

Unit 1

Introduction to Communication



Unit Overview

In this unit, you will learn introductory communication principles.

Chapter 1

Communicating in Everyday Life

Chapter 2

Interpreting Communication

Chapter 3

Communicating Globally



Stories from the Real World

A Japanese automotive company was building a manufacturing plant in the Midwest. A major Japanese supplier of this company also decided to build a small manufacturing facility in a neighboring town. The supplier's company was run using a team approach, common in Japanese companies.

Ann Adams, a recently hired management trainee, was one of the few American employees in management at the supplier's company. Ann was unaware of the differences between Japanese and American culture, particularly concerning the concept of teamwork in Japanese businesses. She used business and social practices commonly used by American companies in the area.

One of Ann's assignments was to research different communication systems to be used at the plant. She contacted local telephone providers for information on costs and services available. Ann also did some research on her own using the Internet. After analyzing the different systems, Ann wrote a report comparing the systems and recommending the one to adopt.

Ann's managers were upset with her for making recommendations without first consulting them. In Japanese businesses, almost all decisions are made by a team. The managers were used to being part of the decision-making process.

Ann was unfamiliar with the management style for a Japanese company, and her Japanese managers did not understand that her American management style was quite different from theirs.

As you read Unit 1, identify some of the problems Ann had in communicating with her managers from another culture, and describe how the problems could be eliminated or minimized.

Thinking Critically

What might Ann have done differently to handle the differences she had with the other members of management?

What action or actions might Ann take in order to work with management and to implement her ideas?

Chapter 1

Communicating in Everyday Life

Section 1.1

Elements of Communication

Section 1.2

Communication Skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing

Section 1.3

Communicating in the Business Environment



Workplace Connection

Mastery of the communication skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—is the foundation for a successful personal and business life. How effectively you use these skills will significantly affect your employment and advancement opportunities.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

When you have completed this chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain the importance of communication in everyday life.
- List the four basic communication skills and explain how they are interconnected.
- Show how the four communication skills are used in your social, educational, and professional life.
- Describe how we communicate in the business environment.

Elements of Communication

Essential Principles

Communication, very simply defined, is the exchange of information. Communication is a vital part of our everyday lives, beginning at birth. Speaking, listening, reading, writing, and even observing are part of the communication process.

Today, in addition to traditional methods of communication such as letters and telephone conversations, communicating by electronic media is becoming increasingly common. Electronic media include e-mail, voice mail, cell phones, PDAs (personal digital assistants), wireless tablet PCs (personal computers), and videoconferencing.

Each of these media allows people in different locations to exchange messages quickly and conveniently. This increased use of electronic media is changing communication practices, especially with regard to ethics and confidentiality.

Types of Communication

Communication can be divided into three main categories: *oral*, *written*, and *nonverbal*.

Oral Communication

Oral communication uses spoken words to exchange ideas and information. Examples of oral communication include one-on-one conversations, meetings, voice mail messages, and teleconferencing. Spoken messages can be sent instantaneously, and they usually result in some immediate feedback. The disadvantage to oral communication is that there is often little opportunity to reflect on what is said. There is also no written record.

Written Communication

Written communication is the exchange of information through letters, words, and sentences. It can include letters, faxes, memos, e-mail, reports, news releases, tables, diagrams, charts, and graphs. Written communication provides proof that the information was exchanged. The disadvantage to written communication is that immediate feedback may not always be possible.

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is communication without words. Nonverbal communication is an important form of communication. Think about it. Without saying a single word, you can express your feelings with body language—gestures, facial expressions, and body movements or positions.

SECTION OBJECTIVES

When you have finished Section 1.1, you will be able to:

- Identify the three types of communication and the four purposes of communication.
- List and define the six components of communication.
- Describe the four factors that influence communication.
- Discuss ways interpersonal skills affect communication.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Good communication is paramount to success in any profession.

KEY TERMS

- oral communication
- written communication
- nonverbal communication
- barriers
- intrapersonal communication
- interpersonal communication
- feedback
- human relations skills
- you-attitude
- I-attitude

KEY POINT

The three main categories of communication are:

1. Oral
2. Written
3. Nonverbal

Many times the nonverbal message is stronger and, therefore, more believable than the verbal message. The nonverbal message also may reinforce or contradict the verbal message. An example would be talking to someone who said she wasn't in a hurry but kept glancing at her watch.

Good communicators combine oral and nonverbal communication techniques to make their communication more effective. When this combination is faulty, the effect is easy to spot. Have you ever listened to a speaker who was an authority on a subject, but whom you considered boring because the speaker lacked any kind of nonverbal expression? Even if the subject interested you, you probably found it hard to keep your mind on the speech. Nonverbal communication can add emphasis and depth to spoken words and can even tell you whether or not to believe a speaker. Nonverbal communication plays an important role in the clear, effective exchange of messages.

Purposes of Communication

The first step in planning any message is to determine the purpose of your communication.

Recall for a moment what you said to various family members, friends, and school or business associates today. Each question you asked, each statement you made—from “How do you feel today?” to “I just found a ten-dollar bill!”—falls into at least one of the following four main purposes of communication:

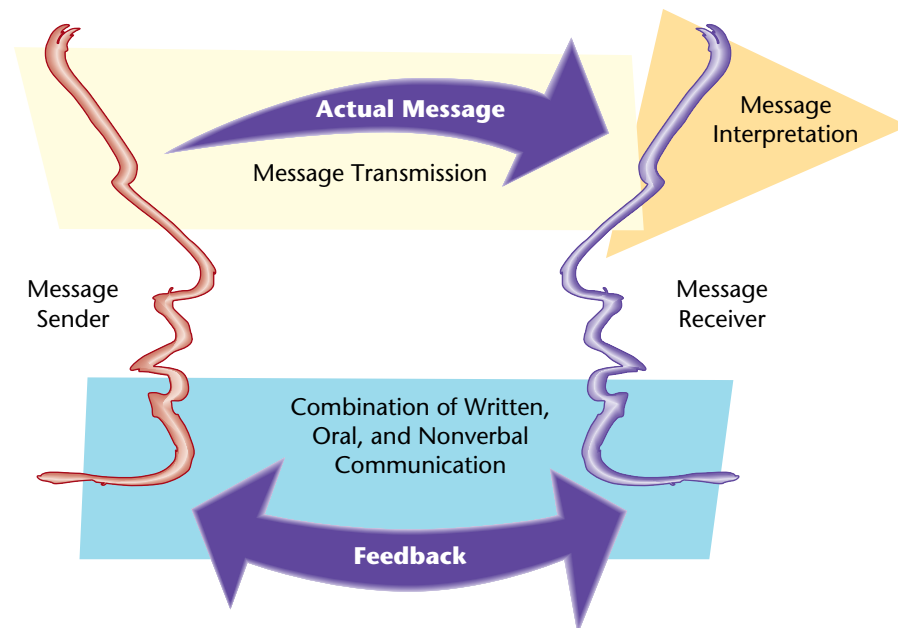
- *To inquire.* “When did you get your HDTV [high definition television]?”
- *To inform.* “This HDTV was a birthday gift.”
- *To persuade.* “You really will have a better quality picture on an HDTV.”
- *To develop goodwill.* “Thank you for helping me select an HDTV.”

You will learn how to plan business messages and to determine the purposes of such messages in Chapters 9, 10, and 11.

Components of Communication

Communication can take place only if you have *both* a sender and a receiver. Each time you have a conversation with someone or exchange written messages, be aware of each component of the communication model, as illustrated in **Exhibit 1.1** below.

Exhibit 1.1
Communication Components
Communicating in teams is an important aspect of internal communication. What qualities should team members demonstrate in order to communicate effectively as part of a team?



Components of Communication

The six basic components of communication are:

1. *Message sender.* The sender composes the intended message. The sender could be a writer, a speaker, or a person who sends a nonverbal message through gestures and body language.
2. *Actual message.* The actual message may be written, oral, or nonverbal; or it may combine two or more types of communication. It may or may not be the message the sender intended.
3. *Message transmission.* The message can be sent or delivered in a variety of ways. Written messages can be sent in the form of letters, memos, and reports. Written messages could also be sent electronically using fax machines or e-mail. Oral messages can be delivered through face-to-face conversations, by phone, and by voice mail. Nonverbal messages include gestures, body language, and facial expressions.
4. *Message receiver.* The receiver takes in, or receives, the message. The receiver's knowledge, interest, and emotional state will affect how the message is received.
5. *Message interpretation.* The receiver interprets the message. The interpretation may be different from the intended message or the actual message.
6. *Feedback.* The sender and the receiver respond to each other in writing, orally, nonverbally, or through a combination of these components. Feedback may include a written response, verbal questions, and nonverbal gestures such as body language and facial expressions.

The Communication Process in Action. As illustrated in **Exhibit 1.2**, the communication process worked like this: On a *60 Minutes II* segment on September 8, 2004, Dan Rather (*message sender*) of CBS News reported that a memo had surfaced indicating that President George W. Bush did not properly complete his National Guard service. Subsequently, the memo was proved to be false. Therefore, the initial report (*message transmission*) to everyone watching *60 Minutes II* (*message receiver*) was that Bush did not complete his National Guard service (*actual message*). This message caused Bush's popularity to drop in the polls (*message interpretation*). Subsequently, the memo was proved to be false and CBS News had to retract the memo and apologize (*feedback*). Several CBS News staffers lost their jobs due to failure to properly verify this memo. The retraction caused Bush's popularity to rise.

Factors That Influence Communication

Although the sender of a message knows the goals to achieve, the sender must keep in mind four key factors that will influence the communication either favorably or unfavorably. To be an effective communicator, the sender should account for how the following four factors affect the communication process:

1. The background of the receiver.
2. The appearance of the sender or of the sender's communication.
3. Barriers that might negatively affect the intended message.
4. The language and communication skills of the sender and the receiver.

Oops!

Mastering Importance

It's important to master verbal communications.

(It's—*its* is the possessive form. *It's* is a contraction meaning *it is*.)

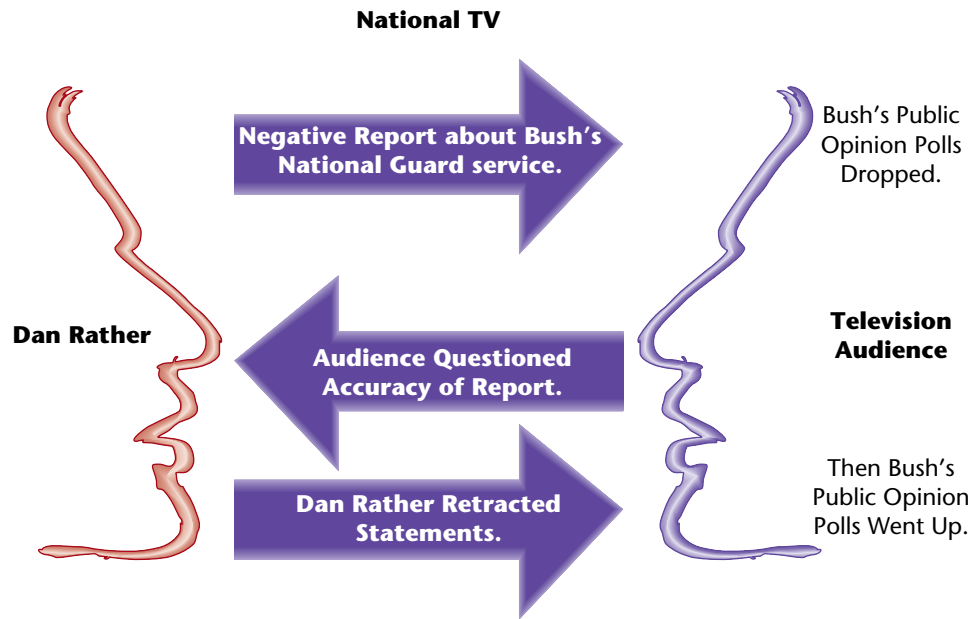


Exhibit 1.2

Communication Components Applied

How could CBS News have improved the *60 Minutes II* report on George W. Bush's National Guard service?

Memory Hook

Recalling the four factors that influence communication is easy if you use the acronym *BABL* (pronounced "babble").

- B** —Background of the receiver.
- A** —Appearance of the sender or of the sender's communication.
- B** —Barriers to effective communication.
- L** —Language skills of the sender and the receiver.

KEY POINT

A receiver's interest and motivation are often influenced by experience.

Background of the Receiver

The following four background elements can play an important role in determining the receiver's possible reaction and response to the message.

1. The *knowledge* both the sender and the receiver already have about the facts, ideas, and language used in the message.
2. The *personality* of the receiver—particularly the emotions, attitudes, and prejudices that are likely to influence the way the message is interpreted.
3. The receiver's *experiences* relevant to the message content.
4. The receiver's *interest* and *motivation* regarding the subject of the message.

To understand how these four factors can influence a receiver, imagine that you have just received a flyer from a computer store explaining its latest sale. If you have not previously purchased from this store, your *knowledge* of its quality and service is probably limited. Naturally, your reaction would be different from that of a person who is knowledgeable about the computer store. If your *personality* is quite conservative, you have probably decided to make only a small purchase. However, if your *experience* with this store has been good, your *interest* and *motivation* probably grew the minute you saw the cost savings available from this type of sale.

The communicator who weighs all these factors and anticipates the receiver's needs before preparing the message stands a greater chance of having the message accepted by the receiver than does the person who ignores these factors.

Appearance of the Sender or of the Sender's Communication

What do the following three situations have in common?

- A sloppy-looking speaker or salesperson.
- A receptionist or telemarketer who does not speak distinctly.
- A letter filled with errors.

The three situations above all transmit their messages in an unfavorable way. Every communication you transmit can be your goodwill ambassador and can help achieve a positive reaction if you remember that appearances do make a difference as shown in **Exhibit 1.3**. Written communication that appears neat and professional makes a positive first impression.

Barriers to Effective Communication

Barriers are factors that interfere with communication and might negatively affect the intended message. Barriers include physical distractions, emotional distractions, and cultural and language differences.

Under what circumstances is the message received? For example, is the room noisy? too warm or too cold? poorly lighted? Is the receiver more concerned with an



Exhibit 1.3 Making an Impression

Physical appearance contributes positively or negatively to the impression a person makes. **Thinking Critically.** Which person's appearance makes the better impression? Why?



Employability Skills

Working with Diversity

With many businesses becoming culturally diverse, the ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds is a key employability skill.

oops!

A Valuable Misunderstanding

Misunderstandings can arise when someone uses the wrong word. Consider this request made by an employee in a European hotel:

"Please leave your values at the front desk."

(the concrete noun, *valuables*, not the abstract noun, *values*)

KEY POINT

Three types of barriers to communication are:

1. Physical distractions
2. Emotional distractions
3. Language differences



Going Global

Globally Speaking

Studying another language is one way to prepare for today's global marketplace. Knowing a few words in another language will help in international meetings. Consult a foreign-language phrase book or dictionary for help with basic expressions.

upcoming exam or the argument he or she had this morning? Such distractions interfere with, and draw the receiver's attention away from, the message and create barriers to effective communication. Sometimes, the resulting lack of concentration can lead to incomplete communication by message senders and erroneous conclusions by message receivers.

Physical Distractions. *Physical distractions* are usually easier to prevent in a speaking or listening situation because the surroundings can often be controlled or changed. In a writing or reading situation, however, the writer has little influence over the reader's surroundings. Writers should take special care in developing error-free messages. Remember, people do judge you based on the appearance of your communication.

Emotional Distractions. *Emotional distractions* on the part of the receiver can prevent him or her from concentrating on, and giving full attention to, the communication. Emotional distractions may include thinking about a personal matter or allowing an emotion such as anger to influence how you interpret a message.

Nonverbal Barriers. *Nonverbal barriers* such as language differences, inattention, and misunderstanding caused by different interpretations of a word or an expression can have a negative influence on the communication process. Cultural diversity can also be a barrier to effective communication. For example, executives in the United States and Japan might have different ideas about what constitutes politeness in a letter. Chapter 3 discusses cultural diversity in more detail.

Oops!

The Comma Is the Clue

Omitting a punctuation mark can completely change the meaning of a sentence. Read these two sentences and notice the difference in meaning.

The teacher said the student was very cooperative.

The teacher, said the student, was very cooperative.

In each sentence, who was cooperative?
(the student, the teacher)

Language and Communication Skills

Every businessperson is involved in some form of communication with others and must be able to use language effectively to send and receive messages. Words are the major tools of language, and they must be chosen carefully to express the intended meaning. How well the sender of the message uses these tools and how well the receiver interprets their use are major factors in the effectiveness of the message.

In today's multicultural society, it is important to be sensitive to cultural diversity when using any form of communication. An awareness of, and respect for, cultural differences will help you to avoid any miscommunications.

Selecting the correct words is particularly important if the receiver's first language is not English. Use of slang and jargon in communicating with people who do not understand the terminology can also cause a barrier to communication. If the receptionist tells the international caller, Mr. Wong, that Mrs. Wyatt can't take his call because she's *tied up* in a meeting, Mr. Wong could interpret the message literally (Mrs. Wyatt is *tied with ropes to a chair* in the meeting).

As a message sender, you must communicate facts, ideas, opinions, and instructions in a coherent manner with clarity, confidence, and knowledge. To do this, you must have a broad vocabulary and the ability to spell, pronounce, and select the correct words. You must be able to speak and write clearly, concisely, and without error. As a message receiver, you must also be able to read and listen with understanding. *Both* the sender and the receiver share the responsibility for effective communication.

In spoken communication, word choice, grammar, pronunciation, and listening are also factors in effective communication. A receiver may be distracted by incorrect grammar, incorrect pronunciation, or misused words, and, consequently, he or she may not receive the intended message. For example, a diner in a restaurant may focus on the errors, rather than the message when a server says, "We *done* the meal as *good* as we could so a 15-percent *gratitude* would be appreciated."

In written communication, something as simple as using the wrong word, making a spelling or grammatical error, using an incorrect format, or misusing a punctuation

mark may change the intended meaning of the message. Even if the receiver understands the message, his or her opinion of the sender's intelligence and credibility may be negatively influenced by the error. For example, a receiver may not do business with a company because of a poorly written sales letter. The receiver may feel that a company careless about its letters may also be careless about filling orders promptly and accurately.

Each of these language tools is discussed more fully in later sections of this book. Keep in mind, however, that these tools apply not only to writing but also to reading, listening, and speaking. If the communication process is to be successful, the message sender must be an effective writer or speaker, and the receiver must be an effective reader or listener.

Responsibilities of the Sender and the Receiver

As illustrated in **Exhibit 1.1**, both the sender and the receiver bear a responsibility for ensuring that effective communication occurs. Let's take a look at the particular responsibilities of the sender and the receiver.

Evaluate Each Communication Situation

Effective communication requires the sender to understand his or her own intrapersonal communication. **Intrapersonal communication** refers to the way each person views and interprets information based on previous life experiences. Intrapersonal communication, or communication with yourself, must take place before you can communicate with another person. **Interpersonal communication** is communication that occurs between two people, such as a doctor and a patient, an attorney and a client, and a financial adviser and a client.

Avoid Miscommunication. Ideally, the intended message, the actual message, and the interpreted message will be the same. Miscommunication occurs when components of one or more of these three messages are different for either the sender or the receiver. For example, consider the following situation:

College freshman Robin Wilkerson was upset with her semester grades, but she had to tell her parents. Robin (*message sender*) sent them a letter (*message transmission*) in which she stated her grades (*intended message*): "I got only one D this semester" (*actual message*). When her parents (*message receivers*) read her letter, they viewed it this way: "Robin got only one D this semester. That is much better than the three Ds she got last semester!" (*interpreted message*).

Miscommunication occurred because Robin's *actual message* did not convey that she also received two Fs. Her parents interpreted her partial message in a positive way. This is not an example of miscommunication, however, if Robin deliberately set out to deceive her parents. Was it ethical if she did intend to deceive them?

Maintain Goodwill. Effective communication takes place (1) when the message is received and understood and (2) when the communication maintains *goodwill* between the sender and the receiver. You can tell a person no and make an enemy for life; but if you use a customer service approach and incorporate human relations skills into your communication, you are more likely to have an effective communication. Chapter 13 discusses customer service communication in more detail.

Remember that communication is effective when it:

- Enables the receiver to interpret the message exactly as the sender intended.
- Results in the desired response from the receiver.
- Develops goodwill between the sender and the receiver.

Give and Receive Feedback. Miscommunication and communication breakdowns can often be avoided by using the feedback technique. **Feedback** involves getting an

KEY POINT

Communication takes place when the intended message, the actual message, and the interpreted message are the same.

Digital Data

Information Tools

Personal digital assistants (PDAs) are handheld tools that help you organize and manage large amounts of information. PDAs are useful as a calendar; valuable for storing contact names and phone numbers, and home and e-mail addresses; keeping personal and business records.

Exhibit 1.4

Listening

Feedback from a listener may include facial expressions, posture, and eye contact. **Thinking Critically.** What might the listener's feedback indicate to the speaker? What could the speaker do to get oral feedback from the listener?



oral, written, or nonverbal response from the receiver. In the process of transmitting a face-to-face message, the sender can use clues from the receiver to determine if the receiver is interpreting the message correctly. For example, a puzzled look on the receiver's face can signal that the message is confusing as illustrated in **Exhibit 1.4**.

Asking questions is one way to get feedback. The sender can ask the receiver questions to determine whether the message is being received accurately. In turn, the receiver can ask the sender questions to clarify any content that is unclear.

Feedback cannot be achieved as easily with written communication because the sender and receiver are separated, and the receiver's response is usually not immediate. The wrong response, questions from the receiver, or no response at all may indicate a temporary breakdown in communication.

KEY POINT

Maslow organizes human needs into five levels:

1. Physical
2. Security
3. Social
4. Esteem
5. Self-actualizing

Understand Personal Needs

One significant factor in successful interpersonal skills is understanding the needs of the receiver of a message. Abraham Maslow, a famous psychologist, divided human needs into five levels as shown in **Exhibit 1.5**.

- *Physical needs.* Physical needs are essential to life and include food, clothing, and shelter. Until these basic needs are satisfied, receivers have difficulty thinking of anything else.
- *Security needs.* Security needs include the desire to be safe from physical harm and mental abuse.
- *Social needs.* Social needs, which are evident in a desire to be part of a group, can be met through family, social contacts, work relationships, or other group situations.
- *Esteem needs.* Esteem needs are satisfied through a feeling of self-importance, self-respect, prestige, power, or recognition. Winning a contest, being selected as chairperson of an event or organization, and receiving a scholarship are some situations that satisfy esteem needs.
- *Self-actualizing needs.* These needs are met through a sense of achievement, competence, and creativity, and by helping others meet their own needs. People who reach the top in their fields often want to use their abilities and resources to benefit others. They may also want to help others attain similar success by becoming a mentor, a role model, or a volunteer for organizations such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts.

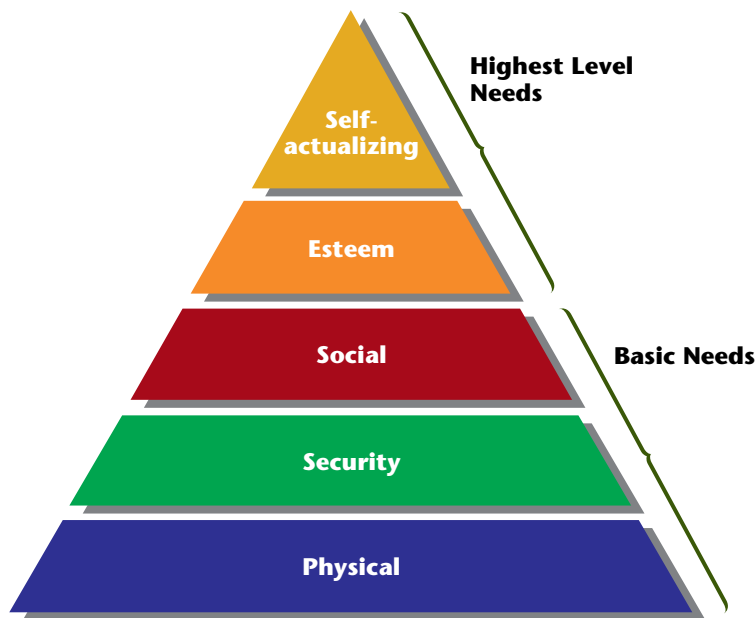


Exhibit 1.5
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
 Exhibit 1.5 illustrates Maslow's hierarchy of needs, with the lowest-level needs at the bottom and the highest-level needs at the top. **Thinking Critically.** How does the lack of these basic needs interfere with effective communication?

Assess the Needs of the Receiver

In order to communicate effectively, the sender must carefully examine each situation and assess the needs of the receiver. Needs motivate people to act or react in certain ways. By helping the receiver satisfy the higher two levels of needs—*esteem* and *self-actualizing*—the sender can improve communication. Furthermore, by *empathizing* with the receiver, that is, imagining yourself in that other person's situation, you will be better able to determine the best way to motivate the receiver to do what you want.

Keep in mind that the receiver may be motivated by more than one need at any given time. For example, a person may accept a position as officer of an organization to satisfy both social and esteem needs.

To communicate effectively, you need to demonstrate human relations skills when interacting with others. Use the human relations techniques described in the following paragraphs as a guide.

Apply Interpersonal Skills

The average person speaks about 18,000 words each day. Most of those words are spent communicating on a one-to-one basis or in situations involving only a few people. **Human relations skills**, also known as *interpersonal skills*, involve the ability to understand and deal with people in such a way that a favorable relationship and goodwill are maintained. It makes sense, therefore, that everyone should develop effective interpersonal skills.

Use the You-Attitude. Using the you-attitude when writing and speaking helps to build goodwill and to maintain an environment of friendliness. The **you-attitude** means putting your reader or listener first and being considerate of the other person. An example of the you-attitude is, "For your convenience, we are extending our hours to 7 p.m."

The **I-attitude** is the opposite of the you-attitude; it is putting your own interests, well-being, and comfort ahead of anyone else's. An example of the I-attitude is, "Because it fits my schedule better, I have decided to extend the store's hours until 7 p.m."

Demonstrate a Positive Attitude. A good communicator demonstrates a positive attitude by building good working relationships with peers, superiors, subordinates, customers, and clients. Showing enthusiasm about your job and your organization and cooperating with others are ways to demonstrate a positive attitude.

KEY POINT

Using the you-attitude in speaking and writing helps to build and maintain goodwill.

Exhibit 1.6

Responsibilities of the Sender and Receiver
Applying a combination of these communication responsibilities fosters productive communication.
Thinking Critically. Which of these responsibilities is most important to the sender and to the receiver?

Responsibilities of Sender and Receiver	
Responsibilities	Actions
Evaluate the situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid miscommunications• Give and receive feedback• Maintain goodwill
Understand your needs and the receiver's needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fulfill each of your own and your receiver's needs according to Maslow, especially esteem and self-actualizing
Apply interpersonal skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use the you-attitude appropriately• Demonstrate a positive attitude• Be a good listener• Maintain confidentiality• Be considerate

Be a Good Listener. A good communicator is also a good listener. It is important to listen carefully and to let the speaker know you are interested. Ask questions when you are unsure of the content of the message, and take notes when appropriate.

Maintain Confidentiality. A good communicator understands the importance of confidentiality. This means releasing information to authorized personnel only and releasing information at the appropriate time, not early and not late.

Be Considerate. Treat others as you would like to be treated. A good communicator is courteous, honest, and patient in dealing with other people and respects the opinions of others. This means using tact and diplomacy in some instances. It also means using words and terms that your receiver understands. Another way to show courtesy is to be prompt in answering correspondence and in returning telephone calls.

Recent studies indicate that workers need to possess good communication skills in order to be competitive in the changing workplace and in the global economy. Practicing the human relations techniques described in this section will help you improve your communication skills. Review the responsibilities of sender and receiver in Exhibit 1.6 above.

Assessment Section 1.1

Review of Key Terms

1. How does *nonverbal communication* affect the verbal message? Provide an example. _____

2. What types of *barriers* interfere with communication? _____

3. What is the difference between *intrapersonal* and *interpersonal* communication? _____

Editing Practice

Spelling Alert! Correct the following spelling errors. A sentence may have more than one misspelled word.

4. The rest of you order is back-ordered and shoud be hear in 7 to 10 days.

5. Although Joaquin maled the package last week, Alicia hasnt recieved it yet. _____
6. You're plane is quit late. _____
7. Ms. Lamay finally wraped up her project. _____
8. With the car radio blaring, Bryan past the hospital quite zone. _____

Practical Application

Analyzing Information

9. Give an example of a *you-attitude* statement and an *I-attitude* statement. Then, list several basic human relations techniques that, if applied, could improve communication. _____

10. Today, immediately after a conversation with a fellow student, analyze what was said by jotting down answers to the following questions:



- What was the sender's intended message?
- What was the sender's actual message?
- What was the receiver's interpretation of the message?

Compare notes with your team to determine if all messages are the same. If not, discuss what factors may have influenced the message.

Discussion Point

Making Comparisons

11. Discuss the differences among oral, written, and nonverbal communication. Why is each type of communication essential to effective communication? _____

12. Name the four key factors that influence communication and describe each one briefly. _____

Section 1.2

SECTION OBJECTIVES

When you have finished Section 1.2, you will be able to:

- Explain how the four communication skills are interconnected and how they reinforce one another.
- Show how the four communication skills relate to your social, educational, and professional lives.
- Give examples to illustrate the importance of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in your life.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Good communicators are effective, energetic, and personable.

KEY TERMS

- oral communication
- written communication
- educational distraction
- environmental distraction
- emotional-physical distraction
- reflective listening

The Communication Skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing

Essential Principles

In Section 1.1 you learned that communication is a two-way process that requires a sender and a receiver. You cannot communicate in a vacuum. You cannot communicate by speaking if there is no one to listen. You cannot communicate by writing if no one will read your words. Each side—sender and receiver—must do its part.

As you have probably noticed, communicators are paired: speaker-listener and writer-reader. **Oral communication** requires a speaker and a listener. Oral communication is most effective when the sender has good speaking skills and the receiver has good listening skills. Similarly, **written communication** requires a writer and a reader. Written communication is most effective when the sender has good writing skills and the receiver has good reading skills.

If only half of the pair operates effectively, something is lost in the communication process. Suppose, for example, that someone writes a clear, step-by-step description of how to install a modem. No matter how clear that message, some information will be lost if the reader does not focus full attention on the message or does not understand some of the words or references. The reader will not understand what the writer is trying to say. Communication, then, is a partnership in which each side is responsible.

Combining the Communication Skills in Your Social, Educational, and Professional Lives

An essential ingredient of successful family, social, and business relationships is effective communication. A communication breakdown can lead to misunderstandings and serious problems in our personal and business lives. Good communication skills can positively affect most aspects of our relationships with others.

Learning to be a successful, effective communicator is somewhat like learning to be a good basketball player or a good chess player. Once you have learned the basic skills, you become better as you practice the skills and gain confidence.

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are important and useful skills in and of themselves. When used together, they reinforce one another, producing a higher, efficient level of communication. Being combined with the others can strengthen each of the four skills. Take listening, for example.

Listening Skills

Listening is concentrating on what you hear and is one of the primary means of receiving information. The problem with listening, though, is that if you miss something or forget part of what you heard, you cannot replay the message, unless you have recorded it. When you know something about the subject, however, when you have “read up on it” or “done your homework,” you will find it easier to grasp the information presented orally. Reading, then, can reinforce listening; it helps you gain more from what you hear.

Common barriers or distractions to good listening fall into three categories—educational, environmental, and emotional-physical. **Educational distractions** include a lack of knowledge of the subject matter and vocabulary. **Environmental distractions** include external factors such as the temperature in the room, the noise level, and so on. **Emotional-physical distractions** include internal factors such as your state of mind or your health. For example, having a headache or being extremely worried about tomorrow’s big exam can adversely affect your ability to listen.

Speaking, too, can reinforce your listening skills. As mentioned before, good listeners ask questions to clarify points and obtain additional information. Speaking can also be used as a memory aid. Repeating a person’s name right after you hear it, for instance, will help you to remember the name later.

Writing reinforces listening skills on an ongoing basis. You jot down the name and address of a restaurant someone recommends, or you take a telephone message for a co-worker. You take notes when your supervisor explains how a job should be done. You can then refer to your notes when you need them. Listening skills are important in all aspects of your life.

Memory Hook

Use these five strategies to enhance, reinforce, and develop your listening skills:

- *Read* to gain background information.
- *Repeat* a person’s name when you are introduced to someone.
- *Ask* questions to clarify information.
- *Take* good notes.
- *Use* a tape recorder, when permitted, to record a lecture or meeting.

Your Social Life. In a social setting, good listeners—those who understand what the speaker is saying and why—are much in demand. We often choose a good listener to be a good friend: someone to turn to when we want to talk about our problems or fears or to share our triumphs or joys. Good listeners often reap the benefit of the experience of others and enjoy the satisfaction of close personal relationships.

KEY POINT

Barriers to listening fall into three categories:

1. **Educational**
2. **Environmental**
3. **Emotional-physical**



Going Global

Listening behavior varies from culture to culture. African listeners may look away from you instead of maintaining eye contact. Japanese listeners often close their eyes when they are concentrating.

oops!

Listen with Your Ears and Your Mind

Jimmy was planning his ski trip and daydreaming when his professor announced that the lecture would be canceled the next day. Jimmy was the only student who showed up to class the following day.



Going Global

Greetings can differ considerably from one culture to another. While handshakes are the normal greeting in the United States, a kiss on both cheeks is the normal greeting in the Middle East. In Asian cultures people greet one another by bowing, and in India, hands are put together in a prayer position with a slight bow.

Your Educational Life. Good listening skills help you absorb an instructor’s lectures, explanations, and directions for assignments. The process of taking notes on the oral information enhances listening. Your notes provide a record of the information you received and enable you to review the information at a later time.

Your Professional Life. Listening is assisted by the other communication skills in every profession. Consider Barbara Wright, for example, who is an administrative assistant in a medical center. She listens in weekly staff meetings to caseworkers and medical staff as they discuss current problems and cases. To help her remember those discussions and what she’s been assigned to do, Barbara takes notes. Then she types her notes on her computer to create a permanent record and handy reference. Barbara also reads as many medical articles as she can. This background reading helps her better understand what her co-workers are talking about.

Barbara also uses speaking skills in her job. She participates in the staff meetings, and she spends time each day on the telephone, answering questions and providing information to co-workers and clients. Barbara has discovered that reading, writing, and speaking have helped her become a more effective listener.

Speaking Skills

The communication skill you will probably use the most is speaking. Speaking can be an excellent way to transmit information. Speaking also plays a part of being a good listener. You provide feedback by letting the speaker know you understand, by offering advice, and by asking for more details.

Reflective listening is an important tool in many listening situations, particularly in one-on-one situations. **Reflective listening** (see **Exhibit 1.7**) is attentively listening to the speaker’s actual words, as well as tone of voice, and observing the body language and emotions displayed. Then, periodically stop the speaker and “play back” in your own words what you heard and observed. “You said . . .”; “You felt . . .”; “Is that correct?” Reflective listening is usually not practical in a speaker-audience situation. It is not appropriate when the speaker needs specific help or information from you.

oops!

Homonym Horror

Browsing and searching through the Internet was a waist of time when I had the information in this book.
(waste—not waist)



Exhibit 1.7

Reflective Listening

How can a listener display reflective listening? *Thinking Critically.* Name two ways you could show reflective listening.

Your Social Life. You use your speaking skills to share your thoughts, wants, accomplishments, and feelings with others. You also ask questions to gain information and show interest. Speaking can be face-to-face or over the telephone or computer.

Your Educational Life. Asking questions, summarizing information, and expressing ideas are an important part of the learning process. Your spoken feedback tells your instructor what information you understand and what information needs clarification. Your speaking skills will help you master the course material.

Your Professional Life. Communicating by speaking is an important skill in the work world. Let's look at how Andrea Rosado uses speaking on her job as a paralegal. Andrea spends a good portion of her day speaking with attorneys, other paralegals, and clients. She makes telephone inquiries regarding legal cases she's working on, and she engages in discussions with attorneys and colleagues.

Reading, writing, and listening skills support Andrea's speaking skills. Andrea knows that reading is an essential part of her job. She must analyze the facts of a case and conduct research to identify laws, judicial decisions, and legal articles that may have a bearing on the case. Andrea uses her writing skills to prepare legal briefs and legal correspondence. Listening is also an important skill for Andrea. As a paralegal, she must listen to clients to obtain information, and she must listen to instructions from her supervising attorney.

Reading Skills

Reading is one of the principal means of obtaining information. The information may be in printed form, such as a book or magazine, or in electronic form on a computer screen. Reading is an efficient way to learn because it allows you to control the flow of information. You can reread a passage you have not fully understood, and you can take notes, which will help you when reviewing the material. Reading allows you to skip over material you don't need.

Your Social Life. Reading newspapers, magazines, and books helps you to broaden your knowledge and understanding of the world and to become a more interesting person. Reading gives you more information and ideas to share with others.

Your Educational Life. In any kind of educational setting, reading is one of the principal means of acquiring course-related information.

Reading skills are important for students at every level. Take Julius Mitchell, for example. Julius works for an electrical supply company during the day and attends a community college at night. He found the reading assignments for some of his courses difficult at first. However, things improved when he started taking notes on his reading. Taking notes helped Julius organize and remember the information. These notes made studying for exams easier, since Julius could review his notes rather than rereading the entire text.

Julius discovered that he gets more out of a class when he has read the assignment ahead of time. The lectures help him to review basic material and to clarify difficult points. Julius has also found that he likes participating in discussions when he is prepared for class. Talking about the material in class reinforces Julius's reading and aids him in mastering the material.

Your Professional Life. Reading will be part of any job, starting with the employment forms you must read when you are hired. Memos, letters, reports, computer manuals, schedules, procedures manuals, and policy manuals are just a few of the documents that will require reading skills.



Employability Skills

Writing

Communication skills, especially the ability to communicate effectively in writing, are necessary to succeed in business.

KEY POINT

Reading and writing are integral to learning and communication skills.

Digital Data



Nonstop Communication

Cell phones, pagers, faxes, and in-flight telephone services make communication easily accessible almost anywhere and any-time, even when traveling by air.

KEY POINT

Excellent communication skills are among the most frequently listed requirements in want ads and in surveys of employers.

Writing Skills

Writing skills are important for creating and communicating information. Although writing has many advantages, the major one is that it provides a physical record that can be used as proof, if necessary.

Your Social Life. Writing is probably the communication skill that is least used in our personal lives today. Many of us tend to make a telephone call rather than write a letter to a friend who lives some distance away. But we need to know how to write a note of appreciation or to express condolences.

Similarly, we all need to know how to write business correspondence, such as letters of request, letters of complaint, or notification of a change of address. Committing your personal business to writing gives you a record of the exchange should it ever be required.

Your Educational Life. Excellent writing skills can help you to earn higher grades on research papers and tests. You learn more through writing about a subject because you must think about the material and organize the information you have before you can start to write about it.

Your Professional Life. On the job, you use your writing skills to compose e-mail messages, memos, letters, and reports. In many jobs, writing is a supporting skill, but in some jobs—a newspaper reporter or author, for example—writing is the primary skill. Writing via some form of electronic communication will become an increasingly important part of our lives in the future.

The Value of Good Communication Skills

As you can see, the four communication skills apply to your social, educational, and professional lives in much the same way. With the rapid rate of technological advancements, you can expect to have several different jobs during your working life. You'll need to learn new software programs or managerial skills, for example. Your communication skills are tools that will help you to adapt to a variety of work situations.

The four communication skills are interconnected, and using all of them will strengthen your ability to communicate. Let's see how Tisha Tillotson uses all four communication skills in her job. Tisha works as an investigative reporter for the *News Gazette*. She has always liked to write and now works as a full-time journalist. Tisha knows that listening, speaking, and reading skills are crucial in writing newspaper articles.

For example, Tisha had to read the minutes of last year's town meetings to get the history of the new recycling program. She found that she needed more information about recycling plans in other communities and the technology involved. Tisha spent the morning in the public library, reading and taking notes. Next, she wanted to find out what various town officials and citizens thought about the new program. Was the proposed program worth the expense? Would it really help to cut down on the amount of garbage? Would the plastic bottles be processed and reused as promised? Tisha drew up a list of questions, she listened carefully to the answers of her interviewees, and she took notes.

Tisha then assembled the material for her story. She was able to plan what she was going to say before she actually sat down at her computer to write.

When analyzing Tisha's job, you see how the four communication skills are interconnected. Each of the communication skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—is strengthened and reinforced by the other skills.

The following chart illustrates that the largest job growth occurs with jobs in which the four communication skills are essential.

Occupations with the Largest Job Growth, 2002–2012 (Numbers in Thousands of Jobs)

Industry Description	Employment		Change	
	2002	2012	Number	Percent
Registered nurses	2,284	2,908	623	27
Postsecondary teachers	1,581	2,184	603	38
Retail salespersons	4,076	4,672	596	15
Customer service representatives	1,894	2,354	460	24
Combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food	1,990	2,444	454	23
Cashiers, except gaming	3,432	3,886	454	13
Janitors and cleaners, except maids and housekeeping cleaners	2,267	2,681	414	18
General and operations managers	2,049	2,425	376	18
Waiters and waitresses	2,097	2,464	367	18
Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants	1,375	1,718	343	25

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics



Assessment Section 1.2

Review of Key Terms

1. What are the three categories of common barriers or distractions to good listening? Give a definition of each category. _____

2. What effect does *written communication* have on one's professional life?

Editing Practice

Proofreading Alert! Proper proofreading involves checking the spelling, grammar, and punctuation within a sentence. Proofread the following paragraph and mark all the errors. Then, rewrite or type the corrected paragraph.

3. As per our telephone conversation, we are sending you corrected specifications. Note that installation of a two-way communication systems is now required. In addition, the thermostat is to be re-located to the upstairs hall. Please send us your revised bid, properly typed on your company stationary, no later than Oct. 1.
-
-

Practical Application

Thinking Critically

4. Write a brief paper on the value of letter writing in either your social life or your business life:
- How has e-mail changed letter writing?
 - Letter writing is a lost art.
 - Writing letters is a wonderful way to communicate.
-
5. One communication skill is featured in each of the following examples. Explain how another communication skill might be used in each situation to reinforce the main skill.



- Listening to a neighbor's complaints about a barking dog.

- Speaking to a group about the pros and cons of four popular word processing programs. _____

- Writing a report about public opinion on local property tax rates. _____
- Reading several consumer and photography magazines in the library that evaluate digital cameras. (You want to buy a digital camera.) _____

Discussion Point

Identifying the Main Idea

6. Describe how communication is a two-way process and explain why communication skills are paired. _____

Communicating in the Business Environment

The Importance of Good Communication in Business

Imagine that you are an employee who has made suggestions on how to improve your department or company. How would you feel if your supervisor listened to your ideas and actually put some of them into effect? You would probably feel great. You might respond by working even harder than you were working before. You would have experienced *effective communication*.

Flow of Communication

Communication not only links members of a certain department but also serves as a vital link between people in different departments. In a company, each department functions as a spoke in a wheel; all the spokes are needed for the wheel to function properly. If several spokes are missing, broken, or not aligned properly, the wheel becomes wobbly and eventually will break.

Upward communication is communicating with people who rank above you, such as your boss or instructor. **Lateral** or **horizontal** communication is communicating with people who are at the same rank or level as you—your co-workers or classmates, for instance. **Downward communication** is communicating with people who rank below you, such as the people you might manage at work. The direction your communication flows at any given time will influence how you communicate—the words you use and the method you choose.

Not only does good communication make a company operate efficiently, it also creates a sense of unity—a team spirit—and a striving for common goals among employees.

Exhibit 1.8 illustrates the flow of communication within an organization and shows the directions in which communication can travel. The arrows at both ends of a line show that communication flows both ways.

Types of Business Communication

Communication that takes place in a company or an organization falls into two categories: internal communication and external communication. The tone used in internal communication usually differs from that used in external communication. *Tone*, as it applies to business communication, usually refers to the general manner of expression or effect of a written document, conversation, discussion, or speech.

SECTION OBJECTIVES

When you have finished Section 1.3, you will be able to:

- Describe upward, lateral, and downward communication.
- Define and give examples of internal communication, external communication, and tone.
- List, explain, and give examples of the six components, or Cs, of business communication.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

No matter what your job, your working day is basically a constant flow of information. Communicating effectively enables you to tap into an endless supply of ideas and solutions.

KEY TERMS

- upward communication
- lateral communication
- downward communication
- internal communication
- external communication

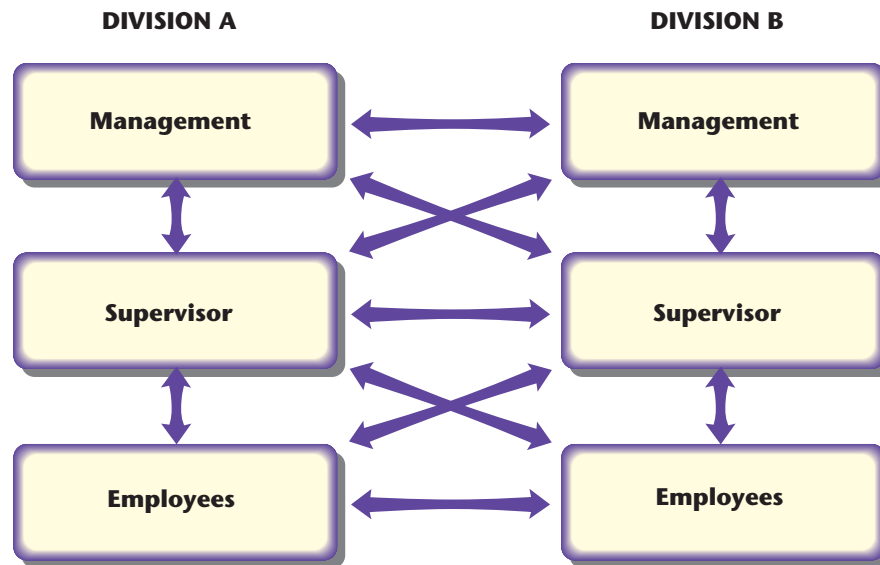


Exhibit 1.8
Communication Flow
 Communication within an organization flows in three directions—upwardly, laterally, and downwardly—to accomplish company objectives. How could management effectively communicate with company employees? List three methods of internal communication.

KEY POINT

Workplace communication can be divided into two categories:

1. Internal
2. External



Employability Skills

Making Decisions

Decision-making skills are among the core employability skills in business. Learn to consider all the alternatives, evaluate the choices, and then make the final decision based on the specific goals in mind.

Internal Communication

Internal communication is the transmittal of information between and among persons within a business or organization. Within a company, internal communication is used to accomplish company goals and objectives. Managers must, for example, let employees know when and why a specific job must be done. On the other hand, nonmanagement personnel use communication for understanding and clarifying how a specific job must be done. Nonmanagement personnel communicate to convince management that their knowledge and personal attributes qualify them for pay increases or promotions. Other examples of internal communication include suggestions for improving products and services and guidelines for completing a process.

Internal communication may be carried out with people in the same department, in other departments, and at other company locations.

Also, employees may communicate individually or as members of a team. Internal communication may include face-to-face conversations, telephone calls, e-mail messages, and brainstorming ideas at a meeting as illustrated in **Exhibit 1.9** on page 25.

In internal communication, a person’s tone may be friendly and informal. As an employee, you must assess a situation and use the most appropriate tone. For instance, when telling a colleague about an idea you have to make your department more productive, you would use different words, different phrasing, and a different tone from the words, phrasing, and tone you would use if you were making the same suggestion to the manager of your department.

External Communication

External communication is the transfer of information to and from people outside the company. The goal of a company’s external communication is to persuade the recipients to respond favorably to company needs. A sales letter, for example, tries to get a potential customer to buy a product or a service. A job listing tries to attract qualified personnel to fill a certain position.



Exhibit 1.9
Team Communication

Communicating in teams is an important aspect of internal communication. What qualities should team members demonstrate in order to communicate effectively as part of a team?

In external communication, a person’s tone is often more polite and formal. Using the right tone in external communication is more challenging than using the right tone in internal communication because you are representing your company as well as yourself. Often, customers and clients will transfer their opinions of you and your communication skills to the company itself. They will base opinions not only on what you say or write but also on your appearance and manner. In other words, the whole package counts.

Although your physical appearance may not be as important as the content of what you say or write, your appearance creates a first impression. Keep in mind that the first impression you create will often influence how closely your customer or client will pay attention to what you have to say. As a result, your appearance, or the appearance of your communication, can work either for you or against you.

The Six Cs of Business Communication

Effective business communication meets the test of the six Cs—*clear, complete, concise, consistent, correct, and courteous*. The six Cs apply to any communication situation, whether you are speaking or writing, and whether you are communicating with someone inside or someone outside your organization. Using the six Cs will make your communication coherent and easy to follow.

Clear

It isn’t enough to communicate so you can be understood; you must communicate so clearly that you cannot be misunderstood. Being specific rather than vague is a way to meet this test. If you leave your car for “routine service,” will you be upset when you receive a bill for \$368? Asking the Service Department to call you if the car will require more than \$70 worth of service work would eliminate this miscommunication.

Complete

Complete communication includes enough details so that the recipient will not need to ask for more information. Imagine receiving a notice from your dentist for a return visit on Wednesday at 3 p.m. Which Wednesday would you go? To be complete, a communication should answer the following questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How? or How much?

oops!

On the Right Paper Trail

Please send us a bid for the project on your company stationary by the end of this week.

(stationery—the noun, not the adjective *stationary*)

KEY POINT

Effective business communication is:

1. Clear
2. Complete
3. Concise
4. Consistent
5. Correct
6. Courteous



Choose Your Words Wisely

Our corporate office was formally in Chicago, Illinois.
(formerly—the adverb *formally* is incorrect)

Concise

Unnecessary words hamper communication because the extra words used to express the idea or thought clutter the message. The following sentence is wordy: “I am writing this letter to inform you that your airline tickets will be mailed ten days before your scheduled departure.” Look how much more effective a more concise version is: “We will mail your airline tickets to you ten days before your scheduled departure.” You’ve eliminated seven words, and none of the meaning is lost from the original message.

Consistent

All communication should be consistent in *fact*, *treatment*, and *sequence*. Consistency in *fact* refers to agreement with a source document or an established fact. For example, an open house scheduled for April 31 should be questioned since April has only 30 days. Consistency in *treatment* means treating similar items the same way. An example of consistent treatment would be using a courtesy title (Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms.) with the names of all recipients of a letter or indenting all paragraphs in a letter. Consistency in *sequence* refers to the arrangement of listings such as alphabetical, chronological, or numerical. Imagine a telephone book that is not arranged in alphabetical order. If a workshop is scheduled for three days, the dates should be given in chronological order: for example, May 3, May 6, and May 10.

Correct

All the information in a message should be accurate—the content, the spelling, the capitalization, and the punctuation.

Courteous

Your communication should use the you-attitude instead of the I-attitude. This means keeping the reader or listener in mind when you write or say something. Use positive words instead of negative words and use tactful language. Use formats, such as lists, short paragraphs, and tables, that are easy to read and comprehend.

Memory Hook

The six Cs of effective communication are easy to remember because each one starts with the letter C.

- | | | | |
|---|----------|---|------------|
| C | Clear | C | Consistent |
| C | Complete | C | Correct |
| C | Concise | C | Courteous |

To recall the six Cs, remember this sentence: Clara gave clear, complete, and concise directions on how to greet customers in a consistent, correct, and courteous way.

Assessment Section 1.3

Review of Key Terms

1. How is *upward communication* different from *lateral* or *horizontal communication*? _____

2. What is the difference between *external* and *internal communication*?

Editing Practice

Call an Editor! Which of the six Cs of communication is violated in each of the following sentences?

3. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome all retirees. _____

4. We demand that you make a payment now. _____
5. The pictures will be sent seperately. _____
6. The sales manager told the associate that he would not attend the meeting. _____
7. The new Wal-Mart store will have the ribbon-cutting ceremony on Wednesday, August 28. _____
8. The prices will be \$2, \$6, and \$4. _____

Practical Application

Analyzing Information

9. Explain and give examples of the six Cs of business communication.

10. In your teams, write a paragraph about what combination of communication skills you would use and why.



- a. Applying for a job advertised in the want ad column in the newspaper that gives a box number for reply.
- b. Receiving a message on your telephone answering machine to call an employer to set up an appointment for a job interview.
- c. Preparing a research paper on a topic about which you have limited knowledge.
- d. Conducting a workshop on refinishing furniture (assume you are not an expert).
- _____
- _____

Discussion Point

Identifying the Main Idea

11. How is communication in an organization like the spokes of a wheel? _____

12. Discuss how speech and appearance can provide the tone for a company you represent. Brainstorm examples of both positive and negative tones. _____
