

GENDER BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

All of us have different styles of communicating with other people. Our style depends on a lot of things: where we're from, how and where we were brought up, our educational background, our age, and it also can depend on our gender. Generally speaking, men and women talk differently although there are varying degrees of masculine and feminine speech characteristics in each of us. But men and women speak in particular ways mostly because those ways are associated with their gender.

The styles that men and women use to communicate have been described as "debate vs. relate", "report vs. rapport, or "competitive vs. cooperative". Men often seek straightforward solutions to problems and useful advice whereas women tend to try and establish intimacy by discussing problems and showing concern and empathy in order to reinforce relationships. Dr. Lillian Glass' book *He Says, She Says: Closing the Communication Gap Between the Sexes*:

BODY LANGUAGE

Men	Women
They take up more physical space when sitting or standing, with arms and legs stretched out away from their body	They take up less physical space, sitting with arms and legs toward their body
They gesture away from the body	They gesture toward the body
They assume more reclined positions when sitting and lean backward when listening	They assume more forward positions when sitting and lean forward when listening
They are not as sensitive to the communication cues of others	They have greater sensitivity and acuity toward other people's nonverbal communication cues
They tend to approach women more closely in terms of their personal space	They do not approach men as closely in terms of their personal space

FACIAL EXPRESSION

Men	Women
They tend to cock their head to the side and look at the other person from an angle when listening	They tend to look at the other person directly facing them with their head and eyes facing forward when listening
They provide fewer facial expressions in feedback and fewer reactions	They provide more facial expressions and more reactions
They tend to display frowning and squinting when listening	They display smiling and head-nodding when listening
They stare more in negative interaction	They lower their eyes more to avert gaze in negative interaction

SPEECH PATTERNS

Men	Women
They speak in a louder voice	They speak in a softer voice
They use loudness to emphasize points	They use pitch and inflection to emphasize points
They sound more monotonous in speech. They use approximately 3 tones when talking	They sound more emotional in speech. They use approximately 5 tones when talking
They interrupt others more and allow fewer interruptions	They interrupt others less and allow more interruptions
They disclose less personal information about themselves	They disclose more personal information about themselves
They make direct accusations (i.e., "You don't call")	They make more indirect accusations. They use "why", which sounds like nagging (i.e., "Why don't you ever call?")
They make more direct statements and "beat around the bush" less often	They make more indirect statements
They use less intensifiers	They use more intensifiers such as "few", "so", "really", "much", "quite"
They make more declarative statements (i.e., "It's a nice day.")	They make more tentative statements and use "tag endings" or upward inflections which make statements sound like questions (i.e., "It's a nice day, isn't it?")
They use more interjections when changing topics (i.e., "Hey!", "Oh", "Listen!")	They use more conjunctions when changing topics (i.e., "and", "but", "however")
They ask fewer questions to stimulate conversation	They ask more questions to stimulate conversations
They rarely discuss their personal life in business	They tend to establish more business relationships through discussing their personal life

BEHAVIOUR

Men	Women
They try to solve problems and troubles	They try to match troubles by relating similar negative experiences
They have a more analytical approach to problems	They have a more emotional approach to problems
They are less likely to ask for help. They try to figure things out on their own	They are more likely to ask for help and accept it
They are more task-oriented (i.e., "What is everyone going to do?")	They are more maintenance-oriented (i.e., "Is everyone all right?")
They appear less intuitive and less aware of details	They appear more intuitive and more aware of details
They have more difficulty in expressing intimate feelings	They have less difficulty in expressing intimate feelings
They are more apt to yell, shout and swear to release anger	They are more apt to cry to release anger
They talk more about what they did, where they went and less about relationships with others	They talk more about how they feel and more about relationships with others
They tend to take verbal rejection less personally	They tend to take verbal rejection more personally