

[As per VTU Outcome Based Education (OBE)
&
Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) Syllabus 2018]

Technical Communication (English) - I

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PREFACE

Communication skills is a requirement for everyone. You need it in your personal life, school/college life, and professional life. No matter what profession you are in, communication skills give an extra edge. Communication skills can be improved by understanding the basic theoretical concepts, implementing them, and practicing them.

To be accepted in today's competitive world, you need to be able to write well and speak well. You have to speak and write correct English, with clarity in expression. Unfortunately, communication is a practical subject. It is important to understand the concepts and theory. More importantly, able to practice it well.

In the last couple of years, there has been a sudden increase in the need for technical communicators (technical writers) in India. Many multinational companies having their development centers in India are setting up their documentation teams here. Though many organizations are ready to hire freshers and provide them with in-house training, it is often difficult to find someone who fits in to the profile well. This is due to lack of combination of the technical background and writing skills.

Contents of this Book

The contents of the book are as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction to Communication

This chapter discusses the following topics:

- **Communication:** Information regarding the importance, the principles, the types and advantages of communication. It describes briefly the barriers to effective communication and also provides pointers to overcome those barriers.
- **Interpersonal skills:** Introduces interpersonal skills and tells you how to improve your interpersonal skills.
- **Technical communication:** Introduces one to technical communication and briefly explains the skills required for technical communication.

Chapter 2: Phonetics

This chapter contains the following topics:

- **Phonetics:** Information regarding types of phonetics and *International Phonetic Alphabet* (IPA).
- **Sounds:** It is about speech sounds, vowels, and consonants.
- **Pronunciation:** Sounds mispronounced, silent letters, pronunciation of the word *the*, and words ending with *-age* and *-able*.

Chapter 3: Developing Phonetics and Vocabulary

This chapter contains the following topics:

- **Accent:** Types and causes of word accent, rules for word accent, stress patterns, stress shift, importance of word stress, and word stress rules.
- **Question Tag:** Question tag for assertive statements and negative statements.

- One word substitute
- **Interrelationships of Words:** Synonyms, antonyms, homophones, homonyms, homograph, heterography, polyseme, and capitonym.

Chapter 4: Speaking Skills

This chapter contains the following topics:

- **Syllable:** Importance of syllables, ways to count them, and division rules. It also contains information regarding spoken and written syllables, and types of syllables.
- **Words:** Word formation, types of word formations, word structure, strong and weak forms of words, word pairs, and words often misspelt.
- **Prefix and suffix:** Categories of suffix.
- **Spelling Rules:** Learn the various spelling rules.

Chapter 5: Public Speaking

This chapter contains the following topics:

- **Public Speaking:** Public speaking process, types of public speech, Lasswell's communication model, importance of public speaking, mastering public speaking
- **Extempore Speaking:** Guidelines and some topics for practice
- Difference between extempore and public speaking
- English in India
- Techniques for Neutralization of MTI (Mother Tongue Influence)
- Listening Comprehension
- Information Transfer
- **Oral Presentation:** Preparing a presentation and structuring the oral presentation

Chapter 6: Grammar

This chapter contains the following topics:

- Nouns: Types and examples of nouns
- Pronouns
- Adjectives
- Verbs
- Prepositions
- Articles
- Conjunctions
- Articles

Though we have tried to ensure that the information presented here will enable students to achieve higher levels of learning, we would be extremely happy to receive any constructive comments and suggestions for improvement (from both, the students and teachers/lecturers).

Authors

SYLLABUS

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Objective: The course (18EGHL18) will enable the students to:

- Acquire basic English grammar and essentials of language skills
- Clarify the nuances of phonetics, intonation and pronunciation skills
- Get familiarized with English vocabulary and language proficiency

Module – I: Introduction to Technical Communication

Fundamentals of Technical Communication Skills, Barriers to Effective Communication, Different Styles in Technical Communication. Interpersonal Communication Skills, How to Improve Interpersonal Communication Skills, Developing Interpersonal Skills. Grammar: Basic English Grammar and Parts of Speech – Nouns, Pronouns, Adjectives, Verbs, Adverbs, Preposition, Articles, Conjunctions.

Module – II: Introduction to Listening Skills and Phonetics – I

Introduction to Phonetics, Sounds Mispronounced, Silent and Non-silent Letters, Homophones and Homonyms, Aspiration, Pronunciation of ‘*The*’, Words Ending with ‘*-age*’, Some Plural Forms. Use of Articles – Indefinite and Definite Articles.

Module – III: Developing Listening Skills (Phonetics and Vocabulary Building) – II

Speech Sounds: Vowels and Consonants – Exercises on it. Preposition, Kinds of Preposition and Prepositions Often Confused. Word Accent – Rules for Word Accent, Stress Shift, Question Tags, Question Tags for Assertive Sentences (Statements) – Some Exceptions in Question Tags and Exercises, One Word Substitutes and Exercises. Vocabulary – Synonyms and Antonyms, Exercises on it.

Module – IV: Speaking Skills (Grammar and Vocabulary) – I

Syllables, Structures, Strong and Weak Forms of Words, Words Formation – Prefixes and Suffixes (Vocabulary), Contractions and Abbreviations. Spelling Rules and Words Often Misspelt – Exercises on it. Word Pairs (Minimal Pairs) – Exercises, The Sequence of Tenses (Rules in Use of Tenses) and Exercises on it.

Module – V: Speaking Skills (Grammar and Vocabulary) – II

Extempore/Public Speaking, Difference between Extempore/Public Speaking, and Guidelines for Practice. Mother Tongue Influence (MTI) – South Indian Speakers, Various Techniques for Neutralisation of MTI Influence – Exercises, Listening Comprehension – Exercises. Information Transfer: Oral Presentiment – Examples. Common Errors in Pronunciation.



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Chapter 1

Introduction to Communication

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1.1 What is Communication?

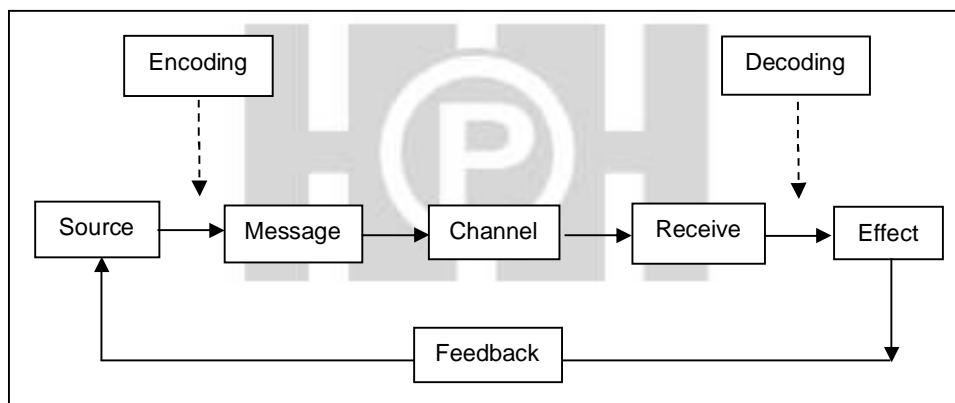
According to Merriam Webster, communication is a process by which there is a meaningful exchange of information through exchange of thoughts, messages, speech, visuals, signals, or writing, between two or more living beings. This exchange can be through a common system of speech, symbols, signs, or behaviour!

We cannot dispute the fact that we need to communicate. We need to communicate efficiently and effectively to function as civilized human beings.

“Communication is a process of sharing information with another person in such a way that he or she understands what you are saying.”
– Dr. H. Norman Writing

Communication is a tool with which we exercise our influence on others, bring out changes in our and others’ attitudes, motivate the people around us and establish and maintain relationships with them. Communication makes a major part of our active life and is a social activity. This social activity is pursued verbally through speech, reading and writing or non-verbally through body language.

The main components of communication process are as follows:



1. **Context:** Every message, irrespective of the type, begins with a context. Communication is affected by the context in which it takes place. This context may be physical, social, chronological or cultural. Every communication proceeds with context. The sender chooses the message to communicate within a context. Context is a very broad field that consists different aspects.

One aspect is country, culture and organization. Every organization, culture and country communicates information in their own way.

2. **External stimulus:** The sources of external stimulus includes; meeting, letter, memo, telephone call, fax, note, email and even a casual conversation. This external stimuli motivates you to respond and this response may be oral or written.
3. **Internal stimuli:** It includes your opinion, attitude, likes, dislikes, emotions, experience, education and confidence. All these have multifaceted influence on the way you communicate your ideas.

As a sender you can communicate the ideas effectively by considering all aspects of context mentioned above.

4. **Sender:** Sender (or encoder) is a person who sends the message. A sender makes use of a combination of symbols, words, graphs and pictures understandable by the receiver, to best convey the message in order to achieve the desired response. The views, background, approach, skills, competencies, and knowledge of the sender have a great impact on the message. The verbal and non verbal symbols chosen are essential in ascertaining interpretation of the message by the recipient in the same terms as intended by the sender.

5. **Message:** Message is the information that is exchanged between the sender and the receiver. The first task is to decide the following:

- ◆ What you want to communicate
- ◆ What would be the content of your message
- ◆ What are the main points of your message
- ◆ What other information to include.

The central idea of the message must be clear. While writing the message, the sender should keep in mind all the aspects of context and the receiver. The sender must ensure that the main objective of the message is clear. Messages can be intentional and unintentional, by the sender.

6. **Medium:** It is the channel through which the message is exchanged and/or transmitted between the sender and the receiver. The choice of appropriate medium of communication is essential for making the message effective and correctly interpreted by the recipient. Hence, the sender must choose an appropriate medium for transmitting the message. Else, the message might not be conveyed to the recipients.

The choice of communication medium varies depending upon the features of communication:

- ◆ It depends on the nature and type of your message.
- ◆ It is also influenced by the relationship between the sender and the receiver.

The oral medium, is effective when your message is urgent, personal or when immediate feedback is desired. Written medium is preferred, when your message is technical and needs to be documented.

7. **Recipient:** Recipient (or decoder) is a person to whom the message is sent. The degree to which the decoder understands the message is dependent upon various factors such as:

- ◆ The reliance of encoder on decoder
- ◆ Knowledge of recipient
- ◆ Responsiveness of recipient to the message

8. **Feedback:** Feedback is the main component of the communication process as it permits the sender to analyze the efficacy of the message. It helps the sender in confirming the correct interpretation of message by the decoder. Feedback completes the loop of communication. Feedback may be verbal (through words) or non-verbal (in form of smiles, sighs, etc.). It may also be take in written form---memos, reports, feedback forms, etc.

1.2 Why is Communication Important?

Communication is important in all walks of life because we live and work with people. Communicating the intended message clearly and effectively is an important skill. Improving your communication skills is an art that comes with regular practice. As we all know, practice makes a man perfect. No matter how intelligent you are, good and positive communication is the only skill that will help you to succeed in life. It is also the key factor in deciding the chances of success in relationships—professionally and personally. So, ensure to make wise and polite use of your words when talking to people.

In the information age, we send, receive, and process huge numbers of messages every day. It could be via different medium—face-to-face, email, phone, text message, WhatsApp, Facebook, twitter, etc. Effective communication is about more than just exchanging information. It is also about understanding the emotion behind the information, the reason for transmitting the information, ensuring that the receiver will not be confused and will receive the correct information.

Effective communication can improve personal and professional relationships by:

- (a) Increasing your capacity to recognize and understand your own emotions and those of the person you are communicating with.
- (b) Combining a set of skills including nonverbal communication, attentive listening, and the ability to manage stress at the moment of communication.
- (c) Enabling you to communicate even negative or difficult messages without creating conflict or destroying trust.
- (d) Deepening your connections with the person or people you are communicating with.
- (e) Improving interaction, decision-making, and problem solving.

Effective communication is really both an art and a science. You as, a sender need to focus on two things while communicating:

- ◆ Ensure that the intended meaning is totally retained and nothing is lost, so that the communicated message is received clearly and precisely by the receiver.
- ◆ Be sensitive in the way you phrase and package the message. This is to ensure that the relationships are kept affable.

1.3 Principles of Communication

Lack of effective communication creates misunderstanding and commotion. So, it is important to follow certain principles to ensure effective communication. They are as follows:

- (a) **Clarity:** It means the communicator should use such a language which is easy to understand. The message must be understood by the receiver. The words used should be simple and unambiguous. The language should not create any confusion or misunderstanding. Language is the medium of communication; hence it should be clear and understandable.
- (b) **Adequacy and Consistency:** The communicator must carefully take into account that the information to be communicated should be complete and adequate in all respect. Inadequate and incomplete message creates confusion and delays the action to be taken. The adequate information must be consistent with the organizational objectives, plans, policies and

procedures. The message which is inconsistent may play havoc and distort the corporate interests.

- (c) **Integration:** It states that the efforts taken by the educational institutions, or organisation should be integrated towards achievement of the objectives through communication. The very aim of communication is to achieve the set target. The communication should aim at coordinating the activities of the people to attain the common goals.
- (d) **Economy:** In a corporate set up, unnecessary use of communication system can add to the cost. You must use the system of communication efficiently, in a timely manner and when it is necessary.
- (e) **Feedback:** The purpose of communication will be defeated if feedback is not taken from the receiver. The confirmation of the receipt of the message in its right perspective from its receiver fulfills the object of communication. The feedback is essential only in case of written communication and messages sent through messengers. In case of oral type of communication, we receive the feedback immediately.
- (f) **Need for Communication Network:** The route through which the communication passes from sender or communicator to its receiver or communicate refers to communication network. For effective communication this network is essential. The managerial effectiveness will also depend upon the availability of adequate network.
- (g) **Attention:** The message communicated must draw the attention of the receiver and ensure action from that person in the right perspective. For example, an efficient, sincere and prompt manager will succeed in drawing the attention of his subordinates to what he is conveying.

It is the psychology of the human nature that they watch their seniors or superiors closely and respond to their orders or instructions. Adhering to the above principles shall make communication effective, minimize the human-relations problems and increase the overall efficiency.

1.4 Advantages of Effective Communication

In the era of globalisation, we cannot ignore the strategic importance of communication. By learning these effective communication skills, you can connect with your friends, parents, colleagues, spouse, and/or co-workers better. We have to take a stock of ineffective and effective communication characteristics.

Effective communication skills does the following:

1. **Build lasting relationships:** Everyone knows at least one person who has had some of the same friends for decades. Research shows that it's not only *what* a person says that keeps these relationships intact, but the *way* you say it.
Research states that the way you communicate something determines lifelong relationships. According to the research, non-verbal cues such as tone, pitch and intensity during arguments makes or breaks a relationship. They concluded that the couples that had controlled vocal acoustics were more likely to stay together. Any relationship—whether marriage or friendship—will fare better if you speak in kinder and more understanding ways.
2. **Be approachable:** Effective communication is a vital tool in building and maintaining your relationship. It makes others feel comfortable with approaching you any time they need or want to talk about anything that might be bothering them. When you are approachable,

people respect and understand you. People are likely to have a more open and healthy relationship if they are approachable. Many married couples live together but they cannot approach each other because the relationship lacks the comfort level that allows for certain subjects to be discussed.

3. **Breeds trust:** Effective communication helps in building trust and respect. When you trust someone, you are able to rely on them and confide in them. When meeting in person, it is easier to pick out the body language and other visual cues of communication. It helps people to better understand each other and the message that is being conveyed.

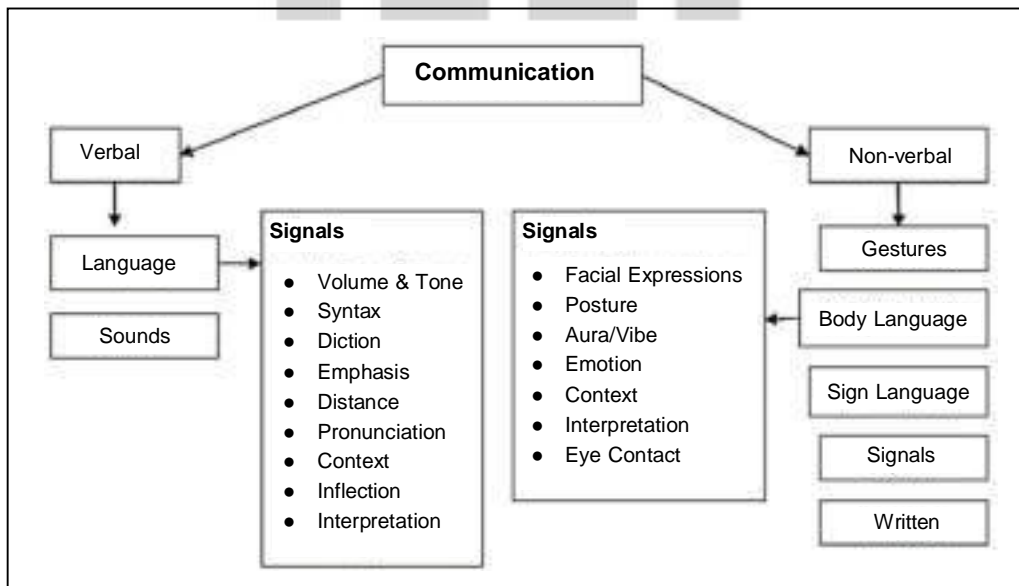
A study asked students to collaborate on a project. One group communicated only in person. The other only through technological means with less-visual cues. The group that met face-to-face, showed the most trust and effective cooperation.

4. **Creates positivity:** Open communication creates positive environments where creative ideas, problem solving, affection, and caring can flourish. It helps you better understand a person or situation thus enabling you to resolve differences. It also enhance your ability to make a positive and lasting impression on peers, superiors, and on all those with whom you come into contact. Positive interactions with others ultimately feel supportive and effective.

1.5 Types of Communication

In a general context, all communication can be divided into two broad categories: *formal* and *informal*. Each of these can be further divided into three forms of communication:

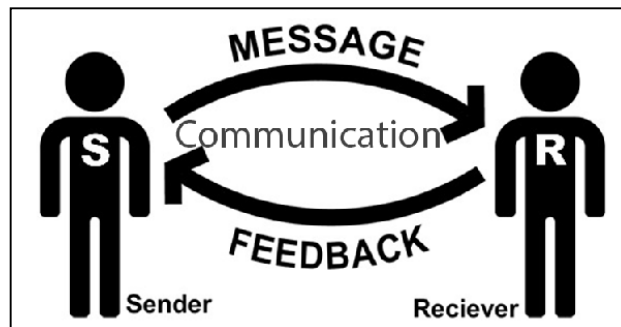
1. Written: in which you read their meaning
2. Verbal
3. Non-verbal



1.5.1 Verbal Communication

In this type of communication, you listen to a person to understand what they are saying and comprehend the meaning. It implies communication through mouth. It includes individuals conversing with each other, be it direct conversation or telephonic conversation. Speeches, presentations, discussions are all forms of oral communication. Verbal communication takes place in real time.

Verbal/oral communication is recommended when a direct interaction is required. Face-to-face communication (meetings, lectures, conferences, interviews, etc.) is significant to build a rapport and trust.



Advantages of Verbal Communication

- ◆ There is high level of understanding and transparency in oral communication as it is interpersonal.
- ◆ There is no element of rigidity in oral communication. There is flexibility for allowing changes in the decisions previously taken.
- ◆ The feedback is spontaneous in case of oral communication. Thus, decisions can be made quickly without any delay.
- ◆ It is not only time saving, but it also saves upon money and efforts.
- ◆ It is best in case of problem resolution. The conflicts, disputes and many issues/differences can be put to an end by talking them over.
- ◆ Oral communication is an essential for teamwork and group energy.
- ◆ It promotes a receptive and encouraging morale among organizational employees.
- ◆ It can be best used to transfer private and confidential information/matter.

Limitations of Verbal Communication

- ◆ Relying only on verbal communication may not be sufficient as business communication is formal and very organized.
- ◆ It is less authentic than written communication as they are informal and not as organized as written communication.
- ◆ Though it is time-saving in daily interactions, but in case of meetings, long speeches consume lot of time and are unproductive at times.
- ◆ They are not easy to maintain and thus they are unsteady.
- ◆ There may be misunderstandings as the information is not complete and may lack essentials.
- ◆ It requires attentiveness and great receptivity on part of the receivers/audience.
- ◆ Verbal communication (such as speeches) is not frequently used as legal records except in investigation work.

1.5.2 Written Communication

In contrast to verbal communications, written business communications are printed messages. It has great significance in today's business world. It is an innovative activity of the mind. Written communication is the most important and the most effective of any mode of business communication.

Written communication does not happen in real time. It can be constructed over a longer period of time. Written communication is often asynchronous, that is it occurs at different times. This means that, the sender can write a message that the receiver can read at any time, unlike a verbal conversation that happens at a real time.

Written communication is the most important and the most effective of any mode of business communication. Some of the various forms of written communications that are used internally for business operations include:

- ◆ Memos
- ◆ Reports
- ◆ Bulletins
- ◆ Job descriptions
- ◆ Employee manuals
- ◆ E-mails
- ◆ Instant messages

Examples of written communications generally used with clients or other businesses include:

- ◆ E-mail
- ◆ Internet websites
- ◆ Letters
- ◆ Proposals
- ◆ Telegrams
- ◆ Faxes
- ◆ Postcards
- ◆ Contracts
- ◆ Advertisements
- ◆ Brochures
- ◆ News releases

They may be handwritten, printed on paper, or appear on the screen. A written communication can be one-to-one (read by one person) or one-to-many (read by many people) communication. Conference calls and speeches one-to-many communications. E-mails may have only one recipient or many.

Disadvantages of Written Communication

- ◆ Written communication costs in terms of stationery and the manpower employed in writing/typing and delivering letters.
- ◆ If the receivers of the written message are separated by distance and if they need to clear their doubts, the response is not spontaneous.

- ◆ Written communication is time-consuming as the feedback is not immediate. The encoding and sending of message takes time.
- ◆ Effective written communication requires great skills and competencies in language and vocabulary use. Poor writing skills and quality, have a negative impact on the organization's reputation.

1.5.3 Non-verbal

Nonverbal communication as the name suggested does not have any verbal or spoken words for communication. In this type of communication, you observe a person and infer the meaning. It involves the nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by the source (speaker). It involves sending and receiving messages through gestures, actions, facial expressions, body language, clothing, and other aspects of your physical appearance, that, when seen, communicate something.

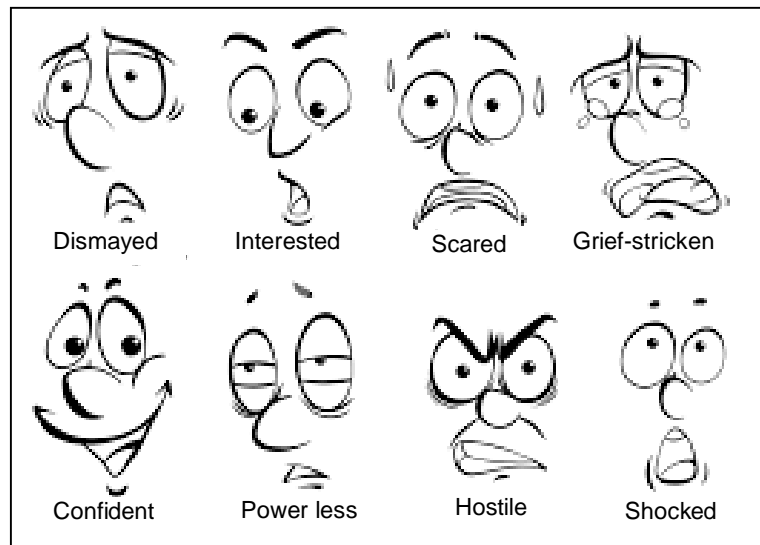
What you say is a vital part of any communication. But what you *don't say* is even more important. Research also shows that 55% of communication comes from nonverbal cues like facial expressions, body stance, and tone of voice. According to one study, people comprehend only 7% of a message based on the sender's actual words. 38% is based on paralanguage (the tone, pace, and volume of speech), and 55% is based on *non-verbal cues* (body language). So, non-verbal communication is very important.

Some factors that help in nonverbal communication are:

1. **Culture:** Different cultures have different gestures, postures and different body movement that have different meaning attached to it. Even simple things like using hands to point, wave, or count differ. For example, in the US people usually point with the index finger. In Japan and in India, it is considered rude. Instead people point with an entire hand.
2. **Body language:** Believe it or not, postures and body language speaks a lot—it easily conveys your feelings and attitudes and shows if you are interested or disinterested in what is being said. For example, a speaker who leans forward appears to be very interested rather than the one who slouches.

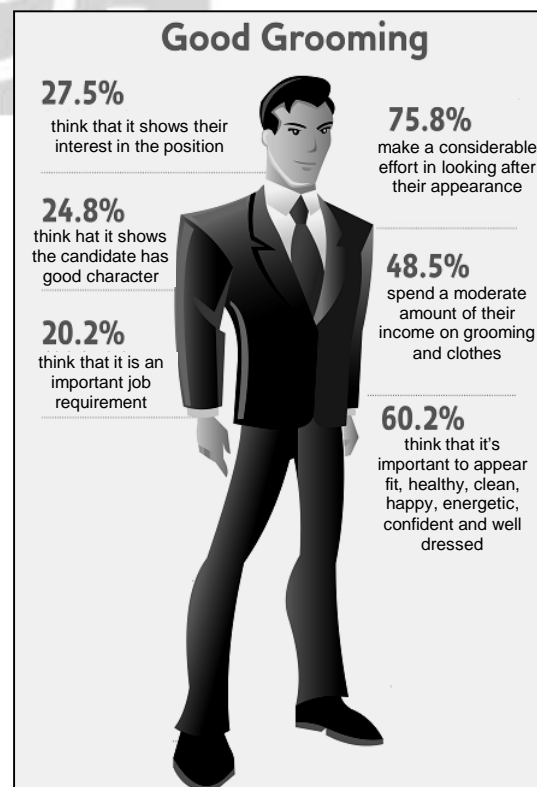


3. **Facial expressions:** It plays a major role in nonverbal communication as people can read your expression and make out what you are thinking and feeling. A person with good expressions can communicate better than the one who is expressionless.



4. **Appearance:** Appearance is a very important factor of nonverbal communication. Your outfit conveys a clear message about your personality. That's why we often say that the clothes must be appropriate to the situation and/or location. According to a survey, 76.4% think that hiring decisions are influenced by appearance. Only 3.7% feel that it is not.

In business settings women are generally expected to wear minimal makeup and avoid chunky accessories. It helps to create a strong persona for a woman without causing any distractions in the office.



For example, you have to be neatly and formally dressed for an interview. Shorts and floaters are more appropriate at the beach or clothes to be worn during a vacation.

1.6 Barriers to Effective Communication

I am sure that you have heard the saying *it is not what you say, but how you say it* or perhaps *actions speak louder than words*.

Communication is a process beginning with a sender who encodes the message and passes it through some channel to the receiver who decodes the message. Communication is fruitful if and only if the messages sent by the sender is interpreted with the same meaning by the receiver. If any kind of disturbance blocks any step of communication, the message will be destroyed. Due to such disturbances, you face severe problems in being able to communicate effectively. Try to locate such barriers and take steps to get rid of them.

There are several barriers that affects the flow of communication. These barriers interrupt the flow of communication from the sender to the receiver, thus making communication ineffective.

What are some of the barriers that you experience when you are speaking to someone and the understanding doesn't happen or what happens to you as the receiver, when you go off to do what you were asked to do and then find out you didn't do it correctly?:

- (a) **Use of jargon:** Words mean different things to different people.
- (b) Emotional barriers and taboos.
- (c) Lack of attention, interest, distractions, or irrelevance to the receiver.
- (d) Differences in perception and viewpoint.
- (e) Physical disabilities such as hearing problems or speech difficulties.
- (f) Physical barriers to non-verbal communication.
- (g) Language differences and the difficulty in understanding unfamiliar accents.
- (h) Expectations and prejudices which may lead to false assumptions or stereotyping. People often hear what they expect to hear rather than what is actually said and jump to incorrect conclusions.
- (i) We assume others know more/less than they do about the subject.
- (j) **Distractions get in the way:** Both visual and auditory (daydreaming).
- (k) Lack of feedback from the receiver.
- (l) Poor timing, the situation is not right for communicating about the subject.
- (m) Fatigue; too many other things on your mind lead to information overload.
- (n) Failure to consider the needs of the receiver.
- (o) Poor listening habits.
- (p) Prejudice; judgement disliking the person speaking, rejecting statements that are too radical, or different from your thinking; disagreeing with the message.
- (q) Different communication styles.
- (r) **Listening filters:** Distractions; poor listening habits; jumping to conclusions before the other person is done.
- (s) Deciding that there is nothing in it for you that is important.

Some of the main communication barriers are described in detail in the following sections:

1.6.1 Language Barriers

Language and linguistic ability may act as a barrier to communication. However, even when communicating in the same language, the terminology used in a message may act as a barrier if it is not fully understood by the receiver(s).

For example, if a doctor talks to a patient using the medical jargon the patient will not be able to understand what the doctor is trying to say. It needs to be explained in a layman's language, without use of the medical terms. The listener will not understand the language that includes a lot of jargon and abbreviations as he is not familiar with the terminology used. You must remember to use language that can be understood by the receiver.

1.6.2 Psychological Barriers

The psychological state of the receiver will influence how the message is received. For example, people having personal issues, worries, and stress may be preoccupied by their concerns and not as receptive to the message as they would be if they were not stressed. A close relative to attitudinal barriers, psychological barriers involve elements like:

1. Emotional regulation ability, specifically of emotions around anger, sadness and connection
2. Dislike of a friend or a team member
3. Disrespect
4. Discriminatory beliefs
5. The intent to harm or undermine rather than encourage and help
6. Feelings of superiority towards individuals or groups
7. Personal emotional issues resulting from past experiences

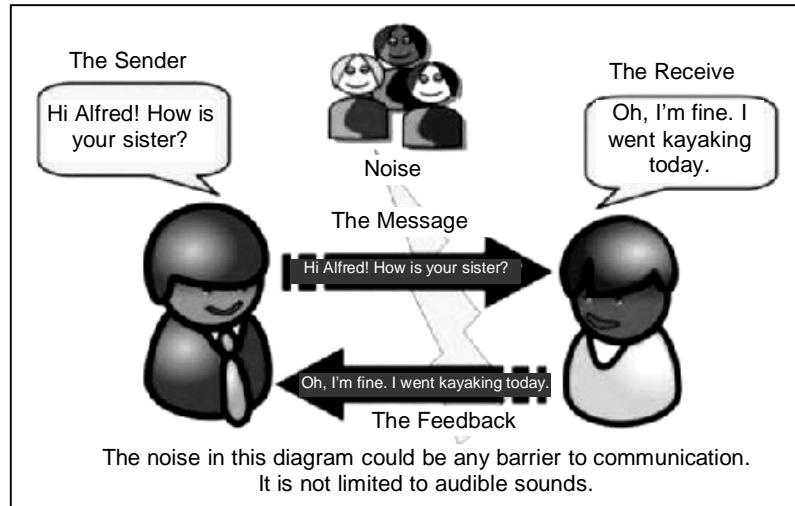
Stress management is an important personal skill that affects our interpersonal relationships. Anger is another example of a psychological barrier to communication. When we are angry it is easy to say things that we may later regret and also to misinterpret what others are saying. Also, people with low self-esteem may be less assertive and therefore may not feel comfortable communicating - they may feel shy about saying how they really feel, or read negative sub-texts into messages they hear.

1.6.3 Physical Barriers

Physical discomfort may cause communication failures. Examples of physical barrier to communication can be:

- ◆ The geographic distance between the speaker and receiver(s)
- ◆ Physical distance between the speaker and receiver(s)
- ◆ Noise
- ◆ Poor lighting
- ◆ Uncomfortable sitting
- ◆ Unhygienic room

For example, a receiver with reduced hearing may not grasp the entirety of a spoken conversation, especially if there is significant background noise.



Modern technology often serves to reduce the impact of physical barriers, such as the geographic distance. But, you should understand the barriers in detail to understand how to overcome the physical barriers.

1.6.4 Physiological Barriers

Physiological barriers may result from the receiver's physical state. Any psychological or emotional turbulence or disturbance can prove to be a barrier to effective communication:

- (a) Sadness
- (b) Fear
- (c) Anger
- (d) Anxiety
- (e) Excitement

Emotional state at a particular point of time also affects communication. If the receiver feels that the communicator is angry the interpretation is that the information being sent is very bad. While the receiver takes it differently, the speaker is happy that the message is passed and has probably interpreted it to be good and interesting.

1.6.5 Gender Barriers

There are distinct differences between the speech patterns in a man and those in a woman. A woman speaks between 22,000 and 25,000 words a day whereas a man speaks between 7,000 and 10,000. In childhood, girls speak earlier than boys and at the age of three, have a vocabulary twice that of boys.

The reason for this lies in the wiring of a man's and woman's brains. When a man talks, his speech is located in the left side of the brain but in no specific area. When a woman talks, the speech is located in both hemispheres and in two specific locations.

This means that a man talks in a linear, logical and compartmentalised way, features of left-brain thinking; whereas a woman talks more freely mixing logic and emotion, features of both sides of the brain. It also explains why women talk for much longer than men each day.

1.6.6 Attitudinal Barriers

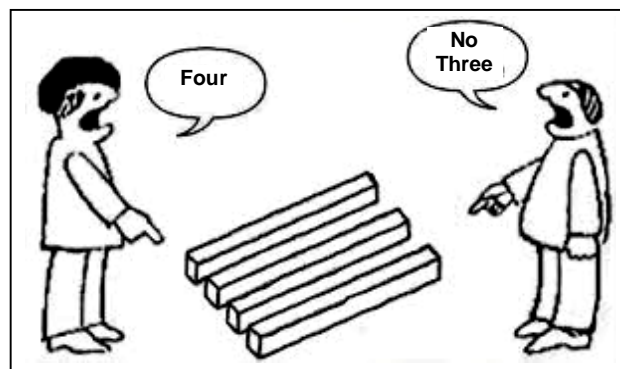
Attitudinal barriers are behaviors that prevent people from communicating effectively. Attitudinal barriers to communication may result from personality conflicts, poor management, resistance to change, or a lack of motivation. Effective receivers of messages should attempt to overcome their own attitudinal barriers to facilitate effective communication.



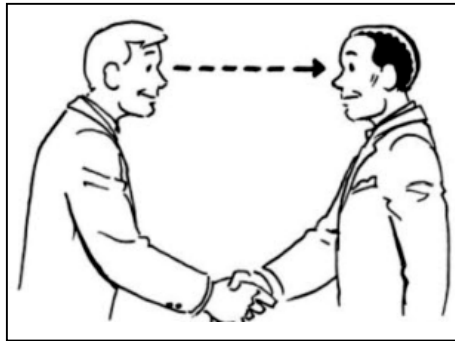
Emotions like anger or sadness can taint objectivity. Also being extremely nervous, having a personal agenda or *needing to be right no matter what* can make communications less than effective. This is also known as *Emotional Noise*.

1.6.7 Perceptual Barrier

Perception is generally how individuals interpret the world around them. People generally want to receive messages which are significant to them. Any message which is against their values is not accepted.



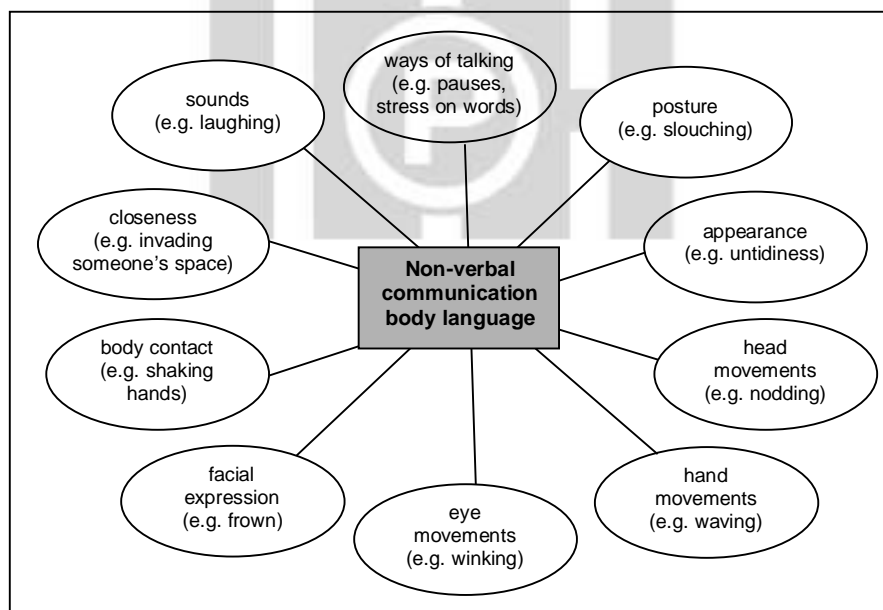
A same event/situation may be seen or understood differently by different individuals. As shown in the figure, the person at the left sees four logs, where as the one on the right sees three.



It's okay to look away once in a while; because by staring intently at the person you are speaking with can make that person uncomfortable.

1.9.4 Non-verbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is equally important. You can speak volumes—without saying a word—with your body language. As the saying goes, *'the first impression is the last impression'*, hence you should always be careful with your body language. It is said that a typical communication consists of more than 50% non-verbal communication, which includes body language.



So if your body language is sending negative signals to the other person, the communication will probably break down in the process. Be aware of what you are doing physically while you are listening and/or speaking:

- (a) Does your face shows boredom?
- (b) Are your hands on your hips?
- (c) Are you sitting or standing, leaning forward or back?
- (d) Are your arms crossed or are you in a comfortable open posture?

to decide what is more important. Are language and writing skills important? Is technical competence more important? Neither!

A healthy combination of both writing talent and technical aptitude is essential to make a good and successful technical writer. The weight age of the requirement (between the two) depends on the job profile, the organization you are working for, the product you are writing about, and the type of document you are writing. There are some instances, wherein you need to possess the subject knowledge because of the subject matter you have to write about. So it is important to understand the value of (and not underestimate) both parts of the job title Technical Writer.

1.11 Technical Communication Skills

The skills of a technical writer is a debatable topic. Different people will have different opinions and different organizations will look for different skill sets. In spite of all the differences and disagreements, there is also a common area of agreement regarding the basic skills required to become a technical writer.

Some of the qualities have to be in-built, a few others can be learned in a short duration, and yet others can be developed over a period of time.

Basic skills are the in-built skills and qualities present in an individual which can be further developed with some effort. The most important skills other than language and writing skills is the ability to express and give good instructions. That seems pretty easy doesn't it? Here, let's discuss some of the main skills required for technical communication.

1.11.1 Language Skills

Language is the basic asset of a technical writer. You don't have to be a genius with words, know all the rules of grammar, or have a Masters degree in English or journalism.

You just need to have a good command over the language, know the basic rules of grammar and punctuation, and be able to express yourself clearly.

Example: Check the following advertisement:

Got a Cold? Try our Cough drops. We guarantee you'll never get better.

[Isn't that scary?]

Any error in the writing will change the intended meaning and will create confusion. To avoid such confusion, you should be able to write your thoughts clearly.

1.11.2 Writing Skills

The Occupational Outlook Handbook defines one of the main characteristics of technical writing as *making scientific and technical information easily understandable to a nontechnical audience*. The writing phase is also about:

1. Writing your thoughts clearly and concisely.
2. Understanding and expressing what your readers need to know.

1.11.4 Interpersonal Skills

You have to interact with the Subject Matter Experts (SME) to understand the concepts and/or gather information. You have to interact with the members of other teams. You may also have to communicate with the customers to understand their expectations. So, it is important that the writers have good interpersonal skills, some of which are:

- ◆ Strong communication (written and spoken) skills.
- ◆ Work in cooperation with individuals from different teams.
- ◆ Listen effectively.
- ◆ Respond promptly, clearly, and appropriately to situations.

To work productively and effectively, you will have to talk and ask questions to make every thing clear. If you are shy and try to keep the questions with yourself, you will not have a clear picture of the product, may make the wrong assumptions, and may write wrong information or vague procedures. This will reflect badly on your work.

1.11.5 Ability to Analyze

As a technical writer, you should be able to think, learn, interpret, analyze, write, and rewrite to reorganize concepts and information. The keyword for producing good documentation is ANALYZE! You should have the ability to analyze the following aspects effectively:

1. Demands of the documentation project.
2. Information required for the documents.
3. Users (the audience) and their requirements.
4. Tools to be used for the documentation project.
5. Time taken to complete the job/project on time.
6. Effective ways to communicate the information to the users.

1.11.6 Flexibility

Documents often require many revisions or may even be abandoned after many hours of hard work. You should exhibit a fair amount of flexibility at work. You should be:

- ◆ Flexible enough to move from a large project to a smaller one or the *vice-versa*.
- ◆ Ready to adapt to the new tools, processes, styles, guidelines, technology, etc.
- ◆ Assertive, yet cool and in control when dealing with the people. You may have to:
 - Gently nudge the SMEs and get them to answer your questions.
 - Act a little dumb, yet very curious to understand the matter.
 - Seem intelligent even if you don't know the subject matter properly.

