

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

KEY IDEAS

- The ability to communicate effectively impacts many aspects of our lives. Our communication influences our personal success, as well as that of the work place that employs us, the groups with which we are involved and our close interpersonal relationships.
- Communication is both verbal and non-verbal.

NON-VERBAL/BODY LANGUAGE

- Non-verbal communication includes: body orientation, gestures, facial expressions, and eye behaviors.
- More than 65% of the meaning of our communication is expressed through our non-verbal behavior.
- We communicate even when we are not aware of it. Thus, we must be aware of the messages we are sending, especially via face and tone of voice.
- When verbal and non-verbal behaviors do not match, people will believe the non-verbal message.
- Non-verbal messages are difficult to fake.
- Be aware of what signals you're sending.
- The most effective message is when words match non-verbal/body language.

LISTENING GUIDELINES

1. Hold back and let the other person speak.

How: Resist the temptation to interrupt other people or to finish their sentences for them. If you find that they are slow to make statements or are straying from the topic, gently steer them towards the subject at hand.

2. Show interest in what the other person has to say.

How: Use eye contact along with appropriate facial expressions and body language when you are listening to other people. Leaning towards the speaker, nodding when you agree with an idea, or smiling at a humorous remark, all help to convey the idea that you want to be involved in the conversation. You can also encourage another talker by simply saying that you are interested in the message and adding that you would like to hear more.

3. Paraphrase and ask questions to clarify what you hear.

How: To be sure you understand exactly what the speaker means, try to clear up any possible confusion by repeating back to the speaker what you think you heard, and check to see if you are right. That very useful technique is called paraphrasing. It is one of the most effective active listening skills to know.

WORDS

- Spoken language allows us to communicate in ways no other species can.

GETTING YOUR POINT ACROSS

- A basic four-point plan is:
 1. Capture attention:
How: When you want to speak to another person about something that is important to you, begin with a statement that you think they can't ignore. In other words, appeal to one or more of their values.
 2. State the basic point:
How: When you start to speak, clearly state the point you most want your audience to remember. That way, both they and you will know where the communication is going.
 3. Present organized support:
How: After you have stated your main point, verbally list the details that support it. For extra effect, you might actually number these details by saying "one," "two," "three," and so on. However, don't overwhelm people with information, and don't offer too many numbers if your audience doesn't seem interested. Be sure also to use language that your listeners can easily understand, and avoid technical terms and abbreviations that are not common knowledge.
 4. Summarize and recommend action:
How: Briefly summarize your basic point and organized support. Be as clear as possible and ensure that your concluding summary matches your introduction. If you think some action should be taken, recommend it.
- Effective speaking combined with active listening is a highly valued communication skill.