and realistic. This is especially true for an informative speech. An **informative purpose statement** is generally worded to stress audience knowledge, ability, or both:

After listening to my speech, my audience will be able to recall the three most important questions to ask when shopping for a smartphone.

After listening to my speech, my audience will be able to identify the four reasons that online memes go viral.

Notice that each of these purpose statements uses a specific verb such as *recall*, *identify*, or *discuss* to point out what the audience will be able to do after hearing the speech. Other key verbs for informative purpose statements include these:

*Accomplish / Choose / Explain / Name / Recognize /
Analyze / Contrast / Integrate / Operate / Review /
Apply / Describe / List / Perform / Summarize*

A clear, informative purpose statement will lead to a clear thesis statement, which presents the central idea of your speech. Sometimes your thesis statement will just preview the central idea:

*Today's smartphones have so many features that it is difficult for the uninformed consumer to make a choice.
Or*

When shopping for a smartphone, the informed consumer seeks to balance price, dependability, and user-friendliness.

Understanding why memes go viral could make you very wealthy someday. Or

The four basic principles of aerodynamics—lift, thrust, drag, and gravity—can explain why memes go viral.

Setting a clear informative purpose will help keep you focused as you prepare and present your informative speech.



Use clear, simple language.

Another technique for effective informative speaking is to use clear language, which means using precise, simple wording and avoiding jargon. As you plan your speech, use words that are familiar to your audience. Important ideas do not have to sound complicated. Along with simple, precise vocabulary, you should also strive for a direct, short sentence structure.

Emphasize important points.

One key principle of informative speaking is to stress the important points in your speech. This can be done through repetition and the use of signposts.

- *Repetition* is one of the age-old rules of learning. Humans are more likely to understand information that is stated more than once. This is especially true in a speaking situation, because audience members usually cannot go back to reread something they have missed. Of course, simply repeating something in the same words likely would bore audience members who actually are paying attention, so effective speakers learn to say the same thing in more than one way. Kathy Levine, a student at Oregon State University, used this technique in her speech on contaminated dental water:

The problem of dirty dental water is widespread. In a nationwide 20/20 investigation, the water used in approximately 90% of dental offices is dirtier than the water found in public toilets. This means that 9 out of 10 dental offices are using dirty water on their patients.¹

- *Redundancy* can be effective when you use it to emphasize important points.² It is ineffective, however, when used with obvious, trivial, or boring points or when repeated to excess. There is no sure rule for making certain you have not overemphasized a point. You just have to use your best judgment.
- *Signposts* are another way to emphasize important material. **Signposts** are words or phrases that emphasize the importance of what you are about to say. You can state, simply enough, “*What I’m about to say is important*,” or you can use some variation of that statement: “*But listen to this . . .*” or “*The most important thing to remember is . . .*” or “*The three keys to this situation are . . .*”

Generate audience involvement.

The final technique for effective informative speaking is to get the audience involved in your speech.

Audience involvement is the level of commitment and attention that listeners devote to a speech. Educational psychologists have long known that the best way to teach people something is to have them do it. Social psychologists have added to this rule by proving, in many studies, that participating in an interaction increases audience comprehension of, and agreement with, the message being presented.

There are many ways to encourage audience involvement in your speech. One way is to follow the rules for good delivery by maintaining enthusiasm, energy, and eye contact. Other methods include having your audience actually do something during your speech or holding a question-and-answer period.

Having listeners actively do something during your speech through **audience participation** is one way to increase their involvement in your message. For example, if you were giving a demonstration on isometric exercises (muscle-building exercises, which don't require too much room for movement), you could have the entire audience stand up and do one or two sample exercises. If you were explaining how to fill out a federal income tax form, you could give each class member a sample form to fill out as you explain it. Outlines and checklists can be used in a similar manner for just about any speech. [Figure 14.1](#) shows how one student used audience participation to demonstrate the various restrictions that were once placed on voting rights. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

3 *Ways to Make It Easy for the Audience to Listen*

Keep in mind the complex nature of listening, discussed in [Chapter 5](#). It's not always easy for your audience members to hear, pay attention, understand, and remember. This means that, as you plan your speech, you should consider techniques that recognize the way human beings process information.

1. Limit the amount of information you present.

You probably won't have enough time to transmit all your research to your audience in one sitting. It's better to make careful choices about the three to five main ideas you want to get across and then develop those ideas fully. Too much information leads to overload, anxiety, and a lack of attention on your audience's part.

2. Transition from familiar to newer information.

Based on your audience analysis ([Chapter 12](#)), you should move members of the audience from information that is likely to be familiar to them to newer information. If you are giving a speech about how the stock market works, you could compare the daily activity of a broker with that of a salesperson in a retail store, or you could compare the idea of capital growth (a new concept to some listeners) with interest earned in a savings account.

3. Transition from simple to more complex information.

Just as you move audience members from the familiar to the unfamiliar, you can move them from the simple to the complex. An average college audience, for example, might be able to understand the complexities of genetic modification if you begin with the concept of inherited characteristics.

Voting is something that a lot of us may take for granted. Today, the only requirements for voting are that you are a U.S. citizen aged 18 or older who has lived in the same place for at least 30 days and that you have registered. But it hasn't always been that way. Americans have had to struggle for the right to vote. I'd like to illustrate this by asking everyone to please stand.

[Wait, prod class to stand.]

I'm going to ask some questions. If you answer no to any question, please sit down.

- *Have you resided at the same address for at least one year? If not, sit down. Residency requirements of more than 30 days weren't abolished until 1970.*
- *Are you white? If not, sit down. The 15th Amendment gave non-whites the right to vote in 1870, but many states didn't enforce it until the late 1960s.*
- *Are you male? If not, sit down. The 19th Amendment only gave women the right to vote in 1920.*
- *Do you own a home? If not, sit down. Through the mid-1800s only property owners could vote.*
- *Are you Protestant? If not, sit down. That's right. Religious requirements existed in the early days throughout the country.*

Source: Voter registration project, New York Public Interest Research Group, Brooklyn College chapter, 2018.

FIGURE 14.1 Using Audience Participation

TIPS & REMINDERS

4 *Ways to Handle a Question-and-Answer Period*

One way to increase audience involvement is to answer questions at the end of your speech. You should encourage your audience to ask questions and keep four guidelines in mind as you answer them.

1. Listen to the substance of the question.

Don't zero in on irrelevant details. Instead, listen for the big picture—the basic, overall question that is being asked. If you are not really sure what the substance of a question is, ask the questioner to paraphrase it. Don't be afraid to let the questioners do their share of the work.

2. Paraphrase confusing or quietly asked questions.

Use the active listening skills described in [Chapter 5](#). You can paraphrase the question in just a few words: "If I understand your question, you are asking _____. Is that right?"

3. Avoid defensive reactions to questions.

Even if the questioner seems to be calling you a liar or stupid or biased, try to listen to the substance of the question and not to the possible personal attack.

4. Answer the question briefly.

Then check the questioner's comprehension of your answer by observing his or her nonverbal response or by asking, "Does that answer your question?"

Techniques of Persuasive Speaking

 **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 14.3:** Explain the techniques of persuasive speaking and use them to present an effective persuasive speech.

The guidelines for informative speaking also form the foundation for persuasive speaking. To be persuasive, however, you also need a clear persuasive purpose and to recognize where your audience's attitudes differ from your own.

Set a specific persuasive purpose.

Remember that your objective in a persuasive speech is to move the audience to a specific, attainable attitude or behavior. In a **speech to change attitudes**, the purpose statement should stress an attitude:



After listening to my speech, audience members will agree that steps should be taken to save whales from extinction.

In a **speech to change behavior**, the purpose statement will stress behavior:

After listening to my speech, audience members will sign my petition.

Your purpose statement should always be specific, attainable, and worded from the audience's point of view. "The purpose of my speech is to save the whales" is not a purpose statement that has been carefully thought out. Your audience members wouldn't likely be able to jump into the ocean and save the whales, even if they wanted to. However, they might be able to support a specific piece of legislation.



A clear, specific purpose statement will help you stay on track throughout all the stages of preparing your persuasive speech. Because the main purpose of your speech is to have an effect on your audience, you have a continual test that you can use for every idea and every piece of evidence. The question you ask is, “Will this help me to get the audience members to think/feel/behave in the manner I have described in my purpose statement?” If the answer is “yes,” you forge ahead.

Adapt to your specific audience.

In a persuasive speech, you should appeal to the values of the audience whenever possible, even if they are not *your* strongest values. This does not mean you should pretend to believe in something. It does mean, however, that you stress those values that are felt most forcefully by the members of the audience.³

In addition, you should use audience analysis ([Chapter 12](#)) to predict the type of response you are likely to get. Sometimes you have to pick out one part of your audience—a **target audience** comprising the subgroup you must persuade to reach your goal—and aim your speech mostly at those members. Some audience members might be so opposed to what you are advocating that you have no hope of reaching them. Still others might already agree with you, so you don’t need to persuade them. A middle portion of your audience members might be undecided or uncommitted, and they would be the most productive target for your appeals.



Establish common ground and credibility.

Establishing **common ground**—stressing as many similarities as possible between yourself and your audience members—helps prove that you understand your audience and gives them a reason to listen to you. By showing areas of agreement, you make it easier for the audience to consider settling your one disagreement—the one related to the attitude or behavior you would like them to change.

Establishing common ground also builds some credibility with the audience. **Credibility** refers to the believability of a speaker; it is a perception in the minds of the audience. Members of an audience form judgments about the credibility of a speaker based on their perception of many characteristics, including competence, character, and charisma.⁴

- *Competence* refers to the speaker’s expertise on the topic. Sometimes this competence can come from personal experience that leads your audience to regard you as an authority on the topic. For example, if everyone in the audience knows you’ve earned big profits in the stock market, they will probably take your investment advice seriously. The other way to be seen as competent is to be well prepared with a

speech that is well researched. In a speech that appears in [Appendix B](#) of this book, Emma González spoke about both her experience and her preparation on the topic of gun control:

The students at this school have been having debates on guns for what feels like our entire lives. AP Gov had three debates on this topic this year. Some discussions on the subject even occurred during the shooting while students were hiding in the closets.

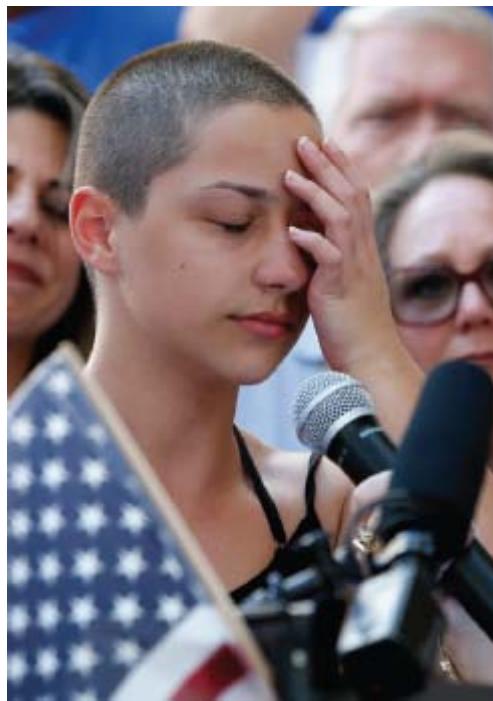
- *Character* involves the audience's perception of your ethics and integrity. Again, Emma González offered some insight into her moral courage when she said,

Every single person up here today, all these people, should be home grieving. But instead, we are up here standing together because if all our government and President can do is send thoughts and prayers, then it's time for victims to be the change that we need to see.

- *Charisma* is the audience's perception of your enthusiasm (how you deliver your remarks) and likability (which includes how friendly and genuine you are). History and research have shown that audiences are more likely to be persuaded by a charismatic speaker. Emma González bolstered her perceived charisma when she said,

We are going to be the kids you read about in textbooks. Not because we're going to be another statistic about mass shooting in America, but because . . . we are going to change the law. That's going to be Marjory Stoneman Douglas in that textbook and it's going to be due to the tireless effort of the school board, the faculty members, the family members and most of all the students—the students who are dead, the students still in the hospital, the students now suffering PTSD, the students who had panic attacks during the vigil because the helicopters would not leave us alone, hovering over the school for 24 hours a day.

The idea that credibility is important in persuasion is not new. Aristotle insisted upon it more than 2,000 years ago. He also established that it is important to recognize and appeal to an audience's emotions and logical reasoning, a triad we turn to next.



Draw upon Aristotle's Triad.

Aristotle proposed that the three requirements of persuasion are ethos, pathos, and logos.

Logos is the idea of a logical appeal, one based on formal reasoning.

The idea of **ethos** is that the speaker has the audience's best interests in mind at all times. It involves being ethical about your intentions and honestly believing that what you propose is best for your audience.

The idea of **pathos** is to speak to the heart as well as the head. Aristotle warned that political leaders who used only emotions rather than reasoning and ethical standards were dangerous. We have seen this play out throughout history, and we can see it in the political polarization that society suffers from today. If people desperately want to believe something because of the emotions involved, they will believe it even if it is both untrue and ultimately not in their best interests. Researchers call this **confirmation bias**, because it involves a confirmation of emotions the audience already believes. Thus, if coal miners already believe that environmental regulations have cost them their jobs, they can be persuaded to vote for the candidate who will ban those regulations, even if the jobs were actually lost because of automation and a lower demand for coal as a fuel. The politicians who use these kinds of arguments might be extremely effective persuaders, but they are neither logical nor ethical. The rest of this chapter takes a closer look at logic and ethics. ●

TIPS & REMINDERS

3 *Types of Persuasive Appeals*

The Greek philosopher Aristotle divided the means of persuasion into three types of appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos. Consider the following questions to make sure you are using all three in your persuasive speeches.

1. Ethos (Credibility) or Ethical Appeal

Have you established your credibility as a speaker so that the audience believes you to be trustworthy?

2. Pathos (Emotions)

Have you used emotional appeals effectively to make your case?

3. Logos (Logic)

Have you made logical arguments to appeal to the audience's sense of reasoning? This was Aristotle's favorite, and is the most important form of appeal that we will discuss in this chapter.



PAUSE TO REFLECT

Informative and Persuasive Speaking

1. Think of a topic for a speech. How would you structure the speech if you were trying to inform your audience on this topic? How would you structure the speech if you were trying to persuade them of something related to this topic? _____

2. Aristotle insisted that persuasion had to balance logic and ethics with emotion. What arguments have you found online that fail to follow this guideline? _____

3. What arguments have you been personally subjected to that failed to include one or two components of Aristotle's Triad? _____

4. Tune into either Fox News or CNN and wait for the first story on today's political news. Would you consider this story to be informative or persuasive? Why? _____

Logic, Ethics, and the Art of Persuasion

LEARNING OBJECTIVE 14.4: Use logical reasoning to create an effective argument that is ethical as well as persuasive.

Persuasive speaking has been defined as “reason-giving discourse.” Its principal technique involves proposing claims and then backing up those claims with proof. **Proof** includes explanations of why your claims are true, along with evidence in the form of the supporting material discussed in [Chapter 12](#).

Step 1: Structure your basic argument.

One of the keys to delivering a persuasive speech is structuring your basic argument carefully. A sample structure of the body of a persuasive speech is outlined in [Figure 14.2](#). With this structure, if your objective is to change attitudes, concentrate on the first two components: establishing the problem and describing the solution. If your objective is to change behavior, add the third component, describing the desired audience reaction. There are, of course, other structures for persuasive speeches. However, the steps outlined in [Figure 14.2](#) can easily be applied to most persuasive topics.

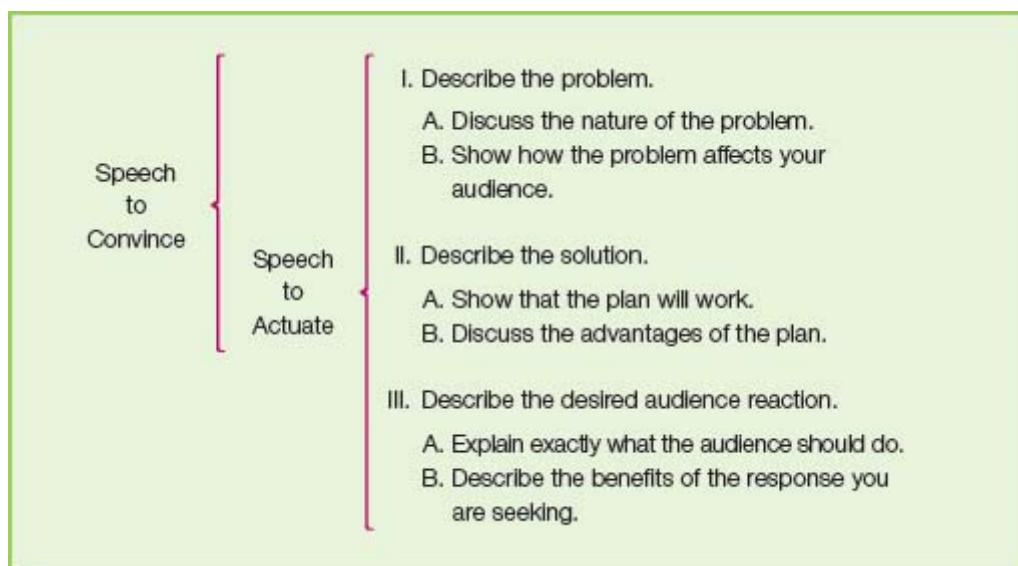


FIGURE 14.2 Sample Structure for a Persuasive Argument

Step 2: Describe the problem.

In order to convince audience members that something should be changed, you have to show them that a problem exists and that it affects them in some way. For example, if your thesis were “This town needs a shelter for homeless families,” you would show that there are, indeed, homeless families (perhaps through the

use of statistics) and that the plight of these homeless families is serious (perhaps using an effective anecdote). However, it's not enough to prove that a problem exists. Your next challenge is to show listeners that the problem affects them in some way.⁵

If your prespeech analysis shows that audience members may not feel sympathetic to your topic, explain why your topic is, indeed, a problem that they should recognize. For example, in a speech about the plight of the homeless, you might establish that most homeless people are not lazy, able-bodied drifters who choose to panhandle and steal instead of work. You could cite respected authorities, give examples, and maybe even show photographs to demonstrate that some homeless people are hardworking but unlucky parents and innocent children who lack shelter owing to forces beyond their control.

Step 3: Describe the solution.

Your next step in persuading audience members is to convince them that there is an answer to the problem you have just introduced. Skeptical listeners might agree with the desirability of your solution but still not believe that it has a chance of succeeding. In the homeless speech discussed previously, you would need to prove that the establishment of a shelter can help unlucky families get back on their feet—especially if your audience analysis shows that some listeners might view such a shelter as a way of coddling people who are too lazy to work.

When you want to change audience behavior, describe exactly what you want audience members to do. Then make it as simple as possible for them to do it.

STEP	FUNCTION	IDEAL AUDIENCE RESPONSE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Attention	to get audience to listen	"I want to hear what you have to say."
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Need	to get audience to feel a need or desire	"I agree. I have that need/desire."
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Satisfaction	to tell audience how to fill need or desire	"I see your solution will work."
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Visualization	to get audience to see benefits of solution	"This is a great idea."
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Action	to get audience to take action	"I want it."

FIGURE 14.3 Monroe's Motivated Sequence

You should also describe in specific terms how your solution will lead to the desired changes. This is the step in which you paint a vivid picture of the benefits of your proposal. In the speech proposing a shelter for homeless families, the benefits you describe would probably include these:

- Families will have a safe place to stay, free of the danger of living on the street.
- Parents will have the resources that will help them find jobs: an address, phone, clothes washers, and showers.
- The police won't have to apply antivagrancy laws (such as prohibitions against sleeping in cars) to people who aren't the intended target of those laws.

- The community (including your listeners) won't need to feel guilty about ignoring the plight of unfortunate citizens.

Step 4: Describe the desired audience response.

When you want to go beyond a strategy to change attitudes and use a strategy to change behavior, describe exactly what you want audience members to do. Then make it as simple as possible for them to do it. If you want them to vote in a referendum, tell them when and where to vote and how to go about registering, if necessary (some activists even provide transportation). If you're asking them to support a legislative change, *you* write the letter or draft a petition and ask them to sign it. If you're asking for a donation, give audience members a stamped, addressed envelope and simple forms that they can return easily.

While your solution might be important to society, your audience members will be most likely to adopt it if you can show that they will get a personal payoff. Explain that saying "no" to a second drink before driving will not only save lives but also help your listeners avoid expensive court costs, keep their insurance rates low, and prevent personal humiliation. Show how helping to establish and staff a homeless shelter can lead to personal feelings of satisfaction and provide an impressive demonstration of community service on a job-seeking résumé.

Sample Outline Using Monroe's Motivated Sequence

There are many ways to expand the structure of argument. One of them is **Monroe's Motivated Sequence**, which was proposed by a scholar named Alan Monroe in the 1930s.⁶ In this structure, shown in [Figure 14.3](#), the problem is broken down into an attention step and a need step, and the solution is broken down into a satisfaction step, a visualization step, and an action step. In a speech on "Organ Donation," the motivated sequence might break down like this:

I. The attention step draws attention to your subject.

Someday, someone you know may be on an organ donation list; it might even be you.

II. The need step establishes the problem.

There is a lack of life-saving organs.

III. The satisfaction step proposes a solution.

Organ donation benefits both the donor's family and the recipient.

IV. The visualization step describes the results of the solution.

Donating an organ could be one of the greatest gifts you could ever give.

V. The action step is a direct appeal for the audience to do something.

Sign an organ donor card today. ●

Structuring Reasoning Within Your Argument



LEARNING OBJECTIVE 14.5: Determine the necessary claims you need to make and back them up effectively.

To make a persuasive appeal, it's useful to structure your argument with solid reasoning. **Reasoning** is defined as the process of making claims and backing them up, logically and rationally. In its purest form, argumentation provides an audience with a series of statements, backed up with support, that lead to the conclusion the speaker is trying to establish. The primary components of reasoning are claims, subclaims, and evidence.

Claims and Subclaims

A **claim** is an expressed opinion that the speaker would like the audience to accept. Within a persuasive speech, several claims and subsidiary claims, or **subclaims**, are usually advanced. These are organized according to the rules of outlining discussed in [Chapter 12](#).



In a speech on the health hazards of fast food, one claim might be backed up as follows:

- A. *Soft drinks are bad for you.*
 1. *They contain empty calories, which are stored within the body as fat.*
 2. *They rot your teeth.*
 3. *They actually make you thirstier than you were.*

Some subclaims might need further sub-subclaims to back them up:

3. *Soft drinks make you thirstier than you were.*
 - a. *Sugared drinks are absorbed more slowly than water.*
 - b. *You need fluid to digest the sugar. So sugar actually causes you to lose fluid.*
 - c. *Caffeine is a mild diuretic, so it increases water loss.*

The structure of every argument is different. Even the *same* argument might be structured differently for different audiences. A claim that will be accepted at face value by one audience will need a number of subclaims with another audience. Take the following proposition:

We should do away with the tolls on our local bridge.

If you were speaking to your town's fellow residents, who were uniformly fed up with the inconvenience of those tollbooths, you might be able to advance the following claim without subclaims backing it up:

- A. *The traffic delays caused by the tollbooths are bad for the community.*

However, were you to advance the same argument to a group of state legislators, some of whom had no experience with the tollbooths or the delays they cause, you might have to back up your claim with subclaims:

- A. *The traffic delays caused by the tollbooths are bad for the community.*
 1. *The delays harm local businesses.*
 2. *The delays waste fuel.*
 3. *The delays increase air pollution.*

For the same proposition with a third audience—one concerned about the income produced by the tolls—you might have to add a second claim:

- B. *The same revenue could be generated through taxes.*

For yet another audience, you might have to back up that claim with subclaims:

- B. *The same revenue could be generated through taxes.*
 - 1. *Only a slight increase in real estate taxes would be necessary.*
 - 2. *Residents would be willing to pass such a tax proposal, because they hate the traffic tie-ups.*

Evidence

Evidence is supporting material that the speaker uses to prove any type of claim. All the forms of support discussed in [Chapter 12](#) can be used to back up your persuasive arguments. Your objective in finding evidence is not to find supporting material that just clarifies your ideas, but to find the perfect example, description, analogy, anecdote, statistic, or quotation to establish the truth of your claim in the minds of this specific audience.

The Toulmin Model

In its most basic form, a model of argument proposed by philosopher Stephen Toulmin calls for every claim to be supported not only with evidence but also with a warrant that ties the claim and evidence together.⁷ A *warrant*, in this sense, is a statement that justifies the use of evidence for a particular claim. The **Toulmin model** is demonstrated in [Figure 14.4](#). The point of the Toulmin model is that *every claim you make has to be examined to see if it needs evidence to back it up, and all the evidence you use needs to be examined to see if it needs a warrant to justify it in light of the claim*. Sometimes neither the evidence nor the warrant needs to be stated out loud. For example, a typical college audience would accept the following claim today:

Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.

After all, such an audience would be familiar with the research linking smoking to respiratory and heart diseases. However, if you were speaking to a group of tobacco company executives, you might need evidence to back up that claim, and a warrant to prove that the evidence is justified in light of the claim.

If you check your reasoning by applying the Toulmin model to each claim you make, you reduce the chances that your audience will discount what you say because of a weak link between claim and evidence. One final way to check your reasoning is to look for possible fallacies. Notice the way all of the rules of reasoning are used in the outline in [Figure 14.5](#), which one student presented on Suicide Survivor Support.⁸ ●

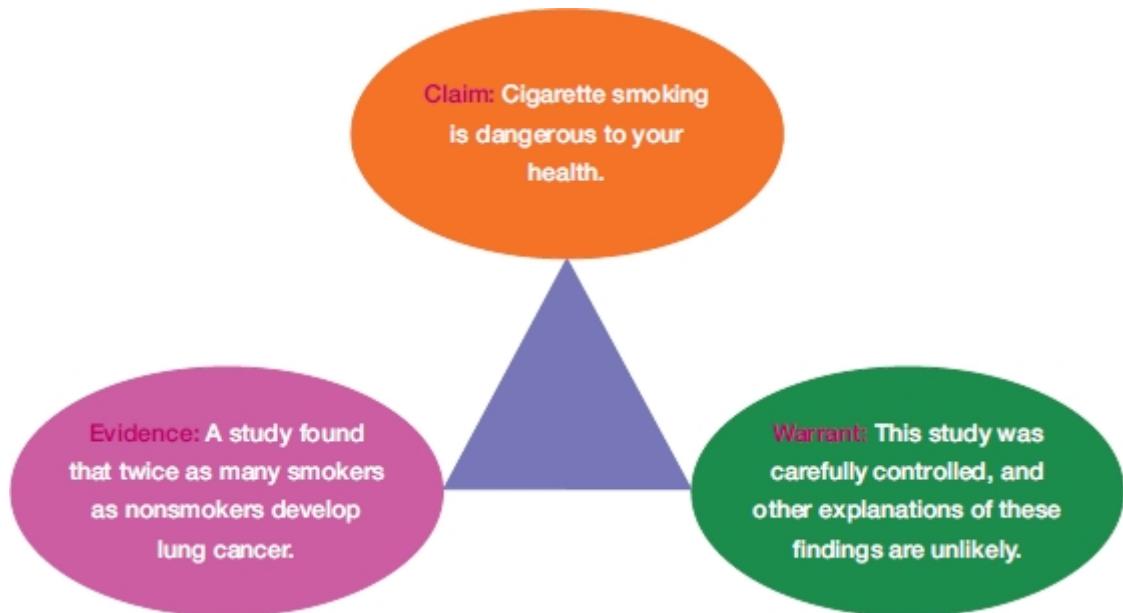


FIGURE 14.4 The Toulmin Model

Suicide Survivor Support

INTRODUCTION

- I. Attention-getter: My father's suicide had a powerful impact on my family.
- II. Thesis statement: We can change the stigma of suicide if we stop survivors from suffering alone.
- III. Preview main points.

BODY

- I. We need to recognize the reasons suicide survivors (family and friends of those who commit suicide) do not receive the help they deserve.
 - A. The deficiencies in survivor support can be found on a societal level.
 1. Society's refusal to use the word *suicide* sets up a social stigma.
 2. Religious doctrine increases this social stigma.
 3. Even media guidelines increase the stigma.
 - B. The deficiencies in survivor support can be found on an economic level.
 1. Survivors are left with funeral, counseling, and living expenses.
 2. Survivors might not be eligible for life insurance payouts.
 3. Survivors might not use the money they do receive wisely.
- II. We need to examine the impact of that lack of help.
 - A. A suicide can cause more grief than most normal deaths.
 - B. A suicide can cause post-traumatic stress disorder.
- III. We need to examine some possible solutions.
 - A. Survivor support solutions can and should be facilitated on a societal level.
 1. One part of the solution would be to require insurance companies to give back the premiums that were paid before the suicide.
 2. Another part of the solution would be to use the word *suicide* when talking to survivors.
 - B. Survivor support solutions can and should be facilitated on an individual level.
 1. If you have a friend who is a survivor, just be there for him or her.
 2. If you are a survivor yourself, share your story with others in similar situations.
 - a. Make survivors realize that they are not at fault for what happened.
 - b. Become part of a LOSS team.
 - c. Make sure you also get the help you need.

CONCLUSION

- I. Review main points.
- II. I have seen firsthand how a suicide can destroy a family.
- III. I know my dad would have wanted us to move on and know that everything is okay.

FIGURE 14.5 Speech Outline

TIPS & REMINDERS

6 Fallacies and How to Avoid Them

It's essential to ensure that the claims and arguments you make within the speech are logical and sound. A **fallacy** (from the Latin word meaning "false") is an error in logic. Although the original meaning of the term implied purposeful deception, most logical fallacies are not recognized as such by those who use them. Scholars have devoted lives and volumes to the description of various types of logical

fallacies.⁹ Here are some of the most common ones to keep in mind and avoid when building your persuasive argument:¹⁰

1. Attack on the Person Instead of the Argument (*Ad Hominem*)

In an ***ad hominem fallacy*** the speaker attacks the integrity of a person in order to weaken the argument. Consider this one: “All this talk about ‘family values’ is hypocritical. Take Senator _____, who made a speech about the ‘sanctity of marriage’ last year. Now it turns out he was having an affair with his secretary, and his wife is suing him for divorce.” Although the senator certainly seems to be a hypocrite, his behavior doesn’t necessarily weaken the merits of family values.

2. Reduction to the Absurd (*Reductio ad Absurdum*)

A ***reductio ad absurdum fallacy*** unfairly attacks an argument by extending it to such extremes that it looks ridiculous. “If we allow the administration to raise tuition this year, soon they will raise it every year, and before long only the wealthiest students will be able to go to school here.” This extension of reasoning doesn’t make sense: One tuition increase doesn’t mean that others will occur. This policy might be unwise or unfair, but the *ad absurdum* reasoning doesn’t prove it.

3. Either–Or

An ***either–or*** fallacy sets up false alternatives, suggesting that, if the inferior one must be rejected, then the other must be accepted. “Either we outlaw alcohol in city parks or there will be no way to get rid of drunks.” This reasoning overlooks the possibility that there may be other ways to control public drunkenness besides banning all alcoholic beverages.

4. False Cause (*Post Hoc ergo Propter Hoc*)

A ***post hoc*** fallacy mistakenly assumes that one event causes another because they occur sequentially. For example, one critic of education pointed out that the increase in sexual promiscuity among adolescents began about the same time that the courts prohibited prayer in public schools. A causal link in this case may exist: Decreased emphasis on spirituality could contribute to promiscuity. But it would take evidence to establish a *definite* connection between the two phenomena.

5. Appeal to Authority (*Argumentum ad Verecundiam*)

An ***argumentum ad verecundiam*** fallacy involves relying on the testimony of someone who is not an authority in the case being argued. Relying on experts is not a fallacy, of course. A professional athlete could be the best person to comment on what it takes to succeed in organized sports. But an *ad verecundiam* fallacy occurs when the athlete tells us why we should buy a certain kind of automobile. When considering endorsements and claims, it’s smart to ask yourself whether the source is qualified to make them.

6. Bandwagon Appeal (*Argumentum ad Populum*)

An ***argumentum ad populum*** fallacy is based on the notion that, if many people favor an idea, you should, too. Of course, the mass appeal of an idea *can* be a sign of its merit. If most of your friends have enjoyed a film or a new book, there is a good chance that you will, too. But in other cases, widespread acceptance of an idea is no guarantee of its validity. In the face of almost universal belief to the contrary, Galileo reasoned accurately that the Earth is not the center of the universe, and he suffered for his convictions. The lesson here: When faced with an idea, don’t just follow the crowd. Consider the facts and make up your own mind.



ASK YOURSELF

Can You Identify Common Fallacies?

Identify the logical fallacies in the following examples.

- _____ 1. We have to keep controversial speakers from campus or there will be violent protests.
 - a. Reduce to absurdity
 - b. Appeal to authority
 - c. Either-or
 - d. Bandwagon
- _____ 2. If we don't convict these defendants, we might as well put out a sign that says "criminals welcome here."
 - a. Ad hominem
 - b. False cause
 - c. Bandwagon
 - d. Reduce to absurdity
- _____ 3. I'm going to try that new McDonald's megaburger. Beyoncé says she loves it.
 - a. Either-or
 - b. Appeal to authority
 - c. Bandwagon
 - d. False cause
- _____ 4. Most people believe we have too much freedom of speech. It is time to consider revoking the First Amendment.
 - a. Bandwagon
 - b. Ad hominem
 - c. Reduce to absurdity
 - d. Appeal to authority
- _____ 5. Of course Louie thinks marijuana should be legalized. Louie is a college dropout who hasn't held a job in more than a year.
 - a. Bandwagon
 - b. Either-or
 - c. Reduce to absurdity
 - d. Ad hominem
- _____ 6. President Trump's policies resulted in peace with North Korea. They haven't attacked us since he became president.
 - a. Reduce to absurdity

- b. False cause
- c. Bandwagon
- d. Either-or

INTERPRETING YOUR RESPONSES !

Give yourself one point for each correct answer (they appear below). Then score yourself as follows:

6 Correct You're as logical as Mr. Spock on *Star Trek* (which is to say, very logical). Don't forget to use emotional appeals in your persuasive speech.

4–5 Correct You're about average. You understand how to recognize some logical fallacies, but you should probably review the section on fallacies one more time.

0–3 Correct Oops. You have not quite learned how to recognize logical fallacies. Review the section on fallacies, and find some additional guidelines on fallacies online!

Answers 1. c; 2. d; 3. b; 4. a; 5. d; 6. b

COMMUNICATION TAKE-AWAYS

Speaking to Inform and Persuade



Information or Persuasion?

- Speeches are informative if they seek to describe, explain, or instruct about a noncontroversial topic, without trying to change audience beliefs, attitudes, or behavior.
- Speeches are persuasive if they seek to change audience beliefs, attitudes, or behavior, usually about a controversial topic.

To Deliver an Effective Informative Speech . . .

- Define a specific purpose.

- Use clear, simple language.
- Emphasize important points.
- Generate audience involvement.

3 Ways to Make It Easy for the Audience to Listen

- Limit the amount of information you present.
- Transition from familiar to newer information.
- Transition from simple to more complex information.

4 Ways to Handle a Question-and-Answer Period

- Listen to the substance of the question.
- Paraphrase confusing or quietly asked questions.
- Avoid reacting defensively.
- Answer briefly and then check to see if your answer was helpful.



To Deliver an Effective Persuasive Speech . . .

- Prepare a persuasive purpose statement.
- Adapt to your specific audience.
- Establish common ground and credibility.
- Follow Aristotle's Triad by balancing emotion with logic and ethics.

3 Types of Persuasive Appeals

- Ethos (credibility) or ethical appeal
- Pathos (emotions)
- Logos (logic)

To Formulate Effective Arguments . . .

- Structure your argument with problems, solutions, and desired audience behaviors.
- Use Monroe's Motivated Sequence.



To Bolster the Reasoning Within Your Argument . . .

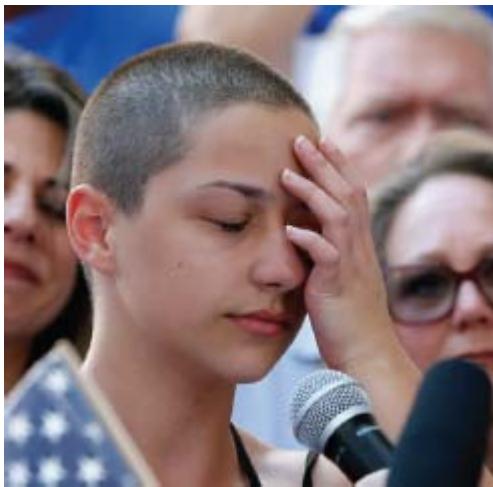
- Back up your claims with evidence.
- Use the Toulmin Model to tie claims and evidence together with a warrant.

6 Fallacies to Avoid

- Attack on the person instead of the argument (*ad hominem*)
- Reduction to the absurd (*reductio ad absurdum*)
- Either–or
- False cause (*post hoc ergo propter hoc*)
- Appeal to authority (*argumentum ad verecundiam*)
- Bandwagon appeal (*argumentum ad populum*)

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Show Your Communication Know-How



14.1: Distinguish between speeches to inform and persuade.

Describe the characteristics of your current speech assignment. Which type of speech will it be, based on those characteristics? If it's informative, how could you make it persuasive, or vice versa?

KEY TERMS: [persuasion](#), [persuasive speaking](#)

14.2: Explain the techniques of informative speaking and use them to present an effective informative speech.

Describe the techniques of informative speaking that seem easiest and hardest for you to implement. Why do you think some of the techniques are more difficult than others?

KEY TERMS: [informative purpose statement](#), [signposts](#), [audience involvement](#), [audience participation](#)

14.3: Explain the techniques of persuasive speaking and use them to present an effective persuasive speech.

Think back to a speech that impressed you with its persuasiveness. This might be a speech that you found online, on TV, in person, or in the classroom. Did the speaker adapt to the audience and attempt to establish common ground? If so, how? If not, how could that speech have been improved in terms of these characteristics?

KEY TERMS: speech to change attitudes, speech to change behavior, target audience, common ground, credibility, logos, ethos, pathos, confirmation bias



14.4: Use reasoning to create an effective argument that is ethical as well as persuasive.

Consider your current or most recent persuasive speech assignment. How would you use Aristotle's Triad to make sure that you balanced emotion, logic, and ethics?

KEY TERMS: proof, Monroe's Motivated Sequence



14.5: Determine the necessary claims you need to make and back them up effectively.

Consider your current or most recent speech assignment. What claims would you have to make to convince members of your class? How would you back up those claims?

KEY TERMS: reasoning, claim, subclaim, evidence, Toulmin Model, fallacy, *ad hominem* fallacy, *reductio ad absurdum* fallacy, either-or fallacy, *post hoc* fallacy, *argumentum ad verecundiam* fallacy, *argumentum ad populum* fallacy

Appendix A Informative Speech

Students often choose topics for informative speaking that are complex and difficult to understand, or they try to include too much information. Marily Oppezzo took a different approach. In a short speech, reproduced here, she explained a study she had done testing the relationship between walking and creativity.

Marily is a behavioral and learning scientist and an instructor of medicine at the Stanford Prevention Research Center. She presented this speech to a group of people attending a TED conference at Stanford.¹ Marily used simple, clear language and several visual aids. While she could have delved deeply into the details of experimental design and theory, she chose instead to limit the amount of information to what the audience needed to know to understand her topic. She effectively “built” her presentation one slide at a time as she talked.

Marily divided her speech into five main points. Her organization is shown in the following outline (numbers in parentheses correspond to paragraphs of the speech).

INTRODUCTION [1–2]

BODY

- I. The study. [3–4]
- II. Our definition of “creativity.” [5–8]
 - A. An idea has to be appropriate. [6]
 - B. An idea has to be novel. [7]
- III. The procedure. [9–10]
 - A. We ran the test twice, with three groups, with subjects either seated or walking on a treadmill. [10]
 - B. The first group sat for both tests. [10]
 - C. The second group sat first and then did the second test while walking on a treadmill. [10]
 - D. The third group walked on the treadmill first, and then they sat. [10]
- IV. The findings. [11–12]
 - A. People who walked were more creative. [11]
 - B. Even if people sat before walking, they were more creative when they started walking. [12]
 - C. Even if people sat after walking, they were more creative than if they had not walked. [12]
- V. Some additional tips. [13–18]
 - A. Pick a topic ahead of time. [13]
 - B. Any activity is good, as long as it doesn’t require attention. [14–15]
 - C. Come up with multiple ideas. [16]
 - D. Speak ideas out loud and record them on a phone. [17]
 - E. Don’t push it—if ideas don’t come easily, go back to them later. [18]

CONCLUSION [19]

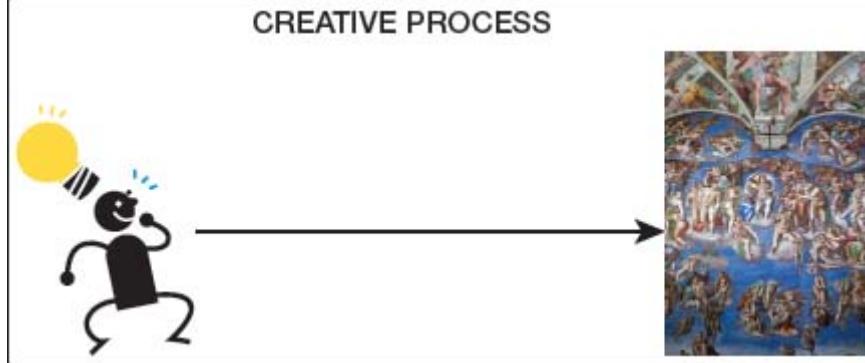
The best way to appreciate this speech is to watch the video before you read it. To find the video, you can search for “Marily Oppezzo Ted Talk” or go directly to https://www.ted.com/talks/marily_oppezzo_want_to_be_more_creative_go_for_a_walk.

Want to Be More Creative? Go for a Walk

Marily Oppezzo

Marily gets right to her topic. Her audience already knows who she is and why they should listen to her, and Marilyn adapts her language to her listeners. For example, she knows that her audience will understand that “super-iterative” means “requires many attempts,” and that they will appreciate a play on words that adds “years” to “tears.”

1. The creative process—you know this—from the first idea to the final product, is a long process. It’s super-iterative, lots of refinement, blood, sweat, tears and years. And we’re not saying you’re going to go out for a walk and come back with the Sistine Chapel in your left hand.
2. So what frame of the creative process did we focus on? Just this first part. Just brainstorming, coming up with a new idea.



Marily shows a simple but colorful slide that illustrates the general topic of her speech and her “Sistine Chapel” reference. She gives a quick definition of “brainstorming,” and she limits the number of concepts she will deal with . . .

3. We actually ran four studies with a variety of people. You were either walking indoors or outdoors. And all of these studies found the same conclusion. I’m only going to tell you about one of them today.

... and also limits the amount of material she will cover.

4. One of the tests we used for creativity was alternate uses. In this test, you have four minutes. Your job is to come up with as many other ways to use common everyday objects as you can think of.

Marily offers a clear explanation of one test that was used . . .

5. So, for example, what else would you do with a key, other than to use it for opening up a lock? Clearly, you could use it as a third eyeball for a giraffe, right? Maybe. That’s sort of interesting, kind of new. But is it creative? So people came up with as many ideas as they could, and we had to decide: Is this creative or not?

. . . coupled with a clear example to back it up.

6. The definition of creativity that a lot of people go with is “appropriate novelty.” For something to be appropriate, it has to be realistic, so unfortunately, you can’t use a key as an eyeball. Boo!

This point is clarified with two definitions.

7. But “novel,” the second thing, is that nobody had to have said it. So for us, it had to be appropriate first, and then for novelty, nobody else in the entire population that we surveyed could have said it. So you might think you could use a key to scratch somebody’s car, but if somebody else said that, you didn’t get credit for it. Neither of you did.

Walking and creativity (1 of 4 studies)

- Alternate Uses
- 4 minutes!
- OTHER ways to use common objects!
- e.g. key—other for opening locks
- As many as you can!

APPROPRIATE

What's creative?

Key

To scratch someone's car

NOVELTY

If you were dying...and it were a murder mystery...and you had to carve the name of the (murderer) into the ground...write your dying words

A yellow cartoon giraffe is shown inside a blue circle with a diagonal slash, indicating it is not appropriate.

Marily builds this slide one item at a time, from paragraph 4 to paragraph 8. The final slide would be too complex to show all at once, but as a “build” it works.

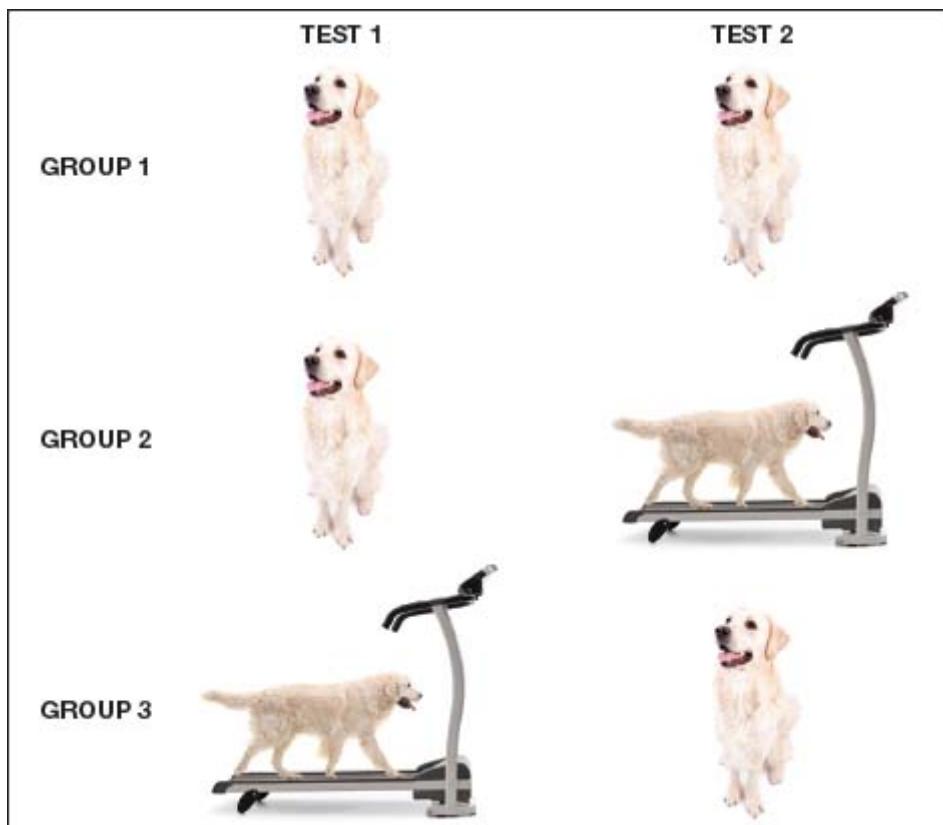
8. However, only one person said this: “If you were dying and it were a murder mystery, and you had to carve the name of the murderer into the ground with your dying words.” One person said this. And it’s a creative idea, because it’s appropriate and it’s novel.

9. You either did this test and came up with ideas while you were seated or while you were walking on a treadmill.



Here Marily shows a visual representation of part of her experimental design.

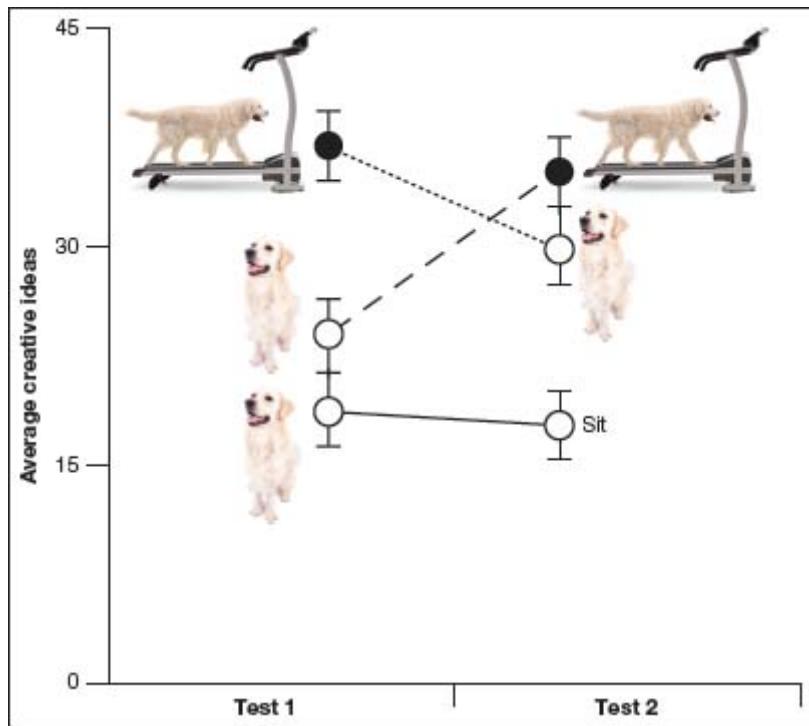
10. They did the test twice, with different objects. Three groups: the first group sat first and then sat again for the second test. The second group sat first and then did the second test while walking on a treadmill. The third group—and this is interesting—they walked on the treadmill first, and then they sat.



Again, Marily shows this slide to illustrate her experimental design, so she can explain this concept quickly and clearly with simple language.

11. OK, so the two groups that sat together for the first test, they looked pretty similar to each other, and they averaged about 20 creative ideas per person. The group that was walking on the treadmill did almost twice as well. And they were just walking on a treadmill in a windowless room.

12. Remember, they took the test twice. The people who sat twice for that second test didn't get any better; practice didn't help. But these same people who were sitting and then went on the treadmill got a boost from walking. Here's the interesting thing. The people who were walking on the treadmill still had a residue effect of the walking, and they were still creative afterwards. So the implication of this is that you should go for a walk before your next big meeting and just start brainstorming right away.



This slide, built up one item at a time, illustrates Marily's results visually.

13. We have five tips for you that will help make this the best effect possible. First, you want to pick a problem or a topic to brainstorm. So, this is not the shower effect, when you're in the shower and all of a sudden, a new idea pops out of the shampoo bottle. This is something you're thinking about ahead of time. They're intentionally thinking about brainstorming a different perspective on the walk.

Marily begins building the next slide here.

14. Secondly—I get asked this a lot: Is this OK while running? Well, the answer for me is that if I were running, the only new idea I would have would be to stop running, so . . .

The audience laughs at Marily's comment about running.

15. But if running for you is a comfortable pace, good. It turns out, whatever physical activity is not taking a lot of attention. So just walking at a comfortable pace is a good choice.

16. Also, you want to come up with as many ideas as you can. One key of creativity is to not lock on that first idea. Keep going. Keep coming up with new ones, until you pick one or two to pursue.

17. You might worry that you don't want to write them down, because what if you forget them? So the idea here is to speak them. Everybody was speaking their new ideas. So you can put your headphones on and record through your phone and then just pretend you're having a creative conversation, right? Because the act of writing your idea down is already a filter. You're going to be like, "Is this good enough to write down?" And then you write it down. So just speak as many as you can, record them and think about them later.

18. And finally: don't do this forever. Right? If you're on the walk and that idea's not coming to you, come back to it later at another time.

Marily concludes with a memorable play on words that summarizes her main point.

19. I think we're coming up on a break right now, so I have an idea: Why don't you grab a leash and take your thoughts for a walk? Thank you!

Appendix B Sample Persuasive Speech

Emma González was a senior at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on Valentine's Day in 2018, when a former student entered her school, killed 17 students and staff members, and injured 17 more, with an assault rifle. When the alarm went off, Emma attempted to leave the building but was told to take cover in the auditorium. She had to remain there for two hours until police let students out.

Emma presented the speech reproduced here at a gun control rally a few days after the shooting.¹ It is one of many that Emma has given as one of the founders of the "#NeverAgain Movement." Just a few days after Emma gave this speech, Rick Scott, the governor of Florida, proposed a number of gun control measures,² which were soon passed by both houses of the state legislature. In proposing the measures, Scott commented, "To the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, you made your voices heard. You didn't let up and you fought until there was change."³

One month after the shooting, 3,000 schools participated in the first of several 17-minute walkouts to protest the lack of gun control in the United States. A week after that, the March for our Lives in Washington, DC and 800 other cities became the largest student protest in U.S. history. Emma gave another memorable speech at that rally, and has been the subject of a number of national media stories since.

In an article she wrote for *Harper's Bazaar*, Emma explained who she is and why she is speaking out:

My Name is Emma González. I'm 18 years old, Cuban and bisexual. I'm so indecisive that I can't pick a favorite color, and I'm allergic to 12 things. I draw, paint, crochet, sew, embroider—anything productive I can do with my hands while watching Netflix.

But none of this matters anymore.

What matters is that the majority of American people have become complacent in a senseless injustice that occurs all around them. What matters is that most American politicians have become more easily swayed by money than by the people who voted them into office. What matters is that my friends are dead, along with hundreds upon hundreds of others all over the United States.⁴

In this speech, Emma presented a clear and logical argument: that the National Rifle Association (NRA) and politicians who accept money from the NRA were complicit in the shootings.

Emma also asked her audience to take clear, decisive action: to support political candidates who support gun control.

Intentionally or not, Emma followed Aristotle's Triad by including emotion with the logic and ethics of her speech:

Adults are saying that children are emotional. I should hope so—some of our closest friends were taken before their time because of a senseless act of violence that should never have occurred.⁵

She also aimed for common ground:

... when members of the March for Our Lives movement talk about the NRA, we are referring to the organization itself, not the members. Many of the members understand and support our fight for responsible gun ownership, despite the organization preventing common sense gun laws from being instituted in the name of protecting the Second Amendment—rather than the American people.⁶

Emma chose her language for this speech carefully. She even used a rhetorical device, the call and response, to encourage her audience to chime in:

I knew I would get my job done properly at that rally if I got people chanting something. And I thought “We call B.S.” has four syllables; that’s good, I’ll use that. I didn’t want to say the actual curse words . . . this message doesn’t need to be thought of in a negative way at all.⁷

The outline for this speech appears as follows (numbers in brackets refer to paragraphs in the speech):

INTRODUCTION [1–3]

Body

- I. The Problem: Guns have changed, but our laws have not. [4]
 - A. It is too easy to buy guns. [5, 6, 7, 8]
 - B. There are too many mass killings in the U.S. [7,8]
- II. The Solution: It’s time to start doing something. [9, 10]
 - A. It is not a mental health issue. [11–13]
 - B. It is not the victim’s fault. [14]
 - C. Our leaders, including our president, are influenced by NRA money. [15–22]
 - D. We need to call BS
 - 1. To politicians who lie to us [23–25]
 - 2. To excuses that don’t make sense [26–30]

CONCLUSION [Desired Audience Response] [31]

Before Emma begins her speech, she holds up papers with handwritten notes and says, “I know this looks like a lot. But these are my AP Gov. notes,” referring to her Advanced Placement, American Government course in which the students had researched gun control issues. She then involves her audience in a moment of silence.

We Call BS⁸

Emma González

1. We haven’t already had a moment of silence in the House of Representatives, so I would like to have another one.
2. Thank you.
3. Every single person up here today, all these people, should be home grieving. But instead, we are up here standing together because if all our government and President can do is send thoughts and prayers, then it’s time for victims to be the change that we need to see.
4. Since the time of the Founding Fathers and since they added the Second Amendment to the Constitution, our guns have developed at a rate that leaves me dizzy. The guns have changed but our laws have not.

Emma establishes credibility.

5. We certainly do not understand why it should be harder to make plans with friends on weekends than to buy an automatic or semi-automatic weapon. In Florida, to buy a gun you do not need a permit, you do not need a gun license, and once you buy it you do not need to register it. You do not need a permit to carry a concealed rifle or shotgun. You can buy as many guns as you want at one time.

Emma quickly identifies her problem through the use of an analogy.

6. I read something very powerful today. It was from the point of view of a teacher. And I quote: “When adults tell me I have the right to own a gun, all I can hear is my right to own a gun outweighs your student’s right to live. All I hear is mine, mine, mine, mine.”

7. Instead of worrying about our AP Gov Chapter 16 test, we have to be studying our notes to make sure that our arguments based on politics and political history are watertight. The students at this school have been having debates on guns for what feels like our entire lives. AP Gov had three debates on this topic this year. Some discussions on the subject even occurred during the shooting while students were hiding in the closets. The people involved right now, those who were there, those posting, those tweeting, those doing interviews and talking to people, are being listened to for what feels like the very first time on this topic . . .

Here Emma further establishes her credibility.

8. I found out today there’s a website shootingtracker.com. It exclusively tracks the USA’s shootings, because Australia had one mass shooting in 1999 and afterward introduced gun safety, and it hasn’t had one since. Japan has never had a mass shooting. Canada has had three and the UK had one and they both introduced gun control and yet here we are, with websites dedicated to reporting these tragedies so that they can be formulated into statistics for your convenience.

Comparison: Of U.S. versus other countries.

9. . . . If us students have learned anything, it’s that if you don’t study, you will fail. And in this case if you actively do nothing, people continually end up dead. So it’s time to start doing something.

Comparison: Social action versus studying in school. “Us students,” of course, is not correct grammatically, but it works rhetorically.

10. We are going to be the kids you read about in textbooks. Not because we’re going to be another statistic about mass shooting in America, but because . . . we are going to change the law. That’s going to be Marjory Stoneman Douglas in that textbook and it’s going to be due to the tireless effort of the school board, the faculty members, the family members and most of all the students—the students who are dead, the students still in the hospital, the students now suffering PTSD, the students who had panic attacks during the vigil because the helicopters would not leave us alone, hovering over the school for 24 hours a day.

A prophetic statement, considering Emma’s inclusion in this text.

11. There is one tweet I would like to call attention to. “So many signs that the Florida shooter was mentally disturbed, even expelled for bad and erratic behavior. Neighbors and classmates knew he was a big problem. Must always report such instances to authorities again and again.”

Here Emma quotes a tweet by President Trump that was featured in many news reports.

12. We did, time and time again. Since he was in middle school, it was no surprise to anyone who knew him to hear that he was the shooter. Those talking about how we should have not ostracized him, you didn't know this kid, OK? We did.

13. We know that they are claiming mental health issues, and I am not a psychologist, but we need to pay attention to the fact that this was not just a mental health issue. He would not have harmed that many students with a knife.

14. And how about we stop blaming the victims for something that was this student's fault, and the fault of the people who let him buy the guns in the first place, those at the gun shows, the people who encouraged him to buy accessories for his guns to make them fully automatic, the people who didn't take them away from him when they knew he expressed homicidal tendencies, and I am not talking about the FBI. I'm talking about the people he lived with. I'm talking about the neighbors who saw him outside holding guns.

15. If the President wants to come up to me and tell me to my face that it was a terrible tragedy and how it should never have happened and maintain telling us how nothing is going to be done about it, I'm going to happily ask him how much money he received from the National Rifle Association.

Here Emma suggests a powerful claim . . .

16. You want to know something? It doesn't matter, because I already know.

. . . and immediately establishes a subclaim . . .

17. Thirty million dollars. And divided by the number of gunshot victims in the United States in the one and one-half months in 2018 alone, that comes out to \$5,800. Is that how much these people are worth to you, President Trump? If you don't do anything to prevent this from continuing to occur, that number of gunshot victims will go up and the number that they are worth will go down. And eventually, we will be worthless to you.

. . . and immediately backs it up with statistical evidence that she breaks down for effect.

18. To every politician who is taking donations from the NRA, shame on you.

Here the crowd takes up a chant, "Shame on You."

19. If your money was as threatened as us, would your first thought be, "How is this going to reflect on my campaign? Which should I choose?" Or would you choose us, and if you answered "us," will you act like it for once?

Emma begins an extended example . . .

20. You know what would be a good way to act like it? I have an example of how to not act like it. In February of 2017, one year ago, President Trump repealed an Obama-era regulation that would have made it easier to block the sale of firearms to people with certain mental illnesses.

. . . and develops it.

21. From the interactions that I had with the shooter before the shooting and from the information that I currently know about him, I don't really know if he was mentally ill . . . I don't need a psychologist and I don't need to be a psychologist to know that repealing that regulation was a really dumb idea.

22. Republican Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa was the sole sponsor on this bill that stops the FBI from performing background checks on people adjudicated to be mentally ill, and now he's stating for

the record, “Well, it’s a shame the FBI isn’t doing background checks on these mentally ill people.” Well, duh. You took that opportunity away last year.

23. The people in the government who were voted into power are lying to us. And kids seem to be the only ones . . . to call BS.

24. Companies trying to make caricatures of teenagers these days, saying that we are self-involved and trend-obsessed—and they hush us into submission when our message doesn’t reach the ears of the nation—we are prepared to call BS.

25. Politicians who sit in their gilded House and Senate seats funded by the NRA telling us nothing could have been done to prevent this, we call BS.

The crowd picks up on this slogan and chants “We Call BS” each time Emma repeats it.

26. They say tougher gun laws do not decrease gun violence. We call BS.

27. They say a good guy with a gun stops a bad guy with a gun. We call BS.

28. They say guns are just tools like knives and are no more dangerous than cars. We call BS.

29. They say no laws could have prevented the hundreds of senseless tragedies that have occurred. We call BS.

30. That kids don’t know what we’re talking about, that we’re too young to understand how the government works. We call BS.

31. If you agree, register to vote. Contact your local congresspeople. Give them a piece of your mind.

The crowd chants, “Throw Them Out” as Emma presents her simple plea for a desired audience response.

Notes

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

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CHAPTER 1

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CHAPTER 6

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CHAPTER 8

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CHAPTER 12

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CHAPTER 13

1. Some recent literature specifically refers to Public Speaking Anxiety, or PSA. See, for example, Bodie, G. D. (2010, January). A racing heart, rattling knees, and ruminative thoughts: Defining, explaining, and treating public speaking anxiety. *Communication Education*, 59(1), 70–105.
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7. Behnke, R. R., Sawyer, C. R., & King, P. E. (1987, April). The communication of public speaking anxiety. *Communication Education*, 36, 138–141.
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12. Research has confirmed that speeches practiced in front of other people tend to be more successful. See, for example, Smith, T. E., & Frymier, A. B. (2006, February). Get “real”: Does practicing speeches before an audience improve performance? *Communication Quarterly*, 54, 111–125.
13. See, for example, Rosenfeld, L. R., & Civikly, J. M. (1976). *With words unspoken*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, p. 62. Also see Chaiken, S. (1979). Communicator physical attractiveness and persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 1387–1397.
14. A study demonstrating this stereotype is Street, R. L., Jr., & Brady, R. M. (1982, December). Speech rate acceptance ranges as a function of evaluative domain, listener speech rate, and communication context. *Speech Monographs*, 49, 290–308.
15. See, for example, Mulac, A., & Rudd, M. J. (1977). Effects of selected American regional dialects upon regional audience members. *Communication Monographs*, 44, 184–195. Some research, however, suggests that nonstandard dialects do not have the detrimental effects on listeners that were once believed. See, for example, Johnson, F. L., & Buttney, R. (1982, March). White listeners' responses to “sounding Black” and “sounding White”: The effect of message content on judgments about language. *Communication Monographs*, 49, 33–39.

16. Smith, V., Siltanen, S. A., & Hosman, L. A. (1998, Fall). The effects of powerful and powerless speech styles and speaker expertise on impression formation and attitude change. *Communication Research Reports*, 15(1), 27–35. In this study, a powerful speech style was defined as one without hedges and hesitations such as *uh* and *anda*.

CHAPTER 14

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- Cacioppo, J. T., & Petty, R. E. (1979). Effects of message repetition and position on cognitive response, recall, and persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 97–109.
- For an example of how one politician failed to adapt to his audience's attitudes, see Hostetler, M. J. (1998, Winter). Gov. Al Smith confronts the Catholic question: The rhetorical legacy of the 1928 campaign. *Communication Quarterly*, 46(1), 12–24. Smith was reluctant to discuss religion, attributed bigotry to anyone who brought it up, and was impatient with the whole issue. He lost the election. Many years later, John F. Kennedy dealt with "the Catholic question" more reasonably and won.
- DeVito, J. A. (1986). *The communication handbook: A dictionary*. New York: Harper & Row, pp. 84–86.
- Stallings, H. (2009). Prosecution deferred is justice denied. *Winning orations 2009*. LOCATION: Interstate Oratorical Association. Hope was coached by Randy Richardson and Melanie Conrad.
- Monroe, A. (1935). *Principles and types of speech*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.
- Toulmin, S. E. (1964). The uses of argument. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Curt Casper presented this speech when he was a student at Hastings College in 2011.
- There are, of course, other classifications of logical fallacies than those presented here. See, for example, Warnick, B., & Inch, E. (1994). *Critical thinking and communication: The use of reason in argument* (2nd ed.). New York: Macmillan, pp. 137–161.
- Sprague, J., & Stuart, D. (1992). *The speaker's handbook* (3rd ed.). Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992, p. 172.

Appendix A

- This talk was presented to a local audience at TEDxStanford, an independent event. TED editors featured it among the selections on their home page. Available at https://www.ted.com/talks/marily_oppezzo_want_to_be_more_creative_go_for_a_walk.

Appendix B

- Video available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxD3o-9H1IY>.
- Signed into law on March 9, 2018, Florida Senate Bill 7026, known as the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, raised the legal age to purchase guns from 18 to 21. It also allowed for teachers to be armed, a provision that Emma disapproved of.
- Sanchez, R., & Yan, H. (2018, March 9). Florida Gov. Rick Scott signs gun bill. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/09/us/florida-gov-scott-gun-bill/index.html>.
- González, E. (2018, February 26). Parkland student Emma González opens up about her fight for gun control. *Harper's Bazaar*. Retrieved from <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/politics/a18715714/protesting-nra-gun-control-true-story/>.
- González (2018).
- González (2018).
- Feller, M. (2018, February 23). Emma González shares the story behind her moving "We call B.S." gun reform speech. *Elle*. Retrieved from <https://www.elle.com/culture/career-politics/a18671363/parkland-students-shooting-ellen-degeneres-emma-gonzalez/>.
- This is a slightly edited version of the speech that González gave February 17, 2018, at the Fort Lauderdale, FL, Rally for Gun Control. The full transcript can be found at <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/17/us/florida-student-emma-gonzalez-speech/index.html>.

Glossary

- accent:** Pronunciation perceived as different from the local speech style. p. 50
- addition:** The articulation error that involves adding extra parts to words. p. 206
- ad hominem fallacy:*** A fallacious argument that attacks the integrity of a person to weaken his or her position. p. 222
- adjustment shock:** When a person feels confused, disenchanted, lonesome, or homesick in a new cultural environment; another term for culture shock. p. 44
- affect blend:** The combination of two or more expressions, each showing a different emotion. p. 85
- affective:** Focused on emotions. See also *Instrumental*. p. 58
- affiliative language:** Language that demonstrates a sense of connection between people. p. 52
- affinity:** The degree to which one person likes or appreciates another. p. 96
- altruistic lie:** Deception intended to be nonmalicious, or even helpful, to the person to whom it is told. p. 132
- analogy:** Extended comparison that can be used as supporting material in a speech. p. 189
- analytical listening:** A process in which the receiver's primary goal is to fully comprehend a message. p. 73
- androgynous:** Combining masculine and feminine traits. p. 20
- anecdote:** A brief personal story used to illustrate or support a point in a speech. p. 189
- apathetic (sibling relationship):** A pattern in which siblings only communicate with one another on special occasions. p. 119
- argumentum ad populum fallacy:*** Fallacious reasoning based on the dubious notion that because many people favor an idea, you should, too. p. 222
- argumentum ad verecundiam fallacy:*** Fallacious reasoning that tries to support a belief by relying on the testimony of someone who is not an authority on the issue being argued. p. 222
- articulation:** The process of pronouncing all the necessary parts of a word. p. 205
- assertive communication:** A style that directly expresses the sender's needs, thoughts, or feelings, delivered in a way that does not attack the receiver's dignity. p. 133
- attending:** The process of focusing on particular stimuli from the environment. p. 66
- attitude:** Predisposition to respond to an idea, person, or thing favorably or unfavorably. p. 180
- attribution:** The process of attaching meaning. p. 19
- audience analysis:** A consideration of characteristics including the type, goals, demographics, beliefs, attitudes, and values of listeners. p. 179
- audience involvement:** The level of commitment and attention that listeners devote to a speech. p. 212
- audience participation:** Having your listeners actually do something during your speech. p. 212
- authoritarian (parenting):** An approach in which parents expect unquestioning obedience. p. 118
- authoritative (parenting):** An approach in which parents are firm, clear, and strict, but encourage children to communicate openly with them. p. 118
- avoidance spiral:** A communication pattern in which the parties slowly reduce their dependence on one another, withdraw, and become less invested in the relationship. p. 105
- bar chart:** Visual aid that compares two or more values by showing them as elongated horizontal rectangles. p. 199
- basic speech structure:** The division of a speech into introduction, body, and conclusion. p. 183

behavioral interview: A formal meeting (in person or via communication technology) to exchange information about an applicant's past performance as it relates to the job at hand. p. 150

belief: An underlying conviction about the truth of an idea, often based on cultural training. p. 180

breadth: The range of topics about which an individual discloses. p. 98

channel: Medium through which a message passes from sender to receiver. p. 3

chronemics: The study of how humans use and structure time. p. 87

citation: Brief statement of supporting material in a speech. p. 190

claim: One of a series of statements that lead to the conclusion the speaker is trying to establish. p. 219

coculture: The perception of membership in a group that is part of an encompassing culture. p. 31

coercive power: The power to influence others by the threat or imposition of unpleasant consequences. p. 167

cognitive complexity: The ability to construct a variety of frameworks for viewing an issue. p. 10

cohesiveness: The degree to which group members feel connected with and committed to the group. p. 169

collectivistic culture: A culture in which members focus on the welfare of the group as a whole, rather than individuals being concerned mostly about their own personal success. p. 38

column chart: Visual aid that compares two or more values by showing them as elongated vertical rectangles. p. 199

common ground: Similarities between yourself and your audience members. p. 214

communication: The process of creating meaning through symbolic interaction. p. 2

communication climate: The emotional tone of a relationship, evident in the messages that relational partners express. p. 103

communication competence: Ability to maintain a relationship on terms acceptable to all parties. p. 9

competitive (sibling relationship): A pattern in which siblings perceive themselves to be rivals. p. 119

complementary: A pattern in which one person's characteristics satisfy the other's needs, as when an introverted and extroverted person inspire each other to try new experiences. p. 111

conclusion (of a speech): The final structural unit of a speech, in which the main points are reviewed and final remarks are made to motivate the audience to act or help listeners remember key ideas. p. 187

confirmation bias: Tendency to believe untrue information if it conforms to one's preconceived biases. pp. 182, 215

confirming response: A message that expresses respect and valuing of the other person. p. 103

conflict stage: A phase in problem-solving groups in which members openly defend their positions and challenge those of others. p. 171

conformity: A family communication pattern in which members are expected to adhere to an established set of rules, beliefs, and values. p. 118

connection power: Influence granted by virtue of a member's ability to develop relationships. p. 167

connotative meanings: Informal, implied interpretations for words and phrases that reflect the people, culture, emotions, and situations involved. p. 49

contact hypothesis: A proposition based on evidence that prejudice tends to diminish when people have personal contact with those they might otherwise stereotype. pp. 37, 116

contempt: Reflects the speaker's negative attitude or opinion toward another person. p. 135

content message: The dimension of a message that addresses information about the subject being discussed. See also *Relational message*. p. 96

control: The ability to influence others. p. 96

convergence: Accommodating one's speaking style to another person, usually a person who is desirable or has higher status. p. 52

conversation: A family communication pattern in which members are encouraged to communicate openly about rules and expectations. p. 118

conversational narcissists: People who focus on themselves and their interests instead of listening to and encouraging others. p. 71

credibility: The believability of a speaker or other source of information. p. 215

critical listening: A process in which the receiver's goal is to evaluate the quality or accuracy of a speaker's remarks. p. 74

criticism: An all-encompassing and accusatory statement such as, "You never do your fair share." p. 135

culture: The language, values, beliefs, traditions, and customs people share and learn. p. 31

culture shock: When a person feels confused, disenchanted, lonesome, or homesick in a new cultural environment; also known as *adjustment shock*. p. 44

debilitative speech anxiety: Intense level of apprehension about speaking before an audience, resulting in poor performance. p. 194

deception bias: A tendency to assume that people are lying. p. 83

decoding: The process in which a receiver attaches meaning to a message. p. 3

defensive listeners: Receivers who perceive a speaker's comments as an attack. p. 70

defensiveness: Striking back when one feels attacked by another. p. 135

deletion: An articulation error that involves leaving off parts of words. p. 206

demographics: Audience characteristics that can be analyzed statistically, such as age, gender, education, and group membership. p. 179

denotative meanings: Formally recognized definitions for words, as found in a dictionary. p. 49

depth: The level of personal information a person reveals on a particular topic. p. 98

descriptive communication: Messages that focus on the speaker's thoughts and feelings instead of judging the other person. p. 104

developmental model (of relational maintenance): The perspective that relationships develop, maintain stability, and come apart in stages that reflect different levels of intimacy. p. 124

diagram: A line drawing that shows the most important components of an object. p. 199

dialect: A version of the same language that includes substantially different words and meanings. p. 51

dialectical model (of relational maintenance): The theory that people in interpersonal relationships must deal with equally important, simultaneous, and opposing forces such as the need for both connection and autonomy, predictability and novelty, and openness and privacy. p. 130

directly aggressive message: An expression of the sender's thoughts or feelings, or both, that attacks the position and dignity of the receiver. p. 134

disconfirming message: A message that expresses a lack of caring or respect for another person. p. 103

disinhibition: The tendency to transmit messages without considering their consequences. p. 8

divergence: A linguistic strategy in which speakers emphasize differences between their communicative style and that of others in order to create distance. p. 52

Dunbar's Number: The average number of friendships an individual can maintain at one time (approximately 150). p. 117

dyadic communication: Two-person communication. p. 5

either-or fallacy: Fallacious reasoning that sets up false alternatives, suggesting that if the inferior one must be rejected, then the other must be accepted. p. 222

emblems: Deliberate nonverbal behaviors with precise meanings, known to virtually all members of a cultural group. p. 82

emergence stage: A phase in problem-solving groups in which members stop arguing for separate solutions and combine their ideas. p. 171

emotional intelligence: A person's ability to understand and effectively manage emotions. p. 21

emotive language: Language that conveys the sender's attitude rather than simply offering an objective description. p. 55

empathy: The ability to project oneself into another person's point of view so as to experience the other's thoughts and feelings. See also *Sympathy*. p. 21

encoding: The process of putting thoughts into symbols, most commonly words. p. 3

environment: Both the physical setting in which communication occurs and the personal perspectives of the parties involved. p. 3

equivocal words: Language with more than one likely interpretation. See also *Equivocation*. p. 53

equivocation: A deliberately vague statement that can be interpreted in more than one way. See also *Equivocal words*. pp. 53, 132

escalatory conflict spirals: A pattern in which disconfirming messages reinforce one another, often leading to arguments. p. 105

ethos: Aristotle's term for the ethical dimension of a persuasive speech. p. 215

ethnicity: A social construct that refers to the degree to which a person identifies with a particular group, usually on the basis of nationality, culture, religion, or some other unifying perspective. p. 32

ethnocentrism: The attitude that one's own culture is superior to that of others. p. 43

euphemism: A pleasant-sounding term used in place of a more direct but less pleasant one. p. 54

evaluating: A stage of listening in which a person goes beyond interpreting a message to make a judgment about the message and/or the speaker. p. 66

evidence: Supporting material used to back up a claim. p. 220

example: A specific case that is used to demonstrate a general idea. p. 189

expert power: The ability to influence others by virtue of one's perceived knowledge about the subject in question. p. 167

extemporaneous speech: A speech that is planned in advance but presented in a direct, conversational manner. p. 198

fabrication: A message in which the speaker deliberately misleads another person in a mean-spirited or manipulative way. p. 132

face: A socially approved identity that a communicator tries to present. p. 24

framework: Verbal and nonverbal behavior designed to create and maintain a communicator's face and the face of others; synonymous with identity management. p. 24

facilitative speech anxiety: A moderate level of apprehension about speaking before an audience that helps improve the speaker's performance. p. 194

factual statement: A statement that can be verified as being true or false. See also *Inferential statements*. p. 55

fallacy: An error in logic. p. 222

fallacy of ad hominem: Statement that attacks a person's character rather than debating the issues at hand. p. 222

fallacy of approval: The irrational belief that it is vital to win the approval of virtually every person a communicator deals with. p. 195

fallacy of catastrophic failure: The irrational belief that the worst possible outcome will probably occur. p. 195

fallacy of overgeneralization: Irrational beliefs in which (1) conclusions (usually negative) are based on limited evidence or (2) communicators exaggerate their shortcomings. p. 195

fallacy of perfection: The irrational belief that a worthwhile communicator should be able to handle every situation with complete confidence and skill. p. 195

family: People who share affection and resources as a family and who think of themselves and present themselves as a family, regardless of their genetic commonality. p. 110

feedback: The discernible response of a receiver to a sender's message. p. 4

filter bubble: Online media that enable users to access only that information that conforms with their biases. p. 182

flaming: Sending angry and/or insulting emails, text messages, and posts. p. 8

flow chart: A diagram that depicts a process with boxes and arrows that represent the steps in a process. pp. 199, 200

formal outline: A consistent format and set of symbols used to identify the structure of ideas. p. 183

formal role: A position and set of behaviors explicitly assigned to a person, as in a project leader or facilitator. p. 169

frame switching: The ability to adapt one's style to the norms of more than one culture or coculture. p. 37

gender: A socially constructed set of expectations about what it means to be "masculine," "feminine," or another gender identity. p. 20

gender matrix: A conceptualization of gender identity that recognizes gender as a multidimensional collection of qualities. p. 20

general purpose: One of three basic ways a speaker seeks to affect an audience: to entertain, inform, or persuade. p. 181

groupthink: The tendency to go along with a group decision without fully considering the implications or alternatives. p. 173

halo effect: The tendency to assume that a person who impresses one favorably in one way also has other positive qualities. p. 19

haptics: The study of touch. p. 85

hearing: The process wherein sound waves strike the eardrum and cause vibrations that are transmitted to the brain. p. 65

high-context culture: A culture that relies heavily on subtle, often nonverbal cues to maintain social harmony. p. 39

high self-monitors: People who pay close attention to their own behavior and others' reactions, adjusting their communication to create the desired impression. p. 25

hinting: Saying something to bring about a desired response without asking for it directly. p. 132

hostile (sibling relationship): A pattern in which siblings feel jealousy, resentment, and anger toward one another. p. 119

hypothetical example: Example that asks an audience to imagine an object or event. p. 188

“I language”: Statements that describe a specific behavior by another person and how that behavior affects the speaker.

See also “*You*” language. p. 104

identity management: Strategies used by communicators to influence the way others view them; synonymous with facework. p. 24

imaginary audience: A heightened self-consciousness that makes it seem as if people are always observing and judging us. p. 36

immediacy: The degree of interest and attraction one feels toward and communicates to others. As with all relational messages, immediacy is usually expressed nonverbally. p. 96

impromptu speech: A speech given “off the top of one’s head,” without preparation. p. 198

indirect communication: Hinting at a message instead of expressing thoughts and feelings directly. p. 133

individualistic culture: A culture in which members focus on the value and welfare of individual members, as opposed to concern for the group as a whole. p. 38

inferential statement: Conclusion arrived at from an interpretation of evidence. See also *Factual statement*. p. 55

informal roles: Behaviors enacted by particular group members although they are not explicitly assigned to do them. For example, some people serve informally as peacekeepers or jesters. See also *Formal role*. p. 169

informational interview: A structured meeting in which a person seeks answers from a source whose knowledge can help them succeed. p. 142

informative purpose statement: A sentence that tells what knowledge your audience will gain by listening to your speech. p. 211

in-group: Members of groups with which we identify. p. 31

insensitive listeners: Receivers who fail to recognize thoughts or feelings that are not directly expressed by a speaker, and instead accept the speaker’s words at face value. p. 71

instrumental: Focused on accomplishing tasks. See also *Affective*. p. 58

insulated listeners: Receivers who ignore undesirable information. p. 71

interpersonal communication: Interaction between people who are part of a close and irreplaceable relationship in which they treat each other as unique individuals. p. 95

interpreting: A stage of listening in which a person takes into consideration the situation, the sender’s nonverbal behaviors, and other contextual cues. p. 66

intersectionality: The idea that people are influenced in unique ways by the complex overlap and interactions of multiple identities. p. 32

intimacy: A state of closeness between people. Intimacy can be manifested physically, intellectually, emotionally, and via shared activities. p. 124

intrapersonal communication: Communication that occurs within a single person. p. 5

introduction (of a speech): The first structural unit of a speech, in which the speaker captures the audience’s attention and previews the main points to be covered. p. 185

irrational thinking: Beliefs that have no basis in reality or logic; one source of debilitating speech anxiety. p. 195

jargon: The specialized vocabulary that is used as a kind of shorthand by people with common backgrounds and experience. p. 54

Johari window: A model that describes the relationship between self-disclosure and self-awareness. p. 99

kinesics: The study of nonverbal communication that involves body movement, facial expressions, gestures, and posture. p. 84

language: A collection of symbols, governed by rules and used to convey messages between individuals. p. 48

legitimate power: The ability to influence others based on one’s official position in a group or organization. p. 167

line chart: Visual aid consisting of a grid that maps out the direction of a trend by plotting a series of points. p. 199

linear communication model: A characterization of communication as a one-way event in which a message flows from sender to receiver. p. 3

listening: A process wherein the brain reconstructs electrochemical impulses generated by hearing into representations of the original sound and gives them meaning. p. 65

listening fidelity: The degree of congruence between what a listener understands and what a sender is attempting to communicate. p. 66

logos: Aristotle’s term for the logical dimension of a persuasive speech. p. 215

longing (sibling relationship:) A pattern in which siblings admire and respect one other but interact less frequently and with less depth than they would like. p. 119

low-context culture: A culture in which people use language primarily to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas as directly as possible. p. 38

low self-monitors: People who express what they are thinking and feeling without much attention to the impression their behavior creates. p. 25

Managerial Grid: A model that portrays leadership on the basis of low to high emphasis on tasks and low to high emphasis on relationships. p. 162

manipulators: Movements in which a person fidgets with an object, clothing, or part of the body. p. 84

manuscript speech: A speech that is read word for word from a prepared text. p. 198

mass communication: The transmission of messages to large, usually widespread audiences via broadcast (such as radio and television), print (such as newspapers, magazines, and books), multimedia (such as DVD), online, and other forms of media (such as recordings and movies). p. 6

mediated communication: Communication sent via a medium other than face-to-face interaction, such as telephone, email, or instant messaging. Can be both mass and personal. p. 3

memorized speech: A speech learned and delivered by rote without a written text. p. 198

message: A sender's planned and unplanned words and nonverbal behaviors. p. 3

metacommunication: Messages (usually relational) that refer to other messages; communication about communication. p. 97

mindful listening: Active, high-level information processing. p. 75

model (in speeches and presentations): Replica of an object being discussed. Usually used when it would be difficult or impossible to use the actual object. p. 199

monochronic: The use of time that emphasizes punctuality, schedules, and completing one task at a time. p. 87

Monroe's motivated sequence: A five-step persuasive organizational pattern. p. 218

narration: Presentation of speech-supporting material as a story with a beginning, middle, and end. p. 190

networking: The strategic process of meeting people and maintaining contacts that results in information and advice. p. 141

noise: External, physiological, and psychological distractions that interfere with the accurate transmission and reception of a message. p. 3

nominal leaders: People who have been officially designated to be in charge of a group. p. 167

nonassertion: The inability or unwillingness to express one's thoughts or feelings. p. 133

nonverbal communication: A process in which messages are expressed without using words. p. 80

number chart: Visual aid that lists numbers in tabular form in order to clarify information. p. 55

omission: A type of deception in which one person withholds information that another person deserves to know. p. 132

opinion statement: A statement based on the speaker's beliefs. p. 55

organizational communication: Communication that occurs within a structured collection of people in order to meet a need or pursue a goal. p. 6

orientation stage: A phase in problem-solving groups in which members become familiar with one another's ideas and tentatively volunteer their own. p. 171

out-group: People we view as different from ourselves. p. 31

paralanguage: Nonlinguistic means of vocal expression: rate, pitch, tone, and so on. p. 85

paraphrasing: Feedback in which the receiver rewords the speaker's thoughts and feelings; can be used to verify understanding, demonstrate empathy, and help others solve their problems. p. 73

passive aggression: An indirect expression of aggression, delivered in a way that allows the sender to maintain a facade of kindness. p. 134

pathos: The use of emotional appeals in a persuasive argument. p. 215

perceived self: The person an individual believes themselves to be in moments of candor. It may be identical with or different from the presenting and ideal selves. p. 24

perception checking: A three-part method for verifying the accuracy of interpretations, including a description of what happened, two possible interpretations, and a request for confirmation of the interpretations. p. 22

permissive (parenting): An approach in which parents do not require children to follow many rules. p. 118

personal fable: A belief that one is special and different from everybody else. p. 36

persuasion: The act of motivating a listener, through communication, to change a particular belief, attitude, value, or behavior. p. 210

persuasive speaking: Reason-giving discourse that involves proposing claims and backing up those claims with proof. p. 210

phonological rules: Linguistic rules governing how sounds are combined to form words. p. 49

phubbing: Episodes in which people snub those around them by paying attention to their phones instead. p. 102

pictogram: A visual aid that conveys its meaning through an image of an actual object. p. 199

pie chart: A visual aid that divides a circle into wedges, representing percentages of the whole. p. 199

pitch: The highness or lowness of one's voice. p. 205

polychronic: The use of time that emphasizes flexible schedules in which multiple tasks are pursued at the same time. p. 87

post hoc fallacy: Fallacious reasoning that mistakenly assumes that one event causes another because they occur sequentially. p. 222

power: The ability to influence others' thoughts and/or actions. p. 167

power distance: The degree to which members of a group are willing to accept differences in power and status. p. 40

powerful language: Linguistic patterns considered to be clear, assertive, and direct. See also *Powerless language*. p. 51

powerless language: Linguistic patterns that suggest a speaker is uncertain, hesitant, or nonassertive; supposedly "powerless" speech can be effective and goal oriented at times. See also *Powerful language*. p. 51

pragmatic rules: Rules that govern how people use language in everyday interaction. p. 49

prejudice: An unfairly biased and intolerant attitude toward people who belong to an out-group. p. 43

presenting self: The image a person presents to others. It may be identical to or different from the perceived and ideal selves. See also *Face*. p. 24

procedural norms: Shared expectations that influence how a group operates or reaches decisions. p. 168

proof statements: Explaining why your claims are true, along with evidence that backs up those claims. p. 217

proxemics: The study of how people and animals use space. p. 87

pseudolistening: Imitating the process of listening without really thinking about what is being heard. p. 70

public communication: Communication that occurs when a group becomes too large for all members to contribute. It is characterized by an unequal amount of speaking and by limited verbal feedback. p. 6

purpose statement: A complete sentence that describes precisely what a speaker wants to accomplish. p. 181

race: A social construct originally created to explain biological differences among people whose ancestors originated in different regions of the world. p. 32

rate: The speed at which a speaker utters words. p. 205

reasoning: The process of making claims and backing them up, logically and rationally. p. 219

receiver: One who notices and attends to a message. p. 3

reductio ad absurdum fallacy: Fallacious reasoning that unfairly attacks an argument by extending it to such extreme lengths that it looks ridiculous. p. 222

referent power: The ability to influence others by virtue of the degree to which one is liked or respected. p. 167

reflected appraisal: The influence of others on one's self-concept. p. 17

reflective thinking method: A structured problem-solving method for small groups introduced in 1910 by John Dewey and still in use, with some modifications, today. p. 174

reinforcement stage: A phase in problem-solving groups in which members endorse the decision they have made together. p. 171

relational maintenance: The process of keeping stable relationships operating smoothly and satisfactorily. p. 124

relational listening: A listening style that is driven primarily by the goal of building emotional closeness with the speaker. p. 72

relational message: An often unstated dimension of a message that reflects how the communicator feels about the other person. See also *Content message*. p. 96

relative words: Words that gain their meaning by comparison. p. 53

remembering: The act of recalling previously introduced information. p. 66

residual message: The part of a message a receiver can recall later. p. 66

respect: The degree to which one holds another person in high esteem. p. 96

responding: Providing observable feedback in reaction to another person's behavior or speech. p. 66

reward power: The ability to influence others by granting or promising desirable consequences. p. 167

roles: Patterns of behavior expected of group members. p. 169

rule: An explicit, officially stated guideline that governs group functions and member behavior. p. 168

salience: How much weight we attach to a particular person or phenomenon. p. 31

selection interview: A formal meeting (in person or via communication technology) to evaluate a candidate for a job opportunity. p. 145

selective listeners: Receivers who respond only to messages that interest them. p. 70

self-concept: The relatively stable set of perceptions one holds of oneself. p. 16

self-disclosure: The process of deliberately revealing information about oneself that is significant and that others would not normally know. p. 98

self-esteem: The part of the self-concept that involves evaluations of self-worth. p. 16

self-fulfilling prophecy: A prediction or expectation of an event that makes the outcome more likely to occur than would otherwise have been the case. p. 18

self-monitoring: The process of paying close attention to one's own behavior and using these observations to shape the way one behaves. p. 10

self-serving bias: The tendency to interpret and explain information in a way that casts the perceiver in a favorable way. p. 19

semantic rules: Rules that govern the meaning of language as opposed to its structure. p. 49

sender: The originator of a message. p. 3

sex: A biological category (e.g., male, female, intersex). p. 20

significant others: People whose opinions are important enough to affect one's self-concept strongly. p. 17

signposts: Words or phrases that emphasize the importance of what you are about to say. p. 212

situational leadership: A model that argues that effective leaders adapt their style to suit the circumstances, considering the nature of the challenge and the relationships of people involved. p. 162

slang: Language used by a group of people whose members belong to a similar coculture or other group. p. 54

slide deck: Collection of visual aids presented via presentation software. p. 201

slurring: The articulation error that involves overlapping the end of one word with the beginning of the next. p. 206

small group: A limited number of people (usually between 3 and 20) who interact in an interdependent way with one another over time to reach shared goals. p. 168

small group communication: Communication within a group of a size that allows every member to participate actively with the other members. p. 5

social exchange theory: A model that suggests that people stay in relationships that offer rewards greater than or equal to the costs of being in the relationship. p. 112

social intelligence: The capacity to effectively negotiate complex social relationships and environments. p. 159

social loafing: Lazy behavior that some people use to avoid doing their share of the work. p. 168

social media: The use of communication technology to communicate with networks of people. p. 7

social media bots: Automated systems that generate and distribute social media posts. p. 35

social media trolls: People whose goal is to disrupt public discourse by posting false claims and prejudiced remarks, usually anonymously. p. 35

social norms: Shared expectations that influence how group members relate to one another. p. 168

social penetration model: A framework that describes how intimacy can be achieved via the breadth and depth of self-disclosure. p. 98

social roles: Patterns of behavior concerned with maintaining smooth personal relationships among group members. p. 169

specific purpose: The precise effect that the speaker wants to have on an audience. Expressed in the form of a purpose statement. p. 181

speech to change attitudes: Persuasion designed to change the way audiences think about a topic. p. 214

speech to change behavior: Persuasion designed to change audience actions. p. 214

spiral: Reciprocal communication pattern in which each person's message reinforces the other's; can be positive or negative. p. 105

stage hogs: People who are more concerned with making their own points than with understanding others. p. 71

statistic: Numbers arranged or organized to show how a fact or principle is true for a large percentage of cases. p. 188

stereotyping: Exaggerated generalizations about a group. p. 43

stonewalling: A form of avoidance in which one person refuses to engage with the other. p. 135

subclaim: One of a series of statements that support a claim made by a speaker. p. 219

substitution: The articulation error that involves replacing part of a word with an incorrect sound. p. 206

supportive listening: An approach meant to offer help or comfort to a speaker. p. 72

supportive (sibling relationship): A pattern in which siblings talk regularly and consider themselves to be accessible and emotionally close to one another. p. 119

symbol: An arbitrary sign used to represent a thing, person, idea, event, or relationship in a way that makes communication possible. pp. 2, 48

sympathy: Compassion for another's situation. See also *Empathy*. p. 21

syntactic rules: Rules that govern the ways in which symbols can be arranged as opposed to the meanings of those symbols. p. 49

target audience: The subgroup you must persuade to reach a goal. p. 214

task norms: Shared expectations that influence how group members handle the job at hand. p. 168

task-oriented listening: A listening style guided primarily by concern with accomplishing the task at hand. p. 73

task roles: Patterns of behavior group members use to help solve a problem. p. 169

territory: Fixed space that an individual assumes some right to occupy. p. 87

testimony: Supporting material that proves or illustrates a point by citing an authoritative source. p. 189

thesis statement: A complete sentence describing the central idea of a speech. p. 181

Toulmin model: The guideline that reminds us to use evidence to back up a claim, as well as a warrant to tie the evidence and claim together. p. 220

trait theories of leadership: The belief (largely unsupported by research) that leadership ability is innate rather than learned. p. 162

transactional communication model: A characterization of communication as the simultaneous sending and receiving of messages in an ongoing, irreversible process. p. 3

transformational leadership: A model that defines leaders in terms of their devotion to helping a team fulfill an important mission. p. 163

transition: Phrase that connects ideas in a speech by showing how one relates to the other. p. 187

truth bias: A tendency to assume that people are telling the truth. p. 83

uncertainty avoidance: The cultural tendency to seek stability and honor tradition instead of welcoming risk, uncertainty, and change. p. 39

understanding: The act of interpreting a message by following syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic rules. p. 66

undifferentiated: A gender identity that involves being neither masculine nor feminine. p. 20

unfair discrimination: Depriving people of opportunities or equal treatment based on prejudice, stereotypes, or irrelevant factors. p. 43

value: A deeply rooted belief about a concept's inherent worth. p. 180

visual aids: Graphic devices used in a speech to illustrate or support ideas. p. 199

visual aspects of delivery: The speaker's appearance, movement, posture, facial expression and eye contact during a speech. p. 203

visualization: A technique for behavioral rehearsal (e.g., for a speech) that involves imagining the successful completion of the task. p. 197

Web 2.0: A term used to describe the capability of everyday people to create and distribute messages online. p. 7

win-win problem solving: A means of resolving conflict in which the goal is a solution that satisfies the needs of everyone involved. p. 136

word chart: Visual aid that lists words or terms in tabular form in order to clarify information. p. 199

working outline: Constantly changing organizational aid used in planning a speech. p. 183

"you" language: Statements that contain an accusation, as in, "You are inconsiderate." See also "*I* language. p. 104

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