**Principles of effective communication**

**General Communication skills**

Adapting

Adapting how one communicates depending on their audience is very important. Communication needs to be different for every person so it is effective. How to adapt communication is dependent on who the audience is. For example, if talking to young children, simple language should be used. Young children also tend to have a short attention span, so sentences should be shorter. There are also other things to change – pitch of voice, speed of speech, etc.  
Talking to young children comes naturally – It does not take much conscious effort to adapt. However, when talking to adults, the differences are much more subtle.  
Things to consider are pitch, volume, enunciation, language and word choice, as well as habits of speech – saying ‘um’ a lot, or phrasing everything as a question for example. If a habit annoys the listener, they will be less receptive to what is being said.

Use of technology

Technology can aid communication, from phone calls to IM (instant messaging) to Skype video calls. However, technology also changes the way we communicate.  
The first way technology aids communication is that it removes the distance barrier – people can communicate in real-time regardless of where they are. A disadvantage is that over large distances there is a small delay. Even if the delay is less than a second, it makes it much more difficult to communicate. For example, during a skype call, one person might start talking, and in the half second it takes for that information to be transmitted, the other person starts talking too – and then stops when the sound arrives. Another half second later, the few words that the second person said arrives, and the first person stops talking. Half a second later, there is an awkward silence on both ends. This generally isn’t a problem with phone calls, but can be with video calls or phone calls over the internet.  
This is related to another problem with using technology to communicate – it doesn’t always work. Nothing is 100% reliable and failsafe. When technology doesn’t work, it can make people feel powerless – not good in a business meeting.  
On the plus side, technology allows for other mediums of communication – especially text.  
Communicating through text, in emails or IM, removes the need for real-time communication – a message can be replied to minutes, hours or even days later without necessarily offending the recipient. This gives the sender more time to think about their message and craft their sentences more carefully.   
A problem is that with no body language or verbal cues, meaning can be lost and a message can be interpreted differently from how it was intended.

**Interpersonal skills**

Intonation

Intonation is variance in pitch to better communicate the intent behind a spoken message. For example, when asking a question, pitch will usually go up on the last word, e.g. “He found it on the *street*?”

It is also used to stress words of importance, e.g. “*He* found it on the street?” shows that the person asking is interested in who found it, not where it was found, and “He found *it* on the street?” Shows the asker is interested in what was found.  
Intonation is very important in communication, as it is the most common verbal cue, and a lot of meaning and intent would not be delivered without it. Changing the emphasis of one word can completely alter the meaning of a sentence, as shown in the previous example.

Active Engagement

Active engagement is when a listener shows the speaker they are listening and paying attention. There are lots of ways to do this, but they all involve interaction with the speaker – active engagement.  
One of the simplest ways is to nod – this shows the recipient is listening and understands what is being said. However, nodding alone is not sufficient – it needs eye contact and occasional responses to back it up, otherwise the speaker will most likely interpret it as ‘I’m not actually listening, but if I nod, you won’t notice’. If it is backed up by eye contact and responses (which can range from a simple ‘mm-hm’ to a question or statement) then it shows the recipient is definitely listening, as these responses must be in the correct place to avoid interruption.  
Another form of active engagement is when the listener stops whatever they were in the middle of to give the speaker their attention – this shows they value what they have to say more than what they are currently doing.

**Communication in writing**

Grammar and spelling

Grammar and spelling are very important in written communication, as they convey a lot about the writer. If the grammar and spelling are poor, the reader will think that the writer doesn’t care about presentation, was in a rush, can’t spell, doesn’t check their work, and all the connotations of these assumptions.  
Consider the following paragraphs;

grammer and spelling r very importent in ritten communicatoin cos they show what the writer is thinking bcause if the spelling is wrong or the grammer isnt right then it looks like they dont really care about what there writing and it makes it very hard to read.

Grammar and spelling are very important in written communication, because the way something is written shows what the writer is thinking. For example, if there are spelling mistakes, or a sentence is grammatically incorrect, it shows that the writer didn’t put much effort into what they wrote. It also makes the text harder to read.

If they were written by two different people, which one do you think has better manners/hygiene/appearance?  
There is not necessarily any correlation between manners/hygiene/appearance and writing style, but people form opinions very quickly, so how one writes can affect others views of them. This becomes very important when submitting job applications or writing a formal email or letter.

Proof-reading

Proof-reading is checking a piece of writing for mistakes. When writing, many people just want to get their thoughts on paper (or typed out) and don’t worry about typos while doing it. This means they have to read their work to spot these mistakes so they can be fixed. While proof reading they may also realise they forgot to include something, included too much of something or repeated one error throughout (such as spelling a name wrong).  
Proof read documents are generally more accurate and mistake-free than ones that aren’t. Proof reading also gives the writer a chance to think about what they have written – is it long enough? Too long? Have they repeated the same word or phrase too many times?  
Proof reading will not catch all mistakes – only the obvious ones. This is because when re-reading something that has just been written, the brain tends to see what was intended, not what is actually there. For example, someone could write ‘He didn’t find it on the street’ – without having previously mentioned what ‘it’ is. However, because the writer knows what ‘it’ is, they may fail to spot this mistake.