

COMPETENT COMMUNICATION - 2ND EDITION



William G. Turner

Southwest Tennessee Community College

Competent Communication: Second Edition



Competent



Communication



Lisa Coleman, Thomas King & Bill Turner

Southwest Tennessee Community College
Competent Communication - 2nd Edition

Competent Communication

Second Edition

Lisa Inzer Coleman, M.A. - lcoleman@southwest.tn.edu

Thomas King, M.A. - tking19@southwest.tn.edu

William G. Turner III, M.A. - wgturner@southwest.tn.edu

This is a Creative Commons Licensed Open Educational Resource for use with the general education communication requirement course.



Competent Communication by Southwest Tennessee Community College, as governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents, is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/), except where otherwise noted.

This text is disseminated via the Open Education Resource (OER) LibreTexts Project (<https://LibreTexts.org>) and like the hundreds of other texts available within this powerful platform, it is freely available for reading, printing and "consuming." Most, but not all, pages in the library have licenses that may allow individuals to make changes, save, and print this book. Carefully consult the applicable license(s) before pursuing such effects.

Instructors can adopt existing LibreTexts texts or Remix them to quickly build course-specific resources to meet the needs of their students. Unlike traditional textbooks, LibreTexts' web based origins allow powerful integration of advanced features and new technologies to support learning.



The LibreTexts mission is to unite students, faculty and scholars in a cooperative effort to develop an easy-to-use online platform for the construction, customization, and dissemination of OER content to reduce the burdens of unreasonable textbook costs to our students and society. The LibreTexts project is a multi-institutional collaborative venture to develop the next generation of open-access texts to improve postsecondary education at all levels of higher learning by developing an Open Access Resource environment. The project currently consists of 14 independently operating and interconnected libraries that are constantly being optimized by students, faculty, and outside experts to supplant conventional paper-based books. These free textbook alternatives are organized within a central environment that is both vertically (from advance to basic level) and horizontally (across different fields) integrated.

The LibreTexts libraries are Powered by [NICE CXOne](#) and are supported by the Department of Education Open Textbook Pilot Project, the UC Davis Office of the Provost, the UC Davis Library, the California State University Affordable Learning Solutions Program, and Merlot. This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 1246120, 1525057, and 1413739.

Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation nor the US Department of Education.

Have questions or comments? For information about adoptions or adaptations contact info@LibreTexts.org. More information on our activities can be found via Facebook (<https://facebook.com/Libretexts>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/libretexts>), or our blog (<http://Blog.Libretexts.org>).

This text was compiled on 10/16/2023

About the Authors

Lisa Inzer Coleman, M.A.

Lisa Inzer Coleman is a long-time associate professor of communication and theatre at Southwest Tennessee Community College. She began her career at STCC as a member of the English Department before moving to the Department of Communication, Graphic & Fine Arts. She holds a B.S.E in English and Speech/Drama from Henderson State University and an M.A. in Communication from the University of Arkansas. She is a course coordinator for her department. Her involvement in this OER began in 2019 when she was selected as a "Gatekeeper Fellow." The aim of the Gatekeeper program is to redesign "gatekeeper" courses such as Fundamentals of Communication to make them more relevant and equitable. This textbook is a product of the redesign process.

Thomas King, M.A. (He/Him/His)

Communication and Theatre Assistant Professor Thomas King teaches in the Department of Communication, Graphic & Fine Arts at Southwest Tennessee Community College. He received a BA in Journalism and Mass Communications and an MA in Communication Studies from the University of North Carolina and is currently pursuing an MFA in Theatre at the University of Memphis. He is the Vice Co-Chair of the Equity and Inclusion sub-council. His research interests include Musical Theatre history, Gender and Ethnic performance, and International and Intercultural Communication in Higher Education. Thomas was in the first class of the Coca-Cola National Scholars program and is a part of the CCS Leadership Foundation. He is a brother of Phi Sigma Pi and Mu Beta Psi. He is an award-winning director, actor, singer, journalist, educator, and choreographer.

William G. Turner III, M.A.

Assistant Professor Turner is a tenured faculty member in the Department of Communication, Graphic & Fine Arts at Southwest Tennessee Community College. He has been teaching for Southwest Tennessee Community College for over a decade. The native Memphian earned a Bachelor of Arts in Communication with an emphasis on film and video production in 2002 and a Master of Arts in Communication with an emphasis on rhetoric in 2009, both from the University of Memphis.

*Special thanks to Patsy Fancher, Dept. Chair of Communication, Graphic & Fine Arts, for her assistance with the cover page.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover Page

Author Page

About the Authors

Licensing

Publisher Page

1: Introduction to Competent Communication

- 1.1: Why Study Communication?
- 1.2: The Process of Communication
- 1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator
- 1.4: Creating Success Through Growth Mindset
- 1.5: Review

2: Culture and Communication

- 2.1: The Impact of Culture on Behavior
- 2.2: Understanding Cultural Differences
- 2.3: Barriers to Intercultural Communication
- 2.4: Cultural Communication Competence
- 2.5: Intercultural Communication Activity and Review

3: Verbal Elements of Communication

- 3.1: How Words Work
- 3.2: Types of Language
- 3.3: Formal and Informal Language
- 3.4: Improving Verbal Communication
- 3.5: Review

4: Nonverbal Elements of Communication

- 4.1: Nonverbal Communication- A Definition
- 4.2: Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication
- 4.3: Types of Nonverbal Communication
- 4.4: Functions of Nonverbal Communication
- 4.5: Interpreting Nonverbal Communication
- 4.6: Review

5: Listening

- 5.1: Listening vs. Hearing
- 5.2: Stages of Listening
- 5.3: Listening Styles and Types
- 5.4: Poor Listening Habits
- 5.5: Improving Listening Competence
- 5.6: Review

6: Interpersonal Communication

- 6.1: Introduction to Interpersonal Communication
- 6.2: Communication Climate
- 6.3: Friendships
- 6.4: Romantic Relationships
- 6.5: Family
- 6.6: Interpersonal Skills in the Workplace
- 6.7: Conflict Management
- 6.8: Review

7: Career Communication

- 7.1: Soft Skills and Career Readiness
- 7.2: Professionalism
- 7.3: Career Exploration
- 7.4: Résumés and Cover Letters
- 7.5: Interviewing
- 7.6: Summary and Learning Activities
- 7.7: Review

8: Leadership and Working in Teams

- 8.1: Understanding Small Groups
- 8.2: Small Group Development
- 8.3: Small Group Dynamics
- 8.4: Leadership and Small Group Communication
- 8.5: Problem Solving and Decision-Making in Groups

9: Mass Communication and Social Media

- 00: Front Matter
 - Table of Contents
- Licensing
- 9.1: Mass Communication - A Definition
- 9.2: Quick Look- Mass Communication and Media
- 9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0
- 9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication
- 9.5: Ethics of Mass Media
 - 9.5.1: Ethical Issues in Mass Media
 - 9.5.2: How Newspapers Control the Public's Access to Information and Impact American Pop Culture
- Index
- Glossary
- Detailed Licensing

10: Public Speaking

- 10.1: A Brief History of Public Speaking
- 10.2: The Purposes of Public Speaking
- 10.3: The Topic and Thesis
- 10.4: The Body
- 10.5: Incorporating Evidence
- 10.6: Introductions and Conclusions

- [10.7: Visual Aids](#)
- [10.8: Delivery](#)
- [10.9: Informative Speech Examples](#)
- [10.10: Persuasive Speech Examples](#)

[Index](#)

[Glossary](#)

[Detailed Licensing](#)

Licensing

A detailed breakdown of this resource's licensing can be found in [Back Matter/Detailed Licensing](#).

Publisher Information

The creation of *Competent Communication* began in the Fall of 2019 when Southwest Tennessee Community College launched a Gatekeeper initiative. This initiative involved identifying high enrollment courses that showed significant equity gaps. Fundamentals of Communication (COMM 2025) was identified as one of the courses with equity gaps. Two of the Communication faculty members (Lisa I. Coleman and Tracy McLaughlin) were selected as Gatekeeper fellows and charged with redesigning the course from a lens of equity. In the fall of 2019 and the spring of 2020, the Gatekeeper Fellows researched best practices for equitable teaching. One of the best practices identified for this Gatekeeper course was the use of open education resource materials in the classroom. Since some students struggle to buy textbooks because of the expense, using OERs could help close equity gaps and ultimately increase retention and ultimately graduation rates. Gatekeeper Fellows also agreed that the Fundamentals of Communication course needed to be refreshed and made more relevant and interesting.

Thus, we utilized the research from the Gatekeeper course, along with a 2020 Tennessee Board of Regents OER Grant, and developed this OER digital textbook. The decision was made to move away from the public speaking approach of the current COMM 2025 course to a hybrid approach focusing on 8 "competencies" identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers as being essential for career success. The name for the textbook, *Competent Communication*, was chosen, in part, because each chapter addresses one or more of these competencies.

CAREER & SELF DEVELOPMENT Proactively develop oneself and one's career, have awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, able to navigate career opportunities and networking.	COMMUNICATION Communicate ideas clearly, public speaking skills, able to express ideas to others, can write and edit letters and memos	CRITICAL THINKING Exercise sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions, overcome problems and obtain/interpret knowledge and facts	TECHNOLOGY Ethically leverage digital technologies to solve problems, demonstrate effective adaptability to new and emerging technologies
EQUITY & INCLUSION Respect and value diverse cultures and races, demonstrate openness and sensitivity with all people, understand differences	LEADERSHIP Leverage the strength of others to achieve common goals, use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others, able to manage emotions and motivate others	PROFESSIONALISM Demonstrate accountability, punctuality, time workload management, demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior	TEAMWORK Build relationships with colleagues and customers, work within a team structure and manage conflict

Figure 1: A Look at Eight Essential Career Competencies. Source: "[10 Steps to Career Development Success](#)," Adapted from the [National Association of Colleges and Employers \(NACE\) Career Readiness Competencies](#) by Southwest Tennessee Community College's Career Services Department.

- **Chapter 2** (Communication and Culture) - Global and Intercultural Fluency
- **Chapters 3 - 5** (Verbal Communication, Nonverbal Communication, Listening) - Oral and Written Communication/Global and Intercultural Fluency
- **Chapter 6** (Interpersonal Communication) - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving/Teamwork and Collaboration
- **Chapter 7** (Career Communication) - Professionalism and Work Ethic/Career Management.
- **Chapter 8** (Leaderships and Working in Teams) - Leadership/Teamwork and Collaboration.
- **Chapter 9** (Mass Communication and Social Media) - Digital Technology
- **Chapters 10** (Public Speaking) - Oral and Written Communication

Our OER textbook is called a [Remix](#) in the OER vernacular. We have utilized the [LibreTexts](#) library of OERs and their software to produce this Remix. LibreText is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to "freeing the textbook from the limitations and costs of traditional textbooks."

The grant specified that what we develop must be available to and editable by others outside our organization. In *Competent Communication*, we have attempted to create a usable, zero-cost textbook for not only our COMM 2025 course, but for any institution that may want to adopt it. The free, open nature of the text means that instructors are able to use all or part of it, and add their own materials. The redundancy of key components in the textbook is intentional. Because it is an open educational resource, some users do not access the whole text. For clarity, sometimes a concept that is explained in a preceding chapter is reviewed and re-emphasized in later chapters as needed.

Thank you for downloading *Competent Communication*.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Introduction to Competent Communication

The objective of this book is to help you develop the communication skills necessary to accomplish your professional and personal goals. In this course, you will learn about many different types of communication, ranging from interpersonal communication to workplace communication to public speaking. Developing polished, professional communication skills takes preparation, practice, and persistence. However, your effort is worthwhile. Ultimately your ability to communicate in relationships, in the classroom, and in your career should improve, opening more doors than you might anticipate.

In Chapter One, you will learn why studying communication is important; elements that are involved in the communication process; and your responsibilities as a competent communicator. Finally, you will learn about how you can apply principles of growth mindset in communication studies and your life.

[1.1: Why Study Communication?](#)

[1.2: The Process of Communication](#)

[1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator](#)

[1.4: Creating Success Through Growth Mindset](#)

[1.5: Review](#)

This page titled [1: Introduction to Competent Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

1.1: Why Study Communication?

Learning Objectives

1. Explain how studying communication can help you academically, personally, and professionally.
2. Understand the layout and content of this textbook.

As a student enrolled in a required communication course, you might be thinking, “Communication isn’t my major, so why am I required to take this course?” The short answer to this question is the more skilled you are at communication, the greater potential you have to succeed in all aspects of your life. We spend most of our day communicating. In fact, when we are in the presence of other people, we are constantly communicating, whether we are conscious of what we are communicating or not. Learning about communication can help you communicate with more intention, resulting in the potential for improving your performance in your other courses, building stronger relationships, and accomplishing your career goals.

Studying Communication Can Help You Academically

In this class, you will learn about language, nonverbal communication, listening, intercultural communication, working in teams and small groups, and giving presentations. Since these skills have applications in your other college courses, communication study can help you academically.

Studying Communication Can Help You Build Stronger Relationships

In this class, you will learn about interpersonal relationships and ways to manage conflict in those relationships. You will be introduced to tools to help you better understand yourself and others—not just their words, but also the nonverbal communication cues they are sending. By applying the knowledge you learn in this class, you can potentially improve your relationships at home, at college, and at work.



Figure 1.1.1: Communication Builds Relationships. Source: [Trey Ratcliff](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)

Studying Communication Can Help You Professionally

A survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that “College students who wish to separate themselves from the competition during their job search would be wise to develop proficiencies most sought by employers, such as communication, interpersonal, and teamwork skills.” An individual with excellent communication skills is an asset to every organization. No matter what career you plan to pursue, competent and professional communication skills will help you succeed.

Each of these skills will be discussed or used in this course. Thus, the study of communication can help you succeed professionally.

CAREER & SELF DEVELOPMENT Proactively develop oneself and one's career, have awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, able to navigate career opportunities and networking.	COMMUNICATION Communicate ideas clearly, public speaking skills, able to express ideas to others, can write and edit letters and memos	CRITICAL THINKING Exercise sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions, overcome problems and obtain/interpret knowledge and facts	TECHNOLOGY Ethically leverage digital technologies to solve problems, demonstrate effective adaptability to new and emerging technologies
EQUITY & INCLUSION Respect and value diverse cultures and races, demonstrate openness and sensitivity with all people, understand differences	LEADERSHIP Leverage the strength of others to achieve common goals, use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others, able to manage Emotions and motivate others	PROFESSIONALISM Demonstrate accountability, punctuality, time workload management, demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior	TEAMWORK Build relationships with colleagues and customers, work within a team structure and manage conflict

Figure 1.1.2: A Look at Eight Essential Career Competencies. Source: "[10 Steps to Career Development Success](#)," Adapted from the [National Association of Colleges and Employers \(NACE\) Career Readiness Competencies](#) by Southwest Tennessee Community College's Career Services Department.

Your Communication Textbook

Your textbook is called *Competent Communication*, in part, because each chapter addresses one or more of these eight essential competencies.

- **Chapter 2** (Communication and Culture) - Global and Intercultural Fluency
- **Chapters 3 - 5** (Verbal Communication, Nonverbal Communication, Listening) - Oral and Written Communication
- **Chapter 6** (Interpersonal Communication) - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- **Chapter 7** (Career Communication) - Professionalism and Work Ethic/Career Management.
- **Chapter 8** (Leaderships and Working in Teams) - Leadership/Teamwork and Collaboration.
- **Chapter 9** (Mass Communication and Social Media) - Digital Technology
- **Chapters 10** (Public Speaking) - Oral and Written Communication



Figure 1.1.3: "[How to run an effective meeting](#)" by [Nguyen Vu Hung \(vuhung\)](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

Career Advice

Communication can occur without your even realizing it. Consider the following:

Is your e-mail name professional? The appropriate form for an email to your professor or in a business e-mail contains some form of your name. While an e-mail name like "LazyGirl" or "DeathMonkey" may be fine for chatting online with your friends, it may send the wrong signal to professors and prospective employers. When sending an email to a professor, always use your school email.

Is your outgoing voice mail greeting professional? If not, change it. Faculty and prospective recruiters will draw certain conclusions if, upon calling you, they get a message that screams, “Party, party, party!”

Do you have a “private” social networking on Facebook.com or another social media site? If so, consider what it says about you to employers or clients. If it is information you wouldn’t share at work, it probably shouldn’t be there.

Have you Googled yourself lately? If not, you probably should. Potential employers have begun searching the Web as part of background checking, and you should be aware of what’s out there about you. (Organizational Behavior)

References

Career Services. *Career Development at Southwest*. Southwest Tennessee Community College. 2021.

The College Board. (2004, September). Writing Skills Necessary for Employment Says Big Business: Writing Can Be a Ticket to Professional Jobs, Says Blue-

Ribbon group. Retrieved from http://www.writingcommission.org/pr/writing_for_employ.html.

National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2009). Frequently asked questions. Retrieved from <http://www.nacweb.org/Press/Frequen....aspx?referral=>.

National Commission on Writing for America’s Families, Schools, and Colleges. (2004, September). *Writing: A Ticket to Work...Or a Ticket Out, A Survey of*

Business Leaders. Retrieved from http://www.writingcommission.org/pr/...or_employ.html.

Organizational Behavior. University of Minnesota. Licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](#)

Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). *An Introduction to Human Communication: Understanding and Sharing* (p. 6). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

This page titled [1.1: Why Study Communication?](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman](#), [Thomas King](#), & [William Turner](#).

1.2: The Process of Communication

I know that you believe that you understood what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.

– Robert J. McCloskey, former State Department spokesman

Learning Objectives

1. Define communication.
2. Identify and describe eight elements of the communication process.
3. Explain the meaning of *Worldview* as well as its importance in communication.

Many theories have been used to describe, predict, and understand communication. In this course, we are less interested in theory than in making sure our communication leads to communication competency. But in order to achieve this result, it can be valuable to understand what communication is and how it works. Communication is a relatively complex process. If it were simple, we would have fewer misunderstandings.

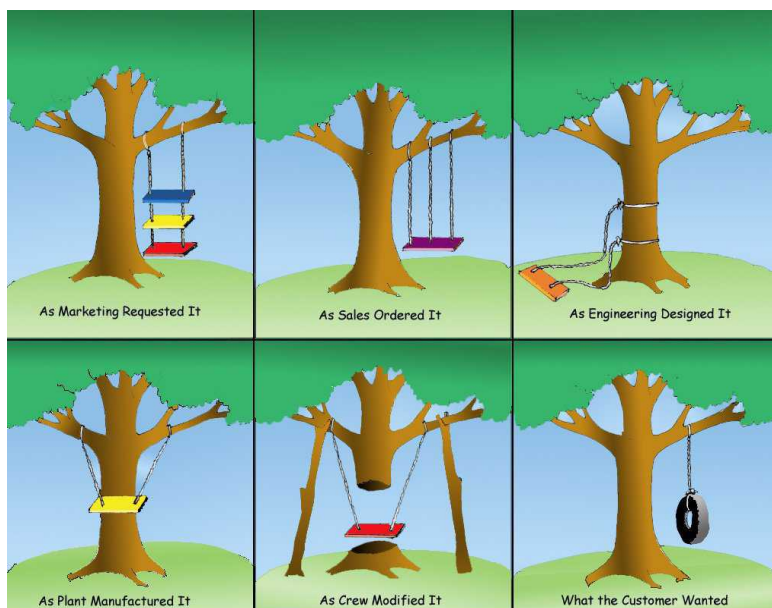


Figure 1.2.1: We only THINK communication is simple! What the customer REALLY Wanted. (Original Author of Cartoon Unknown--Cartoon Recreated by Merrisa Carter)

A Definition of Communication

The root word of communication in Latin is the word *communicare*, which means to share or to make common (Weekley, 1967). Thus, we will define **communication** as *the process of sharing information and feelings in such a way that understanding takes place*. According to our definition, the speaker or source of the message conveys the message he or she intends to share, and the receiver interprets the message in the manner the speaker intended; thus, the two “share” meaning. (Pearson & Nelson, 2000). If you have ever thought you communicated something clearly only to find out later that your message was interpreted completely differently than you intended, you realize that “sharing meaning” can be complicated. Let’s look at two important keywords in this definition.

Process

The first keyword in this definition is "**process**." A process refers to a series of steps that lead to a specific outcome. This definition is accurate but a bit misleading. The **communication process** is *dynamic, ongoing, and constantly changing*. (Pearson & Nelson, 2000). In fact, things often happen so quickly that the sender and the receiver are communicating simultaneously. Or, in conversation, the sender and the receiver may switch roles over and over, with the source becoming the receiver, and so on. Although it is useful to look at communication as a series of elements and steps, as we are doing here, we need to realize that the process of communication is not always neat and tidy, nor does it have a distinct beginning and end. For example, we don't begin communicating when we open our mouths to speak. Nor does communication END when a conversation or speech ends only to start afresh at the next encounter with our receiver. Future communication will be influenced by any previous communication.

Understanding

A second keyword is **understanding**. If the receiver does not understand what the sender means to convey or misinterprets the sender's message, communication has not occurred (McLean, 2003). The sender of the message is ultimately responsible for assuring that understanding happens. However, because humans come from a variety of cultures, life experiences, and worldviews, understanding often takes patience and persistence. The source must do his or her best to convey a message in a manner that the receiver will understand. But as receivers, we also can play a role in understanding. For example, before becoming angry over something we *think* a speaker or writer is saying, we can attempt to make certain our understanding of the message is accurate. As the cartoon at the beginning of this section illustrates, communication is complex.

A Model of the Communication Process

Since communication is a complex and ongoing process, it is difficult to determine where or with whom a communication encounter starts and ends. Models of communication simplify the process by providing a visual representation of the various aspects of a communication encounter. Some models explain communication in more detail than others, but even the most complex model still doesn't recreate what we experience in even a moment of a communication encounter. Models still serve a valuable purpose for students because they allow us to see specific concepts and steps within the process of communication. When you become aware of how communication functions, you can think more deliberately through your communication encounters, which can help you better prepare for future communication and learn from your previous communication. (*Communication in the Real World*). We will examine a visual representation of the communication process (Figure 1.2.2;) and discuss its components

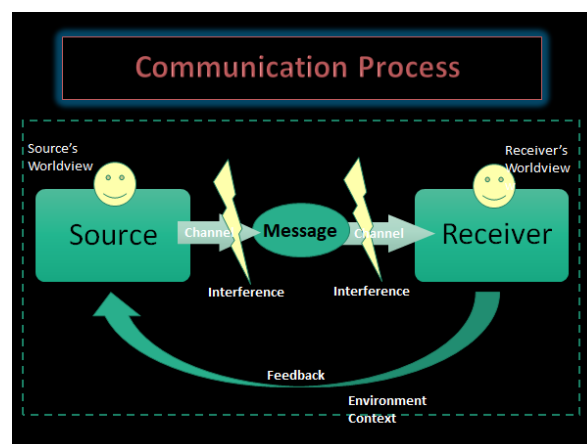


Figure 1.2.2: The Communication Process

Source

The **source** imagines, creates, and sends (encodes) the message either through speaking, writing, conversation, or another communication channel. In public speaking, the source is the person giving the speech. In written communication, the source is the person who sends the email or writes the essay. Since humans are the source of communication we are studying in this course, it is very important to realize that we are all influenced by our **worldview**, sometimes called frame of reference, which is *the overall framework through which an individual sees, thinks about, and interprets the world*.

It is very important to realize that we are all influenced by our **worldview** because our worldview influences how we see, think about, interpret, and interact with others. Our worldview is influenced by our gender, age, education level, religion, culture,

nationality, socioeconomic background, life experiences, and every other aspect of our lives that makes each of us unique. To communicate successfully, it is essential for us to become aware of our own worldview and to consider and respect the worldview of those with whom we are communicating. Chapter Two, Culture and Communication, has more to say about **worldview**.

Channel

The **channel** is the means or medium through which a message is sent. In business or social situations, common channels are face-to-face (conversation, interview, public speech); written (email, text message, letter); social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram); and mass media (television, radio, newspapers). Different channels may use different codes or symbols to convey the message. The primary codes are **verbal** (words) and **nonverbal** (anything other than words, such as our attire, posture, hand gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice, and so on). We will discuss verbal and nonverbal communication in subsequent chapters.

The channel can have a profound impact on the way a message is interpreted. Listening to a recording of a speaker does not have the same psychological impact as seeing that speaker in person or on television. One famous example of this is the 1960 presidential debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. (Figure 1.2.2) Those who listened to the debate on radio thought the debate was a tie or that Nixon won the debate, but those who watched the debate in person or on television thought Kennedy won. According to *History.com*, Kennedy, knowing that his face would be beamed to millions of black and white TV sets, took a long nap and worked on his tan on the roof of his Chicago hotel. When he finally arrived at CBS studios on the evening of September 26, he was rested and ready for action. During the debate, Kennedy looked into the camera, wore a dark suit that made him stand out from the background, and appeared to be calm after spending the entire weekend with aides practicing in a hotel room. In contrast, Nixon looked at the reporters asking him questions instead of at the camera, was sweating and pale, had facial hair stubble, and wore a grey suit that faded into the set background. Debate producer Don Hewitt would later say the Republican candidate's pale complexion and gaunt face made him look "like death warmed over." (Evans)



Figure 1.2.3: "The Kennedy-Nixon debate in 1960" by [scriptingnews](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)

One key to effective communication is to match your choice of a communication channel with the goal of the message (Barry & Fulmer, 2004). As you will see when you examine Figure 1.2.4, channels vary in their "**information-richness**." Information-rich channels convey nonverbal as well as verbal information and allow for immediate feedback from the receiver. Research shows that effective managers tend to use more information-rich communication channels than less effective managers. For example, a channel that is medium in communication richness such as a letter or email is a good choice when the sender wants a record of the content, does not need an immediate response, is physically separated from the receiver, doesn't require a lot of feedback from the receiver, or when the message is complicated and may take some time to understand. Face-to-face, on the other hand, is an information-rich communication channel and makes more sense when the sender is conveying a sensitive or emotional message, needs feedback immediately, and does not need a permanent record of the conversation. (*Organizational Behavior*)

Information Channel	Information Richness
Face-to-face conversation	High
Videoconferencing	High
Telephone conversation	High
E-mails	Medium
Handheld devices	Medium
Blogs	Medium
Written letters and memos	Medium
Formal written documents	Low
Spreadsheets	Low

Figure 1.2.4: Channels differ in their information richness.

Message

The **message** is the meaning conveyed to the receiver, whether intended or unintended. (McLean, 2005) Do not make the mistake of thinking the message is created only through words. Sometimes we convey a message without words or speech. When we do write or speak, words are just the beginning. The words are brought together with grammar and organization; thus, these will become part of the message. The message also consists of the way you say your words; in a speech or conversation, your tone of voice, your body language, and your appearance will affect the receiver's interpretation of your message. In an email and other written communication, your writing style, spelling, punctuation, and the headings and formatting you choose become part of the message. Our goal as competent communicators is to make certain the message received by our listeners or audience is the message we intend to convey.

Receiver

The **receiver** is the individual for whom the communication is intended. It is he or she who analyzes and interprets (decodes) the message in ways both intended and unintended by the source. (McLean, 2005) To better understand this component, think of a receiver on a football team. The quarterback (source) throws the football (message) to a receiver, who must see and interpret where to catch the ball. The quarterback may intend for the receiver to "catch" his message in one way, but the receiver may see things differently and miss the football (the intended meaning) altogether. Like the source, the receiver's interpretation of a message is influenced by his or her **worldview**. And just as the source has the responsibility to consider his or her receivers when encoding a message, a wise receiver will consider the source's worldview and how that worldview may have informed or shaped the message.

Feedback

Feedback is the receiver's response to the source and his or her message. Feedback may be in the form of words (verbal) or body language (nonverbal). Some feedback, particularly nonverbal, may be unintentional. Feedback is an important part of the communication process since it allows the source to see how accurately (or how inaccurately) the message was received. Feedback also provides an opportunity for the receiver or audience to ask for clarification, to agree or disagree, or to indicate that the source could make the message more interesting. As the amount of feedback increases, the accuracy of communication also increases (Leavitt & Mueller, 1951).

Environment

"The **environment** is the atmosphere, physical and psychological, where you send and receive messages." (McLean, 2005) The environment can include the tables, chairs, lighting, and sound equipment that are in the room. The room itself is an example of the environment. The environment can also include factors like formal dress, that may indicate whether a discussion is open and caring or more professional and formal. People may be more likely to have an intimate conversation when they are physically close to each other, and less likely when they can only see each other from across the room. In that case, they may text each other, itself an intimate form of communication. The choice to text is influenced by the environment. As a speaker, your environment will impact and play a role in your speech. It's always a good idea to go check out where you'll be speaking before the day of the actual presentation.

Context

"The **context** of the communication interaction refers to the expectations of the individuals involved." (McLean, 2005) A professional communication context may involve business suits (environmental cues) that directly or indirectly influence

expectations of language and behavior among the participants.

A presentation or discussion does not take place as an isolated event. When you came to class, you came from somewhere. So did the person seated next to you, as did the instructor. The degree to which the environment is formal or informal depends on the contextual expectations for communication held by the participants. The person sitting next to you may be used to informal communication with instructors, but this particular instructor may be used to verbal and nonverbal displays of respect in the academic environment. You may be used to formal interactions with instructors as well, and find your classmate's question of "Hey Teacher, do we have homework today?" as rude and inconsiderate when they see it as normal. The nonverbal response from the instructor will certainly give you a clue about how they perceive the interaction, both the word choices and how they were said.

Context is all about what people expect from each other, and those expectations are likely formed by our culture or the society we live in. Traditional gatherings like weddings or quinceañeras are often formal events. There is a time for quiet social greetings, a time for silence as the bride walks down the aisle, or the father may have the first dance with his daughter as she is transformed from a girl to womanhood in the eyes of her community. In either celebration there may come a time for rambunctious celebration and dancing. You may be called upon to give a toast, and the wedding or quinceañera context will influence your presentation, timing, and effectiveness.

Effective communicators understand the importance of the context and adapt their communication accordingly.



Figure 1.2.5: Context plays a very important role in communication, particularly across cultures. "Marriage Matrix of Shirakawa-go : 白川郷" by Dakiny is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Interference

Interference, also called noise, is anything that blocks or interferes with the communication process. Noise interferes with normal encoding and decoding of the message and can affect both the source and the receiver. **External interference** can come from our surroundings, such as a student's cell phone ringing in class, a car horn blaring, conversations in the hallway, or talking in the back of a classroom. **Internal interference** comes from the inside. Perhaps the source or receiver is hungry or distracted by bad news he or she received earlier in the day.

References

- Cronen, V., & Pearce, W. B. (1982). *The Coordinated Management of Meaning: A Theory of Communication*. In F. E. Dance (Ed.), *Human Communication Theory* (pp. 61–89). New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Evans, Andrew. *History Stories*. <https://www.history.com/news/the-fir...politics-image>. 24 Sept. 2015.
- Organizational Behavior*. University of Minnesota. n.d. Licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike](#) 4.0. <https://open.lib.umn.edu/organizationalbehavior/chapter/8-4-different-types-of-communication-and-channels/>. Retrieved 1 July, 2020.
- Pearson, J., & Nelson, P. (2000). *An Introduction to Human Communication: Understanding and Sharing* (p. 6). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Schreiber, Lisa and Morgan Hartranft. *The Public Speaking Project*, Chapter 1. Millersville University, Millersville, PA. **Located**

at: <http://publicspeakingproject.org/psvirtualtext.html>. **Project:** The Public Speaking Project. **License:** [CC BY-NC-ND: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives](#). Retrieved 12 May, 2020.

Weekley, E. (1967). *An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (Vol. 1, p. 338). New York, NY: Dover Publications.

This page titled [1.2: The Process of Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator

Learning Objectives

1. Define communication competence.
2. Explain the four responsibilities of a competent communicator.

Competent Communicator

Competent communication means

- the knowledge about how to communicate effectively and appropriately and
- the ability to use and adapt that knowledge to various communication contexts

A competent communicator understands there is no *single* effective way to communicate, that communication must be adapted to the context and receiver. A competent communicator takes time to learn communication skills that will enable him or her to communicate appropriately in different communication situations.

Four Characteristics of Competent Communicators

In addition to having knowledge and the ability to adapt to various communication contexts, competent communicators also have the following four qualities in common: they are prepared, clear, concise, and ethical.

A Competent Communicator is Prepared

Whether interviewing for a job, participating in a class discussion over a reading assignment, giving a speech, writing an email, or training a new employee at work, a competent communicator has taken the time to prepare. He or she respects the receiver or audience and does not insult them by wasting their time. A competent communicator does not risk communication failure by sending a poorly written email or giving an unrehearsed speech. If you are participating in a meeting on Zoom or Microsoft Teams or using presentation technology such as PowerPoint in a speech, being prepared includes testing the equipment ahead of time to see it works properly and making certain you know how to use it.

A Competent Communicator is Clear

A message that is **clear** is understandable to the audience is said to have **clarity**. If your message lacks clarity, the audience may misinterpret what you are trying to communicate or simply give up trying to understand.

Interestingly, clarity begins with **intrapersonal communication**, which is communication within your own mind, or "self-talk." You need to have a clear idea about what you are trying to communicate before you can clearly convey your message to someone else. A communicator must carefully consider his or her audience and choose words and phrases meaningful to them, avoiding jargon or slang that may be unfamiliar.

Clarity is also important in the delivery of your message. You must deliver your message so that your audience can understand it. In written communication, grammar, sentence structure, and wording should be accurate. In conversation or public speaking, if you mumble, speak too fast, use a monotonous tone of voice, or stumble over words or phrases, clarity will suffer. If you are using a microphone, participating in a Zoom or TEAMS meeting, or using presentation technology such as PowerPoint in your speech, clarity may depend on the equipment functioning properly—which brings us back to the importance of preparation.

A Competent Communicator is Concise

A **concise** communicator is able to state ideas in a direct, relatively straightforward way without wasting time or words. A concise speaker does not ramble on and on, get off-topic, or use twenty words to describe something that could be better described in two words. It may be tempting to show how much you know by incorporating unnecessary information into your document or speech, but in doing so you run the risk of boring, confusing, or overloading your audience. Be to the point and concise in your choice of words, organization, and even visual aids.

Being concise also involves being sensitive to time constraints. How many times have you listened to a speaker say "in conclusion" only to continue speaking for what seems like forever? How many meetings and conference calls have you attended that got started late or ran beyond the planned ending time? If you are asked to give a five-minute presentation at a meeting, your coworkers will

not appreciate your taking fifteen minutes, any more than your supervisor would appreciate your submitting a fifteen-page report when you were asked to write five pages. For speeches, time yourself when you rehearse and make sure you can deliver your message within the allotted number of minutes.

Since we have brought up the use of time in this section, it is important to address **punctuality** as well as conciseness. Being **punctual** means doing something at the agreed or proper time; on time. In the classroom or in business, penalties for lack of punctuality can be more serious than for lack of conciseness. Submitting a test or asking to present a speech when the due date has passed not only will likely carry a heavy grade penalty but may also communicate that the student does not prioritize or value his or her education. The same is true of consistently arriving late to class or leaving early. Not only does this behavior nonverbally communicate a poor message about the student, but it also creates interference in the classroom. Arriving late to a job interview will likely lead to missing out on that career opportunity. Being late to work may eventually lead to losing your job.



Figure 1.3.1: Good communicators do not waste words or time. "Times! Of! The World!" by Anz-i is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

A Competent Communicator is Ethical

The word *ethical* echoes what Aristotle called *ethos*, the communicator's good character and reputation for doing what is right. An *ethical communicator* considers the welfare of his or her audience and is guided by moral principles and standards. An ethical communication strives to do what is right and understands his or her responsibility to keep society civil. Name-calling among political figures and on social media and the preponderance of "fake news" are just a couple of examples of why a review of standards of ethical communication is needed now more than ever. Because ethics is so important, we will look at this characteristic in more detail.

Ethical communicators are egalitarian.

The word "egalitarian" comes from the root "equal." An **egalitarian** communicator believes in equality and is inclusive of all receivers or listeners. This means using ideas and language appropriate for and inclusive of all the message's readers or listeners, not just some of them. Egalitarian communicators respect diversity and do not speak to only those who are "like them" in terms of religion, age, gender, race, or ethnicity. In terms of your own communication, egalitarianism means avoiding stereotypical, discriminatory language. Use communication to unite, not incite or divide. We will discuss inclusive, nondiscriminatory language in Chapter Three, Elements of Verbal Communication.

Ethical communicators are respectful.

We may have also seen people hurt by sarcasm, insults, and other disrespectful forms of communication. These are behaviors a respectful communicator will avoid. Losing one's temper and being abusive are generally regarded as showing a lack of professionalism (and could even involve legal consequences for you or your employer). When you disagree strongly with a classmate, coworker, or friend, or when you feel deeply annoyed with a difficult customer, it is important to express such sentiments respectfully. For example, instead of telling a customer, "I've had it with your complaints!" a respectful business communicator might say, "I'm having trouble seeing how I can fix this situation. Would you explain to me what you want to see happen?" Taking time to observe and familiarize yourself with customs and viewpoints of those from different cultures than your own is another way of showing respect. Avoid telling jokes or using language that may be offensive to others. And if you inadvertently offend, apologize sincerely. Consider your nonverbal communication, as well. Eye-rolling and other forms of nonverbal communication can be just as disrespectful as words.

Ethical communicators are trustworthy.

Trust is a key component in communication. As a consumer, would you choose to buy merchandise from a company you did not trust? If you were an employer, would you hire someone you did not trust? Would you want to be friends with someone who

betrays your trust by revealing something you told that friend in confidence? Being worthy of trust is something you earn with others. A communicator may not know something and still be trustworthy, but it's a violation of trust to pretend you know something when you don't. Communicate what you know, and if you don't know something, research it before you speak or write. If you are asked a question you don't know how to respond to, say "I don't know the answer but I will research it and get back to you" (and then make sure you follow through later). This will go over much better with listeners than trying to cover by stumbling through an answer or portraying yourself as knowledgeable on an issue that you are not. A trustworthy communicator also does not hide relevant information from an audience. As many wise communicators have observed, "Trust is hard to build but takes only seconds to destroy."

Ethical communicators do not plagiarize.

Another important ethical obligation is to avoid plagiarism in all its forms. **Plagiarism** is the act of presenting another's work or ideas as though they are your own. It is a form of theft or cheating. Plagiarism can range from copying a classmate's answers and submitting them instead of your own work all the way to submitting an outline or giving a speech written by another. Plagiarism can have extremely serious consequences in academics, such as earning an F on an assignment or failing a course. In the workplace or community, a person who plagiarizes may lose his or her job and perhaps his or her reputation. Since plagiarism has such serious repercussions, it is important to understand what plagiarism is.

Examples of plagiarism

- Copying another student's work and submitting the work as though it were your own.
- Turning in a paper, outline, or speech you wrote for a different class (unless approved by your instructor)
- Buying or "borrowing" a paper, outline, or speech from the internet and submitting it as though you wrote it
- Using large sections of chunks of information from sources without adding your own analysis and original thoughts
- Failing to acknowledge the source of ideas and research both orally and in writing.

We will discuss plagiarism and how to avoid it in more detail in later chapters.

Check Your Facts!

To communicate ethically, check your facts and make certain they are accurate. Here are two fact-checking tools that can help:

FactCheck is a nonpartisan project of the Annenberg Center for Public Policy at the University of Pennsylvania. <http://www.factcheck.org>

PolitiFact is a nonpartisan project of the St. Petersburg Times; it won a Pulitzer Prize in 2009. <http://www.politifact.com>

NCA Credo for Ethical Communication

The National Communication Association (NCA) is a professional organization that represents communication scholars and practitioners in the United States. The NCA's "Credo for Ethical Communication" reminds us that communication ethics is relevant across contexts and applies to every channel of communication, including media. The credo goes on to say that human worth and dignity are fostered through ethical communication practices such as truthfulness, fairness, integrity, and respect for self and others. It is up to each one of us to put ethical principles into practice. The following are some of the principles stated in the credo:

- We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision-making fundamental to civil society.
- We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through the expression of intolerance and hatred.
- We are committed to the courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.
- We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences of our own communication and expect the same of others.

1. **What are some examples of unethical communication that you have witnessed?**
2. **Read through the whole credo. Of the nine principles listed, which do you think is most important and why? The credo can be accessed at the following link:** <http://natcom.org/Tertiary.aspx?id=2119&terms=ethical%20credo>.

Key Takeaways

- A competent communicator has the knowledge about how to communicate effectively and appropriately and the ability to use that knowledge to communicate in various communication contexts.
- Competent communicators are prepared, clear, punctual, concise, respectful, and ethical.
- Resources for Exploration and Research

Additional Resources

The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) is a global network of communication professionals committed to improving organizational effectiveness through strategic communication. <http://www.iabc.com>

Explore the Web site of the National Communication Association, the largest U.S. organization dedicated to communication. <http://www.natcom.org>

Read The National Commission on Writing's findings about the importance of communication skills in business. http://www.writingcommission.org/pr/...or_employ.html

This page titled [1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

1.4: Creating Success Through Growth Mindset



Figure 1.4.1: A Scientific Explanation Behind Growth Mindset. Source: Stefanie Faye (https://youtu.be/aItZKnWL_R4)

Growth Mindset

You might wonder why we are taking time to discuss growth mindset in a communication class. The reason is that a growing body of educational research shows that individuals who are most successful in the classroom, at work, and in their personal lives have a *growth mindset* as opposed to a *fixed mindset*.

Carol Dweck, a cognitive psychologist and leading expert on mindset research, defines fixed and growth mindset in the following way:

In a fixed mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They also believe that talent alone creates success—without effort. In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and resilience that is essential for great accomplishment.

Students with a growth mindset believe that with effort, practice, perseverance, resilience, and persistence they can “grow” or build their intelligence or strength in a certain skill, whether that skill is improving their pronunciation, building their vocabulary, writing an outline, giving a speech, or interviewing for a job.

People with a growth mindset do not avoid meeting a challenge, nor do they quit when test results in a college class or a performance review at work are disappointing. Instead, a growth-minded person is open to feedback or well-intended criticism because he or she is eager to grow and improve. Growth-minded people seek out resources and people that can help them and are willing to put in the work that improvement takes. This does not mean that the student with a growth mindset will earn an “A” on every assignment, just as it does not mean that every basketball player, with practice, will become as skilled as a professional player such as Stephen Curry or Michael Jordan. What it does mean is that a person with a growth mindset is willing to put in the effort and practice to become stronger or more accomplished.

A Comparison of Fixed and Growth Mindsets

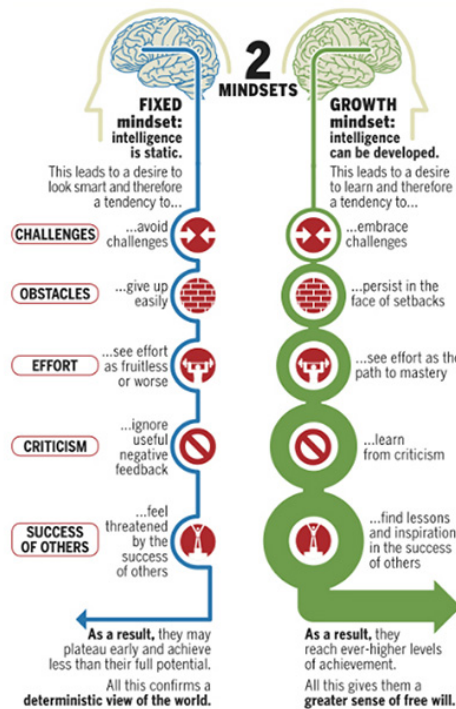


Figure 1.4.2: A Comparison of Fixed and Growth Mind-sets. (*Transforming Education.*)

Applying a Growth Mindset to Your Fundamentals of Communication Class

Some students approach this class with the mindset that they are already good enough communicators and therefore won't have to put forth much effort. As a result, they do the bare minimum to get a passing grade. Other students might approach the class with the mindset that because they have terrible communication anxiety, they are just going to have to suffer through the class and get it out of the way. Neither attitude leads to doing their best work.

Eduardo Briceno explains more about Growth Mindset in a presentation he gave at a TEDx event. In the video, he gives helpful tips for applying Growth Mindset to our lives.



Figure 1.4.3: The Power of Belief: Mindset and Success ([Eduardo Briceno: TEDxManhattanBeach](#))

Some of the most important takeaways from this video are:

- Our mindset can affect every aspect of our lives.
- A growth mindset is supported by science and brain research.
- With deliberate practice and effort, you can grow your abilities and intelligence in any area.

Growth Mindset Exercise

1. List and define 3 characteristics of a growth mindset.
2. Explain why we are including a growth mindset discussion in this class.
3. Each of the following statements shows indications of a fixed mindset. On your own or with a classmate or group, change the wording to show a growth mindset.
 - My grammatical skills always lower my grade.
 - I'm a good communicator. I don't need this class.
 - I can't get to work on time because of the traffic.
 - I don't want to say anything in class because my answer is probably wrong.
 - People won't be able to understand me when I speak because English is not my first language.
 - There is nothing I can do about my speech anxiety; I'm just a nervous person.

Assignment: Growth Mindset Quiz

Instructions: Take the Mindset Quiz below, then answer the following questions. After you have completed this assessment, submit your answers to the following questions.

1. What were your results on the Mindset Quiz? What does this mean?
2. Did your results surprise you or were they what you expected? Explain.
3. How can you use the results of this quiz? Be specific

MINDSET QUIZ

1. Circle the number for each question which best describes you
2. Total and record your score when you have completed each of the 10 questions
3. Using the SCORE chart, record your mindset

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't change very much	0	1	2	3
No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit	3	2	1	0
Only a few people will be truly good at sports, you have to be born with the ability	0	1	2	3
The harder you work at something, the better you will be	3	2	1	0
I often get angry when I get feedback about my performance	0	1	2	3
I appreciate when people, parents, coaches or teachers give me feedback about my performance	3	2	1	0
Truly smart people do not need to try hard	0	1	2	3
You can always change how intelligent you are	3	2	1	0
You are a certain kind of person and there is not much that can be done to really change that	0	1	2	3
An important reason why I do my school work is that I enjoy learning new things	3	2	1	0

SCORE CHART

- 22-30** = Strong Growth Mindset
17-21 = Growth with some Fixed ideas
11-16 = Fixed with some growth ideas
0-10 = Strong fixed mindset

MY SCORE:

MY MINDSET:

Adapted from Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York: Random House Inc.

Reference

Transforming Education. Transforming Education is a registered 501(c)3 based in Boston, Massachusetts. 2020.

This page titled [1.4: Creating Success Through Growth Mindset](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

1.5: Review

Chapter 1: Vocabulary and Questions for Review and Discussion

Vocabulary

- Communication
- Source
- Receiver
- Message
- Environment
- Channel
- Information-rich channel
- Context
- External interference
- Internal Interference
- Nonverbal
- Verbal
- Worldview
- Competent communication
- Clarity
- Concise
- Egalitarian
- Ethical
- Intrapersonal communication
- Plagiarism
- Punctual
- Growth Mindset
- Fixed Mindset

Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Your textbook states that “we are constantly communicating, whether we are conscious of what we are communicating or not.” What does this mean? Do you agree or disagree?
2. Fill in the blank correctly. For communication to take place, _____ must take place between the source and receiver.
3. According to the textbook, the message is whatever the
 - Source intends it to
 - Receiver perceives it to be
4. Pretend you are about to submit several job applications and resumes. What are some guidelines you should follow as far as the email address you use, your voice mail message, and your social media accounts?
5. In 1:2, The PROCESS of Communication, you are told the source and receiver may be communicating at the same time. Assuming only the source is speaking, how could the receiver also be communicating?
6. Face-to-face conversation, email, television, virtual meetings, phone calls, a public speech, letter are all examples of communication _____.
7. When an individual sends an email full of typographical errors, poor grammar, and sentence fragments, what kind of impact might this have on the reader?
8. True or False? Information-rich channels use both verbal and nonverbal communication.
9. What is meant by “immediate feedback”?
10. What creates an individual’s WORLDVIEW?
11. Since each person has a different WORLDVIEW, what steps can the source take to see that a message is understood by the receiver?

12. Most of you have seen a movie about a courtroom trial that shows the jury deliberating. Perhaps you have even served on a jury. How is the seating arranged during deliberation? Why?
13. How is a grocery store set up to influence buying?
14. How does the physical environment of a fast-food restaurant differ from the environment of an expensive, more elegant restaurant?
15. What are some settings or occasions that have unwritten rules of contact connected to them? Explain.
16. List and explain four characteristics of a competent communicator.
17. List and explain the four obligations of an ethical communicator.
18. What are two specific online websites you can use to check facts for accuracy of information before sharing it?
19. A growing body of research shows that individuals who are most successful have a growth mindset as opposed to a fixed mindset. Each of the following statements shows indications of a fixed mindset. Change the wording to show a growth mindset.
 - My grammatical skills always lower my grade.
 - I'm a good communicator. I don't need this class.
 - I can't get to work on time because of the traffic.
 - I don't want to say anything in class because my answer is probably wrong.
 - People won't be able to understand me when I speak because English is not my first language.
 - There is nothing I can do about my speech anxiety; I'm just a nervous person.

1.5: Review is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Culture and Communication

When you think of intercultural communication, perhaps you don't think about the next-door neighbor who just moved in from another state or the person who works as a firefighter when you work in retail. But, these are just a few of the people that you communicate with interculturally. Examining cultural differences can help us understand others and expand our communication horizons.

In this chapter, we will look at the impact of culture on behavior (2.1), cultural differences (2.2), barriers to intercultural communication (2.3), and ways to become competent intercultural communicators (2.4). Section 2.5 presents an intercultural communication activity.

[2.1: The Impact of Culture on Behavior](#)

[2.2: Understanding Cultural Differences](#)

[2.3: Barriers to Intercultural Communication](#)

[2.4: Cultural Communication Competence](#)

[2.5: Intercultural Communication Activity and Review](#)

This page titled [2: Culture and Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

2.1: The Impact of Culture on Behavior

Learning Objectives

After completing this section, students should be able to:

1. Describe what it means to be a provisional communicator.
2. Define culture and co-culture.
3. List several co-cultural groups in the United States.
4. Define intercultural communication.
5. Explain the reasons for education in intercultural communication.

Psychologists have used the term **egocentric** to describe a person who is self-focused and unable to imagine any other perspective than his or her own. Young children are naturally *egocentric*, assuming that everyone else thinks, perceives, and communicates as they do. To a certain extent, we remain egocentric even as we mature, and it can be very challenging to understand that varied perceptions, values, and beliefs exist which are equally valid as our own. However, to communicate effectively and to form satisfying personal and professional relationships, we must step away from our egotism and seek to understand the point of view, or as Chapter One calls it, the **worldview** of others. Learning about different worldviews can lead to our becoming **provisional** communicators.

Provisionalism is the ability to accept the diversity of perceptions and beliefs, and to operate in a manner sensitive to that diversity. Being a provisional communicator does not mean we abandon our own beliefs and values, nor does it mean we have to accept all beliefs and values as correct. Instead, provisionalism leads us to seek to understand variations in human behaviors and to understand the field of experience out of which the other person operates. Provisionalism means:

- We interpret the communication and behavior based on our own life experiences, *but then*
- We stop and consider, “How was the message intended?” or “What other factors may be motivating this communication or behavior?”

An excellent place to start understanding the communication of others is with an understanding of the impact of culture.

Culture

Culture refers to the broad set of shared beliefs and values that form a collective vision of ourselves and others. The tools we use, the goods we buy, the foods we eat, and the clothing we wear are all influenced by our culture. Our language, religion, laws, rules of social conduct, folklore, cultural icons, and the beliefs, norms, collective memories, attitudes, values, and practices that form our worldview and which help us relate to the world are also culturally determined. (Barrett). Culture is learned, and it can be so ingrained it becomes challenging to identify how it influences our thoughts and behaviors.

Let's begin our discussion of culture with our dominant or broad culture, which is usually but not always the country or nation of our upbringing. In the United States, most citizens place a high value on self-determination, believing each individual has a fundamental right to make choices that he or she deems best for them. As long as their actions do not harm others, they feel free to follow the life path of their own choosing. If others attempt to force them to act or think in certain ways, they tend to rebel. The United States is considered an *individualistic* culture because of this belief in self-determination. Other core values shared by most United States are equality, freedom of speech and religion, and competition.

It is important to understand that other cultures may not value self-determination and individualism. Some countries emphasize doing what is best for the group (the family or the company, for instance). In such cultures, engaging in individual behaviors that reflect poorly on the group is a powerful social taboo. For example, in some Asian cultures, if a student performs poorly academically, it is seen as a reflection on the entire family, bringing shame to all. The pressures to succeed are based not on personal achievement but on maintaining the honor of the entire family. Contrast that to the United States, where students are generally seen as failing or succeeding, on their own merit.



Figure 2.1.1: Keith: An American Professor Visits China. Source: Martin & Nakayama, 2018.

In the dominant U.S. culture, children are usually taught it is rude to stare at people, especially those markedly different from themselves. Extended gazes are unsettling and even offensive. This is not true, however, in all cultures. When Keith, the American professor shown in Figure 2.1.1 traveled to China several years ago, he had to acclimate to this cultural difference. Since he stood out as markedly different; lighter-skinned, bald, taller, and larger than average Chinese, he would regularly observe people staring at him, and many were doing so quite openly and obviously. If he had simply interpreted this staring according to his own culture, he would have drawn the conclusion that Chinese people were extremely rude. Since Keith knew from various travel books that staring is acceptable in China, he was able to understand that this behavior was perfectly appropriate within the context of the Chinese culture. If he had not learned about the culture beforehand, he might have experienced even greater **culture shock**. This term *refers to the discomfort felt when interacting in a new environment with few familiar cues to guide our communication behaviors* (Martin & Nakayama, 2018).

Be aware that cultures do not have static sets of beliefs, values, and behavior; instead, they evolve over time. In the U.S., we have seen large cultural shifts in the past 50 years. Sexual mores have changed quite dramatically, as have our attitudes about individual rights. While in the past women were restricted to a narrow range of careers, today we assume men and women are equally able to pursue the career of their choice. Attitudes toward minorities and immigrants continue to evolve. During the past 10 years, the changes in attitudes toward sexuality and the civil rights of same-sex couples are quite striking.

Another important component of worldview is determined by an individual's co-culture.

Co-Culture

It is important to know that a broad culture, like the United States, India, and other countries or societies, will also have a number of smaller cultural groups, sometimes called **co-cultures**, operating within it. A **co-culture** is *an identifiable group with its own unique traits operating within the larger culture*. For example, Keith's wife and her sister can talk for hours about all sorts of relationship issues with co-workers, with family members, and with friends while he finds such extensive conversations exhausting. Since female communication is normally more focused on relationship development and maintenance, such conversations are consistent with the feminine communication style. The masculine style is more focused on action and the bare details of events, who did what to whom, and not as focused on the nuances of relational dynamics. As someone who uses the masculine style, once Keith gets the basic details, he thinks he is informed and does not feel a need to dissect the smaller details of the event. Note that the masculine and feminine communication styles are not based on biology; men can use a feminine style and women can use a masculine style.

In the United States, various co-cultures exist, including those identified by

- Age or generation. For example Baby Boomers, Generation X, teens, senior citizens.
- Race or ethnicity. For example, Native Americans, African-Americans, Latinos, Whites.
- Differing abilities, such as a person who is deaf, a wheelchair user, or a person with Down syndrome.
- Sex, such as male or female
- Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation, such as binary or LGBTQ+.
- Religion, such as Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and so on.
- Affiliation or interests, such as NASCAR fans, gamers, or even gang members.
- Region of the country or city, such as urban north, deep south.
- Occupation.
- And many more.



Figure 2.1.2: North Dakota State Senator Richard Marcellais. Source: "Romesha Reception 12" by North Dakota National Guard is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Our verbal and nonverbal communication are influenced by our co-culture. Consider:

- The use of specific gestures, colors, and styles of dress in inner-city gangs;
- The classic Southern Accent;
- The use of regional sayings, such as “you betcha,” or “whatever” in rural Minnesota;
- The quiet nature of Native Americans who may prefer to listen and observe.
- Use of terms such as *pop*, *soda*, or *coke* to refer to carbonated beverages.



Figure 2.1.3: Photo by RODNAE Productions from Pexels is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

In your academic and work life, you will communicate with people from many different cultures and co-cultures. These variations in lifestyle, communication behaviors, values, beliefs, art, food, and such provide a rich quilt of human experience, and for the individual who can accept and appreciate these differences, it is an invigorating experience to move among them.

Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication occurs when two or more individuals who are from different cultures or co-cultures interact. Conducting business with a person from another country is one example of intercultural communication. Communication with a person from a different age group, ethnicity, or gender can also be considered intercultural communication. In other words, intercultural communication is human communication.

The Council of Europe states the importance of intercultural communication very effectively: "Mutual understanding and intercultural competence are more important than ever today because through them we can address some of the most virulent problems of contemporary societies. Manifestations of prejudice, discrimination, and hate speech have become common, and

political parties advocating extremist ideas have gained fresh momentum. These problems are linked to ... misunderstandings between people from different cultural backgrounds and affiliations. There is a felt urgency – for education that allows citizens to live together in culturally diverse societies. The ability to understand and communicate with each other across all kinds of cultural divisions is a prerequisite for making such societies work. For this reason, intercultural education can make an essential contribution to peaceful coexistence." (Barrett)

Exercises

1. Answer the question, "who are you." In a group, discuss your answers. How many cultures or co-cultures could you identify during your discussion.
2. **Media:** Watch and discuss this [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0reQCDL968) of an intercultural couple as they discuss how they negotiate cultural differences. Particularly, a Japanese man and a white U.S. American woman discuss their differences. *What We Argue About| Japanese/American Marriage* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0reQCDL968>).
3. **Media:** Watch and discuss this [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmdE_FlSfig). Miles Best talks to an author about Black culture, and how it is American culture. Language is discussed, as well as other parts of Black culture. *Black Culture in the United States* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmdE_FlSfig).

References

Barrett, Martyn, Michael Byram, Ildikò Lázár, Pascale Mompoin-Gaillard, Stavroula Philippou. *Developing Intercultural Competence*

Through Education. <https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net...OHF5GGSLRBV4ZA>. 16 Jan. 2013.

Bennett, M.J. (2011). *A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity*. Intercultural Development Research Institute. Retrieved 4/4/2017 from

[www.idrinstitute.org/allegati...o_Bennett_DMIS 12pp_quotes_rev_2011.pdf](http://www.idrinstitute.org/allegati...o_Bennett_DMIS_12pp_quotes_rev_2011.pdf)

Verderber, K.S., & MacGeorge, E.L. (2016). *Inter-Act: Interpersonal Communication Concepts, Skills, and Contexts*. New York: Oxford University Press.

This page titled [2.1: The Impact of Culture on Behavior](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- **3.1: Culture** by [Keith Green, Ruth Fairchild, Bev Knudsen, & Darcy Lease-Gubrud](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

2.2: Understanding Cultural Differences

In this section, we will look at cultural differences through the lenses of German psychologist Geert Hofstede; American anthropologist Edward Hall, and Scottish Business Professor Charles Tidwell. By gaining a rough understanding of different cultures, we can learn what to expect and how to interact with citizens of our diverse, multicultural society.

Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture

Psychologist Geert Hofstede published his cultural dimensions model at the end of the 1970s. Since then, it's become an internationally recognized standard for understanding cultural differences. Hofstede studied people who worked for IBM in more than 50 countries and identified six dimensions that could distinguish one culture from another. These six dimensions are individualism vs. collectivism, discussed in the previous section; high power distance vs. low power distance; high certainty avoidance vs. low certainty avoidance; long-term vs. short-term orientation; masculine vs. feminine; and indulgence vs. restraint.

Individualism and Collectivism

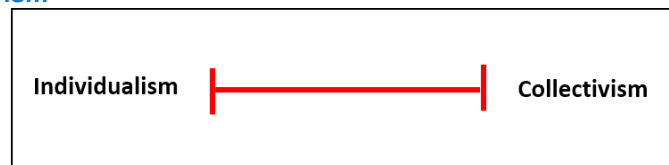


Figure 2.2.1

Put simply, you can think of an individualistic culture as an **I** culture where members are able to make choices based on *personal preference* with little regard for others, except for close family or significant relationships. They can pursue their own wants and needs free from concerns about meeting social expectations. The **United States** is a highly individualistic culture. While we value the role of certain aspects of collectivism such as government and social organizations, at our core we strongly believe it is up to each person to find and follow his or her path in life.

In a highly collectivistic culture, a **we** culture, just the opposite is true. It is the role of individuals to fulfill their place in the *overall social order*. Personal wants and needs are secondary to the needs of society at large. There is immense pressure to adhere to social norms and those who fail to conform risk social isolation, disconnection from family, and perhaps some form of banishment. **China** is typically considered a highly collectivistic culture. In China, multigenerational homes are common, and tradition calls for the oldest son to care for his parents as they age.

High Power-Distance and Low Power-Distance

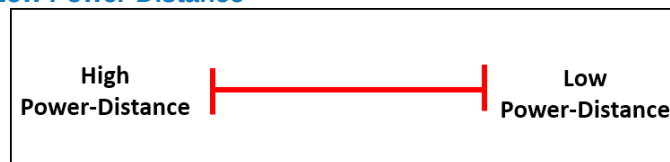


Figure 2.2.2

Power is a normal feature of any relationship or society. How power is perceived, however, varies among cultures. In **high power-distance cultures**, the members accept some having more power and some having less power, and accept that this power distribution is natural and normal. Those with power are assumed to deserve it, and likewise, those without power are assumed to be in their proper place. In such a culture, there will be a rigid adherence to the use of titles, "Sir," "Ma'am," "Officer," "Reverend," and so on. The directives of those with higher power are to be obeyed, with little question.

In **low power-distance cultures**, the distribution of power is considered far more arbitrary and viewed as a result of luck, money, heritage, or other external variables. Those in power are far more likely to be challenged in a low power-distance culture than they would in a high power-distance culture. A wealthy person is typically seen as more powerful in western cultures. Elected officials, like United States Senators, will be seen as powerful since they had to win their office by receiving majority support. However, individuals who attempt to assert power are often faced with those who stand up to them, question them, ignore them, or otherwise refuse to acknowledge their power. While some titles may be used, they will be used far less than in high power-distance culture. For example, in colleges and universities in the U.S., it is far more common for students to address their instructors on a first-name

basis, and engage in casual conversation on personal topics. In contrast, in a high power-distance culture like **Japan**, the students rise and bow as the teacher enters the room, address them formally at all times, and rarely engage in any personal conversation.

High Uncertainty Avoidance and Low Uncertainty Avoidance

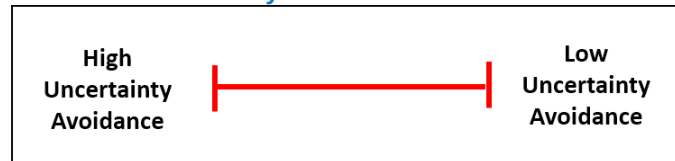


Figure 2.2.3

This index shows the degree to which people accept or avoid something that is strange, unexpected, or different from the status quo.

Societies with high uncertainty avoidance choose strict rules, guidelines, and behavior codes. They usually depend on absolute truths or the idea that only one truth decides all proper conduct. High uncertainty avoidance cultures limit change and place a very high value on history, doing things as they have been done in the past, and honoring stable cultural norms.

Low uncertainty avoidance cultures see change is seen as inevitable and normal. These cultures are more accepting of contrasting opinions or beliefs. Society is less strict and lack of certainty is more acceptable. In a low uncertainty avoidance culture, innovation in all areas is valued. Businesses in the U.S. that can change rapidly, innovate quickly, and respond immediately to market and social pressures are seen as far more successful. Even though the U.S. is generally low in uncertainty avoidance, we can see some evidence of a degree of higher uncertainty avoidance related to certain social issues. As society changes, there are many who will decry the changes as they are “forgetting the past,” “dishonoring our forebears,” or “abandoning sacred traditions.” In the controversy over same-sex marriage, the phrase “traditional marriage” is used to refer to a two person, heterosexual marriage, suggesting same-sex marriage is a violation of tradition. Changing social norms creates uncertainty, and for many changes are very unsettling.

Long-Term Orientation and Short-Term Orientation

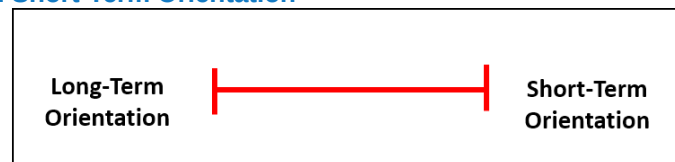


Figure 2.2.4

People and cultures view time in different ways. For some, the “here and now” is paramount, and for others, “saving for a rainy day” is the dominant view.

In a long-term culture, significant emphasis is placed on planning for the future. For example, the savings rates in France and Germany are 2-4 times greater than in the U.S., suggesting cultures with more of a “plan ahead” mentality (Pasquali & Aridas, 2012). These long-term cultures see change and social evolution are normal, integral parts of the human condition.

In a short-term culture, emphasis is placed far more on the “here and now.” Immediate needs and desires are paramount, with longer-term issues left for another day. The U.S. falls more into this type. Legislation tends to be passed to handle immediate problems, and it can be challenging for lawmakers to convince voters of the need to look at issues from a long-term perspective. With the fairly easy access to credit, consumers are encouraged to buy now versus waiting. We see evidence of the need to establish “absolute Truth” in our political arena on issues such as same-sex marriage, abortion, and gun control. Our culture does not tend to favor middle grounds in which truth is not clear-cut.

Masculine and Feminine

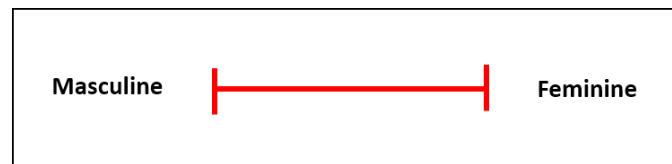


Figure 2.2.5

Expectations for gender roles are a core component of any culture. All cultures have some sense of what it means to be a “man” or a “woman.” **Masculine cultures** are *traditionally seen as more aggressive and domineering*, while **feminine cultures** are *traditionally seen as more nurturing and caring*.

In a masculine culture, such as the U.S., winning is highly valued. We respect and honor those who demonstrate power and high degrees of competence. Consider the role of competitive sports such as football, basketball, or baseball, and how the rituals of identifying the best are significant events. The 2017 Super Bowl had 111 million viewers, (Huddleston, 2017) and the World Series regularly receives high ratings, with the final game in 2016 ending at the highest rating in ten years (Perez, 2016).

More feminine societies, such as those in the Scandinavian countries, will certainly have their sporting moments. However, the culture is far more structured to provide aid and support to citizens, focusing their energies on providing a reasonable quality of life for all (Hofstede, 2012b).

Indulgence and Restraint

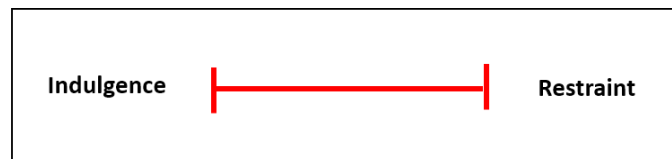


Figure 2.2.6

A more recent addition to Hofstede’s dimensions of culture, the indulgence/restraint continuum addresses the degree of rigidity of social norms of behavior. He states:

Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. **Restraint** stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms (Hofstede, 2012a).

Indulgent cultures are comfortable with individuals acting on their more basic human drives. Sexual mores are less restrictive, and one can act more spontaneously than in cultures of restraint. Those in indulgent cultures will tend to communicate fewer messages of judgment and evaluation. Every spring thousands of U.S. college students flock to places like Cancun, Mexico, to engage in a week of fairly indulgent behavior. Feeling free from the social expectations of home, many will engage in some intense partying, sexual activity, and fairly limitless behaviors.

Cultures of restraint, such as many Islamic countries, have rigid social expectations of behavior that can be quite narrow. Guidelines on dress, food, drink, and behaviors are rigid and may even be formalized in law. In the U.S., a generally indulgent culture, there are sub-cultures that are more restraint-focused. The Amish are highly restrained by social norms, but so too can be inner-city gangs. Areas of the country, like Utah with its large Mormon culture, or the Deep South with its large evangelical Christian culture, are more restrained than areas such as San Francisco or New York City. Rural areas often have more rigid social norms than do urban areas. Those in more restraint-oriented cultures will identify those not adhering to these norms, placing pressure on them, either openly or subtly, to conform to social expectations.

Hall's Cultural Variations

In addition to these 6 dimensions from Hofstede, anthropologist Edward T. Hall identified two more significant cultural variations (Raimo, 2008).

Monochronic and Polychronic

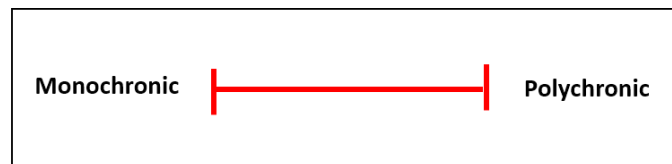


Figure 2.2.7

Another aspect of **variations in time orientation** is the difference between monochronic and polychronic cultures. This refers to *how people perceive and value time*.

In a **monochronic culture**, like the U.S., *time is viewed as linear, as a sequential set of finite time units*. These units are a commodity, much like money, to be managed and used wisely; once the time is gone, it is gone and cannot be retrieved. Consider the language we use to refer to time: *spending* time; *saving* time; *budgeting* time; *making* time. These are the same terms and concepts we apply to money; time is a resource to be managed thoughtfully. Since we value time so highly, that means:

- Punctuality is valued. Since “time is money,” if a person runs late, they are wasting the resource.
- Scheduling is valued. Since time is finite, only so much is available, we need to plan how to allocate the resource. Monochronic cultures tend to let the schedule drive activity, much like money dictates what we can and cannot afford to do,
- Handling one task at a time is valued. Since time is finite and seen as a resource, monochronic cultures value fulfilling the time budget by doing what was scheduled. Compare this to a financial budget: funds are allocated for different needs, and we assume those funds should be spent on the item budgeted. In a monochronic culture, since time and money are virtually equivalent, adhering to the “time budget” is valued.
- Being busy is valued. Since time is a resource, we tend to view those who are busy as “making the most of their time;” they are seen as using their resources wisely.

In a **polychronic culture**, like Spain, *time is far, far more fluid*. Schedules are more like rough outlines to be followed, altered, or ignored as events warrant. Relationship development is more important, and schedules do not drive activity. Multi-tasking is far more acceptable, as one can move between various tasks as demands change. In polychronic cultures, people make appointments, but there is more latitude for when they are expected to arrive. David's appointment may be at 10:15, but as long as he arrives sometime within the 10 o'clock hour, he is on time.

Consider a monochronic person attempting to do business in a polychronic culture. The monochronic person may expect meetings to start promptly on time, stay focused, and for work to be completed in a regimented manner to meet an established deadline. Yet those in a polychronic culture will not bring those same expectations to the encounter, sowing the seeds for some significant intercultural conflict.

High Context and Low Context

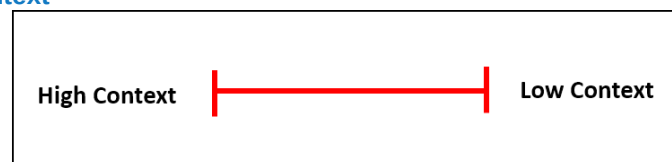


Figure 2.2.8

The last variation in culture to consider is whether the culture is high context or low context. To establish a little background, consider how we communicate. When we communicate we use a communication package, consisting of all of our verbal and nonverbal communication. As you have learned, our **verbal communication** refers to **our** use of language, and our **nonverbal communication** refers to *all other communication variables: body language, vocal traits, and dress*.

In **low-context cultures**, *verbal communication is given primary attention*. The assumption is that people will say what they mean relatively directly and clearly. Little will be left for the receiver to interpret or imply. In the U.S. if someone does not want something, we expect them to say, “No.” While we certainly use nonverbal communication variables to get a richer sense of the meaning of the person's message, we consider what they say to be the core, primary message. Those in a high-context culture find the directness of low-context cultures quite disconcerting, to the point of rudeness.

In **high-context cultures**, *nonverbal communication is as important, if not more important, than verbal communication*. How something is said is a significant variable in interpreting what is meant. Messages are often implied and delivered quite subtly.

Japan is well known for the reluctance of people to use blunt messages, so they have far more subtle ways to indicate disagreement than a low-context culture. Those in low context cultures find these subtle, implied messages frustrating.

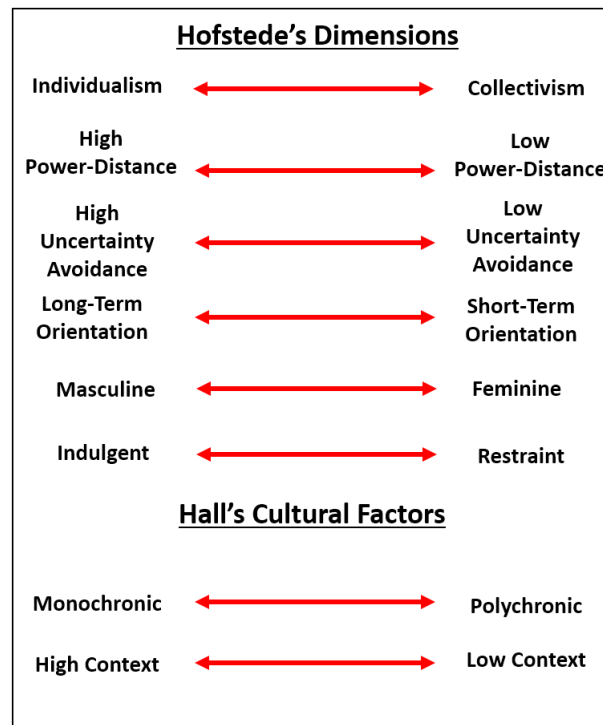


Figure 2.2.9

In summary, Hofstede's Dimensions and Hall's Cultural Variations give us some tools to use to identify, categorize, and discuss diversity in communication. As we learn to see these differences, we are better equipped to manage inter-cultural encounters, communicate more provisionally, and adapt to cultural variations.

While intended to show only broad cultural differences, these eight variables also can be useful tools to identify variations among individuals within a given culture. We can use them to identify sources of conflict or tension within a given relationship, such as a marriage. For example, Keith tends to be a short-term oriented, indulgent, monochronic person, while his wife tends to be long-term oriented, restrained, and more polychronic. Needless to say, they frequently experience their own personal "culture clashes."

Tidwell's Insights about Culture and Nonverbal Communication

Dr. Charles Tidwell, professor of Intercultural Business Relations at Andrews University, has spent many years studying and teaching intercultural communication. He provides some valuable insights on cultural differences in dress, movements, gestures, eye contact, touch, and vocalizations. Following are notes published from his graduate course on Interpersonal Communication.

General Appearance and Dress

All cultures are concerned about how they look and make judgments based on looks and dress. Some Americans, for instance, appear almost obsessed with dress and personal attractiveness. But cultural standards on what is attractive in dress and on what constitutes modesty vary greatly. An interesting area to research is how dress is used as a sign of status in different cultures.

Movements and Posture

We send information on attitude toward a person by movements and posture (facing or leaning towards another), emotional states (tapping fingers, jiggling coins), and desire to control the environment (moving towards or away from a person). There are more than 700,000 possible motions we can make — so it is impossible to categorize them all! But just be aware the body movement and position are key ingredients in sending messages. Consider the following actions and note cultural differences:

- Slouching (seen as rude in most Northern European areas)

- Hands in the pocket (disrespectful in Turkey)
- Sitting with legs crossed (offensive in Ghana, Turkey)
- Showing soles of feet. (offensive in Thailand, Saudi Arabia)
- Even in the US, there is a considerable difference in acceptable posture

Gestures

It is impossible to catalog them all. But we need to recognize that an acceptable gesture in one's own culture may be offensive in another. In addition, the amount of gesturing varies from culture to culture. Some cultures are animated; others are restrained. Restrained cultures often feel animated cultures lack manners and overall restraint. Animated cultures often feel restrained cultures lack emotion or interest. Even simple things like using hands to point and count differ. People in the US point with the index finger; Germany with the little finger; and the Japanese with the entire hand (in fact most Asians consider pointing with the index finger to be rude). In counting with the fingers, Germans use the thumb to indicate the number 1; the middle finger is the symbol for 1 in Indonesia.

Facial Expressions

While many facial expressions such as smiling, crying, or showing anger, sorrow, or disgust are recognized worldwide, the intensity varies from culture to culture. Many Asian cultures suppress facial expressions as much as possible. Many Mediterranean (Latino / Arabic) cultures exaggerate grief or sadness while most American men hide grief or sorrow. Some see "animated" expressions as a sign of a lack of control. Too much smiling is viewed as a sign of shallowness in some cultures. Women smile more than men.

Eye Contact and Gaze

In the USA, eye contact indicates our degree of attention or interest, regulates interaction, communicates emotion, defines power and status, and has a central role in managing the impressions of others. Western cultures see direct eye to eye contact as positive and advise children to look a person in the eyes. But within the USA, differences exist. For example, African-Americans use more eye contact when talking and less when listening with the reverse being true for Anglo-Americans.

- Arabic cultures make prolonged eye contact and believe it shows interest and helps them understand the truthfulness of the other person. (A person who doesn't reciprocate is seen as untrustworthy)
- Japan, Africa, Latin American, Caribbean — avoid eye contact to show respect.

Touch

Touch is culturally determined! The basic pattern is that cultures with high emotional restraint concepts (English, German, Scandinavian, Chinese, Japanese) have little public touch; those which encourage emotion (Latino, Middle-East, Jewish) accept frequent touches. But each culture has a clear concept of what parts of the body one may not touch. The basic message of touch is to show affection or to control others (i.e. hug, kiss, hit, kick). But rules for touch vary greatly, as shown below:

- Traditional Koreans (and many other Asian countries) don't touch strangers., especially members of the opposite sex.
- Islamic and Hindu Cultures: typically don't touch with the left hand. To do so is a social insult. The left hand is for toilet functions. It is mannerly in India to break your bread only with your right hand (sometimes difficult for non-Indians)
- Islamic cultures generally don't approve of any touching between genders (even handshakes). But consider such touching (including hand-holding, hugs) between same-sex to be appropriate.
- Many Asians don't touch the head. (The head houses the soul and a touch puts it in jeopardy).

Vocalizations

Vocal characterizers such as a laugh, cry, yell, moan, whine, belch, and yawn send different messages in different cultures. (Japan — giggling indicates embarrassment; India – belch indicates satisfaction) Other vocal qualifiers (volume, pitch, rhythm, tempo, and tone) also vary. Loudness indicates strength in Arabic cultures and softness indicates weakness; indicates confidence and authority to the Germans; indicates impoliteness to the Thais; indicates loss of control to the Japanese. (Generally, one learns not to "shout" in Asia for nearly any reason!). Loudness is gender-based as well: women tend to speak higher and more softly than men.

Key Terms

- **Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture**
 - Individualism and Collectivism
 - Power Distance
 - Uncertainty Avoidance
 - Time Orientation
 - Masculine and Feminine
 - Indulgence and Restraint
- **Hall's Cultural Dimensions**
 - Monochronic and Polychronic
 - High-Context and Low-Context

Topics for Discussion

Although Hofstede's and Hall's Cultural Dimensions are useful in a study of cultures and co-cultures, it is important that we are careful not to oversimplify. Watch *The Danger of a Single Story* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg>). What were key takeaways from this video?

This page titled [2.2: Understanding Cultural Differences](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [3.1: Culture](#) by [Keith Green, Ruth Fairchild, Bev Knudsen, & Darcy Lease-Gubrud](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

2.3: Barriers to Intercultural Communication

Learning Objectives

- Analyze barriers to effective intercultural communication.
- Define and give examples of ethnocentrism.
- Define and give examples of stereotyping.

"How You See Me" series on YouTube features "real" people discussing their cultural identities. (https://youtu.be/FIs_W4PMJgA?list=PLfjTXaT9NowjmBcbR7gJVFEcprsobMZiX)



Figure 2.3.1: How You See Me. (Nick Ross)

Barriers to Intercultural Communication

Most of us can appreciate the importance of intercultural communication, yet several stumbling blocks may get in the way of a positive intercultural communication experience. Some of the most common ones are anxiety,

Anxiety

It is not unusual to experience some level of discomfort in communicating with individuals from other cultures or co-cultures. It may be that we feel as though we will do or say the wrong thing. This can make the interaction awkward or can lead us to avoid opportunities for intercultural communication. Although not as detrimental as ethnocentrism or stereotypes, anxiety can prevent us from making intercultural connections that will enrich our lives.

Assumption of Similarities

Although you know differently, many people mistakenly assume that simply being human makes everyone alike. However, as we've discussed, values, beliefs, and attitudes can vary vastly from culture to culture. Those who assume a person from another cultural background is just like them will often misread or misinterpret and perhaps even be offended by any intercultural encounter. In intercultural communication, assume differences in communication style will exist that you may be unaware of. It is important to avoid interpreting another individual's behavior through your own cultural lens.

Ethnocentrism

Where did you start reading on this page? The top left corner. Why not the bottom right corner, or the top right one? In English, we read left to right, from the top of the page to the bottom. But not everyone reads the same. If you read and write Arabic or Hebrew, you will proceed from right to left. Neither is right or wrong, simply different. Americans tend to say that people from England

drive on the “wrong” side of the road, rather than on the “other” side. You may find it hard to drive on the other side of the road while visiting England, but for people in the United Kingdom, it is normal and natural. A high level of appreciation for one’s own culture can be healthy; a shared sense of community pride, for example, connects people in a society. But **ethnocentrism** can lead to disdain or dislike for other cultures and could cause misunderstanding and conflict. **Ethnocentrism** assumes *our culture or co-culture is superior to or more important than others and evaluates all other cultures against it*. To dismantle ethnocentrism, we must recognize that our views of the world, what we consider right and wrong, normal or weird, are largely influenced by our cultural standpoint and that our cultural standpoint is not everyone’s cultural standpoint. This ethnocentric bias has received some challenge recently in United States’ schools as teachers make efforts to create a multicultural classroom by incorporating books, short stories, and traditions from non-dominant groups.

Ethnocentrism shows up in large and small ways. A “small” way might be in disdain for other cultures’ or co-cultures’ food preferences. Some individuals express disgust at other cultures’ eating meat from a dog or guinea pig, for example, while they don’t question their own habit of eating cows or pigs. A “large” and one of the most horrific examples of ethnocentrism in history can be seen in the Nazi’s elevation of the Aryan race in World War II and the corresponding killing of Jews, Gypsies, gays and lesbians, and other non-Aryan groups.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are oversimplified ideas about groups of people. Stereotypes can be based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation — almost any characteristic. They may be positive, such as all Asian students are good at math, but are most often negative, such as all overweight people are lazy. Stereotyping is a generalization that doesn’t take individual differences into account.

Stereotypes are frequently expressed on TV, in movies, chat rooms and blogs, and in conversations with friends and family. Further research has found that stereotypes are often used outside of our awareness, making it very difficult to correct them. And when we are distracted or under time pressure, these tendencies become even more powerful (Stangor & Duan, 1991). Still, it’s crucial to try to recognize our own stereotypic thinking. Treating individuals according to rigid stereotypic beliefs is detrimental to all aspects of the communication process and can lead to prejudice and discrimination.

Prejudice

Prejudice is a negative attitude and feeling toward an individual based solely on one’s membership in a particular social group, such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, social class, religion, sexual orientation, profession, and many more (Allport, 1954; Brown, 2010). An example of prejudice is having a negative attitude toward people who are not born in the United States and disliking them because of their status as “foreigners.”

Because it is often difficult to recognize our own prejudices, several tests have been created to help us recognize our own “implicit” or hidden biases. The most well-known implicit measure of prejudice—the *Implicit Association Test (IAT)*—is frequently used to assess stereotypes and prejudice (Nosek, Greenwald, & Banaji, 2007). In the IAT, participants are asked to classify stimuli that they view on a computer screen into one of two categories by pressing one of two computer keys, one with their left hand and one with their right hand. Furthermore, the categories are arranged such that the responses to be answered with the left and right buttons either “fit with” (match) the stereotype or do not “fit with” (mismatch) the stereotype. You can take the test yourself at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/user/agg/blindspot/indexrk.htm>.

When our prejudices and stereotypes are unchallenged, they can lead to action in the forms of discrimination and even violence. **Racial discrimination** is discrimination against an individual based solely on membership in a specific racial group. There have been a number of shocking highly publicized instances in which African-Americans were killed by vigilantes or law enforcement, one of the more disturbing being the case of George Floyd. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd died after Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck for over 8 minutes; almost 3 of those minutes were after Floyd was unconscious. (Dovidio et al., 2010). And in late 2020, “the United Nations **issued a report** that detailed “an alarming level” of racially motivated violence and other hate incidents against Asian Americans.” According to a Pew Research Report, “32% of Asian adults say they have feared someone might threaten or physically attack them...with the majority of Asian adults (81%) saying

violence against them is increasing. (Pew Research Center, Ap. 11, 2021) Mexican Americans and other Latinx groups are also targets, both of citizens and police. (Dovidio et al., 2010)

Discussions about stereotypes, prejudice, racism, and discrimination are unsettling to some. However, we must recognize these attributes in ourselves and others before we can take steps to challenge and change their existence.

Activities: Experiencing Intercultural Barriers Through Media

1. **Activity 1:** When watching the following video, notice all of the stereotypes people who are native to Alaska face, and think about how you'd approach a conversation with someone from the area. Try to consider the situation from another perspective.
2. What People Get Wrong About Alaska Natives: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDU4PkSqWsQ>
3. **Multimedia:** Comedian and news anchor Trevor Noah discusses trying a taco for the first time. More importantly, look at the misunderstanding that happens in the use of language in the clip. Think about whether you may have had misunderstandings like these with friends from other cultures. *Trevor Noah: That's Racist - Tacos*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDk5ajNDgZc&list=TLPMTEwMTIwMjBTkibtm_xuXQ&index=2
4. **Multimedia:** Biracial actresses from Sister, Sister discuss their marriages. One of the twins is married to an African American man, and the other is married to a white man. Think about your own experience with interracial couples, or even your own experience being part of an interracial couple. How do you react when you hear such things? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngwvHYqYGS0>
5. **Ethnocentrism and Mobility** - Read the article "The Inevitability of Ethnocentrism Revisited: Ethnocentrism Diminishes As Mobility Increases," located at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4672305/>. What does the article say about in-group and out-groups? How does mobility reduce out-group hostility? Does traveling help reduce ethnocentrism?
6. If you would like to develop more understanding of prejudice, see some of the short videos at undertandingprejudice.org at this link: <https://secure.understandingprejudice.org/multimedia/>

References

- Ruiz, Neil, Khadidjah Edwards, and Mark Lopez. Pew Research Center, 21 April 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tan...hem-is-rising/>
- Chung, L. (2019). Crossing boundaries: Cross-cultural communication. In K. D. Keith (Ed.), *Cross-cultural psychology: Contemporary themes and perspectives* (pp. 400-420). Wiley.
- Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond Culture*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books/Doubleday.
- Intercultural Conflict Management*. Butte College, 10 Sept. 2020, <https://socialsci.libretexts.org/@go/page/58206>.

This page titled 2.3: Barriers to Intercultural Communication is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner.

- 4.2: Cross-Cultural Communication by Daniel Usera & contributing authors is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

2.4: Cultural Communication Competence

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate sensitivity in co-cultural communication.
- Explain the meaning and characteristics of intercultural communication competence.

Hofstede, Hall, and Tidwell's insights are particularly helpful in understanding broad cultural differences. However, we are also engaged in intercultural communication when we are communicating with people of a different race, age, and gender than our own. In this section, we will share thoughts on co-cultural communication and explain the characteristics of intercultural communication competence.

Co-Cultural Communication

Hofstede, Hall, and Tidwell's insights are particularly helpful in understanding broad cultural differences. However, we are also engaged in intercultural communication when we are communicating with people of different races, ages, and genders than our own. When you are communicating with what you perceive as a different co-culture than your own, here are some things to keep in mind.

Age or Generational Differences

Age and generational differences show up in family relationships, in the classroom, and in the workplace. For example, teenage children and their parents or grandparents may have differences of opinion about many issues. Remember the “OK, Boomer” phenomenon from 2019? This phrase was used whenever younger people want to ignore or dismiss something a person of an older generation said. Can you think of behaviors or even words that may be demeaning to people of a different generation than your own?

Race

Sometimes individuals don't communicate with people of different races because they haven't experienced such friendships before, and so there is uncertainty. Talk with people from different races backgrounds, and ask about experiences. With people who are of different backgrounds, listen and then believe their experience, and understand privilege. Even things as simple as the emoji for a thumbs up tends to be first in a white skin tone, but brown skin tone emojis exist as well. . Know that bias can creep into conversations, but understand that, apologize for it, and make a commitment to change behaviors.

Gender

Think critically about your own attitudes toward gender roles. Just because a woman takes on more traditionally feminine roles in a relationship doesn't mean it's wrong, unless she doesn't want to do so. Or if a male and female attend a movie together and the male cries but the female doesn't remember self-expression can come in different modes for people.

Differing Abilities

People who have a disability should be addressed as you would address anyone else. If someone appears to have cerebral palsy, uses a wheelchair, and has an attendant with her to help facilitate communication, converse and make eye contact with the person using the wheelchair, not with the attendant. When someone who you perceive to have Down syndrome orders food at a restaurant, ask that person, not others, what he or she wants. Expect people with a disability to be able to function independently until they ask for help. When someone who is blind is walking down the hall, don't grab his or her arm. Rather, if it appears if he needs help, ask him if he needs it. With communicating with a person who is deaf, make lots of eye contact, and feel free to write something down on paper if other ways of communicating aren't working. Sign language interpreters often help in larger-group situations; however, once again, make eye contact and converse with the person who is deaf, not with the interpreter.

Developing Intercultural Communication Competence

The best intercultural communicators are open-minded people who are genuinely interested in other cultures, who take the time to learn about other cultures and co-cultures, and who take the opportunity to engage with and listen to others. **Intercultural communication competence** is a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding, and skills applied that allows us to:

- understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from ourselves,
- interact appropriately, effectively, and respectfully with them,
- establish positive and constructive relationships, and
- understand our own multiple cultural affiliations and how these affiliations may affect our own attitudes and behaviors.

Taking the time to learn about other cultures can improve intercultural competence. Many people begin by asking questions or doing research on a particular culture or co-culture. Food is also a great way to find out about a culture, so consider visiting international restaurants. Find out if an international club exists at your college and, if so, join it. Participating in study abroad programs is yet another way to learn about different cultures.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you have learned about the impact of cultures and co-cultures on our own behavior as well as the behavior of others. We discussed the importance of effective intercultural communication, as well as intercultural communication barriers. Finally, we addressed the meaning of intercultural competence and gave suggestions for competent co-cultural communication.

Ideas for Speeches

Topics for further research.

Intercultural Communication is a rich source of topics for speeches and papers. If you are interested in speaking about a specific culture, here are resources you can use in your research.

- Access the **A to Z World Culture** guide at

<http://www.atozworldculture.com/#mode=country®ionId=7&uri=country-content&nid=20.36&key=country-culture>

Popular travel location etiquette guides and be found at

- [Thailand](#)
- [China](#)
- [Japan](#)
- [Britain](#)
- [India](#)
- [Saudi Arabia](#)

- See the **World's Most Interesting Taboos**: <https://www.wheretraveler.com/play/worlds-most-intriguing-taboos>

Key Term

intercultural communication competence- a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding, and skills applied that allows us to:

- understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from ourselves,
- interact appropriately, effectively, and respectfully with them,
- establish positive and constructive relationships, and
- understand our own multiple cultural affiliations and how these affiliations may affect our own attitudes and behaviors.

Learning Activities

1. Select and watch one of these videos on bridging cultural differences.

https://www.ted.com/playlists/411/bridging_cultural_differences After you select a video, write and submit your answers to the following questions:

- Explain why you selected this video. For example, what about the video drew your attention?
 - What specific culture or co-culture did the speaker in the video represent?
 - What were the most important points that the speaker made or attempted to make in this video? What did you learn, as a result?
 - What is your reaction to this video? In what way might you use this knowledge or understanding you gained?
2. Think of suggestions you might add to those for Co-Cultural Communication section. Was a co-culture that has been left out that you think should be added? Explain.

3. **American Dream Quiz:** A recent quiz was created about "privilege" to determine how many roadblocks people have encountered on their search for the American Dream. Do the quiz, located at <https://movingupusa.com/calc/>. What was your score, and were you surprised? How many of the things that you consider roadblocks have been within your control?
4. Teen Vogue asks six women about Halloween costumes that co-opt their cultures. See their answers and views on cultural appropriation here: <https://youtu.be/d6Y5cARFJw8>
5. Complete the Intercultural Activity in 2.5.

References

- Karasawa, M., Curhan, K. B., Markus, H. R., Kitayama, S. S., Love, G. D., Radler, B. T. & Ruff, C. D. (2011). Cultural perspectives on aging and well-being: A comparison of Japan and the U.S. *Int J Aging Hum Dev.* 73(1): Pp. 73–98.
- Rockson, T. (2019). *Use your difference to make a difference: How to connect and communicate in a cross-cultural world.* Wiley.
- Tidwell, Charles, PhD. Dean Emeritus. Notes are from BSAD560, Intercultural Business Relations, a graduate course offered as an elective in the MBA program at Andrews University. Andrews University.
- Working with cross-cultural couples: Unexplored issues in therapy [Video file]. (2018). Retrieved February 8, 2020, from <https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlayl...55&xtid=183978>

This page titled [2.4: Cultural Communication Competence](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [4.2: Cross-Cultural Communication](#) by [Daniel Usera & contributing authors](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).

2.5: Intercultural Communication Activity and Review

Test Your Intercultural Communication Competence

Take the intercultural communication competence quiz found at <https://www.londonschool.com/lsc/resources/intercultural-quiz/>. Continue taking the quiz until you score 20 out of 20, then take a picture or screenshot of your results. Submit your results to the instructor along with answers to these questions.

1. How many times did you take the test before earning a perfect score?
2. What answer or answers surprised you or do you find particularly interesting?
3. Based on this quiz alone, if you were given the assignment to research another country and its culture, which country would you choose and why?

Chapter Vocabulary and Review Questions

Vocabulary

- co-culture
- culture
- culture shock
- discrimination
- egocentric
- ethnocentrism
- intercultural communication
- provisional communicator (Provisionalism)
- prejudice
- stereotyping
- racial discrimination

? Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Using the following categories as guides, identify co-cultures that form an important part of your worldview. For example, for age, are you Generation X? For a hobby, are you a runner or a gamer? It's possible you don't identify with all these categories.
 - Age group or generation _____
 - Race _____
 - Language or dialect _____
 - Religion _____
 - Hobby _____
 - Other: _____
2. Have you ever experienced culture shock after moving to a new country, city, community, or school? Explain what you experienced.
3. List 5 barriers to effective intercultural communication.
4. True or False. Culture does not change; it stays the same.
5. Have you ever felt that you were stereotyped because of your membership in a specific culture or co-culture? Explain.
6. What are some forms of discrimination other than racial discrimination? Have you ever experienced or witnessed what you thought was discrimination? Explain.
7. Have you ever perceived that you were discriminated against because of your culture or co-culture? Have you ever witnessed what you thought was discrimination?

8. As a way of helping us understand broad cultural differences, Hofstede created a model explaining the six dimensions of culture. In this question, you are to relate each dimension of culture to your own culture by choosing which characteristic in each pair best describes you and your values. (You may find it helpful to look back at the full description in the chapter.) For example, for 8.a., I recognize that I mostly identify with Low Power Distance. For 8. b., I recognize that I value Individualism. For a couple of these, it is possible to see yourself as being somewhere in between the two extremes.

- **High Power Distance** cultures are unlikely to challenge authority; they accept that others will be in charge, believe whoever is in power deserves it, and always show respect toward authority figures. **Low Power Distance** Cultures believe success may be from wealth or luck and, while they may respect those in power, believe in the right to challenge authority.
 - Which of these, High Power Distance or Low Power Distance, better reflects you and your cultural beliefs? _____
- **Individualism** (I make decisions with my immediate family and I'm in mind.) Vs. **Collectivism** (I consider the extended family, the community, and others; we all take care of one another).
 - Which of these, Individualism or Collectivism, better reflects you or your cultural beliefs? _____
- **Long-Term Orientation** (Plan and save for the future) Vs. **Short Term Orientation** (Take care of things as they arise. Take out credit and worry about debt later).
 - Which of these two reflects your beliefs or cultural values? _____
- **High Uncertainty Avoidance** (Resist change; laws and cultural practices remain rigid, sometimes for hundreds of years) vs. **Low Certainty Avoidance** (innovation and change are admired; laws and cultural practices may change over time)
 - Which of these best reflects your cultural beliefs or values? _____
- **Masculinity** (Competition, getting ahead, winning) vs. **Femininity** (Nurturing, seeing that everyone is treated equally)
 - Which of these describes your cultural beliefs or values? _____
- **Indulgence** (Not too many "rules," tolerance for difference) vs. Restraint (rigid rules of behavior, dress).
 - Which of these best describes your cultural beliefs or values? _____

Later, Edward Hall added more important cultural dimensions. Again, choose the characteristic in each pair that more closely describes you and your cultural values.

- **High Context** (People are direct in their verbal communication and say what they mean, stating "yes" or "no" directly) vs. **Low Context** - (These cultures rely on nonverbal cues to indirectly communicate. Nonverbal is extremely important; Yes, may mean no, maybe, or yes. Being too direct is rude.)
- Which of these two better reflects your cultural beliefs or values? _____
- **Monochronic** ("time is money": don't waste time; schedules are important; being on time is important) Vs. **Polychronic** (Relaxed attitudes about time, schedules, and punctuality.)
- Which of these describes your cultural beliefs or values? _____

Reference

The London School of International Communication. "Test Your Intercultural Competence." <https://www.londonschool.com/lsc/re...cultural-quiz/>. 2021.

This page titled [2.5: Intercultural Communication Activity and Review](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Verbal Elements of Communication

Have you ever turned in a paper that you thought was excellent only to find that your instructor questioned or even marked through many of the words you used? Or perhaps you said something in a conversation that you thought was harmless only to learn later that you unintentionally offended your listener? If so, you are not alone. Some of the most common problems in communication stem from the use of words.

Verbal Communication means communication through words or language. You might find it helpful to think of verbal communication as *what* we say, whereas nonverbal communication, discussed in another chapter, is *how* we say what we say.

Words are arbitrary symbols used to represent objects, ideas, or feelings. **Language**, on the other hand, is a system of human communication using a particular form of spoken or written words or other symbols. Language consists of the use of words in a structured way.

Words and language help us understand others' wants, needs, and desires. They help us build emotional connections that are vital to all human beings. But used thoughtlessly, they can create conflict and hurt. In this chapter, you will learn about how words work, different types of words, and how to improve verbal communication.

[3.1: How Words Work](#)

[3.2: Types of Language](#)

[3.3: Formal and Informal Language](#)

[3.4: Improving Verbal Communication](#)

[3.5: Review](#)

This page titled [3: Verbal Elements of Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

3.1: How Words Work

Learning Outcomes

1. Discover 3 different rules that govern the use of words and language.
2. Determine the level of abstraction of a word
3. Illustrate your ability to move from abstract to concrete terms.

One person might call a shopping cart a buggy, and another person might call it a cart. There are several ways to refer to a carbonated beverage, such as “soda,” “Coke,” “pop,” “soft drink,” or simply “drink.” A pacifier for a baby is sometimes called a “paci,” “binkie,” “sookie,” or “mute button.” These examples illustrate that meanings are in people, not in words, and different people -- depending on their background -- may use different words to represent the same object.

Words and Meaning

Fortunately, rules exist that govern the use of words and language. These rules help us communicate clearly and understand the meaning. Three types of rules are particularly important: semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic.

Semantic Rules

Semantic rules are the dictionary meaning of the word. Although we have dictionary definitions to guide us, it is important to remember that many words in the English language have multiple definitions, and the meaning can change based on the context in which the word is used. For instance, the word **fly** by itself does not mean anything. It makes more sense if we put the word into a context by saying things like, “There is a fly on the wall;” “I will fly to Dallas tomorrow;” “That girl is so fly;” or “The fly on your pants is open!” We would not be able to communicate with others if we did not have semantic rules. Think of the word “pass.” How many definitions can you think of for that one word?

Since many words have multiple meanings, a speaker should select words carefully and, if necessary, define words or use visual aids to clarify meaning. A careful listener will comprehend that many words have multiple meanings and will consider the context of the communication and ask questions for clarification if needed.

Syntactic Rules

Syntactic rules govern how we help guide the words we use. Syntactic rules can refer to the use of grammar, structure, and punctuation to help effectively convey our ideas. For instance, we can say “Where are you” as opposed to “where you are,” which can convey a different meaning and have different perceptions. The same thing can happen when you don’t place a comma in the right place. The comma can make a big difference in how people understand a message.

You may be familiar with the Star Wars character, Yoda, who often speaks with different rules. He has said, “Named must be your fear before banish it you can” and “Happens to every guy sometimes this does.” This example is a good reminder that syntactic rules can vary based on culture or background.

Another example is Figure 3.1.1. In this case, we learn the importance that a comma can make in written language. In the first instance, “Let’s eat grandma!” is quite different than the second one, “Let’s eat, grandma!” The first implies cannibalism and the second is a family dinner. As the image says, punctuation saves lives.

It is important to understand and correctly apply rules governing punctuation, sentence structure, and grammar. Failure to follow syntactic rules interferes with your ability to communicate effectively and professionally.



Figure 3.1.1: Commas Matter

Pragmatic Rules

Pragmatic rules help us interpret messages by analyzing the context of the interaction. We need to consider the words used, how they are stated, our relationship with the speaker, and the objectives of our communication. For instance, the words “I want to see you now” would mean different things if the speaker was your boss versus your lover. One could be a positive connotation, and another might be a negative one. The same holds true for humor. If we know that the other person understands and appreciates sarcasm, we might be more likely to engage in that behavior and perceive it differently from someone who takes every word literally. If we aren’t sure the person we are communicating with would appreciate our sarcastic humor and might take our joking literally, it is best to avoid sarcasm.

Most pragmatic rules are based on culture and experience. An example would be “Want to have a drink?”, which usually implies an alcoholic beverage, whereas “Would you like something to drink?” does not imply that the drink has to contain alcohol.

It is common for people to text in capital letters when they are angry or excited. For instance, “I love you” might be perceived differently from “I LOVE YOU!!!” Thus, when communicating with others, you should also realize that pragmatic rules can impact the message.

It is important to analyze the context of the communication when you are attempting to understand the meaning of a message. It is also important to be sensitive to communicators from other cultures who may are not familiar with some of the pragmatic rules of the English language.

Level of Abstraction

Abstract words refer to intangible qualities, ideas, and concepts. These words indicate things we know only through our intellect, like “truth,” “honor,” “kindness,” and “grace.” **Concrete** words, on the other hand, are words that refer to tangible, qualities or characteristics, things we know through our senses. Words and phrases like “102 degrees,” “obese Siamese cat,” and “deep spruce green” are concrete and paint a clearer, more vivid picture for your receiver.

In 1941, linguist S.I. Hayakawa created what is called the **abstraction ladder** (Figure 3.1.2). The abstraction ladder starts with the most abstract or general term at the top, with each rung on the ladder becoming more and more specific, down to the most specific term (interpersonal communication). You can see that as we move down the ladder, the topic becomes more fine-tuned and meaningful.

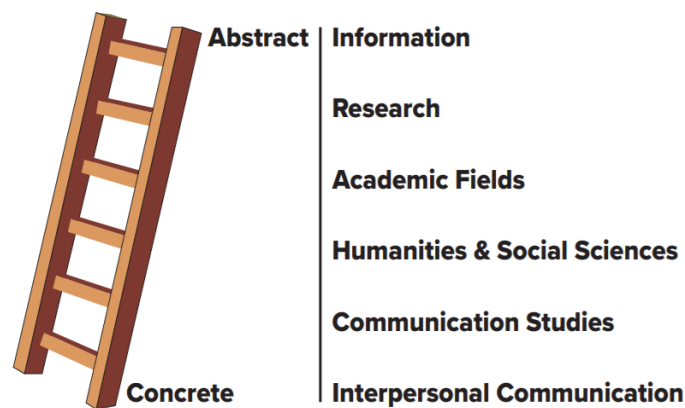


Figure 3.1.2: Abstraction Ladder

In our daily lives, we tend to use high levels of abstraction all the time. It takes too long to say something, so people tend to be abstract. However, abstractions can create confusion. Strive to use concrete, specific language that is more likely to be understood than general, abstract terms.

Words and Meanings

Words can have denotative and connotative meanings. The **denotative** meaning is the dictionary definition of a word. Denotative words are precise and do not imply an emotional association. If you are new to the English language and asked an American acquaintance what a car or a phone is, you would likely be asking for the denotative meaning of those words. Words can have a **connotative** meaning, which is a subjective definition or an emotional association with the word. Beth Parent explains that connotative meaning goes beyond the dictionary definition of the word to what is suggested or implied. Depending on how a word has been used over time, or the context in which it is being used, the term may have a positive, negative, or neutral connotation.

Consider the words group, clique, club, and gang. All four have basically the same denotative meaning: a gathering of people. Each of these words has a different connotative meaning, however.

- **Group** has a neutral connotation. The word simply describes a cluster or gathering. It does not inspire either positive or negative feelings.
- **Clique** also means a group of people, but it carries a negative connotation. This is because "clique" is typically used in circumstances where the group is known for excluding others.
- **Gang** is defined as an organized group, but it has very negative connotations. The use of this term suggests criminal activity and/or violent behavior.
- **Club** also refers to a group of people, but this word has a more positive connotation because a club is a collection of people that voluntarily come together for a shared passion or purpose

When choosing words to use in writing or conversation, it's important to consider both types of meaning. At times, such as during a persuasive speech, connotative words can be very helpful. However, if you aren't fully aware of the connotation of a word you use in speaking or writing, you may choose a word that leads to confusion or even to your receiver taking offense.

Key Takeaways

- Rules that govern language are important because they help us understand others and help others understand us.
- Words have denotative and connotative meanings. Denotations are the dictionary definition, and connotations are what the words imply.
- Sometimes confusion occurs because people are too abstract in their language. To be clear and concise in language, you need to be descriptive and specific as possible.

Exercises

1. For each of the sentences below, determine if the bold word has a positive or negative connotation. (Adapted from Parent, Beth. [Yourdictionary.com](http://yourdictionary.com))
 - How long have you been dieting? Maybe too long. You look so **skinny**.
 - I can tell you put a lot of work into your paper. It is **extraordinary**.

- I hope to look like my sister when I grow up. She is **gorgeous**.
- I know that Eddie and I are the same age, but he is just so **juvenile**.
- It's certainly **unusual** to use Comic Sans font on a resume.

2. First, work alone. For each word on the list write down the percentage of certainty from 0-100% you would feel if you were to use the word in a sentence. For example, if I were to use the word “Probably,” I might mean there is a 90% chance that something will take place. What level of certainty does the word represent in your mind? After you have completed your list, compare your results with members of your class. What does this exercise teach you about words and their meanings? (Adapted from Hamilton, Cheryl with Cordell Parker. *Communicating for Results: A Guide for Business and Professions*, 4th ed. Wadsworth, 1989.)

	<u>Word</u>	<u>Percentage of Certainty</u>
1.	Probably	_____
2.	Possibly	_____
3.	Maybe	_____
4.	Definitely	_____
5.	Certainly	_____
6.	Unlikely	_____

This page titled [3.1: How Words Work](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- **4.1: How Words Work** by Jason S. Wrench, Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter & Katherine S. Thweatt is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Original source: <https://milnepublishing.geneseo.edu/interpersonalcommunication>.

3.2: Types of Language

Learning Outcomes

1. Understand how naming and identity can influence perceptions.
2. Comprehend how language can impact affiliation with others.
3. Identify the difference between sexist and racist language.

By now, you can know some of the rules that govern language and word choice. In this section, we will understand some of the ways that words can impact us or even reveal aspects of our personal identity. This section will look at names, how we use language to express affiliation, and ways in which the words we use can express bias. To be effective communicators, we need to realize the different ways that language can be significant and instrumental.

Names and Identity

New parents typically spend a great deal of time trying to pick just the right name for their newborn because they know that names can impact other people's perceptions. Our names impact how we feel and how we behave. Our names sometimes may even impact how we are treated and possibly even how we view ourselves. For instance, if you heard that someone was named Stacy, you might think that person was female, nice, and friendly, and you would be surprised if that person turned out to be male, mean, and aggressive.

People with unusual names tend to have more emotional distress than those with common names. Names impact our identity because others will typically have negative perceptions of unusual names or unique spellings of names. Names can change over time and can gain acceptance. For instance, the name Madison was not even considered a female first name until the movie *Splash* in the 1980s.

Some names are very distinctive, which also makes them memorable and recognizable. Think about musical artists or celebrities with unique names. It helps you remember them, and it helps you distinguish that person from others.

Some of the names encompass some cultural or ethnic identity. In the popular book, *Freakonomics*, the authors showed a relationship between names and socioeconomic status. They discover that a popular name usually starts with high socioeconomic families, and then it becomes popular with lower socioeconomic families. Hence, it is very conceivable to determine the socioeconomic status of people you associate with based on their birth date and name. Figure 3.2.1 shows some of the more popular baby names for girls and boys, along with names that are non-binary.



Figure 3.2.1: Popular Baby Names

Affiliation

When we want others to associate with us or have an **affiliation** with us, we might change the way we speak and the words we use. All of those things can impact how other people relate to us. Researchers found that when potential romantic partners employed the same word choices regarding pronouns and prepositions, then interest also increased. At the same time, couples that used similar word choices when texting each other significantly increased their relationship duration. This study implies that we often inadvertently mimic other people's use of language when we focus on what they say.

If you have been in a romantic relationship for a long period, you might create special expressions or jargon for the other person, and that specialized vocabulary can create greater closeness and understanding. The same line of thinking occurs for groups in a gang or persons in the military. If we adapt to the other person's communication style or **converge**, then we can also impact perceptions of affiliation. Research has shown that people who have similar speech also have more positive feelings for each other. However, speech can also work in the opposite direction when we **diverge**, or when we communicate in a very different fashion. For instance, a group from another culture might speak the same dialect, even though they can speak English, in order to create distance and privacy from others.

Language to Avoid

Most of the language we have discussed so far can be used as long as it suits the audience and communication context. However, biased language is always inappropriate. **Biased language** refers to words that are offensive because they demean others. This type of language usually expresses an unfair or stereotypical attitude toward a person's race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, disability, or illness. Sometimes biased language goes beyond being demeaning or hurtful; it may even lead to violence.

Sexist language can be defined as "words, phrases, and expressions that unnecessarily differentiate between females and males or exclude, trivialize, or diminish either sex." Think about how language has changed over the years. We used to have occupations that were highly male-dominated, and the words we used to describe them indicated this. For instance, policemen, firemen, and chairmen are now police officers, firefighters, and chairpersons. The same can also be said for some formerly female-dominated occupations. For instance, stewardess, secretary, and waitress have been changed to flight attendant, office assistant, and server.

Racist language conveys a bias toward a racial group, often implying that one racial group is superior to another race.

In "Unbiased Language: Quick Guide to Bias-Free Writing," Michelle Meleen explains that "using unbiased language is challenging because it requires an understanding of what constitutes biased language in the first place." To remove biased language from your vocabulary, she advises the following steps:

- **know your own biases** - self-reflect to see what exclusive language is part of your everyday speech; understand what prejudices you might have against certain groups
- **focus on what's relevant** - in writing or speaking, only include information and details about things like race or age when necessary
- **recognize and acknowledge differences** - the purpose of bias-free language is not to imply differences don't exist, but to treat them professionally and respectfully
- **think small** - be as specific as possible rather than lumping people into broad categories
- **avoid labels** - some common labels are offensive while others are preferred by the individuals or group you're describing; be aware of modern terminology accepted by those individuals or that group
- **when in doubt, ask** - check organization websites or consult with a representative from the population you are describing; get a second opinion before publishing or turning in work that may read as biased

Communicators who use unbiased language speak or write in ways that are free from gender or group stereotypes. Meleen provides many examples of how you can change biased terminology into unbiased terminology at (<https://grammar.yourdictionary.com/style-and-usage/unbiased-language.html>).

You may remember when there was a debate in the United States about whether former President Trump's use of the phrase "Chinese Virus" when referring to the coronavirus was racially insensitive. The argument for its racial insensitivity was that the President used the term as an "other" technique to allow his followers to place blame on Chinese people for the coronavirus. Partly as a result of the use of the phrase "Chinese Virus," there were numerous violent attacks against individuals of Asian descent within the United States. The people that are generally inflamed by this type of rhetoric generally don't take the time to distinguish among people they label as "other." This is just one example of the power of language and the need to choose words carefully. For guidance on replacing sexist or biased language with inclusive terms, examine the table below.

Figure 3.2.2: Replacing Sexist or Biased Language with Inclusive Terms

Sexist or Biased Language	Inclusive Term
Businessman	business owner, business executive, or business person
cancer victim; AIDS victim	cancer patient; a person living with AIDS
chairman	chairperson or chair
confined to a wheelchair	uses a wheelchair
congressman	congressperson
Eskimo	Inuit or Aleut
fireman	firefighters
freshman	first-year student
Indian (when referring to U.S. indigenous peoples)	Native American or specific tribe
policeman	police officer
man or mankind	people, humanity, or the human race
man-hours	working hours
man-made	manufactured, machine-made, or synthetic
manpower	personnel or workforce
illegal alien	immigrant
old people or elderly	older adults
Oriental	Asian, Asian American, or the specific country of origin
postman or mailman	postal worker or mail carrier
steward or stewardess	flight attendant
suffers from diabetes	has diabetes; a person living with diabetes

Key Takeaways

- Our name can affect how we feel about ourselves and even how we are treated.
- We can increase affiliation with others through converging our language to others. We can decrease affiliation with others through diverging our language with others.
- Sexism and racism can be displayed through our language choices. It is important to be aware of the words we use so that we do not come across as sexist or racist.

Learning Activities

- If you are not certain of the origin of your own name, research it. Why did your parents choose your given name? Do you like your name? Why or why not? What is the meaning or derivation of your surname? Does your surname come from your father, mother, or another relative? If you are from a country other than the United States, do your naming traditions vary from those in the United States? Explain. Would you pass any part of your name on to your child? Why or why not?
- Engage in a normal conversation with a friend or family member. Without having them know what you are doing, slowly and subtly converge your communication style to theirs. Record your observations. Then, with the same person, try to diverge your communication style. Re-record your observations. Ask if the person noticed any communication changes. How did it make them feel? How did you feel? Why?

This page titled [3.2: Types of Language](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- **4.3: Types of Language** by Jason S. Wrench, Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter & Katherine S. Thweatt is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Original source: <https://milnepublishing.geneseo.edu/interpersonalcommunication>.

3.3: Formal and Informal Language

Learning Outcomes

1. Differentiate between informal and formal language.
2. Determine the different types of informal language.
3. Understand improper language and biased language.

Competent communicators adapt their words to their audience and the communication context. For example, in a text to your best friend, you are going to use more casual words and grammar than in a paper you turn in to your English professor. One of these contexts calls for formal language whereas informal language is fine for the other.

Formal vs. Informal Language

Formal language is official and academic language. You should use formal language in papers, written discussions, tests, research papers, resumes, and cover letters.

Figure 3.3.1: Formal vs. Informal Language

Formal Language	Informal Language
Used in carefully edited communication.	Used in impromptu, conversational communication.
Used in academic or official content.	Used in everyday communication.
The sentence structure is longer and more complicated.	The sentence structure is short, choppy, and improvised.
The emphasis is on grammatical correctness.	The emphasis is on easily understood messages using everyday phrases.
Speakers/writers may avoid the use of contractions.	Speakers/writers actively include contractions.
Avoid the inclusion of emotionally laden ideas and words.	It allows for the inclusion of emotions and empathy.
Language should be objective.	Language can be subjective.
Language should avoid the use of colloquialisms.	It's perfectly appropriate to use colloquialisms.
Only use an acronym (CEO) after it has clearly been explained or spelled out once.	People use acronyms without always clearly spelling out what it means.
All sentences should be complete (clear subjects and verbs).	Sentences may be incomplete (lacking a clear subject and/or verb).
Arguments are supported by facts and documented research.	Arguments are supported by personal beliefs and opinions.
Language is gender-neutral.	Language includes gender references.

Informal Language

Informal language is a common, everyday language, which might include slang words. It is casual and continually changing. We use informal language when we talk to others, and when you look at your text messages, you will probably see several examples of informal language.

Jargon

Jargon is the specialized or technical language of a specific group or profession that may not be understood by outsiders. If you are really into cars or computers, you probably know a lot about the different parts and functions as well as terms or jargon that a general audience wouldn't understand. Jargon is usually appropriate when communicating with others in your profession or group but should be avoided unless you are certain the people you are speaking to are familiar with the terms. *Your Dictionary.com* provides a list of commonly heard jargon phrases used in the business world. (<https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-jargon-in-the-workplace.html>).

- Blue-sky thinking - A creative idea that doesn't always have a practical application
- Think outside the box - Don't limit your thinking; use your creativity
- The helicopter view - An overview of a job or a project

- Drink our own champagne - A phrase meaning that a business will use the same product that they sell to their customers. The champagne is an indicator of a good product.
- Heavy lifting - The most difficult aspects of a project, as in, "Bill is doing all the heavy lifting for us!"
- Hammer it out - To type something up
- Win-win situation - A solution where all parties are satisfied with the results

Chances are you have heard a few of these jargon phrases, but others may be new to you. Take a minute and think through all of the jargon you hear on an average day.

Colloquialisms

What do you call a carbonated beverage? Is it a soda, soft drink, a Coke, or a pop? The colloquialism you use is most likely determined by where you grew up. **Colloquialisms** are informal words that vary from region to region. Examples might be “wanna” instead of “want to” or “gonna” instead of “going to.”

How many of these colloquialisms do you use?

- Ballpark - used to describe something that is close to accurate
- Bomb - to do terribly on a test
- Flake - a person who cancels plans regularly or the act of regularly canceling plans
- Raincheck - a promise to reschedule plans that had to be canceled
- Ride shotgun - to sit in the front passenger seat of a car
- Go bananas, or go nuts – go insane or be very angry
- Pop into my head – to have a new thought
- Wanna – want to
- Y’all – you all
- Yinz – you all

Slang

Slang refers to informal words that are used within certain groups, such as young adults and teens. You most certainly use different slang expressions than your parents or grandparents. Slang is often used in conversations with those who are similar and have experience with each other and should be avoided in academic and professional writing (including emails), speeches and presentations, and even in class and group discussions (unless you are absolutely certain everyone else uses the same slang as you).

How many of these slang expressions do you use?

- Bye Felicia (saying goodbye to someone you don’t like)
- The Tea (gossip)
- Bro (typically a male friend)
- Cash (money)
- Cheesy (cheap or tacky)
- Ship (wanting people to be in a relationship, whether real or fictional)
- Frenemy (someone who is both a friend and an enemy)
- Thirsty (being overly eager or desperate)
- Throw Shade (to insult another person)
- YOLO (you only live once)
- Woke (being acutely aware of social injustice within society)

What is common slang today could be completely outdated tomorrow? Dominic-Madori Davis gives examples of slang expressions from Gen. Z (people born 1997 ---) along with their Baby Boomer (people born 1946 – 1964) equivalent.

Gen Z: That movie was **fire**; you have to check it out.

Baby Boomer: I liked that movie; it was **groovy**.

Gen Z: You really look **salty** right now. What happened?

Baby Boomer: You really look **hacked off**. What happened?

Gen Z: Their dress at prom was a **lewk**.

Baby Boomer: Yeah, they were all **decked out**.

Idioms

Idioms are expressions or figures of speech that are used in everyday speech that has been given meaning over time because of common usage. Idioms can be especially hard to grasp for new residents or citizens because the actual words in the idiom have

very little relationship to the overall meaning of the phrase. Do you know the meaning of the following idioms?

- Stir up a hornet's nest
- Bite off more than you can chew
- Under the weather
- Sat on a fence
- The ball is in your court

Clichés

A **cliché** is a once-clever word or phrase that has lost its impact through overuse. If you spoke or wrote in clichés, how would others react? Let's try it. How do you react when you read this sentence: "A cliché is something to avoid like the plague, for it is nothing but a tired old warhorse, and if the shoe were on the other foot, you too would have an ax to grind"? As you can see, the problem with clichés is that they often sound silly or boring. Clichés are sometimes seen as a symptom of lazy communication—the person using the cliché hasn't bothered to search for original words to convey the intended meaning. As a result, they can be obstacles to successful communication. Avoid clichés in academic or professional writing and speeches.

Textspeak

Textspeak is the language and spelling that people use when they are writing text messages. Textspeak is fine in your personal life but is inappropriate for academic assessments and most communication in the workplace. Most students realize that textspeak is inappropriate in essays and research papers, but the words and grammar still show up where they shouldn't, such as emails between students and instructors, or on classroom discussion boards. Although emails and discussion boards are less formal than research papers, they still should be written with care and consideration for the reader. It is important to use capital letters when called for and to use punctuation appropriately, important details that are often omitted in textspeak.

Mindfulness Activity



For an entire day, take a minute to pause before you text or email someone. When we text or email someone, we typically just put our thoughts together in a quick fashion. Take a second to decide how you plan to use your words. Think about which words would be best to get our message across effectively. After you have typed your message, take another few minutes to reread the message. Be mindful of how others might interpret it. Would they understand what you intend to communicate, or is it possible they might misinterpret your message? What can you do to make certain your message is conveyed accurately?

Researchers have found that when college students can address their emotions and are mindful of their feelings, it can enhance written communication with others.³¹ After doing this activity, try to be more mindful of the things that you send to other people.

Key Takeaways

- Formal language is more careful and more mannered than everyday speech, whereas informal language is appropriate in casual conversation.
- Informal language includes (1) Jargon, or technical language; (2) Colloquialism, or informal expressions; (3) Slang, or nonstandard language; (4) Idioms, or expressions or figures of speech; (5) clichés, or sayings that are overused and predictable.

Exercises

- Create a list of jargon or slang words that you use and what they mean. Ask your parents or grandparents to share some of the slang they grew up hearing. Compare your lists.
- Create a list of colloquialisms or idioms. Find an international student and see if these words make sense. What was confusing or unclear?
- Ask an international friend or classmate to share clichés that are used in his or her culture, or locate clichés through research. See if you can find an American equivalent of each cliché.

This page titled [3.3: Formal and Informal Language](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- **4.4: Improving Verbal Communication** by Jason S. Wrench, Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter & Katherine S. Thweatt is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Original source: <https://milnepublishing.geneseo.edu/interpersonalcommunication>.

3.4: Improving Verbal Communication

Learning Outcomes

1. Examine ways to improve your verbal communication
2. Realize the importance of checking for understanding.

In this chapter, you have learned about several aspects of verbal communication. To be a successful communicator, it is extremely important that you also know how to use words in the most effective way. In this segment, we will examine ways we can improve our verbal communication.

The words we use and the grammatical structure of how we use those words can impact our communication success in school, work, and our personal lives. Here are some tips to help you improve your verbal skills.

Choose Words Appropriate for Your Audience and the Communication Context

Your word choice should be determined by the audience you are communicating with and the communication context. Choose words that will have meaning to your listeners and that are appropriate for the situation. For example, using profanity in a classroom discussion might be understood by your listeners, but would be inappropriate for the setting. Using “textspeak” on a class discussion board or an email to your instructor would be inadvisable because textspeak is too informal. Be aware that many words may have both denotative and connotative meanings, and that you need to choose and use words consciously and strategically. Always avoid biased language, which is inappropriate for all contexts.

Define Unfamiliar Terms

Even when you are careful to craft your message clearly and concisely, some of your receivers may not understand every word you say or write. As a conscientious communicator, you know it is your responsibility to give listeners every advantage in understanding your meaning. Yet your presentation would fall flat if you tried to define each and every term—you would end up sounding like a dictionary! The solution is to be aware of any words you are using that may not be familiar to your receiver, and provide clues to meaning in the process of making and supporting your points. Give examples to illustrate each concept. Use parallels from everyday life. Rephrase unfamiliar terms in different words.

Choose Specific, Concrete Words

Think back to the ladder of abstraction discussed earlier in the chapter, and choose specific, concrete words that paint as vivid and accurate a mental picture as possible for your listeners. If you use language that is vague or abstract, your meaning may be lost or misinterpreted. Your paper or presentation will also be less dynamic and interesting than it could be.

- **Abstract:** Clumber spaniels are big dogs.
 - **Concrete:** The Clumber Spaniel Club of America describes the breed as a “long, low, substantial dog,” standing 17 to 20 inches high and weighing 55 to 80 pounds.
-
- **Abstract:** It is important to eat a healthy diet during pregnancy.
 - **Concrete:** Eating a diet rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables, lean meats, low-fat dairy products can improve your health during pregnancy and boost your chances of having a healthy baby.

Check for Understanding

Check to see that your message is understood. If you are giving a speech or are engaged in conversation, one way to do this is to stay alert to nonverbal feedback. If your listeners are frowning or otherwise indicating confusion, it is important to check for understanding. Even if listeners are smiling and nodding at you when you talk, this does not necessarily mean that they comprehend. Let's say you are training a new employee for an important job responsibility. Even though the employee might be nodding and smiling, it is still a good idea to ask questions to evaluate understanding. But instead of asking a question like "Did you understand everything?" it would be more beneficial to say, "Let's go back through this so I can make sure I explained this clearly. What did you understand me to say?"

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we discussed the definition of verbal communication and the various rules that govern language. To be an effective verbal communicator, it is important to understand that many words have both denotative and connotative meanings. Some words, such as slang, jargon, idioms, and colloquialisms, should be avoided in academic writing or speeches because they are too informal and are likely to be confusing to some audience members. However, no matter how carefully you choose your words, the meaning of words can vary from person to person. ("Meanings are in people, not words.")

The words you use can impact how others will see you and perhaps how they see one another. It is important to use language ethically. Always avoid biased wording that stereotypes and demeans others.

Finally, this chapter discusses ways of improving verbal communication to increase the likelihood that our messages will create the desired effect on our listener or reader.

This page titled [3.4: Improving Verbal Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [4.5: Improving Verbal Communication](#) has no license indicated.

3.5: Review

Chapter 3: Vocabulary and Questions for Review and Discussion

Vocabulary

- Abstract
- Affiliation: Converge and Diverge
- Biased Language
- Cliché
- Colloquialism
- Concrete
- Connotation
- Denotation
- Formal Language
- Idiom
- Informal Language
- Jargon
- Language
- Personal Function
- Pragmatic Rules
- Racist Language
- Semantic Rules
- Sexist Language
- Slang
- Syntactic Rules
- Word
- Verbal Communication

? Questions for Review and Discussion

1. For each of the sentences below, determine if the bold word has a positive or negative connotation. (Adapted from Parent, Beth. [Yourdictionary.com](https://www.yourdictionary.com) (opens in new window))
 - How long have you been dieting? Maybe, too long. You look so **skinny**.
 - I can tell you put a lot of work into your paper. It is **extraordinary**.
 - I hope to look like my sister when I grow up. She is **gorgeous**.
 - I know that Eddie and I are the same age, but he is just so **juvenile**.
 - It's certainly **unusual** to use Comic Sans font on a resume.
2. **Each word below is taken from a list of the most commonly-used business terms. But what does each word mean?** Instructions: First, work alone. For each word on the list, write down the percentage of certainty from 0-100% you would feel if you were to use the word in a sentence. For example, if I were to use the word "Probably," I might mean there is a 90% chance that something will take place. What level of certainty does the word represent in your mind? After you have completed your list, compare your results with members of your class. What does this exercise teach you about words and their meanings? (Adapted from Hamilton, Cheryl with Cordell Parker. *Communicating for Results: A Guide for Business and Professions*, 4th ed. Wadsworth, 1989.)

Figure out the percentage of certainty of these words.

Word	Percentage of Certainty
Probably	_____ %
Possibly	_____ %
Maybe	_____ %

Word	Percentage of Certainty
Certainly	_____ %
Unlikely	_____ %

3. Create a list of colloquialisms or idioms. Find an international student and see if these words make sense. What was confusing or unclear?
4. Ask an international friend or classmate to share clichés that are used in his or her culture or locate clichés through research. See if you can find an American equivalent of each cliché.
5. Create a list of jargon or slang words that you use and what they mean. Ask your parents or grandparents to share some of the slang they grew up hearing. Compare your lists.

3.5: Review is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Nonverbal Elements of Communication

You may have heard sayings such as "actions speak louder than words" or "what you see is what you get" or "it's not what he said, it's HOW he said it." All of these phrases remind us of the importance of nonverbal communication, the focus of this chapter.

- [4.1: Nonverbal Communication- A Definition](#)
- [4.2: Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication](#)
- [4.3: Types of Nonverbal Communication](#)
- [4.4: Functions of Nonverbal Communication](#)
- [4.5: Interpreting Nonverbal Communication](#)
- [4.6: Review](#)

This page titled [4: Nonverbal Elements of Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

4.1: Nonverbal Communication- A Definition

What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Learning Objectives

- Define nonverbal communication.
- Explain why humans continue to use nonverbal communication, even after they learn to speak.
- Understand different types of nonverbal communication.
- Understand that use of voice is also considered nonverbal communication.

Your brother comes home from school and walks through the door. Without saying a word, he walks to the refrigerator, gets a drink, and turns to head for the couch in the family room. Once there, he plops down, stares straight ahead, and sighs. You notice that he sits there in silence for the next few minutes. At this time, he never speaks a word. Is he communicating? If your answer is yes, how would you interpret his actions? How do you think he is feeling? What types of nonverbal communication was your brother using? Like verbal communication, nonverbal communication is essential in our everyday interactions. While nonverbal and verbal communications have many similar functions, nonverbal communication has its own set of functions for helping us communicate with each other. Before we get into the types and functions of nonverbal communication, let's examine what is meant by *nonverbal communication*.

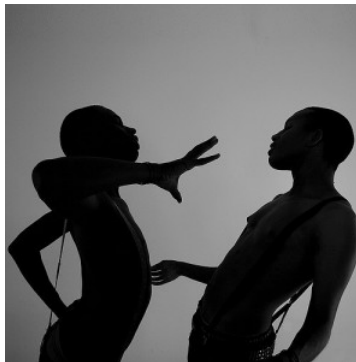


Figure 4.1.1: Image of two silhouettes. (CC BY-NC-ND; joel zobel via <https://flic.kr/p/528J1n>)

What is Nonverbal Communication?

Nonverbal communication can be defined as communication without words. It includes readily-observable behaviors such as facial expressions, eye contact, touching, and tone of voice, as well as less obvious messages such as dress, posture, and the spatial difference between two or more people. Everything communicates, including material objects physical space, and the way we use time. Although verbal communication can be turned off, nonverbal communication cannot. **Even silence speaks.**

Dr. Tricia Jones writes in "Nonverbal Communication for Educators" (Creducation.org) that nonverbal communication skills are developed at a very young age. "Young children know far more than they can verbalize and are generally more adept at reading nonverbal cues than adults are because of their limited verbal skills and their recent reliance on the nonverbal to communicate. As children develop verbal skills, nonverbal channels of communication do not cease to exist but rather they become entwined in the total communication process." Humans continue to use nonverbal communication for many reasons, as shown in the insert below.

Why Humans Continue to Use Nonverbal Communication

1. Words have limitations. There are numerous areas where nonverbal communication is more effective than verbal (describing the shape of something, or providing quick direction, for instance).
2. We can't control nonverbal behaviors as easily as spoken words. Since nonverbal communication may be unconscious, it tends to be more genuine than words.
3. Nonverbal signals can express feelings inappropriate to state: social etiquette limits what can be said, but nonverbal cues can communicate thoughts.

4. A separate communication channel is useful to help send complex messages: a speaker can add enormously to the complexity of the verbal message through simple nonverbal signals." (Jones)

Nonverbal Communication in Action

The following video is a compilation of three clips from the old television series, *The Lucy Show*. You can watch the first two clips without sound and guess what is happening. The third shows how nonverbal communication can be misinterpreted. Watching a person's face, shoulders, hands, and even listening to their tone is important to understanding nonverbal language.



Figure 4.1.1: Contributed to YouTube by Mari Bryson. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mh47wWr_Hbw

References

- Jones, Tricia, PhD. "Nonverbal Communication for Educators." *Creducation.org*.
nd.https://creducation.net/resources/nonverbal_communication/what_is_nonverbal_communication.html. Retrieved 8 July 2021. CC 2.5.
- Paynton, Scott and Linda K Hahn. *Survey of Communication Study*. **Provided by:** Humboldt State University. **Located at:** en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Survey_of_Communication_Study. Last update: 19 Oct., 2021. **License:** [CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike](#)

This page titled [4.1: Nonverbal Communication- A Definition](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [3.2: Defining Nonverbal Communication](#) by Scott T. Paynton & Laura K. Hahn with Humboldt State University Students is licensed [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

4.2: Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication

Learning Objectives

- List four important characteristics of nonverbal communication and explain each.

Nonverbal Communication Uses Multiple Channels

We use a **single channel** (words) when we communicate verbally versus **multiple channels** when we communicate nonverbally. Try this exercise. Say your first and last name at the same time. You quickly find that this is an impossible task. Now, pat the top of your head with your right hand, wave with your left hand, smile, shrug your shoulders, and chew gum at the same time. While goofy and awkward, our ability to do this demonstrates how we use multiple nonverbal channels simultaneously to communicate.

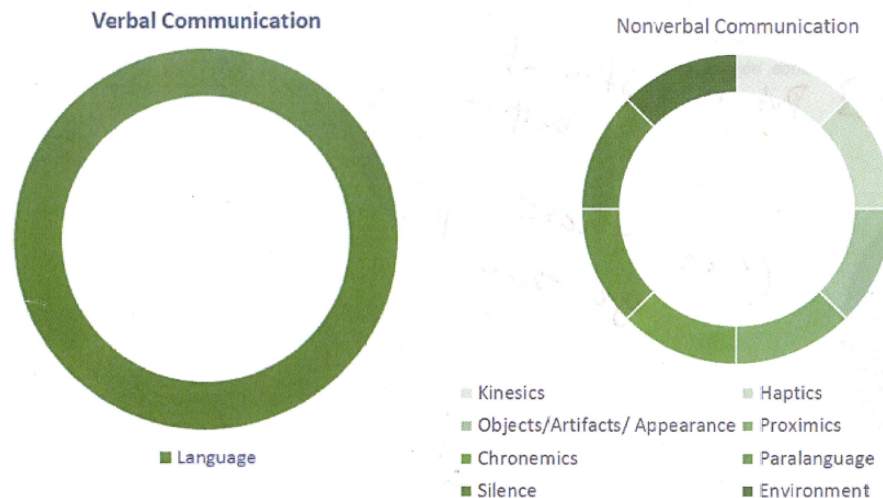


Figure 4.2.1A: Verbal Communication Uses a Single Channel. Figure 4.2.1B: Nonverbal Communication Uses Multiple Channels. (CC BY-SA; Spaynton via Wikipedia)

In the verbal communication chapter, we learned that meaning is in people, not in words. The same is true of nonverbal communication, but even more so. Attempting to accurately decode nonverbal signals such as eye contact, facial expressions, body movements, clothing, personal artifacts, and tone of voice when they all may be happening at the same time can be very difficult. Despite this difficulty, we learn to decode nonverbal communication as babies. How effectively we interpret these nonverbal signals may be influenced by our gender, with some research suggesting that women are much better than men at accurately interpreting the many nonverbal cues we send and receive (Gore).

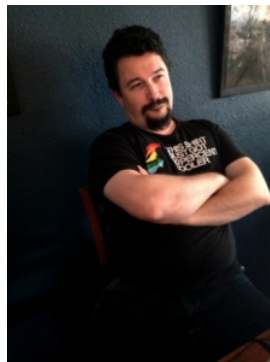


Figure 4.2.2: How do you interpret this student's nonverbal communication? (CC BY-SA; Spaynton via Wikipedia)

Nonverbal Communication is Continuous and Ongoing

Whereas verbal communication is **distinct**, nonverbal communication in face-to-face interactions is **continuous**, ongoing, and in constant motion. Words have a distinct beginning and end, and we can simply stop talking to end verbal communication. However,

we can't turn off nonverbal communication. Our posture, eye contact (or lack of eye contact), facial expressions, and physical appearance are *always* communicating something about us, whether intentional or unintentional.

Nonverbal Communication Can Be Conscious or Unconscious

Normally, humans use language or verbal communication **consciously** while we use nonverbal communication **unconsciously**. Conscious communication is communication we *think* about and choose deliberately. If you ever heard the statement as a child, "Think before you speak" you were being told a fundamental principle of verbal communication. Realistically, it's nearly impossible not to think before we speak. When we speak, we do so consciously and intentionally.

When we engage in unconscious communication, we do not think about or plan the message we communicate. Much of our nonverbal communication is unconscious. For example, when something funny happens, you probably do not think, "Okay, I'm going to smile and laugh right now." Instead, you react unconsciously, displaying your emotions through these nonverbal reactions.

Of course, not all nonverbal communication is unconscious. At times we certainly make conscious choices to use or withhold nonverbal communication. For example, before and during a job interview, the interviewee makes conscious decisions about wardrobe, posture, and eye contact. Because much nonverbal communication is unconscious, many of us tend to believe what we see over what we hear.

Can We "Read" Nonverbal Communication?

Can we really accurately interpret the nonverbal communication used by others? Some seem to think so. Counselor Michele Meleen lists the following positive nonverbal behaviors:

- learning in
- direct eye contact
- head nodding
- firm handshake

In contrast, here are some negative nonverbal behaviors:

- arms crossed over the chest
- nail biting
- hand placed on the cheek
- tapping or drumming fingers
- head in hands
- locked ankles
- fig-leaf pose
- using a mobile device when someone else is speaking

For a fun take on "reading nonverbal communication, watch these "reads: from the television show, Seinfeld: <https://youtu.be/L8VOuGQD60U>

Nonverbal Communication is Culture-Bound

Researchers such as Psychologist Paul Ekman have come to believe there are certain core emotional expressions conveyed by the face that are **interpreted the same way across cultures**. SAD(FI)SH is a mnemonic device to remember the emotions that are recognized (somewhat) across the world:

Sadness

Anger

Disgust

Fear

Interest--there is some support for this one, but not as clear as the other ones.

Surprise

Happiness



Figure 4.2.4: Six Emotions Recognized Universally (Wikimedia)

Although some facial expressions may be recognized all over the world, as you learned in the chapter on Culture and Communication, most nonverbal communication varies greatly from one culture to the next. This is what we mean by nonverbal communication as "culture-bound." For this reason, if you travel to different regions of the world, it is very important to research and find out what is appropriate before you visit.

Key Takeaways

Let us sum up the ways in which nonverbal communication is unique:

- Nonverbal communication uses multiple channels simultaneously as opposed to verbal communication, which uses one.
- Nonverbal communication is continuous, whereas verbal communication is distinct.
- Nonverbal communication can be both conscious and unconscious; verbal communication is conscious.
- Certain nonverbal communication is universally understood, although nonverbal communication for the most part is culture-bound.

Now that you have a definition of nonverbal communication, and can identify characteristics of nonverbal communication, let's examine what counts as nonverbal communication.

References

Jones, Tricia, PhD. Nonverbal Communication for Educators. *CReducation.org*. n.d. [://creducation.net/resources/nonverbal_communication/how_does_nvc_differ_from_language.html](http://creducation.net/resources/nonverbal_communication/how_does_nvc_differ_from_language.html). Licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.5 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/).

Survey of Communication Study. **Authored by:** Scott T Paynton and Linda K Hahn. **Provided by:** Humboldt State University. **Located at:** en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Survey_of_Communication_Study. **License:** [CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

This page titled [4.2: Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [3.3: Differences Between Verbal and Nonverbal Communication](#) by Scott T. Paynton & Laura K. Hahn with Humboldt State University Students is licensed [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

4.3: Types of Nonverbal Communication

Learning Objectives

- Understand and explain six primary types of nonverbal communication.
- Learn how to record a speech or deliver an effective virtual presentation.

As we discussed previously, when it comes to nonverbal messages, there are often multiple things going on at once. Let's gain a better understanding by looking at the types of nonverbal communication.

Kinesics

Kinesics is *the study of how we use body movement and facial expressions*. We interpret a great deal of meaning through body movement, facial expressions, hand gestures, and eye contact. In the United States, engaging in consistent **eye contact** makes you appear confident, at ease, and interested. Use a relaxed, steady gaze and be careful not to stare at the other person. Looking directly at someone with sincerity reveals that you are open and engaging in your communication style. **Facial expressions** are a primary method of sharing emotions and feelings (Ekman & Friesen; Scherer, Klaus, & Scherer). For example, imagine yourself at a party and you see someone across the room you are attracted to. What sort of nonverbal behaviors do you engage in to let that person know? Likewise, what nonverbal behaviors are you looking for from him or her to indicate that it's safe to come over and introduce yourself? Many people believe they can easily interpret the meanings of body movements and facial expressions in others. The reality is, it is almost impossible to determine an exact meaning. Even so, we know that kinesics can communicate liking, social status, and even relationship responsiveness (Mehrabian).

Haptics

Haptics is *the study of touch*. Touch is the first type of nonverbal communication we experience as humans and is vital to our development and health (Dolin & Booth-Butterfield; Wilson, et al.). Those who don't have positive touch in their lives are less healthy both mentally and physically than those who experience positive touch. We use touch to share feelings and relational meanings. Hugs, kisses, handshakes, or even playful roughhousing demonstrate relational meanings and indicate relational closeness. In Western society, touch is largely reserved for family and romantic relationships. In contrast, an exchange student from Brazil recognized the differences in touch between cultures when arriving in the United States. She was surprised when someone hesitated to remove an eyelash from her face and apologized for touching her. In her country, no one would hesitate to do this act. She realized how much more physical touch is accepted and even expected in her culture. On the negative side, touch can also be used to intimidate others. If in doubt about the appropriateness of touch in a specific situation, it is best to avoid it.

Personal Appearance

Personal Appearance is another type of nonverbal communication. This category includes hairstyle and clothing, as well as **objects** you carry with you (mobile phone, purse, etc.) and **artifacts** you use to adorn the body, such as jewelry, piercings, and necklaces. Even the automobile you drive is a form of nonverbal communication. Your choices express meanings about what you value and the image you wish to put forth. As with most communication, our choices for personal appearance, objects, and artifacts occur within cultural contexts. Consider the recent trendiness and popularity of tattoos. While once associated primarily with prison and armed services, tattoos have become mainstream and are used to articulate a variety of personal, political, and cultural messages.

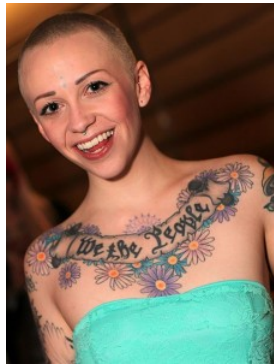


Figure 4.3.1: Tattoos, hair style, dress, and makeup are all part of personal appearance. Image of woman with tattoos. (CC BY-SA; Michael Dorausch via [Wikipedia](#))

Proxemics

Proxemics is the *study of our use of space*. One aspect of proxemics has to do with how closely we stand to others. The distance may vary based on cultural norms and the type of relationship existing between the parties. Edward T Hall (1966) identified four distance zones that are commonly observed by North Americans.

- **Intimate distance** - (0" to 18") This zone extends from actual touching to eighteen inches. It is normally reserved for those with whom one is intimate. At this distance the physical presence of another is overwhelming. Those who violate the intimate space of others are likely to be perceived as intruders.
- **Personal distance** (18" to 4') This zone extends from eighteen inches to four feet. This is the distance of interaction of good friends or other close acquaintances.
- **Social distance** (4' to 12') This zone exists from four to twelve feet. It seems to be an appropriate distance for casual friends and acquaintances to interact.
- **Public distance** (12' to 25') This zone extends from twelve up to twenty-five or more feet. This is the distance for most public speeches. At this distance, a speaker becomes formal.

Hall's system provides useful insight into the constructive use of space for various interactions. It should be noted, however, that appropriate distance is determined by many variables, including the situation, the nature of the relationship, the topic of conversation, and the physical constraints which are present. Dr. Tricia Jones points out that **vertical distance** is also included in proxemics. Just as the horizontal distance between people communicates something, so does the vertical distance. In this case, however, vertical distance is often understood to convey the degree of dominance or sub-ordinance in a relationship. Looking up at or down on another person can be taken literally in many cases, with the higher person asserting greater status. People who work with small children should realize that children will interact more comfortably with a communicator when they are in the same vertical plane. On the other hand, in a situation of conflict, a person might stand to use vertical distance to their advantage. (*Creducation.com*)

Our **environment** includes *the way we use spaces we occupy*, such as our homes, rooms, cars, or offices. Think of your home, room, automobile, or office space. What meanings can others perceive about you from these spaces? What meanings are you trying to send by how you keep them? Think about spaces you use frequently and the nonverbal meanings they have for you. Most educational institutions intentionally paint classrooms in dull colors. Why? Dull colors on walls have a calming effect, theoretically keeping students from being distracted by bright colors and excessive stimuli. Contrast the environment of a classroom to that of a fast-food restaurant. These establishments have bright colors and hard plastic seats and tables. The bright colors generate an upbeat environment, while the hard plastic seats are just uncomfortable enough to keep patrons from staying too long—remember, it's FAST food (Restaurants See Color As Key Ingredient). People and cultures place different emphasis on the use of space as a way to communicate nonverbally.

Case In Point: Feng Shui

Feng Shui, which means wind and water, is the ancient Chinese art of living in harmony with our environment. Feng Shui can be traced as far back as the Banpo dwellings in 4000 BCE. Behind Feng Shui is the belief that the way we use our environment and organize our belongings affects the energy flow (chi) of people in that space and the person or people who created the environment. The inclusion or exclusion and placement of various objects in our environments can be used to create a positive impact on others. The theory is to use the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth to design a space. Feng Shui is

applicable to cities, villages, homes, and public spaces. The Temple of Heaven in Beijing, China, is an example of Feng Shui architecture. To keep harmony with the natural world, the Temple houses the Hall of Annual Prayer which is comprised of four inner, 12 middle, and 12 outer pillars representing the four seasons, 12 months, and 12 traditional Chinese hours.

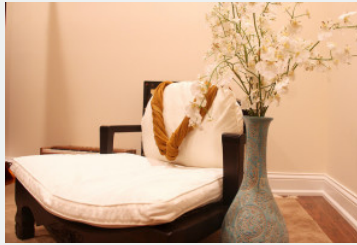


Figure 4.3.2: Example of Feng Shui via a chair/vase combination. (CC BY-NC-ND; ash.wu via <https://flic.kr/p/isyU5D>)

Chronemics

Chronemics is the study of how people use time. Are you someone who is always early or on time? Or, are you someone who arrives late to most events? Our use of time communicates a variety of meanings to those around us. Think about the person you know who is most frequently late. How do you describe that person based on their use of time? Now, think about someone else who is always on time. How do you describe that person? Is there a difference? If so, these differences are probably based on their use of time. In the U.S., we place a high value on being on time and respond more positively to people who are punctual. However, in many Arab and Latin American countries, time is used more loosely, and punctuality is not necessarily a goal to achieve. You may have heard the expression, “Indian time” to refer to “the perception of time [that] is circular and flexible” (Harris, Shutiva). This is the belief that activities will commence when everyone is present and ready; not according to an arbitrary schedule based on a clock or calendar. Neither approach is better than the other, but the dissimilar uses of time can create misunderstandings among those from different cultural groups.

Paralanguage

While the types of nonverbal communication we’ve discussed so far are non-vocal, this form of nonverbal communication is actually vocal (noise is produced). **Paralanguage** is the term we use to describe *vocal qualities or vocalizations*. Our vocal qualities or the manner in which we say words often expresses greater meaning than the actual words themselves.

Paralanguage includes

- **Volume:** the softness or loudness of a voice
- **Rate:** how quickly or slowly we speak
- **Pitch:** highness or lowness of a voice
- **Inflection:** variations in pitch that add meaning to our sentences. An upward inflection is when there is a change in pitch going from a lower to a higher note. In most cases, an upward inflection is used for a question or to indicate insincerity or surprise. A downward inflection is a change in pitch from a higher to a lower note. A downward inflection is used when making a statement.
- **Vocalizations:** sounds that have meaning, such as “uh-huh,” “shhh,” and “mmm.”
- **Silence/pause:** a break where there is no sound. Sometimes silence is unintentional and other times intentional. A well-placed pause or use of silence is an art that can add impact and emphasis to a message.
- **Nonfluencies:** words or sounds that interrupt the flow of your sentences. Examples of common nonfluencies are *uh*, *uhm*, *like*, and *you know*.

Paralanguage adds important information to our message. Paralanguage can show our excitement and enthusiasm or can indicate our unease about what we are saying. It can keep our listeners alert or put them to sleep. The *best* paralanguage complements our words and makes our voice pleasing and interesting to our listeners. Through effective paralanguage, we can emphasize important words in our sentences and can clue our listeners into whether we are asking a question or making a statement. There are also times when we can intentionally use paralanguage to contradict our words. Sarcasm and incongruence are two examples of this. When you use sarcasm, your paralanguage is intended to contradict the verbal message. However, sometimes using sarcasm can backfire when listeners do not pick up our paralinguistic cues and focus primarily on the verbal message.

Silence also serves as a type of paralanguage. Have you ever experienced the “silent treatment” from someone? What meanings did you take from that person’s silence? Silence is powerful because the person using silence may be refusing to engage in

communication with you. Likewise, we can use silence to regulate the flow of our conversations. Silence has a variety of meanings and, as with other types of nonverbal communication; context plays an important role in interpreting the meaning of silence.

Finally, we come to nonfluencies. **Nonfluencies** are words or sounds that interrupt the flow of your sentences. Most of us naturally use nonfluencies in conversation, with *uh*, *uhm*, *like*, and *you know* among the most common. Nonfluencies are often a way of buying time while we think of our next words. Although common, they can become a distraction or even an annoyance to our listeners. Overuse of nonfluencies, particularly in professional communication such as a job interview or during a speech, can diminish a speaker's credibility. One of the best ways to limit nonfluencies is to simply practice pausing silently instead of filling each silence with a sound.

Nonverbal Communication Now: Boosting Power Through Your Nonverbal Communication

Body language affects how others see us, but it may also change how we see ourselves. Social psychologist Amy Cuddy argues that "power posing" -- standing in a posture of confidence, even when we don't feel confident -- can boost feelings of confidence, and might have an impact on our chances for success. Cuddy's talk was presented at an official TED conference, and was featured by TED editors on the home page.

What is your opinion of Cuddy's views? Try "power posing" a few times and see what you think.

Click here: https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_...re?language=en

With an understanding of the definition of nonverbal communication and the types of nonverbal communication, let's consider the various functions nonverbal communication serves in helping us communicate. (Ekman; Knapp; Malandro & Barker).

Recording Effective Smartphone Videos

When it comes to recording or giving virtual presentations, "It's not just what you say, it's how you say it." Here are some suggestions for recording effective videos or giving effective virtual presentations using your smartphone or other recording technology.

1. Record with your camera placed horizontally, not vertically.

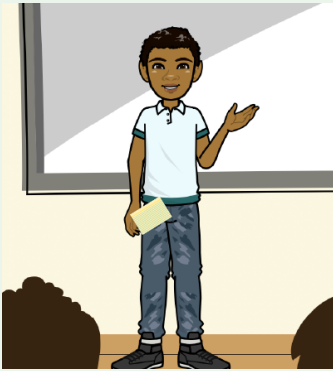


2. Raise the camera so it is at or close to eye level. Use a stack of books to add some height, if necessary. If you don't have a tri-pod, check out these instructions for making your own. <https://fixthephoto.com/diy-iphone-tripod.html>



3. Make sure your face is well lit. The light source should be in front of you, behind the camera, or above your head, not behind it.
4. Chose a quiet, distraction-free environment. The background should be neat and tidy. Turn the television off. Close the door to bar barking dogs, inquisitive cats, or crying children.
5. Look directly into the camera. This gives the appearance of eye contact. Do not look at the keyboard, the ceiling, or the screen. DO NOT READ to the audience.

6. If you are recording a speech or formal presentation, you will be expected to stand up and place the camera far enough away from you so that your body language will be visible to the instructor.



7. Make certain your microphone works well.

8. Use effective paralanguage to capture your audience's interest and convey enthusiasm. Pronounce words correctly and say them distinctly. Use vocal variety, modifying your rate, inflections, and volume to keep the attention of the audience. Avoid speaking in a monotone.

9. Keep both feet planted firmly on the floor with your weight distributed equally between both feet.

10. Use occasional natural hand gestures. Hand gestures make you appear more conversational and animated. Smile. Dress professionally. Do not wear a hat or head covering unless it is required by your religion.

11. Record your rehearsal and watch the recording. This is one of the best ways to see areas for improvement.

Images 1 and 2 are provided by the Office of Communications, Amherst College.

References

Jones, Tricia S., PhD. "Nonverbal Communication for Educators." *CREducation.org*. n.d. Accessed 8/7/2021. <https://creducation.net/resources/nonverbal-communications.html>. Added by Lisa Coleman, Southwest Tennessee Community College.

Office of Communications, Amherst College. *Creating Smartphone Videos*. Retrieved 19 July, 2022. <https://www.amherst.edu/news/communi...rtphone-videos>

Paynton, Scott T. and Linda K Hahn. *Survey of Communication Study*. **Provided by:** Humboldt State University. **Located at:** en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Survey_of_Communication_Study. **License:** [CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike](#)

This page titled [4.3: Types of Nonverbal Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [3.4: Types of Nonverbal Communication](#) by Scott T. Paynton & Laura K. Hahn with Humboldt State University Students is licensed [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

4.4: Functions of Nonverbal Communication

Learning Objectives

- Explain and demonstrate 8 functions of nonverbal communication.
- Explain what happens when a mixed message is received.
- Understand the importance of the Mehrabian Equation.

You learned that there are many categories of nonverbal communication. But what functions do they serve?

We use nonverbal communication to repeat verbal communication.

For example, we may point in a specific direction while explaining directions, or we may nod or give a shake of our head to duplicate the verbal messages of “yes” or “no.”

We use nonverbal communication to replace verbal communication.

If someone asks you a question, instead of a verbal reply “yes,” you may choose to simply nod your head without the accompanying verbal message. When we replace verbal communication with nonverbal communication, we use nonverbal cues that are easily recognized by others such as a wave, head-nod, or head-shake. Shaking the head side-to-side to indicate “no,” or to show disbelief or disapproval is used by infants to refuse food or drink; even children born deaf and blind shake their heads to refuse objects or to show others they do not wish to be touched. (Givens).

We use nonverbal cues to complement or contradict verbal communication.

If a friend tells you that she recently received a promotion and a pay raise, you can show your enthusiasm in a number of verbal and nonverbal ways. If you exclaim, “Wow, that’s great! I’m so happy for you,” while at the same time smiling and hugging your friend, you are using nonverbal communication to complement what you are saying. Unlike duplicating or replacing, nonverbal communication that complements cannot be used alone without the verbal message. If you simply smiled and hugged your friend without saying anything, the interpretation of that nonverbal communication would be more ambiguous than using it to complement your verbal message. Sometimes nonverbal messages can be used to contradict the verbal message. For example, a “wink” may contradict a stated message.

We use nonverbal communication to accent the verbal message.

For instance, you may be upset with a family member and state, “I’m very angry with you.” To accent or accentuate your feelings, you might use paralanguage to vocally emphasize the word “very.” (“I’m VERY angry with you”). Parents might tell their children to “come here.” If they point to the spot in front of them dramatically, they are accenting the “here” part of the verbal message.

We use nonverbal communication to regulate communication.

Rarely, if ever, would we approach someone and say, “I’m going to start a conversation with you now. Okay, let’s begin.” Instead, we might smile, make eye contact, move closer, or face the person directly — all nonverbal behaviors that indicate our desire to interact. Likewise, we do not generally end conversations by stating, “I’m done talking to you now” unless there is a breakdown in the communication process. Instead, we may look at our phone, look in the direction we wish to go, or stay silent to indicate an impending end in the conversation. If our listener doesn’t respond to our nonverbal cues, we may say something to the effect, “I really need to get going now.”

We use nonverbal communication to indicate relationships

Take a few moments today to observe the nonverbal communication of people you see in public areas. What can you determine about their relational standing from their nonverbal communication? For example, romantic partners tend to stand close to one another and touch frequently. On the other hand, acquaintances generally maintain greater distances and touch less than romantic partners. Those who hold higher social status often use more space when they interact with others. In the United States, it is generally acceptable for women in platonic relationships to embrace and be physically close while males are often discouraged from doing so. Contrast this to many other nations where it is custom for males to greet each other with a kiss or a hug and hold

hands as a symbol of friendship. We make many inferences about relational standing based on the nonverbal communication of those with whom we interact and observe. Imagine seeing a couple talking to each other across a small table. They both have faces that looked upset, red eyes from crying, closed body positions, are leaning into each other, and are whispering emphatically. Upon seeing this, would you think they were having a “breakup conversation”?

We use nonverbal communication to express emotions

While we can certainly tell people how we feel, we more frequently use nonverbal communication to express our emotions. Conversely, we tend to interpret emotions by examining nonverbal communication. For example, a friend may be feeling sad one day and it is probably easy to tell this by her nonverbal communication. Not only may she be less talkative but her shoulders may be slumped and she may not smile. One study suggests that it is important to use and interpret nonverbal communication for emotional expression, and ultimately relational attachment and satisfaction (Schachner, Shaver, & Mikulincer). Research also underscores the fact that people in close relationships have an easier time reading the nonverbal communication of emotion of their relational partners than those who aren’t close. Likewise, those in close relationships can more often detect concealed emotions (Sternglanz & DePaulo).

We use nonverbal communication to demonstrate and maintain cultural norms

We’ve already shown that some nonverbal communication is universal, but the majority of nonverbal communication is culturally specific. For example, in the United States, people value their personal space; thus, they maintain greater distance from others than is common in many other cultures. If you visit New York City, you might observe that any time someone accidentally touches you on the subway he or she might apologize profusely for the violation of personal space. Cultural norms of anxiety and fear surrounding issues of crime, terrorism, and a global pandemic appear to cause people to be more sensitive to others in public spaces, highlighting the importance of culture and context.

Westerners who are visiting China might be shocked that shoppers there do not observe the personal distance that is common in the United States. In China, shoppers may ram their shopping carts into others’ carts when they want to move around them. This is not an indication of rudeness, but a cultural difference in the negotiation of space.

Similarly, in many Asian cultures, frequent touch in crowded public spaces goes unnoticed because space is not used in the same way as in the United States. For example, watch this short video below which shows subway pushers in Japan whose job it is to pack the train.



Figure 4.4.1: Japanese Subway Pushers Pack the Morning Train. (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9Xg7ui5mLA>)

Mixed Messages

A mixed message is when your nonverbal communication and verbal communication send two different messages. Imagine that you visit your boss’s office and she asks you how you’re enjoying a new work assignment. You may feel obligated to respond

positively because it is your boss asking the question, even though you may not truly feel this way. However, your nonverbal communication--such as a hesitation in answering or a frown-- may contradict your verbal message, sending a **mixed message** to your boss.

Social psychology professor Albert Mehrabian explored the relative impact of various channels of communication in terms of the power they have to convey our feelings and attitudes to others. Specifically, he studied the relative effectiveness of words alone compared to the nonverbal channels of voice (paralanguage), facial expressions, and body language. His study gave rise to the Mehrabian Equation. According to the Mehrabian Equation, when a message is broken down into three components--words, speaker's voice, and body language

- 7% of the impact of a message is communicated with **words (verbal communication)**.
- 38% of the message is **paralinguistic (speaker's voice and vocalizations)**.
- 55% of the message is in **facial expressions and other forms of body language**.

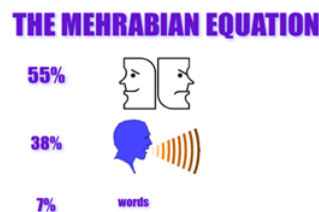


Figure 4.4.2: The Mehrabian Equation: Comparing words, paralanguage, and body language. (Wikimedia)

It is important to note that Mehrabian's research found that **93%** of communication is nonverbal. Clearly, paying attention to our nonverbal communication and attempting to keep it consistent with our verbal message is vital for delivering messages that communicate what we intend them to.

Key Takeaway

We use nonverbal communication in many ways, including to show emotions, demonstrate cultural norms, regulate communication, and complement/contradict, accent, emphasize, or replace verbal communication. In the case of a mixed message, Mehrabian's studies showed that nonverbal communication was most important to meaning (55%), followed by paralanguage (38%) and verbal (7%).

Nonverbal Communication and Service Industries: When Nonverbal Communication Goes Wrong

Analyze the nonverbal communication used by the employee in this video clip. Using terms you learned in this and the previous segment (Types of Nonverbal Communication), point out specific problems. If you were this employee's supervisor, what advice would you give him?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7lGqmZprx0>

Nonverbal Communication and You: Nonverbal Communication and Getting a Job

You may be thinking that getting the right degree at the right college is the way to get a job. Think again! It may be a good way to get an interview, but once at the interview, what matters? *College Journal* reports that "Body language comprises 55% of the force of any response, whereas the verbal content only provides 7%, and paralanguage, or the intonation — pauses, and sighs given when answering — represents 38% of the emphasis." If you show up to an interview smelling of cigarette smoke, chewing gum, dressed inappropriately, and listening to music on your phone, you're probably in trouble.

About.Com states that these are some effective nonverbal practices during interviews:

- Make eye contact with the interviewer for a few seconds at a time.
- Smile and nod at appropriate times when the interviewer is talking, but don't overdo it. Don't laugh unless the interviewer does first.

- Be polite and keep an even volume. Don't be too loud or too quiet.
- Maintain good posture. Don't slouch.
- Do not sit down until the interviewer invites you to take a seat.
- Relax and lean forward a little towards the interviewer so you appear interested and engaged.
- Don't lean back. You will look too casual and relaxed.
- Keep your feet on the floor and your back against the lower portion of the chair.
- Pay attention.
- Listen.
- Don't interrupt.
- Stay calm. Even if you had a bad experience at a previous position or were fired, keep your emotions to yourself and do not show anger or frown.
- Not sure what to do with your hands? Hold a pen and your notepad or rest an arm on the chair or on your lap, so you look comfortable. Don't let your arms fly around the room when you're making a point. Gesture naturally.
- See more guidelines in Chapter 7, Career Communication.

Eat Like a Lady

In Japan, it is considered improper for women to be shown with their mouths open in public. Not surprisingly, this makes it difficult to eat particular foods, such as hamburgers. So, in 2013, the Japanese burger chain, Freshness Burger, developed a solution: the liberation wrapper. The wrapper, or mask, hides women's mouths as they eat thus allowing them to maintain the expected gendered nonverbal behavior for the culture. To read and see more about this, [click here](#).

Reference

Survey of Communication Study. **Authored by:** Scott T Paynton and Linda K Hahn. **Provided by:** Humboldt State University. **Located at:** en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Survey_of_Communication_Study. **License:** [CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike](#)

This page titled [4.4: Functions of Nonverbal Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [3.5: Functions of Nonverbal Communication](#) by [Scott T. Paynton & Laura K. Hahn with Humboldt State University Students](#) is licensed [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

4.5: Interpreting Nonverbal Communication

Lesson Objectives

- To explain why it is important to exercise caution when interpreting the nonverbal communication of others.
- To explain nonverbal learning disabilities and how they may impact nonverbal communication.

As you have learned, we communicate and interpret the communication of others through our cultural lens or perspectives. A skillful communicator must learn to interact with those who communicate in a manner different from their own. Like verbal communication, nonverbal communication is influenced by many diverse cultural, co-cultural, and demographic factors; thus, communicators should reserve making judgments about others based solely on interpretations of their nonverbal communication. It is crucial to interpret nonverbal communication objectively and fairly. Suppose you are confused by another person's nonverbal communication or believe you have possibly misinterpreted them. In that case, it is better to ask them what they meant instead of continuing the conversation with what could be inaccurate or unkind assumptions.

Cultural Differences in Nonverbal Communication

In the United States, socially accepted examples of professional nonverbal communication include maintaining eye contact with the speaker, leaning towards the speaker in a conversation, and using facial expressions and gestures to appear attentive to the speaker's message. However, as you learned in Chapter 2, not all cultures consider these as good or required nonverbal communication skills.

In Japan, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, communicators often avoid eye contact to show respect. Arabic communicators may maintain prolonged eye contact to establish trust and truthfulness, whereas American communicators could perceive prolonged eye contact as unwanted sexual or romantic advances (Tidwell).

Differences in the communication styles of neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals are examples of communication differences that often cause misinterpreted nonverbal messages.

Neurodiversity and disability perspectives on nonverbal communication

Some individuals struggle to form relationships, communicate in groups, and start conversations. Depending on the extent to which an individual's social and communication skills are affected, he or she may be diagnosed with a social skills disorder or disability on the neurodivergent spectrum.

The two most common methodologies when discussing neurological perspectives, such as autism spectrum (disorder) and attention-deficit hyperactivity (disorder) (ADHD), are the **pathological (medical)** and **neurodiverse (social)** models of human experience (Shaw).

Neurodiversity, defined as the "natural diversity in human thinking," argues that all forms of human thinking and communication are equally valid. Within this model, people with typical or 'normal' social skills, thinking, and communication methods are considered **neurotypical**. In contrast, individuals with nonstandard social skills and communication techniques are considered **neurodivergent** (Dwyer).

The Neurodiversity model is commonly accepted among autistic and neurodivergent individuals and self-advocacy organizations. However, the medical and neurodiverse models support diagnosis and treatment for social skills disabilities when necessary for improved quality of life (Shaw).

Differences between neurodivergent and neurotypical communication:

- Autistic people are often low-context communicators and are most comfortable with specific communication and instructions. Many autistic people are uncomfortable interpreting nonverbal communication and decoding a sender's intention from context clues (National Autistic Society).
- Some neurodivergent people may wear headphones in public to control their sensory environment. They are not being rude. These neurodivergent people feel extreme discomfort when exposed to loud noises, bright light, unexpected touches, and other sensory stimuli the individual cannot control (Alper). Haptic communication (touch) and forcing eye contact can make autistic people extremely uncomfortable (Eklöv).
- Neurodivergent people often talk extensively about their special interests and communicate better with one another than they do with neurotypical people.

- Active listening looks different in neurodivergent people. Autistic and ADHD people often focus better while performing repetitive actions such as “stims,” and often can focus better without maintaining eye contact with the speaker.
- Neurodivergents often learn social skills by adopting personalities from media such as TV shows and books* (u/Dotacchin & u/the_quirky_ravenclaw et al. via community consensus, see note in Works Cited).
- People with ADHD often have difficulty focusing on long and tedious tasks. Still, they can spend hours hyperfocusing on a single task or project without getting up to eat or drink. This “hyperfocus” can be a distraction and cause ADHD people to prioritize tasks of lesser importance.

Neurodivergent **masking (camouflaging)** is a term used to describe neurodivergent individuals using neurotypical modes of behavior and communication to fit in with society. “Social psychologist Devon Price explains that masking is any attempt or strategy ‘to hide your disability.’ Masking manifests itself in two ways: camouflage and compensation. Camouflage includes behaviors like ‘faking a smile, faking eye contact by looking in the middle of someone's forehead,’ Price says (Sivayoganathan).” Neurodivergent people with low to intermediate social support needs can mask for different lengths of time before needing to rest and recharge their social batteries (Sivayoganathan). Masking for extended periods can result in [burnout and/or emotional trauma](#) (Garcia, Shaw, & Dwyer).

Neurodivergent individuals with a high degree of difficulty in a social interaction category are considered “high support needs.” In contrast, those with less difficulty in a category are considered “low support needs.” One can simultaneously be “high support needs” in one category and “low support needs” in another. For example, an individual can require significant support maintaining punctuality and adhering to deadlines but need little support understanding nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal communication in textual channels

Nonverbal communication is also essential via physical and electronic textual channels such as letters, instant messages, emails, communication servers, or group chats. Since it can be harder to analyze and interpret nonverbal communication when receivers cannot see the sender, receivers must use context clues and inferences to determine nonverbal communication and sender intent within these channels.

In informal communication, using emojis (such as 😊😊, 🙄, and 😬😬) and tone indicators (such as /s “sarcasm,” /gen “genuine,” /j “joke,” /srs “serious”) can improve understanding of the sender’s intent. Tone indicators are used in cases such as sarcasm, when the verbal (textual) message can differ significantly from the sender’s intended meaning, and in cases where the sender wants to emphasize genuine concern to a recipient who could take the intended message as a joke. Although using emojis and tone indicators is strongly discouraged in formal communication, studies show they significantly help low context communicators understand the sender’s tone and inflection. Many communicators, especially autistic and neurodivergent communicators, use these styles to limit misunderstandings within online communities (Marcus).

Works Cited and Resources for Additional Study References

Content and resources in 4.5 were provided by Southwest Tennessee Community College student, Dev Chrysalis Dalal. The authors appreciate his contributions.

Alper, Meryl. “Inclusive Sensory Ethnography: Studying New Media and Neurodiversity in Everyday Life.” *New Media; Society*, vol 20, no. 10, 2018, pp.

3560-3579. SAGE Publications, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818755394>. Accessed 18 Sept 2022.

Bölte, S., Lawson, W. B., Marschik, P. B., & Girdler, S. (2021). Reconciling the seemingly irreconcilable: The WHO’s ICF system integrates biological

and psychosocial environmental determinants of autism and ADHD. *BioEssays*, 43, e2000254. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bies.202000254>

Dwyer, Patrick; Ryan, Jacalyn G; Williams, Zachary J; Gassner, Dena L (1 April 2022). “First Do No Harm: Suggestions Regarding Respectful Autism

Language.” *Pediatrics. American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)*. 149 (Supplement 4). doi:10.1542/peds.2020-049437n. ISSN 0031-4005. PMC 9066426. PMID 35363298.

Eklöv, Annie. "Why You Should Not Insist That ADHD Kids Make Eye Contact | The ADHD Minimalist". The ADHD Minimalist,

2022, <https://theadhdminimalist.com/why-you-should-not-insist-that-adhd-kids-make-eye-contact/>.

Furfaro, Hannah. "New Evidence Ties Hans Asperger to Nazi Eugenics Program." *Spectrum News*, 23 Apr. 2018,

www.spectrumnews.org/news/new-evidence-ties-hans-asperger-nazi-eugenics-program/.

Garcia, Eric, and Meghan Keane. "How 'Unmasking' Leads to Freedom for Autistic and Other Neurodivergent People: Life

Kit." NPR.Org, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/04/14/10928...nclusive-world>.

This page titled [4.5: Interpreting Nonverbal Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

4.6: Review

Chapter 4: Vocabulary and Questions for Review and Discussion

In this chapter, you learned that nonverbal communication is all communication other than the words you use. Types of nonverbal communication discussed in the chapter are kinesics, haptics, personal appearance, proxemics, chronemics, and paralanguage.

In verbal communication, the communicator uses one channel (a word) at a time. Verbal communication is a conscious, distinct form of communication. In nonverbal communication, we may use multiple channels simultaneously. Nonverbal communication is continuous instead of distinct.

While nonverbal communication can be conscious or unconscious, much nonverbal communication is enacted at an unconscious level. It, therefore, is considered by many recipients to be more trustworthy than the actual words used by the communicator. A mixed message is one where the communicator's nonverbal and verbal communication messages contradict one another. In the case of mixed messages, studies by Albert Mehrabian have found that message recipients are more likely to believe the nonverbal over the verbal message, with study participants indicating that 93% of their understanding came from nonverbal factors. What has become known as the Mehrabian Equation indicates that in the case of a mixed message, recipients are likely to pay MOST attention to personal appearance and body language (with recipients indicating 55% of their understanding came through personal appearance and body language); paralanguage is second in importance (responsible for 38% of the message's interpretation), and verbal communication (words alone) as least influential, responsible for only 7% of the recipients' understanding. Although the Mehrabian Equation may not fit every occasion, Mehrabian's studies highlight the importance of studying nonverbal communication carefully.

Because nonverbal communication is strongly influenced by culture, it is essential to exercise caution when interpreting another's nonverbal behavior. In addition to cultural and co-cultural factors, some individuals are neurodivergent and may use nonverbal behaviors differently than those who are neurotypical.

Vocabulary

- artifacts
- camouflaging
- chronemics
- continuous
- conscious
- distinct
- environment
- Feng Shui
- haptics
- inflections
- intimate distance
- kinesics
- masking
- mixed messages
- nonverbal communication
- nonfluencies
- paralanguage
- personal appearance
- personal distance
- pitch
- proxemics
- public distance
- rate
- silent treatment
- social distance
- vertical distance

- volume
- continuous
- distinct
- silence
- unconscious

? Questions for Review and Discussion

1. List four reasons humans use nonverbal communication even after developing the ability to use language.
2. This chapter taught you that verbal communication uses one channel. However, when we communicate nonverbally, we can use multiple channels simultaneously. Pretend your best friend or significant other has forgotten to meet you for a meaningful engagement. Explain how you might use multiple channels to communicate your disappointment.
3. While verbal communication is distinct, nonverbal communication is continuous and ongoing. Explain your understanding of the continuous and ongoing nature of nonverbal communication
4. Agree or disagree: In face-to-face interactions, we are *constantly* communicating nonverbally.
5. Discuss when it would be advisable to be conscious of and practice your nonverbal communication.
6. What nonverbal signals might imply a friend or acquaintance partner is nervous or distressed?
7. Are any facial expressions interpreted similarly across many diverse cultures? Explain.
8. Why is nonverbal communication referred to as “culture bound?” Give examples.
9. Think of an environment where you spend a lot of time – such as your home, room, automobile, or office space. What impressions might others form about you based on this environment?
10. What personal artifacts or objects do you often have with you? Explain.
11. In the United States, we have a strict view of time and value punctuality. Discuss a culture where time is viewed differently.
12. What nonfluencies do you commonly or occasionally use? What is the danger of overusing nonfluencies? What can you do to limit your use of nonfluencies?
13. In “Recording Effective Smartphone Videos,” you were given many tips for recording a speech or presenting virtually. In your opinion, what are the five most essential guidelines? Are any guidelines missing that need to be added?
14. Explain how nonverbal communication can regulate the flow of conversation or communication.
15. According to studies by Albert Mehrabian, if a listener receives a mixed message, will verbal or nonverbal factors significantly impact his or her interpretation?
16. Would you categorize yourself as neurotypical or neurodivergent? Explain.
17. Have you ever had your nonverbal cues misinterpreted? For example, someone thought you liked him or her because your proxemics suggested a desire for an intimate relationship, or perhaps someone thought you were unfriendly when that wasn't your intention. How did you correct the misinterpretation?
18. What nonverbal communication do you use every day? What does it accomplish for you?
19. Now that you have learned about paralanguage and its importance in communication, formulate guidelines or suggestions for using the voice professionally in the workplace and with public speeches.

4.6: Review is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Listening

Listening is a primary means through which we learn new information, complete tasks at work or school, and get things done in general. It also provides support to our relational partners. Listening to what others say about us helps us develop an accurate self-concept.

[5.1: Listening vs. Hearing](#)

[5.2: Stages of Listening](#)

[5.3: Listening Styles and Types](#)

[5.4: Poor Listening Habits](#)

[5.5: Improving Listening Competence](#)

[5.6: Review](#)

This page titled [5: Listening](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

5.1: Listening vs. Hearing

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the differences between listening and hearing.
2. Explain the benefits of listening.



Figure 5.1.1: "Angry Man With Megaphone" by [cosimoilvecchio](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)

"Are you listening to me?" You may have been asked this question because the speaker thinks you are nodding off or daydreaming. Many of us mistakenly think of listening as a "passive" activity. We think we just need to sit there and let words wash over us. Yet the reality is different. Effective listening demands active participation.

In our sender-oriented society, listening is often overlooked as an important part of the communication process. Yet research shows that adults spend about 45 percent of their time listening, which is more than any other communicative activity. In some contexts, we spend even more time listening than that. On average, workers spend 55 percent of their workday listening, and managers spend about 63 percent of their day listening. (Hargie)

O, the Oprah Magazine featured a cover article with the title, "How to Talk So People *Really* Listen: Four Ways to Make Yourself Heard." This title leads us to expect a list of ways to leave the listening to others and insist that they do so, but the article contains a surprise ending. The final piece of advice is this: "You can't go wrong by showing interest in what other people say and making them feel important. In other words, the better *you* listen, the more you'll be listened to" (Jarvis, 2009).



Figure 5.1.2: Zach Graves – [The Importance of Listening](#) – licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)

The adage, "We have two ears but only one mouth" serves as an important reminder that listening is often even more important than talking. Yet many of us think that listening is the same thing as hearing and therefore put very little effort into the process. The reality is quite different.

Listening vs. Hearing

Hearing is an automatic brain response to sound that requires no effort. We are surrounded by sounds most of the time, such as airplanes, lawnmowers, furnace blowers, the rattling of pots and pans, and so on. We hear those incidental sounds and, unless we have a reason to do otherwise, we train ourselves to ignore them. We learn to filter out sounds that mean little to us, just as we choose to hear our ringing phones and other sounds that are more important to us.

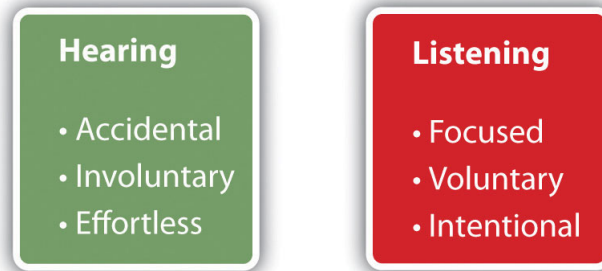


Figure 5.1.3: Hearing vs. Listening - licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)

Listening, on the other hand, is purposeful and focused rather than accidental. As a result, it requires motivation and effort. Listening is *active, focused, concentrated attention for the purpose of understanding the meanings expressed by a speaker*. We do not always listen at our best; later in this chapter, we will examine some of the reasons and strategies for becoming more active critical listeners.

Benefits of Listening

Today, you can gain a great deal of information and entertainment through reading and electronic recordings rather than through real-time listening. If you become distracted and let your attention wander, you can go back and replay a recording. However, much of what we need to hear at work and in our personal relationships isn't recorded and can't be replayed. There are many benefits to listening effectively and competently in real-time, including the five compelling benefits discussed in the next paragraph.

Since listening is a primary means through which we learn new information, good listening skills help us **complete tasks effectively** at home, at work or school, and get things done in general. Second, when we listen attentively to others, we are showing support for them; thus, effective listening helps us **build and maintain satisfying relationships** with those who are important to us. Third, listening to what others say about us helps us **develop an accurate self-concept**, which can help us put our best foot forward and communicate our identity in the best way possible. Fourth, effective listening skills can help us be **better students and more successful professionals**. Finally, effective listening can help us **improve our public speaking skills**. Clearly, effective listening has many benefits.

Key Takeaways

- Hearing is the physiological process of attending to sound within one's environment; listening, however, is a focused, concentrated approach to understanding the message a source is sending.
- Learning how to be an effective listener has numerous advantages. Effective listening can help you complete tasks efficiently, become a better partner in your relationships, serve as a reality-check for your self-identity, become a better student, and even improve your public speaking abilities.

This page titled [5.1: Listening vs. Hearing](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [4.2: Listening vs. Hearing](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/public-speaking-practice-and-ethics>.

5.2: Stages of Listening

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the receiving stage of listening.
2. Explain the understanding stage of listening.
3. Explain the remembering stage of listening.
4. Explain the evaluating stage of listening.
5. Explain the feedback stage of listening and the two types of feedback.
6. Understand the difference between formative and summative feedback.

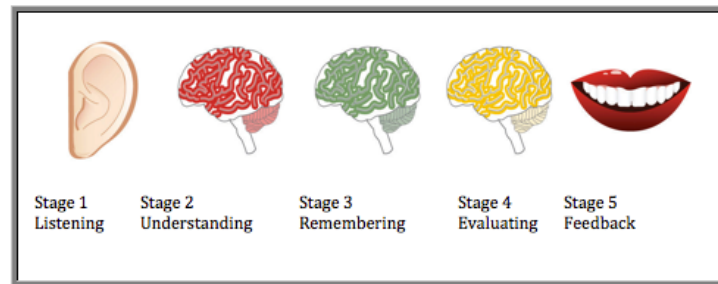


Figure 5.2.1: Author Joseph DeVito has divided the listening process into five stages: receiving, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding through feedback. [DeVito, J. A. \(2000\)](#).

Stage 1: Receiving

Receiving is the intentional focus on hearing a speaker's message, which happens when we filter out other sources so that we can isolate the message and avoid the confusing mixture of incoming stimuli. At this stage, we are still only hearing the message. Notice in Figure 5.2.1 that this stage is represented by the ear because it is the primary tool involved with this stage of the listening process.

During a crowded event in an outdoor amphitheater, for example, when the person on stage starts speaking, the cheering and/or yelling is sometimes so loud that the speaker can't be heard easily despite using a speaker system. In this example, the difficulty of receiving the message is due to the external noise. This is only one example of the ways that hearing alone can require sincere effort, but you must hear the message clearly before you can continue the process of listening.

Stage 2: Understanding

In the understanding stage, we attempt to learn the meaning of the message, which is not always easy. For one thing, if a speaker does not enunciate clearly, it may be difficult to tell what the message was—did your friend say, “I think she’ll be late for class,” or “my teacher delayed the class”? Notice in Figure 5.2.1 that stages two, three, and four are represented by the brain because it is the primary tool involved with these stages of the listening process.

Even when we have understood the words in a message, because of the differences in our backgrounds and experience, we sometimes make the mistake of attaching our own meanings to the words of others. For example, say you have made plans with your friends to meet at a certain movie theater, but you arrive and nobody else shows up. Eventually, you find out that your friends are at a different theater all the way across town where the same movie is playing. Everyone else understood that the meeting place was the “west side” location, but you misunderstood it as the “east side” location and therefore missed out on part of the fun.

The consequences of ineffective listening in a classroom can be much worse. When your professor advises students to get an “early start” on your speech, he or she probably hopes that students will begin their research right away and move on to developing a thesis statement and outlining the speech as soon as possible. However, students in your class might misunderstand the instructor's meaning in several ways. One student might interpret the advice to mean that as long as she gets started, the rest of the assignment will have time to develop itself. Another student might instead think that to start early is to start on the Friday before the Monday due date instead of Sunday night.

As mentioned more than once in this textbook, *meanings are in people, not in words*. This means that much of our understanding of others is influenced by our own perceptions and experiences. Therefore, at the understanding stage of listening, we should be on

the lookout for places where our perceptions might differ from those of the speaker, and be willing to ask questions to clarify the speaker's meaning.

Stage 3: Remembering

Remembering begins with listening; if you can't remember something that was said, you might not have been listening effectively. Researchers Wolvin and Coakley note that the most common reason for not remembering a message after the fact is because it wasn't really learned in the first place (Wolvin & Coakley, 1996). However, even when you are listening attentively, some messages are more difficult than others to understand and remember. Complex messages that are filled with detail call for keen listening skills. Moreover, if something distracts your attention even for a moment, you could miss out on information that explains other new concepts you hear when you begin to listen fully again.

You can improve your memory of a message by processing it meaningfully—that is, by applying it in ways that are meaningful to you (Gluck, et al., 2008). Instead of simply repeating a new acquaintance's name over and over, for example, you might remember it by associating it with something in your own life. "Emily," you might say, "reminds me of the Emily I knew in middle school," or "Mr. Impiari's name reminds me of the Impala my father drives." Keep in mind that if understanding has been inaccurate, recollection of the message will be inaccurate too.

Stage 4: Evaluating

The fourth stage in the listening process is evaluating or thinking critically about the message. We might think, "This makes sense" or conversely, "This is very odd." Because everyone embodies biases and perspectives learned from widely diverse sets of life experiences, evaluations of the same message can vary widely from one listener to another. Even the most open-minded listeners will have opinions of a speaker, and those opinions will influence how the message is evaluated. People are more likely to evaluate a message positively if the speaker speaks clearly, presents ideas logically, and gives reasons to support the points made.

Unfortunately, personal opinions sometimes result in prejudiced evaluations. Imagine you're listening to a speech given by someone from another country and this person has an accent that is hard to understand. You may have a hard time simply understanding the speaker's message. Some people find a foreign accent to be interesting or even exotic, while others find it annoying or even take it as a sign of ignorance. If a listener has a strong bias against foreign accents, the listener may not even attempt to attend to the message. If you mistrust a speaker because of an accent, you could be rejecting important or personally enriching information. Good listeners have learned to refrain from making these judgments and instead to focus on the speaker's meanings.

Stage 5: Responding Through Feedback

Feedback--response to the message--is the fifth and final stage of the listening process. Although Figure 5.2.1 represents this stage of listening by the lips because we often give feedback in the form of words, feedback can be either *verbal* or *nonverbal*. Almost anything a listener says or does can be interpreted as feedback. Making eye contact and nodding your head when a classmate or instructor is speaking are examples of positive nonverbal feedback. On the other hand, looking at your mobile phone would likely be construed as negative nonverbal feedback. Positive verbal feedback could be saying, "great job" or telling the speaker you found his or her message interesting.

Formative Feedback

Not all responses occur at the end of the message. Formative feedback is a natural part of the ongoing transaction between a speaker and a listener. As the speaker delivers the message, a listener signals his or her involvement with focused attention, note-taking, nodding, and other *nonverbal* behaviors that indicate understanding or failure to understand the message. These signals are important to the speaker, who is interested in whether the message is clear and accepted or whether the content of the message is meeting the resistance of preconceived ideas. Speakers can use this feedback to decide whether additional examples, support materials, or explanation is needed.

Summative Feedback

Summative feedback is given at the end of the communication. When you attend a political rally, a presentation given by a speaker you admire, or even a class, there are verbal and nonverbal ways of indicating your appreciation or disagreement. Maybe you'll stand up and applaud a speaker you agreed with or just sit staring in silence after listening to a speaker whose message you didn't appreciate. In other cases, a speaker may be attempting to persuade you to donate to a charity, so if the speaker asks for money and

you make a donation, you are providing feedback on the speaker's effectiveness. At the same time, we do not always listen most carefully to the messages of speakers we admire. Sometimes we simply enjoy being in their presence, and our summative feedback is not about the message but about our attitudes toward the speaker. If your feedback is limited to something like, "I just love your voice," you might be indicating that you did not listen carefully to the content of the message.

There is little doubt that by now, you are beginning to understand the complexity of listening and the great potential for errors. By becoming aware of what is involved with active listening and where difficulties might lie, you can prepare yourself both as a listener and as a speaker to minimize listening errors with your communication.

Key Takeaways

- The receiving stage of listening is where an individual hears a message being sent by a speaker.
- The understanding stage of listening occurs when a receiver interprets or attaches meaning to the message.
- The remembering stage of listening is when a listener either places information into long-term memory or forgets the information presented.
- The evaluating stage of listening occurs when a listener thinks critically about and judges the content of the message or the character of the speaker.
- The responding stage of listening occurs when a listener provides verbal or nonverbal feedback to the speaker or message.
- During the responding stage of listening, listeners can provide speakers with formative or summative feedback. Formative feedback is given while the speaker is engaged in the act of communicating. Summative feedback is given when the communicator has concluded the message.

This page titled [5.2: Stages of Listening](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [4.5: Stages of Listening](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/public-speaking-practice-and-ethics>.

5.3: Listening Styles and Types

Learning Objectives

1. Understand listening styles.
2. Explain the people listening style.
3. Explain the action listening style.
4. Explain the content listening style.
5. Explain the time listening style.
6. Understand the basic types of listening: discriminative, information, critical, and empathetic.



Figure 5.3.1: Iscte - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/)

If listening were easy and if all people went about it in the same way, teaching listening would be much easier. One reason for the complexity of teaching listening is that people have different ways of listening. The Greek philosopher Aristotle, as long ago as 325 BC, recognized that listeners in his audience were varied in **listening styles**. Part of the potential for misunderstanding is the difference in these listening styles. As you read through these styles, try to identify your own preferred style.

Styles of Listening

A listening style is a manner or way in which an individual attends to messages. In an article in the *International Journal of Listening*, authors Watson, Barker, and Weaver identified four listening styles: people, action, content, and time.

People

The **people-oriented listener** is interested in the speaker. People-oriented listeners listen to the message in order to learn how the speaker thinks and feels. For instance, when people-oriented listeners hear an interview with a famous rap artist, they are likely to be more curious about the artist as an individual than about music, even though they might also appreciate the artist's work. If you are a people-oriented listener, you might have certain questions you hope will be answered such as: Does the artist feel successful? What's it like to be famous? What kind of educational background does the artist have? In the same way, if we're listening to a doctor who responded to the earthquake crisis in Haiti, we might be more interested in the doctor as a person than in the state of affairs for Haitians. Why did the doctor go to Haiti? How did she get away from her normal practice and patients? How many lives did she save? We might be less interested in the equally important and urgent needs for food, shelter, and sanitation following the earthquake. The people-oriented listener is likely to be more attentive to the speaker than to the message itself.

Action

Action-oriented listeners are primarily interested in finding out what the speaker wants. Does the speaker want votes, donations, volunteers, or something else? It's sometimes difficult for an action-oriented speaker to listen to details such as the descriptions,

evidence, and explanations with which the speaker builds their case.

Action-oriented listening is sometimes called *task-oriented listening*. This type of listener seeks a clear message about what needs to be done and might have less patience for listening to the reasons behind the task. This can be especially true if the reasons are complicated. For example, before an airplane waiting on the runway takes flight, a flight attendant delivers a brief speech called the preflight safety briefing. To appeal to action-oriented listeners, the flight attendant does not read the findings of a safety study or explain that the content of the speech is actually mandated by the Federal Aviation Administration. Instead, the attendant says only to buckle up so we can leave. An action-oriented listener finds “buckling up” a more compelling message than a message about the underlying reasons.

Content

Content-oriented listeners are interested in the message. These listeners desire well-developed information with solid explanations and credible evidence. They listen to details and carefully analyze and evaluate the message. When you give a speech or lead a meeting at work, many members of your audience will be content-oriented listeners. Therefore, you have an obligation to present information in the fullest way you can. You can emphasize or advocate an idea that is important to you, but if you exaggerate or omit important information, you could lose credibility in the minds of your content-oriented audience.

Time

Time-oriented listeners prefer a message that gets to the point quickly. They can become impatient with slow delivery or lengthy explanations. This type of listener may be receptive for only a brief amount of time and may become rude or even hostile if the communicator expects a longer focus of attention. They may convey their impatience through eye-rolling, shifting about in their seats, checking their phones, and other inappropriate behaviors. If you’ve been asked to speak to a group of middle school students, you need to realize that their attention spans are simply not as long as those of college students. For this reason, speeches or conversations with young audiences must be shorter and include more variety than speeches to adults.

In the workplace, some listeners will have very real time constraints, not merely perceived ones. Imagine that you’ve been asked to speak about a new project to the board of directors of a local corporation. Chances are the members of the board of directors are all pressed for time. If your speech is long and filled with overly detailed information, time-oriented listeners will simply start to tune you out as you’re speaking.

Listening Types

Just as there are different listening styles, there is more than one type--or purpose--of listening. Different situations may require us to use different strategies, depending on whether we are engaged in discriminative, informational, critical, or empathetic listening.

Discriminative Listening

Discriminative listening usually occurs at the *receiving* stage of listening and is used to monitor and focus on particular sounds. For example, we may focus our listening on a dark part of the yard while walking the dog at night to determine if the noise we just heard presents us with any danger. Or we may listen for a particular paralinguistic cue to let us know our conversational partner received our message. In the absence of hearing impairment, we have an innate and physiological ability to engage in discriminative listening. Although this is the most basic form of listening, it provides the foundation on which more intentional listening skills are built. This type of listening can be refined and honed. Think of how musicians, singers, and mechanics exercise specialized discriminative listening to isolate specific sounds and how parents train themselves to listen to sounds from their baby's room that might indicate the baby is in distress.

Informational Listening

Informational listening is listening to understand and remember information. This type of listening is common in contexts ranging from a student listening to an instructor to an out-of-town visitor listening to directions to the nearest gas station. We also use informational listening when we listen to news reports, voice mail, and briefings at work. Since retention and recall are important components of informational listening, good concentration and memory skills are key. These also happen to be skills that many college students struggle with, at least in the first years of college, but will be expected to have mastered once they are in the workplace. Most college professors provide detailed instructions and handouts with assignments so students can review them as needed, but many supervisors and managers will expect employees to take the initiative to remember or record important information. Additionally, many bosses are not as open to questions or requests to repeat themselves as professors are.

Critical Listening

Critical listening is listening to analyze or evaluate the quality or accuracy of a message. You can see judges employ critical listening on talent competition shows like *Rupaul's Drag Race*, *America's Got Talent*, and *The Voice*. In college, you may be expected to use critical listening to evaluate a classmate's speech or to analyze and react to comments made in group discussions. In your personal life, you engage in critical listening when you listen to political candidates asking for your vote. Here are some helpful guidelines for critical listening:

- **Listen to the entire message before making a judgment.** Listen to the entire message. Withhold judgment or decision-making until the speaker is finished. Sometimes speakers will surprise you.
- **Listen for evidence.** Does the communicator present research that reinforces their message, such as references to research or studies conducted by credible authors and organizations, or does the message consist solely of the speaker's unsupported statements and opinions? Sociologist and former United States Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan is credited with saying, "Everyone is entitled to their own opinions, but they are not entitled to their own facts." An important part of critical listening is learning to separate unsubstantiated opinions from facts. This is not to say that speakers should not express their opinions. Many of the greatest speeches in history include personal opinions. Consider, for example, Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech, in which he expressed his wish for the future of American society. Critical listeners may agree or disagree with a speaker's opinions, but the point is that they know when a message they are hearing is based on opinion and when it is factual.
- **Analyze the speaker's credibility, including possible hidden agendas.** *Speaker credibility* refers to the listeners' judgment about whether the communicator is trustworthy and qualified to speak about the topic. Consider whether the speaker has educational background or experience on the topic. Do the speaker's prior actions and reputation convince you the speaker can be trusted? Other than the speaker's qualifications and trustworthiness, another important consideration is whether the speaker has a *hidden agenda*, a motive that is not shared with listeners. For example, assume you are watching a television program that has promised to inform the audience about the properties of Vitamin D. The program features a number of doctors with impressive credentials. At first, you are convinced that these doctors are trustworthy and the information they are presenting is solid and unbiased. However, several minutes into the broadcast, a commercial and then the doctors themselves urge viewers to buy a particular brand of Vitamin D—one developed by the doctors on the program. At this point, a good critical listener will realize the program, although it at first appeared to be informative, is actually persuasive and that the supposedly unbiased doctors have a hidden agenda. This calls into question the claims made in the program.
- **Consider the communicator's nonverbal communication, not just their words.** Sometimes a communicator's body language or paralanguage will add important clues to the message itself. Although we want to be fair about judging unfairly, it is still important to consider how the speaker presents the message.

As students and as constant consumers of social and mass media, we need to use critical listening to assess the intent of the message and to evaluate the message itself. The program urges viewers to buy a particular brand of Vitamin D—one developed by the doctors themselves. At this point, a good critical listener will realize the program, although it at first appeared to be informative, is actually persuasive in nature. This should call into question the credibility of the doctors and the claims made in the program.

You can see judges employ critical listening on talent competition shows like *Rupaul's Drag Race*, *America's Got Talent*, and *The Voice*. In college, you may be expected to use critical listening to evaluate a classmate's speech or analyze and react to comments made in group discussions.

Empathetic Listening

Empathetic listening is listening to understand and experience what a speaker feels and provide emotional support. This is a difficult type of listening for many since it's often easier to tell our own story or to give advice than to try to understand and show support for what the communicator has experienced. In order to be empathetic listeners, people should strive to be open-minded, patient, and genuine. We should keep in mind that sometimes others just need to be heard and our feedback isn't actually desired. Empathetic listening is important for understanding others and building strong interpersonal relationships.



Figure 5.3.2: We support others through empathetic listening. (Thinkstock. *A Primer on Communication Studies*)

Key Takeaways

- A listening style is a general manner in which an individual attends to the messages of another person.
- People-oriented listeners pay more attention to the personal details about a speaker than the content of the message.
- Action-oriented listeners pay attention to what the communicator wants them to do, such as make a donation, volunteer, and so on.
- Content-oriented listeners pay attention to the meaning and credibility of a speaker's message. They are interested in learning.
- Time-oriented listeners want messages that are short and concise as a result of limited attention spans or time commitments.
- Discriminative listening is the most basic form of listening, used to distinguish between and focus on specific sounds. Informational listening is when we seek to comprehend and retain information. Through critical listening, we analyze and evaluate messages at various levels. We use empathetic listening to try to understand or experience what a speaker is feeling and provide emotional support.

References

- Aristotle. (325 BCE). *Rhetoric* (W. Rhys Roberts, Trans.). Book I, Part 3, para. 1. Retrieved from <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.1.i.html>.
- Bruneau, Tom. "Empathy and Listening," in *Perspectives on Listening*, eds. Andrew D. Wolvin and Carolyn Gwynn Coakley (Norwood, NJ: Alex Publishing Corporation, 1993), 188, from [A Primer on Communication Studies](#) (v. 1.0).
- Hargie, Owen. *Skilled Interpersonal Interaction: Research, Theory, and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2011), 185. Taken from "Understanding How and Why We Listen", section 5.1, from the book [A Primer on Communication Studies](#) (v. 1.0).
- Watson, K. W., Barker, L. L., & Weaver, J. B., III. (1995). The Listening Styles Profile (LSP-16): Development and Validation of an Instrument to Assess Four Listening Styles. *International Journal of Listening*, 9, 1–13.

Wolvin, Andrew and Carolyn Gwynn Coakley, "A Listening Taxonomy," in *Perspectives on Listening*, eds. Andrew D. Wolvin and Carolyn Gwynn Coakley

(Norwood, NJ: Alex Publishing Corporation, 1993), 18–19. Taken from "Understanding How and Why We Listen", section 5.1, from the book

[A Primer on Communication Studies](#) (v. 1.0).

This page titled [5.3: Listening Styles and Types](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [4.3: Listening Styles](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/public-speaking-practice-and-ethics>.

5.4: Poor Listening Habits

Learning Objectives

1. Identify common poor listening habits.
2. Understand the types of noise that can impede a listener's ability to attend to a message.
3. Analyze how a listener's personal biases can influence her or his ability to attend to a message.
4. Define receiver apprehension and the impact it can have on a listener.

Studies have shown that immediately after listening to a 10-minute oral presentation, the average listener remembers only half (50%) of the message. Within 48 hours, listeners recall only 25%--one-fourth--of the presentation. Poor listening accounts for much of this steep decline. It's not difficult to anticipate the many problems we can create for ourselves through these poor listening habits.

Poor Listening Habits

The [International Listening Association](#) identifies many habits that can interfere with our ability to listen effectively. As we analyze a few of the most common problems, attempt to identify your own listening habits.

Interrupting the Speaker

Conversations unfold as a series of turns, with conversational turn-taking similar to a dance where communicators try to avoid stepping on each other's toes. One of the most frequent problems in the turn-taking process is interrupting a speaker before they are finished speaking. You may interrupt because you are only half-listening and jump in at the first pause. Interrupting the speaker with "That reminds me..." or "That's nothing, let me tell you about..." in an attempt to dominate the conversation is rude and offensive. Continually finishing the speaker's sentences should also be avoided.

Not all interruptions are considered poor listening, however. Some interruptions may be statements intended to show support ("I think so too") or to express excitement about the conversation ("That's so cool!"). Supportive paralinguistic like "uh-huh," also may overlap a speaker's message. These interruptions are not evidence of bad listening unless they become distracting for the speaker.

Pretending to Pay Attention (Fake Listening)

Do you have a friend or family member who repeats stories? If so, you've probably pretended to pay attention or engaged in "fake listening" as a politeness strategy. Outwardly visible signals of attentiveness are an important part of the listening process, but when they are just an "act" are evidence of poor behaviors. Many of us smile, nod, and act as though we are paying attention and interested when our mind is somewhere else. Particularly in the classroom or workplace, we should avoid fake listening. Although we may get away with it in some situations, each time we do it, we risk being "found out," which could be embarrassing or have negative consequences.

Allowing Yourself to Be Distracted

Most communicators speak at a rate of 125 to 175 words per minute, but listeners can process between 400 and 800 words per minute. Think about that. We think around four times faster than a communicator can speak. This gap between speech rate and thought rate gives us ample opportunity to give in to distractions such as daydreaming or reaching for our mobile phones. Instead of surrendering to the temptation to plan lunch or dinner or to engage in other thoughts unrelated to the message, good listeners learn to use this extra mental processing time to repeat the message, paraphrase it, or apply it to their own experiences. Some listeners find that taking brief notes helps them focus. Effective listeners discipline themselves to resist the temptation to text, check social media, or succumb to external or internal distractions.

Media Multitasking and Listening

Do you check your social media account during virtual meetings or classes? Do you read text messages at work? Do you watch television while you read your textbook? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you are engaged in multitasking.

Although many of us like to think that we're good at multitasking, research indicates otherwise. Studies analyzing use of laptop computers during class found that laptops interfered with the receiving stage of listening, with students using them reporting they paid less attention to the class lectures. Often this was because students used the laptops for purposes other than

taking notes or exploring class content. Of the students using laptops, 81 percent checked e-mail during lectures, 68 percent used instant messaging, and 43 percent surfed the web. Students using laptops also had difficulty with the interpretation stage of listening, as they found less clarity in the parts of the lecture they heard and did not understand the course material as much as students who didn't use a laptop or mobile phone. The difficulties with receiving and interpreting obviously create issues with recall that can lead to lower academic performance.

Laptop use also negatively affected the listening abilities of students not using the devices. These students reported that they were distracted, as their attention was drawn to the screens of other students. Although these examples are about laptops, mobile phones have now taken over as likely media multitasking culprits. (Carrie B. Fried, "In-Class Laptop Use and Its Effects on Student Learning," *Computers and Education* 50 (2008): 906–14.

In an article written for the Cleveland Clinic, Neuropsychologist [Cynthia Kubu, PhD](#) explains that multitasking not only affects listening, it can also affect our ability to learn, because in order to learn, we need to be able to focus. "We're really wired to be monotaskers, meaning that our brains can only focus on one task at a time...The more we multitask, the less we actually accomplish, because we slowly lose our ability to focus enough to learn," Dr. Kubu says. "If we're constantly attempting to multitask, we don't practice tuning out the rest of the world to engage in deeper processing and learning." [One study](#) found that college students who tried to multitask took longer to do their homework and had lower average grades.



Figure 5.4.1: Ian T. McFarland – Listen – [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

Factors that Interfere with Listening

Some of the factors that interfere with good listening might exist beyond our control, but others are manageable. It's helpful to be aware of these factors so that they interfere as little as possible with understanding the message.

Noise

Noise is anything that interferes with your ability to attend to and understand a message. To listen effectively, we must learn to overcome noise.

Physical noise refers to sounds or other distractions in our environment that interfere with our ability to hear and pay attention. Construction noises right outside a window, planes flying directly overhead, a classmate talking, and a television blaring are all examples. If possible, a listener should manage the environment to reduce the noise. Close the window, or ask the people in the next room to turn their television down. Move to a different seat in the classroom if that will take care of the problem. When you are responsible for recording a speech, participating in a virtual discussion, or conducting a meeting at work or school, it is important to choose a setting where physical noise won't interfere with your or your audience members' ability to hear and listen.

Psychological noise refers to a listener's thoughts and internal distractions. When you are preoccupied with personal problems or worried about an upcoming test, it is difficult to give your full attention to the message. The presence of another person to whom you feel attracted, or perhaps a person you dislike intensely, can also draw your attention away from the message. Setting aside personal distractions may be difficult, but good listeners must have the willingness and self-discipline to do so.

Physiological noise refers to distractions caused by our bodies. If you are hungry, hot, tired, or have a headache, you will probably find it difficult to listen. We can avoid some physiological noise by healthy habits such as getting enough sleep, eating breakfast, and dressing appropriately for the environment. However, some physiological noise--such as illness or a headache--can't be anticipated. In this event, you can request postponing the meeting or conversation to another time.

Semantic noise occurs when a listener experiences confusion over the meaning of a word or phrase. While the listener attempts to understand, the speaker continues to present the message. For example, assume you are listening to a speaker who mentions using a *sweeper* to clean carpeting. You are confused because you do not see how a broom would be effective in cleaning carpeting. Only later do you learn that the speaker was using the word "sweeper" to refer to a vacuum cleaner. In the meantime, your listening was hurt by your inability to understand that term. Words in the English language commonly have more than one meaning. In "10 Words in the English Language With the Most Definitions," author Melina Glusac explains there are at least ten words with hundreds of definitions each. "'Go' has 368, for instance, and 'set' has 430. The word 'run' is [anticipated to have approximately 645 different meanings](#) in the next Oxford English Dictionary, set for a 2037 release" (Glusac, *Insider.com*). No wonder listeners experience semantic confusion, particularly those who are still learning the language.

Physical Noise

- Construction activity
- Barking dogs
- Loud music
- Air conditioners
- Airplanes
- Noisy conflict nearby

Psychological Noise

- Worries about money
- Crushing deadlines
- The presence of specific other people in the room
- Tight daily schedule
- Biases related to the speaker or the content

Physiological Noise

- Feeling ill
- Having a headache
- Growling stomach
- Room is too cold or too hot

Semantic Noise

- Special jargon
- Unique word usage
- Mispronunciation
- Euphemism
- Phrases from foreign languages

Listener Biases

Good listening demands that we keep an open mind and withhold judgment until the communicator has finished speaking. Listener biases can refer to one of two things: prejudice toward the speaker or preconceived ideas about the topic. Both biases can interfere with effective listening.

One type of listener bias is directed toward the speaker. When we have preconceived notions based on a speaker's appearance, accent, or demeanor, those biases can interfere with our ability to listen accurately and competently. Listener bias comes into play

when we ignore the speaker because we don't like the way they are dressed or because we disagree with their political beliefs. When we fail to listen to a work colleague who annoys us for some reason or to a classmate whom we believe has little of value to say about the topic, we are demonstrating listener bias toward the speaker.

Another type of listener bias results when we have preconceived ideas about the topic. The biased listener may believe, "I don't need to listen because I already know all about the topic," or "I already know what I believe." Maybe you've heard the subject discussed a thousand times, so you just tune out the speaker. Or perhaps the speaker is presenting a position you fundamentally disagree with. When listeners have strong preexisting opinions about topics such as political candidates, gun ownership, the death penalty, religion, abortion, or global warming, their biases may make it difficult for them to even consider new information, especially if the new information is inconsistent with what they already believe to be true.

Listeners may have difficulty identifying our biases, especially when our biases seem to make sense. However, we have an ethical obligation to withhold judgment and listen to others. Our lives would be very difficult if no one ever considered new points of view or new information. We live in a world where everyone can benefit from clear thinking and open-minded listening. Oscar Wilde said, "Listening is a very dangerous thing. If one listens, one may be convinced."

Listening or Receiver Apprehension

Listening or receiver apprehension is the fear that you might be unable to understand the message or process the information correctly. In some situations, you might worry that the information presented will be "over your head"—too complex, technical, or advanced for you to understand adequately. Many students will actually avoid registering for courses in which they feel certain they will do poorly. In other cases, students will choose to take a challenging course only if it's a requirement. This avoidance might be understandable but is not a good strategy for success.

Research has shown us that when listeners do not feel they understand a speaker's message, their apprehension escalates. Imagine that you are listening to a lecture about chemistry and the professor begins talking about "colligative properties." You may start wondering whether you're even in the right place. In this situation, keep in mind that your professor's job is to help you understand. Most professors welcome and encourage questions, so do not be afraid to ask them. If you still don't understand, take advantage of your professor's office hours; that is what they are for. The same thing is true in the workplace; if you don't understand, ask questions.

Key Takeaways

- The International Listening Association has identified common habits that can lead to poor listening, including interrupting the speaker, pretending to pay attention, and giving in to distractions.
- Listeners are often unable to accurately attend to messages because of noise. Physical noise is caused by the physical setting a listener is in. Psychological noise exists within a listener's own mind and prevents him or her from attending to a speaker's message. Physiological noise exists because a listener's body is feeling some sensation that prevents him or her from attending to a speaker's message.
- Listener biases can often prevent a listener from accurately and competently listening to a speaker's actual message. Listeners must be aware of the biases they have for speakers and certain topics.
- Receiver apprehension is a listener's fear that he or she will be unable to understand the message, process the information correctly, or adapt thinking to include new information coherently. Listeners should not hesitate to ask questions to clarify the speaker's meaning.

References

"Are You Listening?" *International Listening Association*. Retrieved 2021. <https://www.listen.org/Are-you-Listening>

Kabu, Cynthia. Ph.D. "Why Multitasking Doesn't Work." *Health Essentials*. <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/s...g-doesnt-work/>. 10 March 2021.

This page titled [5.4: Poor Listening Habits](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- 4.4: **Why Listening Is Difficult** by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/public-speaking-practice-and-ethics>.

5.5: Improving Listening Competence

Learning Objectives

1. Understand ways to improve your listening.
2. Apply the 10-step listening checklist to your own listening.

Now it's time to turn our attention to the practical: how to become a better listener.



Figure 5.5.1: Kizzzbeth – Good Listener – [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

Ways to Improve Your Listening

Listening is first and foremost a skill that can be learned and refined. Here are five suggestions for improving your listening.

Be Open to New Ideas

In college, at work, and in our personal lives, we must be open to new ideas. We all have a tendency to filter out information we disagree with and to filter in the information that supports what we already believe, but this can be a mistake. Nicolaus Copernicus was a sixteenth-century astronomer who dared to publish a treatise explaining that the earth revolves around the sun, which was a violation of Catholic doctrine. Copernicus's findings were labeled heretical and his treatise was banned because a group of people at the time were not open to new ideas. In May 2010, almost five hundred years after his death, the Roman Catholic Church admitted its error and reburied his remains with the full rites of Catholic burial (Owen, 2010).

While the Copernicus case is a fairly dramatic reversal, listeners should always be open to new ideas. You do not have to agree with every idea that you are faced with in life, but you should at least listen to and consider the message before you evaluate it.

Use Your Common Sense

Your powers of reasoning and common sense can act as a warning system. If common sense tells you a message is inconsistent with established facts, an argument is illogical, or the language is exaggerated, you may very well be right. You should investigate before accepting or rejecting the message. Often, you will not be able to take this step during the presentation of the message; it may take longer to collect enough knowledge to make that decision for yourself.

However, when you are a public speaker, you should not give a speech based only on your common sense. You must also be able to back up your statements with evidence from reputable sources. That's why it's necessary for public speakers to cite sources and refer to the works of scholars whose research is credible.

Relate New Information and Ideas to Old Ones

As both a speaker and a listener, one of the most important things you can do to understand a message is to relate new ideas to previously held ideas. If you can make effective comparisons while you are listening, it can reinforce and deepen your

understanding. When you are the communicator or speaker, if you can provide those comparisons for your listeners, you make it easier for them to understand and consider your ideas.

Take Notes

Of course, we don't need to take notes during every conversation. However, careful, selective note-taking is important when we desire an accurate record or need to recall important details. It's nearly impossible to write down everything a speaker says; therefore, focus on the main ideas. Note-taking is a skill that improves with practice. To improve both your listening and note-taking, practice identifying the speaker's central issues and main ideas. Do not become so involved in note-taking that you fail to observe the speaker's nonverbal communication or to provide supportive feedback. It is important to strike a balance between listening and writing things down.

Listen Ethically

Ethical listening involves showing respect and consideration for the speaker. We should extend to speakers the same courtesy we want to receive when it's our turn to speak. Face the speaker and make eye contact instead of checking your phone or looking out the window. Avoid facial expressions or behavior that belittles the speaker or the message, and guard against making snap judgments. Communication professors Stephanie Coopman and James Lull emphasize creating a climate of caring and mutual understanding, observing that "respecting others' perspectives is one hallmark of the effective listener" (Coopman & Lull). In *The Speaker's Handbook*, Sprague, Stuart, and Bodary urge us to treat the speaker with respect even when we disagree, don't understand, or find the speech boring (Sprague, et al.).



Figure 5.5.3: Ben Smith – *String telephone* – [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

Doug Lippman, a storytelling coach, wrote powerfully and sensitively about listening in his book:

Like so many of us, I used to take listening for granted, glossing over this step as I rushed into the more active, visible ways of being helpful. Now, I am convinced that listening is the single most important element of any helping relationship.

Listening has great power. It draws thoughts and feelings out of people as nothing else can. When someone listens to you well, you become aware of feelings you may not have realized that you felt. You have ideas you may have never thought before. You become more eloquent, more insightful....

As a helpful listener, I do not interrupt you. I do not give advice. I do not do something else while listening to you. I do not convey distraction through nervous mannerisms. I do not finish your sentences for you. In spite of all my attempts to understand you, I do not assume I know what you mean.

I do not convey disapproval, impatience, or condescension. If I am confused, I show a desire for clarification, not dislike for your obtuseness. I do not act vindicated when you

misspeak or correct yourself.

I do not sit impassively, withholding participation.

Instead, I project affection, approval, interest, and enthusiasm. I am your partner in communication. I am eager for your imminent success, fascinated by your struggles, forgiving of your mistakes, always expecting the best. I am your delighted listener.

Are You Listening? A Checklist for Listeners

We'll conclude this chapter with a listening checklist published on the International Listening Association website.

1. Have you given the speaker 100% of your attention?
2. Are you listening to understand, rather than listening to respond?
3. Have you opened your mind to receive what is being said?
4. Have you rejected the temptation to prepare your response while the other person is speaking?
5. Are you open to changing your mind?
6. Are you aware of what is not being said as well as what is being said?
7. Are you taking account of the degree of emotion attached to the words?
8. Are you aware of differences or similarities (culture, age, gender) between you and the speaker which may influence how the speaker communicates and how you listen?
9. Are you giving signals to the speaker that you are listening?
10. Are you valuing the speaker and the experience they have gathered in their life so far?

Chapter Summary

At the beginning of this chapter, you learned that an average worker spends 55 percent of their workday listening, and managers spend about 63 percent of their day listening. Yet, speaking is typically covered much more extensively than listening in communication classes. In this chapter, the authors have attempted to emphasize the importance and benefits of listening, differences between listening and hearing, stages of listening, variations in listening types and styles, difficulties in listening, and ways of improving your listening in the hopes that students will apply what you have learned to your professional, personal, and academic lives.

Additional Listening Resources

Consider these academic survival tips provided by Chicago State University. www.csu.edu/engineeringstudies/acadsurvivaltips.htm

Examine this collection of articles and other resources to assist in improving listening and other communication skills:

<http://conflict911.com/resources/Communication/Listening>

Active Listening Skills: <http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkll/ActiveListening.htm>

References

Edward Jenner Museum. (n.d.). Vaccination. Retrieved from www.jennermuseum.com/Jenner/vaccination.html

Lippman, D. *The Storytelling Coach: How to Listen, Praise, and Bring out People's Best*. Little Rock, AR: August House. 1998.

Owen, R. Catholic Church Reburies "Heretic" Nicolaus Copernicus with Honour. *Times Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article7134341.ece>. 23 May, 2010.

Sprague, J., Stuart, D., & Bodary, D. *The Speaker's Handbook* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage. 2010.

This page titled [5.5: Improving Listening Competence](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- **4.6: Listening Critically** by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/public-speaking-practice-and-ethics>.

5.6: Review

Chapter 5: Vocabulary and Questions for Review and Discussion

Vocabulary

- action-oriented listening style
- content-oriented listening style
- critical listening
- discriminative listening
- empathetic listening
- ethical listening
- formative feedback
- hearing
- informational listening
- listening
- listener bias
- listener apprehension
- media multitasking
- people-oriented listening style
- physical noise
- psychological noise
- semantic noise
- summative feedback
- time-oriented listening style

? Questions for Review and Discussion

1. List and describe the 5 stages of listening.
2. Which of the 4 styles of listening most accurately describes your listening preference? Are you able to switch listening styles if there is a need?
3. List the 4 types of listening. Which type of listening do you do best? Which do you find most difficult and why?
4. Assuming you were attempting to listen empathetically to a friend or colleague, what are some examples of positive nonverbal communication you could use to put him or her at ease? What are some examples of nonverbal communication that might make the communicator uncomfortable?
5. What percentage of a message do most listeners remember right after they hear it? What does that percentage drop to after a couple of days? What are possible reasons for such poor retention?
6. List negative formative feedback that might be given during a lecture or student speech. How might this negative feedback affect the communicator?
7. Which of the three types of noise discussed in the chapters most often keeps you from listening attentively in the classroom? How do or could you manage this noise?
8. What are two types of listener bias? Describe a time when you sensed that a listener or audience was biased toward you or your message. How did you handle the situation? Or if you have not experienced bias, describe a time when you struggled with your own bias toward a speaker or a topic.
9. Examine the checklist for effective listening provided by the International Listening Association. Choose 5 suggestions from the checklist that you see as the most important and order them from most (1) to least (5) important. Compare your list with your classmates.
10. How and when do you engage in media multitasking? What are some positive and negative consequences of your media multitasking?
11. Should laptops, smartphones, and other media devices be used by students during classes? Why or why not? What restrictions or guidelines for use could instructors provide that would capitalize on the presence of such media to enhance learning and minimize distractions?

12. Does your employer restrict the use of mobile phones during work hours? What restrictions, if any, should be placed on a mobile phone or computer use in the workplace?

5.6: Review is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Interpersonal Communication

In this chapter, we discuss the meaning of interpersonal communication and explore communication climates, friendships, romantic relationships, family, and conflict management.

[6.1: Introduction to Interpersonal Communication](#)

[6.2: Communication Climate](#)

[6.3: Friendships](#)

[6.4: Romantic Relationships](#)

[6.5: Family](#)

[6.6: Interpersonal Skills in the Workplace](#)

[6.7: Conflict Management](#)

[6.8: Review](#)

Reference

Hargie, O., *Skilled Interpersonal Interaction: Research, Theory, and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2011), 2.

This page titled [6: Interpersonal Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

6.1: Introduction to Interpersonal Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Define and give examples of interpersonal communication.
2. Define self-disclosure.
3. Identify the four areas of the Johari window.
4. Explain how the Johari window can be used to improve self-awareness and interpersonal communication.

Think about your relationships in the last few years. You may have just transitioned from high school to a community college or university. Perhaps you and your friends from high school went to different colleges and are now living far apart from each other. If you have recently been separated by distance from friends or family, you have noticed that it is more difficult to stay connected and share all of the little things that go on in your day. As you continue to grow and change in college, it is likely that you will create relationships along the way. Being away from your family, you will probably notice changes to your relationships with them. All of these dynamics, and many more, fall under the scope of interpersonal communication.



Figure 6.1.1: "Homecoming and Reunions 2017" by The University of the South is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

What is Interpersonal Communication?

Interpersonal communication is an exchange between two or more individuals who are part of a close relationship in which they get to know one another as individuals. We usually think of interpersonal communication as occurring between two people. However, interpersonal communication also takes place in small groups such as a family unit. By virtue of this definition, chatting with a classmate you just met, nodding to a coworker in the hallway, or participating in a committee or group project would *not* be considered interpersonal communication. On the other hand, having lunch and talking with a close friend or sharing the day's events at the family dinner table would meet the definition of interpersonal communication. We will use this definition of interpersonal communication to explore the three primary types of relationships in our lives—friendships, romantic, and family. Because conflict is a natural part of interpersonal communication, we will also discuss multiple ways of understanding and managing conflict. But before we go into detail about specific interpersonal relationships, let's examine two important aspects of interpersonal communication: self-disclosure and climate.

Self-Disclosure

Because interpersonal communication is the primary means by which we get to know others as unique individuals, it is important to understand the role of self-disclosure. **Self-disclosure** is the *process of revealing information about yourself to others that is not readily known by them*. In face-to-face interactions, telling someone "I have brown hair" would not be self-disclosure because that person can perceive that about you without being told. However, revealing, "I am an avid runner" or "I like to make TikTok videos" would be examples of self-disclosure because these are pieces of personal information others do not know unless you tell them. To establish strong friendships or lasting romantic relationships, it is necessary to self-disclose. Even in an academic or career setting, appropriate self-disclosure can help establish an open work environment and build trust and a sense of collaboration. The key here is self-disclose appropriately.

There are degrees of self-disclosure, ranging from relatively safe (revealing your hobbies or musical preferences), to more personal topics (fears, dreams for the future, or fantasies). Typically, as relationships deepen and trust is established, self-disclosure increases in both breadth and depth. We tend to disclose facts about ourselves first (I am a Biology major), then move towards opinions (I feel the war is wrong), and finally disclose feelings (I'm sad that you said that). Even in an academic or career setting, self-disclosure is a good way to establish an open communication environment, although self-disclosure in that setting would not be as intimate as it would be in a personal relationship. At work, be cautious about revealing things that might be damaging to your credibility or career.

An important aspect of self-disclosure is the **rule of reciprocity**. This rule states that self-disclosure between two people works best in a back and forth fashion. When you tell someone something personal, you probably expect them to do the same. When one person reveals more than another, there can be an imbalance in the relationship because the one who self-discloses more may feel vulnerable as a result of sharing more personal information. This may be a clue to you to back off on self-disclosing until the other person reciprocates.

Johari Window

The Johari Window is a communication model designed to help improve interpersonal communication skills. The name **Johari Window** comes from combining the first names of the window's creators, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham. It is used in communication classes as well as some businesses *to help people think about differences in how they see themselves and how others see them*. The window is divided into four quadrants or "panes": the open area or pane, the blind spot, the hidden area or facade, and the unknown. The size of each of the four areas or window panes varies depending on whom you are communicating with and the context of the communication.

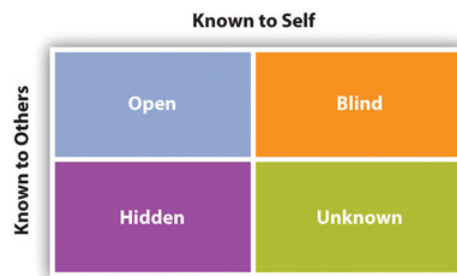


Figure 6.1.2: Johari Window. Source: Luft, Joseph. (*Of Human Interaction*, 1969).

The **open area** of the Johari Window contains information that is known to us and to others. This area is sometimes called the "I know and you know" pane. When we first meet another person, the open area is small, consisting only of those things others see, such as our hair color, or things we freely share, such as our occupation. Early on, we share only "safe" topics, but as we become more comfortable with another person, we increase our *self-disclosure*, adding more information; thus the open area expands.

The **blind area or blind spot** includes those things that are apparent to others, yet we are unaware of in ourselves. This is the "I don't know but you know" area. The habit of playing with your hair when nervous may be a habit that others have observed but you are unaware of, or perhaps the habit of growing rude and testy when you are under stress is something that others have come to expect yet you are oblivious to. Think about your own blind area. Do you wonder what characteristics or behaviors loved ones or colleagues might see in you that you don't? If you do, the best way to find out is to ask for *feedback* from a trusted friend or colleague. If you can remain open-minded and not become defensive, this type of feedback can be very helpful in increasing your self-awareness and interpersonal skills. Once you become aware of information previously in your blind spot, it moves from the blind area to the open area.

The third area, the **hidden area**, contains information that you know but you keep hidden from others. This is the "I know, but you don't know" area. Something you may have done in the past but are ashamed of, previous mistakes or failures, embarrassing moments, or private family history are topics we typically hold close and reveal only in the context of safe, long-term relationships. Sometimes we may choose to keep some things hidden in an attempt to protect the other person. If and when we do reveal this previously hidden information, it moves into the open area. Thus, the hidden area grows smaller and the open area expands.

Finally, the **unknown** area contains information that neither you nor others know about you. This is the "I don't know and you don't know" area. We cannot know how we will react when a parent dies or just what we will do after graduation until the experience

occurs. Or perhaps we have an unknown talent or interest that we are as yet unaware of. Taking on challenges and trying new things can help us discover traits or gifts that we didn't know we have.

Knowing how much to share with someone you are close to can be difficult at times. Certainly, you don't want to reveal too much too soon. On the other hand, if the open area remains small, it is difficult for the relationship and trust to grow. Knowing about ourselves, especially our blind and unknown areas enables us to have a healthy, well-rounded self-concept.

Creating Your Own Johari Window

The Johari Window can help you identify your strengths as well as your weaknesses and blind spots. If you would like to create your own Johari Window, you can do so using instructions from The World of Work Project, a company based in Edinburgh, Scotland, dedicated to creating training that will "increase team cohesion and help individuals have more fulfilling and engaging careers." (WOW 2019) To create your own Johari Window, you will need to:

1. **Choose your friend or collaborator:** Identify a person or people whom you trust and whom you think know you.
2. **Select your words:** Review the list of 56 words given below and circle 5-10 words that you think best describe you.
3. **Get your feedback from your collaborator:** Ask your chosen collaborators to complete the same exercise, choosing the 5-10 words they think best describe you.
4. **Place your words in the appropriate pane of the Johari Window:** Place words both you and others selected in "Open" pane. Place words that only you selected in the "Hidden" pane.
5. **Plot your feedback:** Place words your friend or collaborator selected but that you didn't in the "Blind" pane. Place the remaining words in the "unknown" pane.
6. **Review your Window:** Review the words in the four panes of the window. How aligned is your view of who you are with how others see you? How open are you as a person?

Words to Choose From

able	accepting	adaptable	bold	brave
calm	caring	cheerful	clever	complex
confident	dependable	dignified	energetic	extroverted
friendly	giving	happy	helpful	idealistic
independent	ingenious	intelligent	introverted	kind
knowledgeable	logical	loving	mature	modest
nervous	observant	organized	patient	powerful
proud	quiet	reflective	relaxed	religious
responsive	searching	self-assertive	self-conscious	sensible
sentimental	shy	silly	spontaneous	sympathetic
tense	trustworthy	warm	wise	witty

One of the most important parts of creating your own Johari Window is considering the results. How can you use what you learned to improve your interpersonal relationships? Could you share more about yourself to create more trusting relationships? Are there "blind spots" you discovered about yourself that you and address?

Self-Disclosure and Social Media

The willingness of many users to self-disclose personal information ranging from moods to religious affiliation, relationship status, and personal contact information have led to an increase in privacy concerns. Facebook and Twitter offer convenient opportunities to stay in touch with friends, family, and coworkers, but are people using them responsibly? Some argue that there are fundamental differences between today's digital natives, whose private and public selves are intertwined through these technologies, and older generations (Kornblum, 2007). Even though some colleges are offering seminars on managing privacy online, we still hear stories of self-disclosure such as the football player from the University of Texas who has kicked off the team for posting racist comments about the president of the student who was kicked out of his private, Christian college after a picture of him dressed in drag surfaced on Facebook. (Nealy, 2009). The issue of privacy management on Facebook is affecting parent-child relationships, too, and as the website "Oh Crap. My Parents Joined Facebook." shows, the results can sometimes be embarrassing for the college student and the parent as they balance the dialectic between openness and closedness once the child has moved away.

1. How do you manage your privacy and self-disclosures online?
2. Do you think it's ethical for school officials or potential employers to make admission or hiring decisions based on what they can learn about you online? Why or why not?
3. Are you or would you be friends with a parent on social media? Why or why not? If you already are friends with a parent, did you change your posting habits or privacy settings once they joined? Why or why not?

Key Takeaways

- **Self-disclosure** is the *process of revealing information about yourself to others that are not readily known by them*—you have to disclose it. Self-disclosure is important to interpersonal relationships.
- An excellent way of understanding self-disclosure is by looking at the open, hidden, blind, and unknown areas of the **Johari Window**.

Learning Activities

1. Have you ever said too much on a first date? At a job interview? To a professor? Have you ever posted something on Facebook only to return later to remove it? If you answered yes to any of the questions, what have you learned in this chapter that may have led you to do something differently?
2. Have you experienced negative results due to self-disclosure (as sender or receiver)? If so, what could have been altered in the decisions of what, where, when, or how to disclose that may have improved the situation?
3. Under what circumstances is it OK to share information that someone has disclosed to you? Under what circumstances is it not OK to share the information?

References

Survey of Communication Study. **Authored by:** Scott T Paynton and Linda K Hahn. **Provided by:** Humboldt State University. **Located at:**

https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Survey_of_Communication_Study. **License:** CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike

Image of Known Table. **Authored by:** Spaynton. **Located at:** https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johari_window.png. **License:** CC BY-SA:

Attribution-ShareAlike

Image of autonomy triangle. **Authored by:** Spaynton. **Located at:** <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Autonomy.png>. **License:** CC BY-SA:

Attribution-ShareAlike

Image of 4 Ways to Handle Dialectical Tension. **Authored by:** Spaynton. **Located at:** <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dialectics.png>. **License:** CC

This page titled [6.1: Introduction to Interpersonal Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

6.2: Communication Climate

Learning Objectives

- Define communication climate.
- Explain the differences between confirming and disconfirming communication climates.
- Demonstrate how to use recognition, acknowledgment, and endorsement to create a confirming communication climate.

Do you feel organized, or confined, in a clean workspace? Are you more productive when the sun is shining than when it's gray and cloudy outside? Just as factors like weather and physical space impact us, communication climate influences our interpersonal interactions. **Communication climate** is the “*overall feeling or emotional mood between people*” (Wood 245). If you dread going to visit your family during the holidays because of tension between you and your sister, or you look forward to dinner with a particular set of friends because they make you laugh, you are responding to the communication climate—the overall mood that is created because of the people involved and the type of communication they bring to the interaction. Let's look at two different types of communication climates: Confirming and Disconfirming climates.

Confirming and Disconfirming Climates

We experience **Confirming Climates** when we receive *messages that demonstrate our value and worth from those with whom we have a relationship*. Conversely, we experience **Disconfirming Climates** when we receive *messages that suggest we are devalued and unimportant*. Obviously, most of us like to be in confirming climates because they foster emotional safety as well as personal and relational growth. However, it is likely that your relationships fall somewhere between the two extremes. Let's look at how we and others create either a confirming or disconfirming climate by using--or failing to use-- three types of messages.



Figure 6.2.1: "Free hugs" by hien_it is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Recognition Messages

Recognition Messages are *messages that either confirm or deny another person's existence*. For example, if a friend enters your home and your smile, hug him, and say, “I'm so glad to see you” you are confirming his existence. If you say “good morning” to a colleague and she ignores you by walking out of the room without saying anything, she is creating a disconfirming climate by not recognizing you as a unique individual. To foster a confirming climate, it is important to recognize others



Figure 6.2.2: "A Laugh With Richard Allen" by MTSOfan is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Acknowledgment Messages

Acknowledgment Messages go beyond recognizing another's existence by *confirming what they say or how they feel*. Nodding your head while listening or laughing appropriately at a funny story are nonverbal acknowledgment messages. When a friend tells you she had a really bad day at work and you respond with, "Yeah, that does sound hard, do you want to go somewhere quiet and talk?", you are acknowledging and responding to her feelings. In contrast, if you were to respond to your friend's frustrations with a comment like, "That's nothing. Listen to what happened to me today," you would be ignoring her experience and presenting your own experiences as more important than hers.



Figure 6.2.3: Image by Tumisu from Pixabay is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Endorsement Messages

Endorsement Messages go one step further by *recognizing a person's feelings as valid*. Suppose a friend comes to you upset after a fight with his girlfriend. If you respond with, "Yeah, I can see why you would be upset" you are endorsing his right to feel upset. However, if you said, "Get over it. At least you have a girlfriend" you would be sending messages that deny his right to feel frustrated at that moment. While it is difficult to see people we care about in emotional pain, people are responsible for their own emotions. When we let people own their emotions and do not tell them how to feel, we are creating supportive climates that provide a safe environment for them to work through their problems

Key Takeaways

- A communication is the overall feeling or mood between people.
- Two types of climates are confirming and disconfirming climates.
- Three types of messages that can create a confirming climate are recognition messages, acknowledgment messages, and endorsement messages.

Learning Activity

1. Have you ever avoided a particular interpersonal communication situation because it was uncomfortable or you felt out of place? Could any of this have been related to disconfirming behaviors? Explain.
2. Do you attempt to establish a confirming communication environment in your interactions with others? Explain.

References

Survey of Communication Study. **Authored by:** Scott T Paynton and Linda K Hahn. **Provided by:** Humboldt State University.
Located at:

https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Survey_of_Communication_Study. **License:** *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

Image of 3 Types of Messages. **Authored by:** Spaynton. **Located at:** <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Climates.png>.
License: *CC BY-SA:*

Attribution-ShareAlike

This page titled [6.2: Communication Climate](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

6.3: Friendships

Learning Objectives

1. Understand stages in the development of friendships.
2. Explain the challenges that gender, culture, and sexual attraction may pose for friendships.
3. Discuss how friendships have changed as a result of social media.

Friendships are *voluntary interpersonal relationships between two people who are usually equal and who mutually influence one another*. Most people feel the need to feel connected with others. One way we meet our need for connection is through our friendships. Friendship means different things to different people depending on age, gender, and cultural background. Common among all friendships is that they are interpersonal relationships of choice. Throughout your life, you will engage in an ongoing process of developing friendships. Some of your friends may become so close that they are like members of your family. Other friendships may be more short-term but still important while they last.

Stages in Developing Friendships

The Mayo Clinic says that adults with strong support provided by good friends have a reduced risk of depression and that older adults with friends are likely to live longer than those without social connections. Friends can increase your sense of belonging and boost your self-confidence. They can help you cope with traumas, such as divorce or serious illness, and enrich your quality of life. (*Mayo Clinic.org*). However, sometimes it can be difficult to make new friends. Rawlins suggests that we develop our friendships through a series of six steps. While we may not follow these six steps in the exact order in all of our relationships, these steps help us understand how we develop friendships.

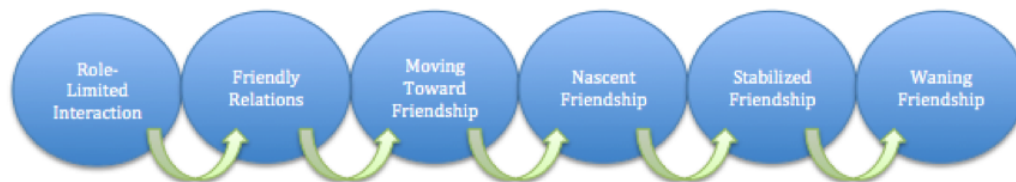


Figure 6.3.1: [Friendship Development](#). Source: S. Paynton is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)

Role-Limited Interaction

The first step in building friendships occurs through **Role-Limited Interaction**. In this step, we *interact with others based on our social roles*. For example, when you meet a new person in the class, your interaction centers around your role as a “student.” Communication is characterized by a focus on superficial, rather than personal topics. In this step, we engage in limited self-disclosure and rely on scripts and stereotypes. When two first-time freshmen met in an introductory course, they struck up a conversation and interacted according to the roles they played in the context of their initial communication. They began a conversation because they sit near each other in class and discussed how much they liked or disliked aspects of the course.

Friendly Relations

The second step in developing friendships is called **Friendly Relations**. This stage is characterized by *communication that moves beyond initial roles as the participants begin to interact with one another to see if there are common interests, as well as an interest to continue getting to know one another*. As the students spend more time together and have casual conversations, they may realize a wealth of shared interests. They realize that both were traveling from far distances to go to school and understood each other’s struggle with missing their families. Each of them also loves athletics, especially playing basketball. The development of this friendship occurred as they identified with each other as more than classmates. They saw each other as women of the same age, with similar goals, ambitions, and interests. Moreover, as one of them studied Communication and the other Psychology, they appreciated the differences as well as similarities in their collegiate pursuits.

Moving Toward Friendship

The third step in developing friendships is called **Moving Toward Friendship**. In this stage, participants *make moves to foster a more personalized friendship*. They may begin meeting outside of the setting in which the relationship started, and begin increasing

the levels of self-disclosure. Self-disclosure enables new friends to form bonds of trust. When the students entered this stage it was right before one joined the basketball club on their college campus. As she started practices and meetings, she realized this would be something fun for her and her classmate to do together so she invited her classmate along.

Nascent Friendship

The fourth step in developing friendships is called **Nascent Friendship**. In this stage, individuals *commit to spending more time together*. They also may start using the term “friend” to refer to each other as opposed to “a person in my history class” or “this guy I work with.” The interactions extend beyond the initial roles as participants work out their own private communication rules and norms. For example, they may start calling or texting on a regular basis or reserving certain times and activities for each other such as going on evening runs together. As time went on, the students started texting each other more frequently just to tell each other a funny story that happened during the day, to make plans for going out to eat, or to plan for meeting at the gym to work out.

Stabilized Friendship

The fifth step in developing friendships is **Stabilized Friendship**. In this stage, friends *take each other for granted as friends, but not in a negative way*. Because the friendship is solid, they assume each other will be in their lives. There is an assumption of continuity. The communication in this stage is also characterized by a sense of trust as levels of self-disclosure increase and each person feels more comfortable revealing parts of him or herself to the other. This stage can continue indefinitely throughout a lifetime. When the women became friends, they were freshmen in college. After finishing school some years later, they moved to separate regions for graduate school. While they were sad to move away from one another, they knew the friendship would continue. To this day they continue to be best friends.

Waning Friendship

The final step in friendship development is **Waning Friendship**. As you know, friendships do not always have a happy ending. *Many friendships come to an end*. Friendships may not simply come to an abrupt end. Many times there are stages that show a decline of a friendship, but in Rawlin’s model, the ending of a friendship is summed up by this step. Perhaps the relationship is too difficult to sustain over large geographic distances. Or, sometimes people change and grow in different directions and have little in common with old friends. Sometimes friendship rules are violated to a degree beyond repair. We spoke earlier of trust as a component of friendships. One common rule of trust is that if we tell friends a secret, they are expected to keep it a secret. If that rule is broken, and a friend continually breaks your trust by telling your secrets to others, you are likely to stop thinking of them as your friend.

Challenges for Friendships

While these steps are a general pathway toward friendship, friendships are not always smooth. As with any relationship, challenges exist in friendships that can strain their development. Three of the more common challenges to friendships are gender, cultural diversity, and sexual attraction. Important to remember is that each of these constructs comes with its own conflicts of power and privilege because of the cultural norms and the values we give to certain characteristics. These are challenges to relationships since studies show that people tend to associate with others that are similar to themselves (Echols & Graham). Take a look at the pair on the side of the page, they identify as different genders, ethnicities, cultures, and are even attracted to different sexes. Their friendship not only offers an opportunity to learn about differences through each other but also offers challenges because of these differences. As we emphasize throughout the book, factors such as our gender identities and cultural backgrounds always play a role in our interactions with others.



Figure 6.3.2: Friends (Picnoi.com Open Images)

Gender

Research suggests that both women and men value trust and intimacy in their friendships and value their time spent with friends (Mathews, Derlega & Morrow; Bell & Coleman; Monsour & Rawlins). However, there are some differences in the interactions that take place within women's and men's friendships (Burlinson, Jones & Holmstrom; Coates; Harriman). Quite common among female friends, is to get together simply to talk and catch up with one another. When calling her close friend, Antoinette might say, "Why don't you come over to my place so we can talk?" The need to connect through verbal communication is explicitly stated and forms the basis for the relationship. In contrast, among male friends, a more common approach to interaction is an invitation to engage in an activity as a means of facilitating the conversation. For example, John might say to his friend, "Hey, Mike, let's play video games this weekend." The explicit request is to engage in an activity, but John and Mike understand that as they engage in the activity, they will talk, joke around, and reinforce their friendship ties. While we have often looked at gender as male and female, culture is changing in that gender is now often viewed as a spectrum rather than the male/female binary. Research is now being done to be more inclusive of gender definitions that extend beyond the male/female binary. This research may be cutting edge in its field, but as society becomes more accepting of difference, new ideas of relationship rules will emerge.

Culture

Cultural values shape how we understand our friendships. Most Western societies emphasize individualism (as opposed to collectivism); thus friendships are seen as voluntary in that we get to choose whom we want in our friendship circle. If we do not like someone we do not have to be friends with him or her in personal life. This is in contrast to the workplace, or school, where we may be forced to get along with colleagues or classmates even though we may not like them. In many collectivist cultures, such as Japan and China, friendships carry certain obligations that are understood by all parties (Carrier; Kim & Markman). These may include gift-giving, employment, and economic opportunities. Although these sorts of connections, particularly in business and politics, may be frowned upon in the United States because they contradict the cultural value of individualism, they are natural, normal, and logical results of friendships in collectivist cultures.

Sexual Attraction

The classic film, *When Harry Met Sally*, highlights how sexual attraction can complicate friendships. In the movie, Harry quotes the line, "Men and women can't be friends because the sex always gets in the way." Levels of sexual attraction or sexual tension may challenge friendships between heterosexual men and women, gay men, and lesbian women. This may arise from an internal desire of one of the friends to explore a sexual relationship, or if someone in the relationship indicates that he/she wants to be "more than friends." These situations might place strain on the friendship and require the individuals to address the situation if they want the friendship to continue. One approach has been the recent definition of friendships called, "Friends with Benefits." This term implies an understanding that two people will identify their relationship as a friendship, but will be open to engaging in sexual activity without committing to the other characteristics common in romantic relationships.

Key Takeaways

Friendships are voluntary relationships between people who are usually equal and mutually influence one another. They are interpersonal relationships of choice.

Most friendships move through 6 discrete phases. Some friendships last a lifetime, but those who enter the waning phase come to an end.

Three common challenges of friendship are gender, culture, and sexual attraction on the part of one friend but not the other.

Friendships and Social Media

- Take a moment to reflect on how many friends you have in your everyday life. Is that number equivalent or more than the number you have on social media accounts like Facebook? Chances are, those numbers are very different. To those of us who have access to social media, it is changing the ways we develop and maintain friendships
- [Social networking addiction](#) occurs when people become so dependent on Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, and related platforms that all of their communication seems to take place within these virtual places. Many researchers conclude that addiction to social media is much stronger than an addiction to cigarettes or alcohol. Can social networking addiction enhance or interfere with friendships?
- [Six Ways Social Media Changed the Way We Communicate](#) discusses how our ability and need to share and consume information quickly can lead to changes in our relationships and ourselves. The article also provides related links. (Open Stax) What conclusions can you draw about social media and friendships?

References

CC licensed content, Shared previously:

Communication and Technology. OpenStax College Success, 3 Dec. 2020, <https://socialsci.libretexts.org/@go/page/52439>.

Survey of Communication Study. **Authored by:** Scott T Paynton and Linda K Hahn. **Provided by:** Humboldt State University.

Located at:

https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Survey_of_Communication_Study. **License:** *CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike*

Image of Friendship Model. **Authored by:** Spaynton. **Located at:**

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Friendshipmodel.png>. **License:** *CC BY-SA:*

Attribution-ShareAlike

Image of 2 friends. **Authored by:** Spaynton. **Located at:** <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Friendshipschallenge.png>.

License: *CC BY-SA: A*

tribution-ShareAlike

This page titled [6.3: Friendships](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman](#), [Thomas King](#), & [William Turner](#).

6.4: Romantic Relationships

Learning Objectives

1. Define romantic relationships.
2. Explain cultural differences that may determine the selection of a romantic partner.
3. List and explain three influences that may determine whom we select as romantic partners.
4. To comprehend common stages in romantic relationships.
5. To understand three relational dialectics present in interpersonal relationships.



Figure 6.4.1: "Couple Kissing - Pride 2009" by [pedram navid](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)

Romantic Relationships

Like other relationships in our lives, romantic relationships play an important role in fulfilling our needs for intimacy and social connection. In many Western cultures, romantic relationships are voluntary. We are free to decide whom to date and form life-long romantic relationships. In some Eastern cultures, these decisions may be made by parents, or elders in the community, based on what is good for the family or social group. Even in Western societies, not everyone holds the same amount of freedom and power to determine their relational partners. Parents or society may discourage interracial, interfaith, or interclass relationships. While it is now legal for same-sex couples to marry, many same-sex couples still suffer political and social restrictions when making choices about marrying and having children. Much of the research on how romantic relationships develop is based on relationships in the West. In this context, romantic relationships can be viewed as *voluntary relationships between individuals who intend to be a significant part of one another's ongoing lives*.

Arranged Marriages

Although romantic love is considered a precursor to marriage in Western societies, this is not the case in other cultures. Mutual attraction and love are the most important factors in mate selection according to research conducted in the United States. In some other countries, like China, India, and Iran, mate selection is primarily decided by family members and may be based on the evaluation of a potential partner's health, financial assets, social status, or family connections. In some cases, families make financial arrangements to ensure the marriage takes place. Research on marital satisfaction of people in autonomous (self-chosen) marriages and arranged marriages has been mixed, but a study by Myers, Madathil, and Tingle found that there was no significant difference in marital satisfaction between individuals in marriages of choice in the United States and those in arranged marriages in India (Myers, Madathil, & Tingle, 2005). While many Americans undoubtedly question whether a person can be happy in an arranged marriage, in more collectivistic (group-oriented) societies, accommodating family wishes may be more important than individual preferences. Rather than love leading up to a marriage, love is expected to grow as partners learn more about each other and adjust to their new lives together once married.



Figure 6.4.2: "Scene 2: Malai Matral (Ma-lie Ma-tral)" by kittygutz is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

Think about your own romantic relationships for a moment. To whom are you attracted? Chances are they are people with whom you share common interests and encounter in your everyday routines such as going to school, work, or participation in hobbies or sports. In other words, **self-identity**, **similarity**, and **proximity** are three powerful influences when it comes to whom we select as romantic partners. We often select others that we deem appropriate for us as they fit our self-identity; heterosexuals pair up with other heterosexuals, lesbian women with other lesbian women, and so forth. Social class, religious preference, and ethnic or racial identity also influence as people are more likely to pair up with others of similar backgrounds. We are certainly not suggesting that we only have romantic relationships with carbon copies of ourselves. Over the last few decades, there have been some dramatic shifts when it comes to numbers and perceptions of interracial marriage. It is more and more common to see a wide variety of people that make up married couples. Logically speaking, it is difficult (although not impossible with the prevalence of social media and online dating services) to meet people outside of our immediate geographic area. In other words, if we do not have the opportunity to meet and interact with someone at least a little, how do we know if they are a person with whom we would like to explore a relationship? We cannot meet or maintain a long-term relationship, without sharing some sense of proximity.

Stages of Romantic Relationships

Just as there are stages in friendship, romantic relationships go through stages as well.

1. In the initial stage of a romantic relationship, **no interaction** occurs when two people have not interacted.
2. We move into **invitational communication** when we begin to send signals that we are interested in more interaction.
3. Third, we engage in **explorational communication** where we increase our self-disclosure and time together to see if we are truly compatible.
4. Fourth is a period of **intensifying communication** ("relationship high" where we cannot bear to be away from one another. At this stage, we tend to idealize one another or downplay faults.
5. Fifth is **revising communication** when the relationship high wears off and we begin to see one another more realistically. It is at this point that couples must again make decisions about where to go with the relationship. Do they stay together and work toward long-term goals, or do they break up?
6. **Commitment** is the sixth stage in the development of romantic relationships. This occurs when a couple makes the decision to make the relationship a permanent part of their lives. While marriage is an obvious sign of commitment, it is not the only signifier. Not all couples planning a future together legally marry.

Obviously, simply committing is not enough to maintain a relationship through tough times that occur as couples grow and change. Like a ship set on a destination, a couple must learn to steer through rough waves as well as calm waters. A couple can accomplish this by learning to communicate through the good and the bad. **Navigating** is when a couple continues to *revise their communication and ways of interacting to reflect the changing needs of each person*. Done well, life's changes are more easily enjoyed when viewed as a natural part of the life cycle. The original patterns for managing dialectical tensions when a couple began dating, may not work when they are managing two careers, children, and a mortgage payment. Outside pressures such as children, professional duties, and financial responsibilities put added pressure on relationships that require attention and negotiation. If a couple neglects to practice effective communication with one another, coping with change becomes increasingly stressful and puts the relationship in jeopardy.

Not only do romantic couples progress through a series of stages of growth, but they also experience stages of deterioration. Deterioration does not necessarily mean that a couple's relationship will end. Instead, couples may move back and forth from

deterioration stages to growth stages throughout the course of their relationship.

Relational Dialectics

Relationship dialectics is a communication theory that states that people in relationships have contradictory desires or needs. These contradictory desires or impulses can create tension within the relationships if they are not managed properly. Baxter identifies three common relational dialectics or tensions as Autonomy-Connection, Novelty-Predictability, and Openness-Closedness.

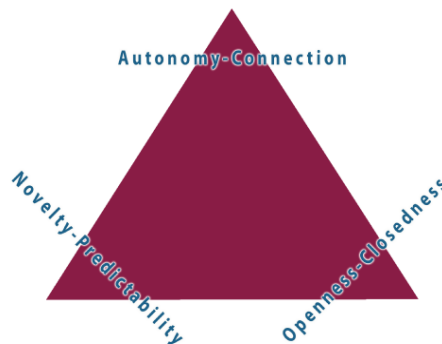


Figure 6.4.3: [The Three Relational Dialectics](#). Source: H. Rayl is licensed under [CC-BY 4.0](#).

Autonomy-Connection

Autonomy-Connection refers to our *need to have a close connection with others as well as our need to have our own space and identity*. We may miss our romantic partner when he or she is away but simultaneously enjoy and cherish that alone time. When you first enter a romantic relationship, you probably want to be around the other person as much as possible. As the relationship grows, you likely begin to desire fulfilling your need for autonomy, or alone time. In every relationship, each person must balance how much time to spend with the other, versus how much time to spend alone.

Novelty-Predictability

Novelty-Predictability is the idea that *we desire predictability as well as spontaneity in our relationships*. In every relationship, we take comfort in a certain level of routine as a way of knowing what we can count on the other person in the relationship. Such predictability provides a sense of comfort and security. However, it requires balance with novelty to avoid boredom. An example of balance might be friends who get together every Saturday for brunch but make a commitment to always try new restaurants each week.

Openness-Closedness

Openness-Closedness refers to *the desire to be open and honest with others while at the same time not wanting to reveal everything about yourself to someone else*. One's desire for privacy does not mean they are shutting out others. It is a normal human need. We tend to disclose the most personal information to those with whom we have the closest relationships.

In general, there is no one right way to understand and manage dialectical tensions since every relationship is unique. However, to always satisfy one need and ignore the other may be a sign of trouble in the relationship (Baxter). It is important to remember that relational dialectics are a natural part of our relationships and that we have a lot of choice, freedom, and creativity in how we work them out with our relational partners. It is also important to remember that dialectical tensions are negotiated differently in each relationship. The ways we self-disclose and manage dialectical tensions contribute greatly to the overall communication climate of the relationship.

Online Dating

It is becoming more common for people to initiate romantic relationships through the Internet, and online dating sites are big business, bringing in \$470 million a year (Madden & Lenhart, 2006). Whether it's through sites like Match.com or OkCupid.com or through chat rooms or social networking, people are taking advantage of some of the conveniences of online dating.

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of online dating?
2. What advice would you give a friend who is considering using online dating to help him or her be a more competent communicator?

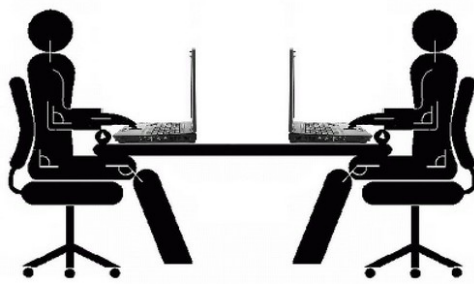


Figure 6.4.4: "Blogger Double Date" by Mike Licht, NotionsCapital.com is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Key Takeaways

- In the U.S. we view romantic relationships as *voluntary relationships between individuals who have intentions that each person will be a significant part of their ongoing lives*. In some cultures, marriages are arranged. Romantic relationships go through typical stages. Most relationships are subject to relational dialectics. The survival of the relationship may rest on the individuals' ability to balance these tensions.
- We balance tensions in our relationships by balancing relational dynamics, such as **Autonomy-Connection**, **Novelty Predictability**, and **Openness-Closedness**.

Ideas for Speech Topics

- **Five Love Languages**. Dr. Gary Chapman wrote *The Five Love Languages*, basing it on notes he took over many years while counseling couples. His notes indicated that there are five love languages that people use and respond to and that recognizing and trying to "speak" the love language of your partner or family member helps him or her feel valued and supported. You can read more about love languages and take the 5 Love Languages quiz at <https://www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes/>
- Marriage Traditions in Various Times and Cultures. Read more at www.buddybuddy.com/mar-trad.html

References

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Survey of Communication Study. **Authored by:** Scott T Paynton and Linda K Hahn. **Provided by:** Humboldt State University. **Located at:** https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Survey_of_Communication_Study. **License:** CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike
- Image of romantic stages. **Authored by:** Spaynton. **Located at:** <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Romanticstages.png>. **License:** CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike

All rights reserved content

- How to Get Over A Crush. **Authored by:** Videojug. **Located at:** https://youtu.be/Isw4qF_xU8s. **License:** All Rights Reserved. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License
- How to Have A Long Distance Relationship. **Authored by:** Videojug. **Located at:** https://youtu.be/oBYs_taeiyM. **License:** All Rights Reserved. **License Terms:** Standard YouTube License

This page titled 6.4: Romantic Relationships is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner.

6.5: Family

Learning Objectives

1. To explain the characteristics of a family.
2. To describe and explain how our early concept of family influences us in the future.
3. To examine whether and how our view of the family still shapes our expectations and behaviors.

What is a Family?

The third primary type of interpersonal relationship we engage in is that of family. Unlike friendships and romantic relationships, which are usually voluntary relationships, we have no choice in our family of birth. What is family? Is family created by legal ties, or the bond of sharing common blood? Or, can a family be considered people who share a commitment to one another? In an effort to recognize the diversity of families we define **family** as *two or more people related by marriage, blood, adoption, or choice, who live together for an extended period of time*. Families are characterized by relationships among family members. Family relations are typically long-term.

Characteristics of a Family

Pearson suggests that in families, members tend to play predictable roles, form a relational transactional group, share a living space for prolonged periods of time, and create interpersonal images of family that evolve over time. (Pearson, 1992) Let's take a few moments to unpack these characteristics:

Each Family Member Plays a Predictable Role

Most family members take on predictable individual roles (parent, child, older sibling) in our family relationships. Similarly, family members tend to take on predictable communication patterns within the family. For example, your younger brother may act as the family peacemaker, while your older sister always initiates fights with her siblings.

Families Are Characterized by Relationships Among Members

Not only is a family made up of individual members, but it is also largely defined by the relationships among the members. A family that consists of two opposite-sex parents, an older sister, her husband and three kids, a younger brother, his new wife, and two kids from a first marriage is largely defined by the relationships among the family members. All of these people have a role in the family and interact with others in fairly consistent ways according to their roles.

Families Usually Occupy a Common Living Space Over an Extended Period of Time

One consistent theme when defining family is recognizing that family members typically live under the same roof for an extended period of time. We certainly include extended family within our definition, but for the most part, our notions of the family include those people with whom we share, or have shared, common space over a period of time.

We Learn Cultural and Personal Values From Our Family

From our families, we learn important cultural and personal values concerning intimacy, spirituality, communication, and respect. Parents and other family members model behaviors that shape how we interact with others. From our family, we form an image of what "family" means and may try to keep that image or ideal throughout our lifetime. As an adult, you may define family as your immediate family, consisting of your parents and a sibling. However, your romantic partner may see family as consisting of parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents. Each of you performs different communication behaviors to maintain your image of family. This can even filter down to the way you view holidays and expectations for family get-togethers.

Key Takeaways

- Family is defined as two or more people related by marriage, blood, adoption, or choice, who live together for an extended period of time. Unlike friends and romantic partners which are voluntary, most of us have no say in the family we are born or adopted into.
- Families have common characteristics in that each member tends to play a predictable role; families are characterized by relationships among members; families share a living space for prolonged periods of time; and families are the primary means through which we are educated about cultural and personal values.

Discussion Topics

1. If you have siblings, think about and explain the communication roles taken on by each of you.
2. Think about your own family. In what ways, if any, do you seek to maintain the view of family you had as a child? In what ways do you want your future family to be different? Has your view of the family ever created conflict with your romantic partner, or can you see it doing so in the future? For instance, does your partner have a different expectation for holidays or other events?

Topics for Further Research

- Differing cultural viewpoints on the role and status of elder family members
- Research the effects of social media on family relationships
- Research Multiracial Families and some of the challenges or stressors they might face.

References

CC licensed content, Shared previously

- Pearson, Judy C. *Communication in the Family: Seeking Satisfaction in Changing times*. Vol. 2. New York: Harper & Row, 1992. Print.
- Survey of Communication Study. **Authored by:** Scott T Paynton and Linda K Hahn. **Provided by:** Humboldt State University. **Located at:** https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Survey_of_Communication_Study. **License:** CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike
- Image of two boys and dog. **Authored by:** Spaynton. **Located at:** <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Childrendog.png>. **License:** CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike
- Image of nesting dolls. **Authored by:** Fiona Thomson. **Located at:** <https://flic.kr/p/4ryZqa>. **License:** CC BY-NC-ND: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives

This page titled 6.5: Family is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner.

6.6: Interpersonal Skills in the Workplace

Learning Objectives

After watching the video: Developing Interpersonal Skills, you should be able to

1. Identify 7 important interpersonal skills needed in the workplace or classroom.
2. Assess your own interpersonal strengths and weaknesses.

Interpersonal Skills in the Workplace

Watch the video at <https://youtu.be/2n3iAuGyyrI>

As you may well know, interpersonal skills are as essential in the workplace as they are in personal life. This video introduces you to 7 important interpersonal skills needed for the workplace or classroom. As you listen to the video, make notes. I suggest that you use the Close-Captioning (CC) tool. The following questions are to help you in your note-taking.

1. According to the narrator, what is meant by **interpersonal** skills?

This video lists 7 important interpersonal skills for the workplace or classroom. The following questions ask you to discuss each. There may be more than one question about each of the 7 skills.

2. VERBAL skills- a. Define verbal skills. b. What is the difference between a person with "good" verbal skills and a person with "poor" verbal skills?
3. Nonverbal skills. a. Define NONVERBAL skills. b. In this video, the woman has good nonverbal skills whereas the man is shown as having poor skills. What makes the nonverbal skills shown by the woman superior to those shown by the man?
4. Listening skills. a. Define Listening skills and give examples.
5. Negotiation skills. a. Explain what is meant by negotiation skills.
6. Problem-solving skills. a. What are problem-solving skills? Give examples.
7. Good decision-making. a. Explain what "good" decision making means.
8. Assertiveness. a. Explain what assertiveness means.
9. Now that you have learned about interpersonal skills, I'd like you to think about and analyze your own skills. Of the 7 interpersonal skills you just learned about, where do your strengths lie? In other words, which of these skills do you already have?
10. As far as the 7 interpersonal skills you just learned about, where do your weaknesses lie? In other words, which interpersonal skills do you need to work on?

Reference

O'Reilly, Denise. University of Kwazulu-Natal. *Developing Interpersonal Skills*. <https://youtu.be/2n3iAuGyyrI>. Retrieved 28 July, 2021.

This page titled 6.6: Interpersonal Skills in the Workplace is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner.

6.7: Conflict Management

Learning Objectives

1. Define interpersonal conflict.
2. Compare and contrast the five styles of interpersonal conflict management.
3. List strategies for effectively managing conflict through collaboration.

To whom do you have the most conflict right now? If you still live at home with a parent or parents, you may have daily conflicts with your family as you try to balance your autonomy, or desire for independence, with the practicalities of living under your family's roof. If you've recently moved into an apartment or house, you may be negotiating roommate conflicts as you adjust to living with someone you may not know very well. You probably also have experiences with conflict in romantic relationships, in the workplace, and maybe even at school. So think back and ask yourself, "How well do I handle conflict?" As with all areas of communication, we can improve if we have the background knowledge and the motivation to reflect on and enhance our communication skills.

Examining Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict occurs in interactions where there are real or perceived incompatible goals or opposing viewpoints. Interpersonal conflict may be expressed verbally or nonverbally along a continuum ranging from mild nonverbal silent treatment to a very loud shouting match. Interpersonal conflict is, however, distinct from interpersonal violence, which escalates beyond communication to include abuse. Domestic violence is a serious issue that goes beyond the conflict we will discuss.

While conflict may be uncomfortable and challenging, it doesn't have to be negative. In fact, it is inevitable. Since conflict is present in our personal and professional lives, the ability to manage conflict and negotiate desirable outcomes can help us be more successful at both. Whether you and your partner are trying to decide what brand of flat-screen television to buy or discussing the upcoming political election with your mother, the potential for conflict is present. In professional settings, the ability to engage in conflict management, sometimes called conflict resolution, is a necessary and valued skill.

Using strategies for managing conflict situations can make life more pleasant than letting a situation stagnate or escalate. The negative effects of poorly handled conflict could range from an awkward last few weeks of the semester with a college roommate to being fired from your job. There is no absolute right or wrong way to handle a conflict. Remember that being a competent communicator doesn't mean that you follow a set of absolute rules. Rather, a competent communicator assesses multiple contexts and applies or adapts communication tools and skills to fit the situation.

Strategies for Managing Conflict

When we ask others what they want to do when they experience conflict, most of the time they say "resolve it." While this is understandable, also important to understand is that conflict is ongoing in all relationships, and our approach to conflict sometimes should be to "manage it" instead of always trying to "resolve it."

One way to understand options for managing conflict is by knowing five major strategies people may use for managing conflict. As you read about each of these, you will see that some are likely to be more successful than others.

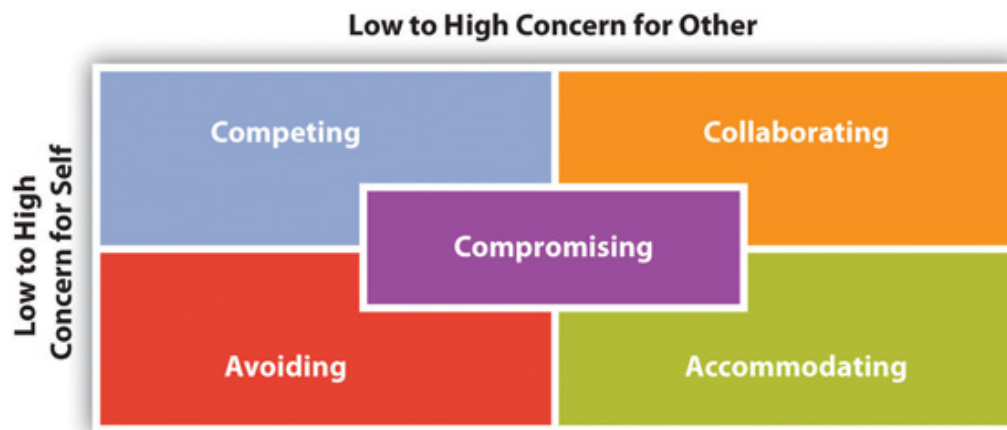


Figure 6.7.1: Five Styles of Interpersonal Conflict Management. Source: Adapted from M. Afzalur Rahim, “A Measure of Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict,” *Academy of Management Journal* 26, no. 2 (1983): 368–76.

Competing

When people select the **competing** or the win-lose approach, they exhibit *high concern for the self and low concern for the other person*. The goal here is to win the conflict. This approach is often characterized by loud, forceful, and interrupting communication. Again, this is analogous to sports. Too often, we avoid conflict because we believe the only other alternative is to try to dominate the other person. In relationships where we care about others or in conflicts at work, it’s no wonder this strategy can seem unappealing. Competing sometimes leads to aggression, although not always. Aggressive communication may involve insults, profanity, and yelling, or threats of punishment if you do not get your way.

Avoiding

When people **avoid** a conflict they may suppress feelings of frustration or walk away from a situation. This style of conflict management often indicates a *low concern for self and a low concern for the other*, and no direct communication about the conflict takes place. This is not always the case, however. In fact, there may be times when this is the best strategy. Take, for example, a heated argument between D'Shaun and Pat. Pat is about to make a hurtful remark out of frustration. Instead, she decides that she needs to avoid this argument right now until she and D'Shaun can come back and discuss things in a calmer fashion. Or we may decide to avoid conflict for other reasons. If you view the conflict as having little importance to you, it may be better to ignore it. If the person you’re having conflict with will only be working in your office for a week, you may perceive a conflict to be temporary and choose to avoid it. In general, avoiding doesn’t work. For one thing, *you can not communicate*. Even when we try to avoid conflict, we may intentionally or unintentionally give our feelings away through our verbal and nonverbal communication, such as rolling our eyes or sighing. Consistent conflict avoidance over the long term generally has negative consequences for a relationship because neither person is willing to participate in the conflict management process.

Accommodating

The **accommodating** conflict management style indicates a *moderate degree of concern for self and others*. Sometimes, this style is viewed as passive or submissive, in that someone complies with or obliges another without providing personal input. However, it could be that the person involved in the conflict values the relationship more than the issue. The context for and motivation behind accommodating play an important role in whether or not it is an appropriate strategy. For example, if there is little chance that your own goals can be attained, or if the relationship might be damaged if you insist on your own way, accommodating could be appropriate. On the other hand, if you constantly accommodate with little reciprocation by your partner, this style can be personally damaging.

Compromising

The **compromising style** is evident when *both parties are willing to give up something in order to gain something else*. It shows a moderate concern for self and the other. When environmental activist, Julia Butterfly Hill agreed to end her two-year-long tree-sit in Luna as a protest against the logging practices of Pacific Lumber Company (PALCO), and pay them \$50,000 in exchange for their promise to protect Luna and not cut within a 20-foot buffer zone, she and PALCO reached a compromise. If one of the parties feels the compromise is unequal they may be less likely to stick to it long term. When conflict is unavoidable, many times people will opt for a compromise. One of the problems with compromise is that neither party fully gets their needs met. If you want Mexican food and your friend wants pizza, you might agree to compromise and go someplace that serves Mexican pizza. While this may seem like a good idea, you may have really been craving a burrito and your friend may have really been craving a pepperoni pizza. In this case, while the compromise brought together two food genres, neither person got their desire met.

Compromising may be a good strategy when there are time limitations or when prolonging a conflict may lead to relationship deterioration. Compromise may also be good when both parties have equal power or when other resolution strategies have not worked (Macintosh & Stevens, 2008).

Collaborating

Finally, **collaborating** demonstrates a *high level of concern for both self and others*. Using this strategy, individuals agree to share information, feelings, and creativity to try to reach a mutually acceptable solution that meets both of their needs. In our food example above, one strategy would be for both people to get the food they want, then take it on a picnic in the park. This way, both people are getting their needs met fully, and in a way that extends beyond original notions of win-lose approaches for managing the conflict. The downside to this strategy is that it is very time-consuming and requires high levels of trust.

Tips for Managing Interpersonal Conflict

- Do not view the conflict as a contest you are trying to win.
- Distinguish the person or people from the problem. (Don't make it personal and don't engage in blaming and name-calling.)
- Determine what underlying needs may be driving the other person's demands (sometimes needs can still be met in a different way).
- Identify areas of common ground or shared interests that you can work from to develop solutions.
- Ask questions to allow them to clarify and to help you understand their perspective.
- Listen carefully and provide verbal and nonverbal feedback.
- Remain flexible and realize there may be solutions yet to be discovered.

Key Takeaways

Interpersonal conflict is an inevitable part of relationships that, although not always negative, can take an emotional toll on relational partners unless they develop skills and strategies for managing it. Although there is no absolute right or wrong way to handle a conflict, there are five predominant styles of conflict management, which are competing, avoiding, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating.

Chapter Summary

Interpersonal communication is communication between two or more individuals engaged in a personal relationship. Quite often, interpersonal communication occurs in pairs, but a small family unit could also engage in interpersonal communication. In order for a close relationship to develop, participants must engage in self-disclosure.

As we navigate our interpersonal relationships, we create communication climates, which are the overall feelings and moods people have for one another and the relationship. When we engage in disconfirming messages, we produce a negative relational climate, while confirming messages can help build a positive relational climate by recognizing the uniqueness and importance of another person.

The three primary types of interpersonal relationships we engage in are friendships, romantic relationships, and family relationships. Each of these relationships develops through a series of stages. Friendships and romantic relationships differ from family relationships in that they are relationships of choice. We manage our relationships by negotiating dialectical tensions, which are opposing needs in interpersonal relationships.

Finally, all relationships experience conflict. Conflict is often perceived as an indicator that there is a problem in a relationship. However, conflict is a natural and ongoing part of all relationships. The goal for conflict is not to eliminate it, but to manage it. There are five primary approaches to managing conflict which include competing, accommodating, compromising, avoiding, and collaborating.

Key Terms

- accommodating
- arranged marriages
- avoiding (as a means of managing conflict)
- collaborating
- competing
- compromising
- conflict
- confirming climate
- disconfirming climate
- family
- friendship
- interpersonal communication
- interpersonal conflict
- Johari Window: open, hidden, blind, and unknown panes
- navigating
- proximity
- relationship dialectics
- romantic relationships
- waning stage of friendship

Exercises

1. Select an important person in your life and pay attention to your communication climate. How do you and this other person demonstrate recognition, acknowledgment, and endorsement?
2. Reflect on one of your important friendships and trace its development through Rawlins' six stages. Discuss whether or how was affected by important transitions in your life, sexual attraction, and diversity?
3. Reflect on a current or past romantic relationship. How did you communicate attraction or needs for connection and separateness?
4. Does the definition of family in this textbook fit your own definition? Why? Why not?
5. Interview one or both of your parents about how their communication has changed as they have moved along the family life cycle. How did their relational culture change? How did they manage relational dialectics?
6. How was conflict managed in your family while growing up? Was it viewed as positive or negative? How did those early messages and lessons about conflict shape your current attitudes?
7. Of the five conflict management strategies, is there one that you use more often than others? Why or why not? Do you think people are predisposed to one style over the others based on their personality or other characteristics? If so, what personality traits do you think would lead a person to each style?

Topics for Further Research

- Conflict and power in interpersonal communication
- De-escalating conflict in the workplace
- Interpersonal Conflict Communication in Japanese Cultural Contexts

References

Hargie, O., *Skilled Interpersonal Interaction: Research, Theory, and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2011), 406–7, 430.

Survey of Communication Study. **Authored by:** Scott T Paynton and Linda K Hahn. **Provided by:** Humboldt State University.

Located at: https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Survey_of_Communication_Study. **License:** [CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike](#)

Image of chess. **Authored by:** Cristian V.. **Located at:** <https://flic.kr/p/C6ZpC>. **License:** [CC BY-ND: Attribution-NoDerivatives](#)

Image of small group. **Authored by:** NYU Stern BHR. **Located at:** <https://flic.kr/p/qqgik3>. **License:** [CC BY-NC: Attribution-NonCommercial](#)

This page titled [6.7: Conflict Management](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

6.8: Review

Chapter 6: Vocabulary and Questions for Review and Discussion

Vocabulary

- Accommodating
- Arranged Marriage
- Avoiding
- Collaborating
- Compromise
- Confirming Climate
- Conflict
- Disconfirming Climate
- Family
- Friendship
- Interpersonal Communication
- Johari Window: open, hidden, blind, and unknown panes
- Navigating
- Proximity
- Relationship dialectics
- Romantic relationships

? Questions for Review and Discussion

1. What is self-disclosure? You may use the textbook definition to start, but then explain the definition in your own words.
2. Why is self-disclosure important in interpersonal relationships? What should guide us in deciding how much information to self-disclose and how much to keep hidden?
3. How does the textbook define or describe “confirming communication climate”? After giving the textbook definition, explain the definition in your own words.
4. What are three types of messages that create a confirming communication environment? Explain and give an example of each. (Do not simply copy what the textbook says without explanation.)
 - Type: _____ Explanation and example.
 - Type: _____ Explanation and example.
 - Type: _____ Explanation and example.
5. In the United States, most marriages are voluntary romantic relationships of choice. However, in some cultures and even co-cultures within the United States, marriages are arranged. Explain what an arranged marriage is. Explain possible cultural reasons behind arranged marriages. (You might find it helpful to look back at Chapter 2.
6. What is the purpose of the Johari Window? In other words, why was it created, and how can it be used?
7. For this question, do the following:
 - Select one of the Relationship dialectics discussed in 6.4 (Autonomy vs. Connection; Novelty-Predictability; Openness-Closedness).
 - Explain what the relational dialectic is.
 - Then, using one of your own relationships (spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, parent/child) as an example, explain how you manage the dialectic you chose in that relationship. For example, I might choose my relationship with my husband as an example. Then explain how I manage the dialectic of Openness-Closedness by giving examples of the types of things I reveal and some of the things I keep hidden. If you live alone and do not have a relationship to discuss, use a past relationship or even a hypothetical relationship. For example, you might not be married now, but you could discuss how you *could* manage this dialectic if you *were* married.
8. What Relational dialectic did you choose? Define the relational dialectic you chose.

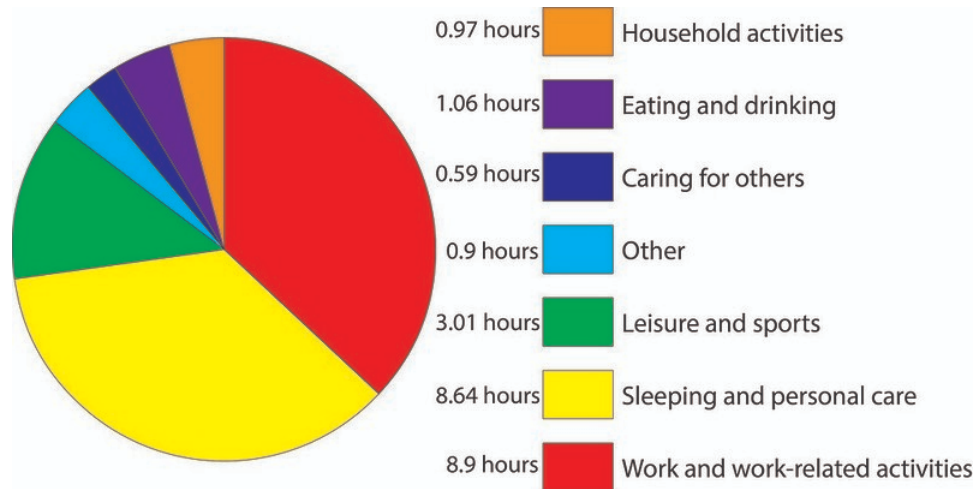
9. Using one of your own relationships, explain how you manage the relational dialectic you chose. If you live alone and do not have a relationship to discuss, use a past relationship or even a hypothetical relationship. For example, you might not be married now, but you could discuss how you *could* manage this dialectic if you *were* married.

6.8: Review is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Career Communication

During the five-day workweek, most of us spend as much or more time with the people at work than the people we live with, so it is unsurprising that our workplace communication is very important to our overall quality of life.



Average hours per day spent in selected activities on days worked by employment status.

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey, 2017

Figure 7.1: Daily Life Breakdown

In this chapter, we're going to explore some areas directly related to workplace communication, including competencies employers desire, and how to prepare for and manage your career. Much of the material in this chapter is provided by the Career Services Department at Southwest Tennessee Community College and its director, Brenda Williams.

[7.1: Soft Skills and Career Readiness](#)

[7.2: Professionalism](#)

[7.3: Career Exploration](#)

[7.4: Résumés and Cover Letters](#)

[7.5: Interviewing](#)

[7.6: Summary and Learning Activities](#)

[7.7: Review](#)

© SkillsYouNeed (2017) <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/interpersonal-skills.html>.

This page titled [7: Career Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman](#), [Thomas King](#), & [William Turner](#).

7.1: Soft Skills and Career Readiness

Learning Outcomes

1. Define soft skills.
2. Explain the meaning of "career readiness."
3. Define "career competencies."
4. Identify 8 essential career competencies.
5. Begin your own digital portfolio to showcase your education and experiences.

Year after year on national surveys, employers rank **soft skills** as even more essential than **hard skills** for career success.

What are Soft Skills?

The best way to understand soft skills is to compare them to hard skills. **Hard skills** are technical or practical skills such as accounting, computer repair, and other practices or techniques you learn in courses in your college major, in a practicum, or on the job. **Soft skills** are personal and interpersonal attributes that are important no matter what job or position you are hired for. Soft skills are considered "**transferrable skills**" because they are relevant for any position and can be transferred from one job to another. Employers look for soft skills because these skills are difficult and time-consuming to teach yet are important to success. Figure 7.1.1 compares soft and hard skills.

	SOFT SKILLS	HARD SKILLS
What are they?	personal attributes and interpersonal abilities	practical abilities and skills usually learned through practice and education
What are some examples?	communication, professionalism, teamwork, problem-solving, respect for others, leadership	computer repair, accounting, Excel, Python, AutoCAD, social media marketing, graphics manufacturing, CPR, rescue equipment
Why are they important?	helps you get the job	helps you get an interview

Figure 7.1.1: Comparison of Soft Skills and Hard Skills. Career Services. Southwest Tennessee Community College. *Digital Career Guide*. 2021.

Soft Skills Examples for Students

Students or recent graduates often find themselves looking for a job without work experience. You can still find plenty of soft skills from your educational background that you can discuss in a job interview or career fair. Some of these include teamwork, critical thinking, organization, research, public speaking, self-motivation, dependability, empathy, enthusiasm, diplomacy, planning, reliability, leadership, self-awareness, resourcefulness, patience, persuasion, interpersonal skills. Think about ways you can discuss your command of these soft skills by giving examples of times you have learned and demonstrated these skills in specific courses; in your volunteer work; or in your involvement in clubs and organizations.

Soft Skills in the Job Search Process and Interview

Employers may value different soft skills according to the specific position you are applying for. How do you know which soft skills are valued by the employer? The answer to this lies 1) in what you have learned in your research about the company and in 2) the job description. When you read the job description, you will likely see statements such as, "Must be able to work independently as well as as part of a team" or "must show diplomacy and sensitivity in dealing with others." These are the soft skills you must be able to address in your interview, on the cover letter, and, to a lesser extent, on the resume. To prepare for the job interview, be able to address specific soft skills and how you have developed them. Another way you can demonstrate your soft skills are through the job interview itself. To demonstrate your soft skills during the interview

- refer to your research and what you have learned about the company
- demonstrate your critical thinking and active listening skills by replying specifically to questions asked in the interview
- demonstrate your planning by showing you have prepared for questions during the interview; don't allow questions to take you by surprise

Career Competencies

Career competencies can be defined as a combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal attributes that lead to excellent employee performance and ultimately to the success of the business or organization (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2017). Employers want to hire students and graduates who are **career-ready**, meaning graduates who can demonstrate they possess these essential competencies. Most of these Career Readiness Competencies are the soft skills you learned about previously.

Eight Essential Career Competencies

As first discussed in Chapter 1, the National Association of Colleges and Employers identified **eight essential career competencies**. These essential competencies are career and self-development; communication; critical thinking; technology; equity and inclusion; leadership; professionalism; and teamwork. Each is explained in the figure shown below.

Figure 7.1.2: A Closer Look at Eight Essential Career Competencies

CAREER & SELF DEVELOPMENT Proactively develop oneself and one's career, have awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, able to navigate career opportunities and and networking.	COMMUNICATION Communicate ideas clearly, public speaking skills, able to express ideas to others, can write and edit letters and memos	CRITICAL THINKING Exercise sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions, overcome problems and obtain/interpret knowledge and facts	TECHNOLOGY Ethically leverage digital technologies to solve problems, demonstrate effective adaptability to new and emerging technologies
EQUITY & INCLUSION Respect and value diverse cultures and races, demonstrate openness and sensitivity with all people, understand differences	LEADERSHIP Leverage the strength of others to achieve common goals, use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others, able to manage Emotions and motivate others	PROFESSIONALISM Demonstrate accountability, punctuality, time workload management, demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior	TEAMWORK Build relationships with colleagues and customers, work within a team structure and manage conflict

Source: "[10 Steps to Career Development Success](#)," Adapted from the [National Association of Colleges and Employers \(NACE\)](#) Career Readiness Competencies by Southwest Tennessee Community College's Career Services Department.

How "Career Ready" is the Typical College Graduate?

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, "When it comes to rating the 'career readiness' of college graduates . . . employers tend to rate the proficiency of recent college graduates lower than do the students themselves. This can be problematic because it suggests that employers see skills gaps in key areas where college students don't believe gaps exist. . . Employers and graduating seniors differed greatly when it came to rating proficiency in competencies such as professionalism/work ethic, oral/written communications, and leadership as students considered themselves much more proficient than did employers." (NACE) The results are shown in Figure 7.1.3.

Figure 7.1.3: Employer vs. Student Perception of Proficiency in Career Readiness Competencies, by Percentage of Respondents

COMPETENCY	% OF EMPLOYERS THAT RATED RECENT GRADS PROFICIENT*	% OF STUDENTS WHO CONSIDERED THEMSELVES PROFICIENT**
Professionalism/Work Ethic	42.5%	89.4%
Oral/Written Communications	41.6%	79.4%
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving	55.8%	79.9%
Teamwork/Collaboration	77.0%	85.1%
Leadership	33.0%	70.5%
Digital Technology	65.8%	59.9%
Career Management	17.3%	40.9%
Global/Intercultural Fluency	20.7%	34.9%

Job Outlook 2018 (N=201 employing organizations) and *The Class of 2017 Student Survey Report* (N=4,213 graduating seniors), National Association of Colleges and Employers. (<https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/are-college-graduates-career-ready/>)

Developing Career Readiness Competencies

As you have likely already noticed, many of these competencies are components of your Fundamentals of Communication course. In addition to Oral and Written Communication, you will be or have already been introduced to Global and Intercultural Fluency (Equity and Inclusion), Teamwork/Collaboration, Leadership, and Critical Thinking/Problem-Solving. In this chapter, you will learn about another important career competency: professionalism. In addition, you will take steps toward Career Management.

As you develop your career competencies, a great place to keep track of your accomplishments is in an e-Portfolio or digital portfolio.

What is an E-Portfolio?

A digital portfolio is a **computer-based collection of student performance over time**. Digital portfolios can include many different types of content, including photographs, texts, illustrations, graphic design projects, artwork, papers you've written, and speeches you've given. You should build your e-Portfolio over time, adding new content each semester and after graduation to record your new experiences, projects, and activities.

Uses of an e-Portfolio

An e-Portfolio can be used to apply for scholarships and internships and to gain admissions to a four-year university or master's degree programs. Another important use of a digital portfolio can be in your search for employment. Submitting a link to your digital portfolio along with your resume and cover letter provides an online source of information that helps set you apart from other candidates and may improve your chances of getting an interview. "If you want to show an employer proof of your skills and abilities, then a digital portfolio is an excellent way to display your work and show hiring managers what you are capable of doing. Having a visual representation of your qualifications also helps employers decide if you are the right fit for their company and position." (Indeed.com) Aside from its academic and professional uses, an e-Portfolio can be personally satisfying because you can share your experiences with friends and family and look back over your activities in the future.

Starting Your E-Portfolio

Although many platforms exist for developing digital portfolios, Google is a good option since most students already have an account. To start an e-Portfolio on Google, visit <https://www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/docs/e-portfolio.pdf> for instructions, then complete the steps. Set up your e-Portfolio title page and create titles for additional content pages. Suggested additional e-Portfolio page categories: 1. About me. 2. Career assessment information (from Career Coach) 3. Resume (from Optimal Resume) 4. Class projects (recorded speeches, photos of artwork or other projects) 5. Activities (such as club membership, etc.). For more information or questions about e-Portfolios, contact Career Services at careerservices@southwest.tn.edu.

Career Services at Southwest Tennessee Community College

This unit of the course is presented in collaboration with Career Services Director Brenda Williams and the Career Services Department at Southwest Tennessee Community College. Much of the content of this chapter is taken from the digital guide created by Career Services, *Career Development at Southwest*. You can access the guide in its entirety at <https://www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/docs/Career-Development-Guide.pdf>.



Key Takeaways

- Soft skills are personal and interpersonal attributes that are important no matter what the job.
- Surveys by the National Association of Colleges and Employers identified eight essential career competencies.
- NACE surveys found that college graduates rated themselves higher than did employers in most of the eight essential competencies.
- In this course, we focus on helping students develop all eight competencies.
- An ePortfolio is a computer-based record of a student's activities over time. It can be used to apply for jobs and scholarships, or simply as a repository of activities and accomplishments.

Exercises for Personal Reflection

1. Discuss the results of the survey that compared employers' perception of graduates' readiness with the graduates' own perceptions. Did the results surprise you? Why or why not?
2. Consider your own proficiency in the competencies shown above. In what categories would you rate yourself as "very" (4) or "extremely" (5) proficient? In what categories would you fall below a 4?

References

- Career Services. Southwest Tennessee Community College. *Career Development at Southwest*. 2021. <https://www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/docs/Career-Development-Guide.pdf>
- "How to Make a Digital Portfolio That Gets You Hired." *Indeed.com*. 22 Feb. 2021. <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice...ital-portfolio>
- "Are College Graduates Career Ready?" National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). 19 Feb. 2018. <https://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/are-college-graduates-career-ready/>.
- U.S. Department of Labor. Office of Disability Employment Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success. "Professionalism." Retrieved 12/15/2020. <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/odep/topics/youth/softskills/softskills.pdf>

This page titled [7.1: Soft Skills and Career Readiness](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- **13.3: Coworker (Peer Relationships)** by Jason S. Wrench, Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter & Katherine S. Thweatt is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Original source: <https://milnepublishing.geneseo.edu/interpersonalcommunication>.

7.2: Professionalism

Learning Outcomes

1. Define "professionalism."
2. Define the term "ethics" and recall several modern ethical lapses in organizations.
3. Understand the importance of respecting one's coworkers.
4. Explain the concept of personal responsibility in the workplace.
5. Demonstrate the ERROR method.

Professionalism is one of the most important of the Eight Career Readiness Competencies. Yet a 2019 survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that while almost 95% of employers surveyed considered Professionalism to be an essential competency, only 44.2%—fewer than half—found college graduates proficient in this area. (NACE 2019). Clearly, there is room for improvement; yet improvement can begin only after a clear understanding of what professionalism is. In examining professionalism, we will explore a definition of professionalism and three important components: ethics, respect for others, and taking personal responsibility.

Professionalism

According to the United States Department of Labor,¹ professionalism “does not mean wearing a suit or carrying a briefcase; rather, it means conducting oneself with responsibility, integrity, accountability, and excellence. It means communicating effectively and appropriately and always finding a way to be productive.” The U.S. Department of Labor’s book *Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success* goes on to note:

Professionalism isn’t one thing; it’s a combination of qualities. A professional employee arrives on time for work and manages time effectively. Professional workers take responsibility for their own behavior and work effectively with others. High-quality work standards, honesty, and integrity are also part of the package. Professional employees look clean and neat and dress appropriately for the job. Communicating effectively and appropriately for the workplace is also an essential part of professionalism.²

Ethics

Ethics is one of the important components of professionalism. The word “ethics” refers to whether something is good, right, or just.

We first discussed ethics in Chapter 1 as being one of the responsibilities of a communicator. In the business world, ethics are equally important. Business ethics involves things like not stealing from a company; not lying to one’s boss, coworkers, customers, or clients; not taking bribes, payoffs, or kickbacks; not taking credit for someone else’s work; not abusing and belittling someone in the workplace; or even not allowing others to behave unethically. For example, if you know your organization has a zero-tolerance policy for workplace discrimination and you know that one supervisor is purposefully not hiring pregnant women because “they’ll just be leaving on maternity leave soon anyway,” then you have an ethical obligation to report him or her. We might also add that discriminating against someone who is pregnant or can get pregnant is also a violation of the Equal Employment Opportunity law, so you can see that often the line between ethics and rules (or laws) can be blurred.

Every year there are lapses in ethical judgment by organizations and organizational members. Let’s look at ethical lapses in 2017 and 2018.

1. We saw aviation police officers drag a bloodied pulmonologist off a plane when he wouldn’t give up his seat on United Airlines.
2. We saw the beginnings of the #MeToo movement in October 2017 after Alyssa Milano used the hashtag in response to actor Ashley Judd accusing media mogul Harvey Weinstein of serious sexual misconduct in an article in *The New York Times*. Since that critical moment, many victims of sexual violence have raised their voices to take on some in our society who had gotten away with these behaviors for decades.
3. Facebook (among others) was found to have accepted advertisements indirectly paid for by the Kremlin that influenced the 2016 election. The paid advertisements constituted a type of cyber warfare.

4. Equifax had a data breach that affected 145 million people (mostly U.S. citizens as well as some British and Canadian customers) and didn't publicly disclose this for two months.
5. The head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Scott Pruitt, committed many ethical lapses during his tenure with the agency prompting his resignation. Some of the ethical lapses included ordering raises for two aides even when the White House rejected them, spending \$3.5 million (twice times as much as his predecessor) on his own taxpayer-funded security, using that security to pick up his favorite moisturizing lotion and dry-cleaning, renting a room for \$50 a night from a lobbyist who had dealings with the EPA, installing a \$43,000 private phone booth in his office that allegedly was used once, spending \$124,000 on first-class flights, purchasing two season-ticket seats at a University of Kentucky basketball game from a billionaire coal executive, attempting to use his position to get his wife a Chick-fil-A franchise, and others.

Unfortunately, these ethical lapses are still frequent in corporate America, and they often come with huge lawsuit settlements and prison time.

Respect for Others

Our second category related to professionalism is respecting others. It seems that many people in the modern workplace need a refresher in respect. From workplace bullying to sexual harassment, many people simply do not always treat people with dignity and respect in the workplace. So, what do we mean by treating someone with respect? Here's a list we created of respectful behaviors for the workplace and academic interactions:

- Be courteous, polite, and kind to everyone.
- Use confirming communication behaviors that were discussed in the chapter on Interpersonal Communication.
- Do not criticize little or inconsequential things.
- Do not engage in patronizing or demeaning behaviors.
- Do not play with your cell phone, answer phone calls, etc., when others are speaking to you.
- Don't engage in physically hostile body language. Make sure your facial expressions are appropriate and not aggressive.
- Don't roll your eyes when others are talking.
- Don't use an aggressive tone of voice when talking with coworkers, instructors, or classmates.
- Encourage others to express opinions and ideas.
- Encourage others to demonstrate respect for one another.
- Listen to others with an open mind.
- Listen without cutting them others off or speaking over them.
- Make sure you treat all of your coworkers fairly and equally.
- Never engage in verbally aggressive behavior: insults, name-calling, spreading rumors, disparaging, and putting people or their ideas down.
- Compliment others more often than you criticize them. Point out when they're doing things well, not just when they're doing "wrong" things.
- If you are leading a meeting or team, provide an equal opportunity for all to provide insight and input during meetings.
- Treat people the same regardless of age, gender, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, etc.
- When expressing judgment or criticism, focus on specific ideas or behavior, and not the person.
- As we discussed in the chapter on Verbal Communication, replace biased language with inclusive terms.

Personal Responsibility

Taking personal responsibility is the third component of professionalism. Let's face it; we all make mistakes. Making mistakes is a part of life. **Personal responsibility** refers to an individual's willingness to be accountable for his or her actions, including mistakes. Personal responsibility is simply realizing that we are responsible for our own conduct and not blaming others for our current circumstances. Now, this is not to say that there are never external factors that impede our success. Of course, there are. This is not to say that certain people have advantages in life because of a privileged background; of course, some people have. However, personal responsibility involves differentiating between those things we can control and those things that are outside of our control. For example, I may not be able to control a coworker who decides to yell at me, but I can control how I choose to respond to that coworker. Here are some ways that you can take personal responsibility in your own life (or in the workplace):

- Acknowledge that you are responsible for your choices.
- Acknowledge that you are responsible for how you feel.
- Acknowledge that you are responsible for your behaviors.

- Accept that your choices are yours alone, so you can't blame someone else for them.
- Decide to invest in your self-improvement.
- Decide to take control of your attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors.
- Decide on specific professional goals and make an effort and commitment to accomplish those goals.

Although you may have the ability to take responsibility for your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, not everyone in the workplace will do the same. Most of us will come in contact with coworkers, classmates, or even relatives who do not take personal responsibility. Dealing with people who have constant excuses can be frustrating and demoralizing.

Excuse-making occurs any time people attempt to make themselves look better by shifting the blame for their behavior to sources outside of their control.⁸ For example, an employee may explain her tardiness to work by talking about how horrible the traffic was on the way to work instead of admitting that she slept in late and left the house late. People make excuses because they fear that revealing the truth would make them look bad or out of control.

Excuse-making happens in every facet of life, but excuse-making in the workplace can be highly problematic. For example, research has shown that when front-line service providers engage in excuse-making instead of accepting responsibility, they are more likely to lose return customers as a result.⁹ In one study, when salespeople attempted to excuse their lack of ethical judgment by pointing to their customers' lack of ethics, supervisors tended to punish salespeople who engaged in excuse-making more severely than salespeople who had not made excuses.¹⁰ Even friends or family members can become a little annoyed (or downright disgusted) by someone who always has an excuse for his behavior.

How can you take the blame for something that is your responsibility in the most professional way possible? Amy Nordrum recommends using the **ERROR** method when handling a situation where your behavior was problematic. This method consists of 4 steps: Empathy, Responsibility, Reason, Offer Reassurance.¹¹ Here is an example Nordrum uses to illustrate the ERROR method:

I regret that you [burden placed on the person] because of me (**E**mpathy). I should have thought things out better (**R**esponsibility), but I got caught up in [reason for behavior] (**R**eason). Next time I'll [preventative action] (**O**ffer Reassurance).

As you can see, the critical parts of this response involve validating the other person, taking responsibility, and providing an explanation for how you'll behave in the future to avoid similar problems.

Key Takeaways

We have discussed the meaning of professionalism and three important components of professionalism: ethics, respect for others, and personal responsibility.

Exercises

1. What lapses in ethical judgment would you add to the list of unethical examples provided in this unit?
2. Look at the list of respectful behaviors for workplace interactions. Is anything missing from the list? How would you react if others violated these respectful behaviors towards you as a coworker? Have you ever been disrespectful in your communication toward coworkers? Why?
3. Why do you think it's essential to take personal responsibility and avoid excusing making in the workplace? Have you ever found yourself making excuses? Why?
4. Practice using the ERROR method with a classmate.

Reference

U.S. Department of Labor. Office of Disability Employment *Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success*. "Professionalism." Retrieved 12/15/2020. <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/odep/topics/youth/softskills/softskills.pdf>

This page titled [7.2: Professionalism](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- **13.1: The Requirements of Professionalism** by Jason S. Wrench, Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter & Katherine S. Thweatt is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). Original source: <https://milnepublishing.geneseo.edu/interpersonalcommunication>.

7.3: Career Exploration

Learning Objectives

1. Explore career options that best suit your personality traits.
2. Complete the Career Coach Assessment and learn how to use the results to find employment opportunities.

A job: yes, it's something you would like to have, especially if you want to pay your bills. A job lets you enjoy a minimal level of financial security. A job requires you to show up and do what is required of you; in exchange, you get paid. A career involves holding jobs, but it is more a means of achieving personal fulfillment. In a career, your jobs follow a sequence that leads to increasing mastery, professional development, and personal and financial satisfaction. A career requires planning, knowledge, and skills. If it is to be a fulfilling career, it requires that you bring into play your full set of analytical, critical, and creative thinking skills to make informed decisions that will affect your life in both the short term and the long term. In this unit, you will learn how to explore different career options that best suit your personality and interests.

What Do You Want to Do When You “Grow Up”?

The Department of Labor defines 840 occupations in its Standard Occupation Classification system—and new occupations are being created at an ever-faster rate. Just ten years ago, would anyone have imagined the job of a social media marketing specialist? How about the concept of a competitive chef? As new careers develop and old careers morph into almost unrecognizable versions of their original, it's fine if you aren't able to pinpoint exactly what occupation or career will be your life passion. However, it is important to define as best you can within what field you will want to develop your career because that will help dictate your major and your course selections.

The process of career exploration can be a lot of fun, as it allows you to discover a world of possibilities. Even those students who have a pretty clear idea of what they want to do should go through this process because they will discover new options as backups and occasionally a new direction even more attractive than their original choice.

You are a unique individual with a distinct combination of likes, dislikes, personality traits, and skills. But you are not so different that you can't be identified with certain personality types, and those types may help you narrow your career choices. Most career assessments are based on the career theory developed by Dr. John Holland. Dr. Holland believed that people are most likely to choose satisfying work if they do something that fits their personality type. He identified the six types below which include: **Realistic**, **Investigative**, **Artistic**, **Social**, **Enterprising**, and **Conventional**. As you read through these categories, decide which category or categories best describe you.

1. **Realistic.** These people describe themselves as honest, loyal, and practical. They are doers more than thinkers. They have strong mechanical, motor, and athletic abilities; like the outdoors; and prefer working with machines, tools, plants, and animals.
2. **Investigative.** These people love problem-solving and analytical skills. They are intellectually stimulated and often mathematically or scientifically inclined; like to observe, learn, and evaluate; prefer working alone, and are reserved.
3. **Artistic.** These people are the “free spirits.” They are creative, emotional, intuitive, and idealistic; have a flair for communicating ideas; dislike structure and prefer working independently, and like to sing, write, act, paint, and think creatively. They are similar to the investigative type but are interested in the artistic and aesthetic aspects of things more than the scientific ones.
4. **Social.** These are “people” people. They are friendly and outgoing; love to help others, make a difference, or both; have strong verbal and personal skills and teaching abilities, and are less likely to engage in intellectual or physical activity.
5. **Enterprising.** These people are confident, assertive risk-takers. They are sociable; enjoy speaking and leadership; like to persuade rather than a guide; like to use their influence; have strong interpersonal skills, and are status-conscious.
6. **Conventional.** These people are dependable, detail-oriented, disciplined, precise, persistent, and practical; value order; and are good at clerical and numerical tasks. They work well with people and data, so they are good organizers, schedulers, and project managers.

Taking the Career Coach Self-Assessment

Getting to know who you are—who you *really* are—is the first step in identifying a potential career. For this exercise, we will be using the STCC Career Services Guide: Steps to Career Development Success (<https://www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/docs/Career-Development-Guide.pdf>) Full instructions are in the Career Services digital guide. Here is a summary:

1. Visit: <https://southwest-tn.emsicc.com>
2. Select the “sign up” link to create an account and save your results. IMPORTANT: Use your STCC email account so you can access your results in the future. This will also be helpful for accessing job openings and internships.
3. Select “Take the Assessment.” Be sure you answer all questions. Avoid answering “unsure” too many times as this will make your assessment less reliable.
4. After you complete the assessment, download the FULL RESULTS (right side of the page under Assessment Options.) You should see your top personality traits, 5 top job categories, and 10 career matches. On subsequent pages, you will read more details about your work personality traits.
5. Study your Career Coach Assessment results. You should learn your top three types or “Holland Code.” Are the results what you expected?
6. Your Career Coach results also identify career groups or clusters best suited to you. Do these sound like you?
7. On your Career Coach profile page, scroll down and select “View Career Matches” to see your top matches and learn about daily duties, required education, regional wages, outlook, prospective employers, live job listings, and more. Select one position that is of interest to you and locate the required education, daily duties, salary, job outlook, and potential employers.

TIP: To log back into your account, go to <https://southwest-tn.emsicc.com> and enter your username and password.

Reflecting on Your Career Assessment Results

Step 1. Save a copy of your FULL Results or a screenshot of the first page of your Assessment Results and study them.

Step 2. Copy and paste the following questions into an empty document, then answer them. Submit your questions and answers in the same Assignment Dropbox you use for your Assessment Results.

1. Do you agree with the work personality traits identified by the assessment, or did they surprise you?
2. After looking over your top 5 job categories and 10 career matches, select a **specific position identified on Career Coach** that interests you.
 - What is the position you selected?
 - What is the required education for this position?
 - What are the daily duties?
 - What is the salary?
 - What is the job outlook?
 - Who are potential employers in this region?
3. What have you learned as a result of this exercise that may be beneficial to you now or in the future?

Optional: If you would like to talk to Career Services about your assessment results or if you are having difficulty taking the assessment, we encourage you to contact Career Services. Instructions for setting up an appointment with Career Services are found under Step Two of the 10 Steps for Career Development Success. (<https://www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/docs/Career-Development-Guide.pdf>)

Schedule an Appointment with Career Services (3 Options):

1. Use the Navigate application at: <https://swtn.navigate.eab.com>. Once logged in, select “Career Services” as the care unit and follow the prompts to choose your appointment time.
2. Email Career Services at: careerservices@southwest.tn.edu
3. Call Career Services at 901-333-4180

Appointment Formats:

Career Services can meet with you by phone, email, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or on campus.

References

Career Services. *Career Development at Southwest*. Southwest Tennessee Community College. 2021. (<https://www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/docs/Career-Development-Guide.pdf>)

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *U.S. Department of Labor: Standard Occupational Classification User Guide 2010*, http://www.bls.gov/soc/soc_2010_user_guide.pdf (accessed July 13, 2010).

This page titled [7.3: Career Exploration](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [12.2: Career Exploration](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#).

7.4: Résumés and Cover Letters

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the purpose of a résumé.
2. Create a résumé using STCC Optimal Resume™.
3. Know how to prepare a good cover letter.
4. Explain ways of gaining work experience before you graduate.

Résumé

Every student needs a résumé, whether you are searching for an internship, a part-time job while you are in college, or a full-time job after graduation. A résumé is a one (preferred) or two-page document summarizing your relevant skills and qualifications that you share with an employer when applying for a job. The purpose of a résumé is to get you invited for an interview. Unfortunately, too often a résumé is a reason to exclude a candidate. Poor grammar, misspelled words, lengthy listings of irrelevant experience, and messy formatting motivate hiring managers to move quickly to the next candidate. There is no such thing as a perfect format for a résumé, though hiring managers and recruiters generally agree on the following principles:

- A short résumé is generally better than a long one. One page should usually be enough—two pages if you have a lot of experience. Use an easy-to-read font like Arial, Tahoma, or Times New Roman in size 11 or 12.
- Focus on your accomplishments, not just the positions you held. Your résumé should point out your strengths. Use dynamic verbs, as described on *Indeed.com* (<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice...sume-stand-out>).
- Most recruiters and hiring managers look for résumés online and review submitted résumés with software that looks for keywords. To help your resume get noticed by Human Resources and electronic *applicant tracking systems* (ATS), **tailor it to each position** you apply for. You can do this by printing the job description and **highlighting** key requirements and skills, also known as “**keywords**.” Be sure to include the “keywords” and any other *relevant* information on your resume. (STCC Career Services)
- Keep information easy to scan and to find.

Deciding what to include in your résumé is where most of the work comes into play because it is in the careful wording of the body of your résumé that you can really sell yourself for a position. Ideally, you should revise your résumé for each position you are applying for, particularly to include any accomplishments that you would not include in your “general résumé” but that are relevant to that particular job. Do not be discouraged if you have very little practical job experience to include on your resume. That is why you are in college: to gain that experience.

Following are two examples of resumes provided by the STCC Career Services Department. Later, you will learn to create your own resume using an online tool called Optimal Resume™.

SAMPLE RESUME: student applying for an internship	SAMPLE RESUME: new graduate looking for a full-time job
Shalonda Williams 297 Crossway Street, Apt. #18, Cordova, TN 38136 901-433-42219 swilliams@gmail.com Linkedin.com/in/shalondawilliams PROFILE Detail-oriented Computer Information Technology major looking for an internship that utilizes my hardware and software skills and education. QUALIFICATIONS • PC Hardware/Software Troubleshooting & Repair • Dependable, Quick Learner, Critical Thinker • Basic Network Security, Unix/Linux OS, HTML & CSS Skills EDUCATION Southwest Tennessee Community College, Memphis, TN Pursuing A.A.S. Computer Information Technology Networking concentration; GPA: 3.5 Related coursework completed: Computer Applications A+ Hardware & Software CCNA I & II Network Security Unix/Linux Operating Systems Beginning HTML & CSS WORK EXPERIENCE Target, Bartlett, TN Lead Stocker (March 2018 to present) Provided leadership to team of 5 associates in restocking merchandise for the electronics department. Assists with inventory tracking and theft prevention. VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE Provide Technical Support to patrons at the Main Library REFERENCES Provided upon request.	ANDRE JACKSON 2241 Blue Sky Lane • Memphis, TN 38000 • 901-123-4567 ajackson@yahoo.com Linkedin.com/in/andrejackson PROFILE Compassionate, resourceful Physical Therapy Assistant graduate seeking a position that utilizes my education and clinical experience. SKILLS SUMMARY • Experience Using a Variety of Physical Therapy Techniques • Strong Patient Care, Communication, and Teamwork Skills • Ability to Safely Lift, Transfer, and Position Patients WORK EXPERIENCE Baptist Healthcare Rehabilitation Associates, Memphis, TN PTA Intern (10/2019 – present) Assist in patient treatment through prescribed exercise regimens and strength training programs. Document patient progress and make observations on range of mobility. Communicate with physicians, nurses, related therapy providers, and case managers to provide total patient care. Hanson Physical Therapy Services, Memphis, TN PTA Intern (8/2018-12/2018) Prepared patients and treatment rooms for physical therapist. Demonstrated correct usage of equipment and exercise routines as part of patient instruction. EDUCATION Southwest Tennessee Community College, Memphis, TN A.A.S. Physical Therapist Assistant, May 2020 Cumulative GPA: 3.6 University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN Completed 30 credit hours toward B.S. degree in Biology VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE St. Jude Marathon, First Aid Volunteer REFERENCES References and portfolio provided upon the reviewer's request.

Cover Letters

A cover letter is sometimes requested by employers along with your resume and job application. In your cover letter include the position you are interested in, how you learned about it and your skills/qualifications/experience highlights that are relevant to the position. If you are transitioning into a new career, a cover letter is a great place to explain this. The purpose of a cover letter is to entice the recipient to read your résumé. The following sample cover letter is provided by STCC's Career Services Department.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER	MARKUS RANCH
TIPS: Before you send your resume and/or cover letter to an employer, have Career Services proofread it for you! Career Services can meet with you via phone, email, Microsoft Teams or Zoom.	224 Hwy 9 South, Byhalia, MS 38611 • 123.456.7890 or 901.333.1234 • mbranch3415@yahoo.com November 12, 2021 Mr. Juan Jimenez, Human Resource Director Clifton College 5983 Tall Oaks Blvd. Memphis, TN 38134 Dear Mr. Jimenez, It is with great interest that I reply to your advertisement with Southwest Career Services for a Transcript Analyst. I believe that both my experience and skills are a perfect match for the position as highlighted below and on the enclosed resume: • 3 Years' Experience Assisting the Registrar as a Student Worker • A.A.S. Degree in Administrative Professional Technology • Strong Microsoft Word, Banner, and Office Organization Skills • Dedicated, Detail-Oriented, Problem Solver Who Enjoys Helping Others I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how my previous experience, strong organization and communication skills could benefit your organization. Thank you for your time and consideration. Respectfully, <i>Markus Ranch</i> Attachment

How to Gain Work Experience Before You Graduate

While you are thinking about your resume, it is a good idea to consider how you can begin developing future job skills. One way is to become involved in student clubs, organizations, and special interest groups at STCC. Information about organizations can be found in the Career Services brochure.

Internships and on-campus jobs allow students to gain major-related work experience in a variety of majors and can be paid or unpaid. For more information, look at your degree requirements and contact Career Services or the Department Chairperson. You

can also visit [Internship Benefits, Requirements & Application \(tn.edu\)](#). Career Services continually receives new full and part-time job listings from employers that can be found on the Career Services website at: [Jobs and Career Fairs \(tn.edu\)](#)

Volunteer Experience is also an excellent way to develop career skills. Volunteering through the Southwest Center for Service-Learning & Civic Engagement allows students to use their skills and training to help meet local community needs. Learn more at: <http://www.southwest.tn.edu/service/>. Career Services continually receives new full and part-time job listings from employers that can be found on the Career Services website at: [Jobs and Career Fairs \(tn.edu\)](#)

Key Takeaways

- The purpose of a résumé is to secure an interview.
- A good résumé is action-based and focused on accomplishments.
- The purpose of a cover letter is to entice the recipient to read your résumé.
- You can use Optimal Resume to create your custom resume.
- You can build work experience before you graduate.

Exercises:

1. If you are a student who has no work experience, what kinds of accomplishments can you use to illustrate your skills? Discuss this with a partner or group.
2. Create your own resume! To write your resume, use [Optimal Resume™](#), a free online resume-builder that will allow you to see samples and create your custom resume.
 - Instructions:
 - Visit <https://southwest-tn.optimalresume.com/>
 - Select “NEW USER”
 - Enter **your southwest email address** to request a system password
 - Browse resume samples by industry and get started creating your own custom resume.

If you are having difficulty with creating a resume, contact Career Services for help. (careerservices@southwest.tn.edu)

References

Career Services. *Career Development at Southwest*. <https://www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/docs/Career-Development-Guide.pdf>. 2021.

This page titled [7.4: Résumés and Cover Letters](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [12.7: Résumés and Cover Letters](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#).

7.5: Interviewing

Learning Objectives

1. Learn about the benefits of Career Fairs.
2. Describe four different types of interviews
3. Know how to prepare for an interview by anticipating commonly-asked interview questions.
4. Know what to do during and after an interview.
5. Prepare and record a 60-second elevator speech.

The saying that “you only have one chance to make a good first impression” is especially true during an interview. The goal is to present a professional image while communicating to potential employers the skills, education, and experiences you’ve worked so hard to gain. In a job search, nothing is more exciting or more intimidating than an interview. Reaching the interview stage means that you are in serious consideration for the position, and the pressure feels cranked up. In this section, you will learn how to prepare yourself to “ace” this process. To learn more about how to market yourself, schedule a practice interview with Career Services at STCC.

Career Fairs

Career fairs are an excellent way to network with potential employers and discover internships and jobs related to your major. They are also a great place to build your employment-related communication skills while you meet with recruiters without the pressure of a formal interview. All students are encouraged to attend a Career Fair, even if they aren’t currently looking for a job. STCC students can visit the [Career Services website](#) to learn about upcoming career fairs and to see a list of participating employers before the event. Events may be held on campus, online, or both. When you attend a career fair, bring several copies of your updated resume, dress in business attire, and prepare to give employers your full and undivided attention by silencing your phone and removing your earbuds.

Elevator Speech

An elevator speech is a 30-60 second “commercial” or message about who you are, what you’re looking for, and how you can benefit an employer. An elevator speech is an excellent way to introduce yourself to employers at a job fair, or to answer one of the most commonly-asked interview questions, “Tell me about yourself.” You can learn more about elevator speeches and see an example at <https://youtu.be/hGkIVxwxrCk>.

Interview Formats

In the process of exploring occupations and landing a job, you will likely participate in a variety of interviews. Four types of interviews are phone and one-way interviews, which are typically for screening purposes; virtual or online interviews; and in-person interviews.

Phone Interviews

Prior to scheduling an interview with job candidates, many companies hold a phone or “screening” interview. The objective of this interview is to find reasons to remove, not include, people in a candidate pool. Do not consider it lightly just because someone other than the hiring manager is conducting it. Prepare for your call by reading [5 Phone Interview Tips to Master](#) from Monster.com.

One-Way Interviews

Instead of using phone interviews, employers are increasingly using one-way interviews. “A one-way video interview is a brief video recording that you send to employers to help with their screening process. Within this video, you typically answer a few preselected interview questions or follow a prompt. Unlike a typical interview, you are only talking to your camera. You do not get instant feedback like you would with a real-time interview with an employer. While this format can be challenging, you can also benefit from the fact that you can re-record your video.” (*Indeed.com*) If you are successful in your one-way interview, you will likely be asked to participate in a virtual or traditional, in-person interview. To read more about one-way interviews at <https://www.job-hunt.org/handling-on...eo-interviews/>

Virtual or Online Interviews

With an increasing number of employers conducting virtual or online video interviews, it's important to be prepared for this format. Some of the more common virtual platforms that are being used are Zoom, Skype, Go-To-My-Meeting, and Microsoft Teams. It's a good idea to familiarize yourself with both the technical aspects of the platform and some considerations unique to online interviewing as mentioned here: [Video Interview Tips for Job Seekers](#).

In-Person Interviews

During an in-person interview, you will meet with a hiring manager or small hiring committee at their workplace. This type of interview allows employers to get a better sense of your professionalism and interpersonal communication (verbal and non-verbal) skills. Through a series of questions, the interviewer's goal is to find out if you have the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to handle the job for which you have applied. The hiring manager is also looking to get a sense of what it would be like working with you and how you would fit into the organization. Expect to be asked a behavioral interview question such as, "Tell me about a time when..." or "Give me an example..." as many interviewers believe that how you handled past situations is a predictor of how you will behave in the future. This interview is the one a hiring decision is based on.

Preparing for Interviews

Employers often state that candidates do not know enough about the company when they interview and therefore come across as unprepared or uninterested in the position they are interviewing for. Don't let this be you. A little preparation can go a long way toward reducing interview day stress and ensuring that you come across it in a professional manner. For practical and helpful tips from Indeed, watch [Top Interview Tips](#). In addition, here are other guidelines to help you prepare:

Learn about the organization. In almost every interview situation, you'll be asked, "What can you do for this company?" To adequately answer this question, you must research the company or organization. Know the company's mission, values, products and services, targeted customers, new executives, and major directional changes.

Use your network. Do you know anyone who works for or has worked for this company or organization? Make contact with individuals who have worked for the company through Handshake or acquaintances. Email, call, or have lunch with him or her before your interview to learn more. Your competition likely won't have done their homework as well as you have. Your prospective employer will notice.

Review the job description. Be prepared to explain how your background qualifies you for the job. Did you find the job posting online? Be sure to have printed a copy, and bring it with you to the interview. Some companies take weeks to start calling people in for interviews, and by then the job description may have been removed from the site where you saw it.

Review your résumé. Think of examples that describe or illustrate your accomplishments. You will be asked about items on your résumé, and you need to be able to support them and go into more detail.

Use your interview study guide. Employment interviews, especially screening interviews, do not stray far from a standard list of questions. Find a quiet one to two hours to review the interview study guide provided here, prepare your answers, and actually practice them. Your answers should be short but complete.

Interview Study Guide

The following questions are typical in many employment interviews. If you prepare answers for them ahead of time, you will not be caught off guard during an interview.

- **Tell me about yourself.** Remember that one-minute elevator introduction? Here is a great place to use it. Practice saying it aloud until your delivery is smooth and fluent.
- **What do you know about our company?** Remember to research the company thoroughly so that you can answer this question successfully.
- **What can you offer us? Why should we hire you?** Make a list of your qualifications for the job. Include years of experience, education, special training, technical skills, inside knowledge of a product or market, and so on. Are you a customer of this product or service? Make a list of your "soft skills" skills like communication, leadership, organization, attention to detail, and work ethic. Review the list objectively. Which items are most valuable to the employer? Use this information to write a brief "sales pitch" that describes your qualifications for the job. Structure the information in a logical fashion and then practice saying it aloud until your delivery is smooth, natural, and confident.

- **What are your strengths?** Provide context and scope when answering this question. By elaborating on your strengths, it's easier for the employer to see where and how you excel. Think about your noteworthy and unusual achievements or experiences. What did you do to accomplish them? What kind of preparation did they require? Why are they unique? Think about performance reviews you have received in a job. Have you won awards or received positive feedback from others in the organization or from a happy customer? What were the reasons for the positive attention? If you are a student or recent graduate with limited professional experience, think about your papers, reports, projects, or group assignments. Think about the assignment and what you did to complete it. The same strengths that helped you academically will also help you succeed professionally.
- **What are your weaknesses?** Remember that employers are human and appreciate honesty. It's OK to acknowledge your weaknesses and explain steps you've taken to address them.
- **Where do you see yourself three to five years from now?** Think about your personal goals and answer as genuinely as possible. This is a good opportunity to ask the interviewer about the opportunities available to a person who succeeds in this job.
- **What attracted you to our company?** Draw from your research and personal knowledge of the company to answer this question. Keep in mind that this interview is about what you can do for them, so answering that you're attracted to the free snacks in the break room won't score any points.
- **Tell me about a time you were under pressure to meet a deadline and what you did.** Did you face pressure at school or work because something was due? Describe the problem, the actions you took, and the outcome. This type of question is called a behavioral question and has become increasingly common in recent years. One of the best techniques for answering a behavior question is using the **STAR** technique, which consists of 4 steps: **Situation:** Describe the context within which you performed a job or faced a challenge at work. For example, perhaps you were working on a group project, or you had a conflict with a coworker. This situation can be drawn from a work experience, a volunteer position, or any other relevant event. Be as specific as possible. **Task:** Next, describe your responsibility in that situation. Perhaps you had to help your group complete a project within a tight deadline, resolve a conflict with a coworker, or hit a sales target. **Action:** You then describe how you completed the task or endeavored to meet the challenge. Focus on what you did, rather than what your team, boss, or coworker did. (Tip: Instead of saying, "We did xyz," say "I did xyz.") **Result:** Finally, explain the outcomes or results generated by the action taken. It may be helpful to emphasize what you accomplished, or what you learned.
- **What will former employers say about you?** Be honest. Think about the positive things they will say about you.
- **What salary are you expecting?** This is a land-mine question and one you'll almost certainly face. Typically a company has budgeted a certain salary range for a position and will do its best to stay within it. A general rule for salary discussions is that he or she who says the first number loses. Ask what the salary range is and where the interviewer sees you fitting into that range. You owe it to yourself to find out before the interview what the salary range is for a comparable position in the geographical region. You can learn this through your network or an online salary search.
- **Why do you want to leave your present job?** Or why did you leave your previous job? Do NOT bad-mouth a previous employer. This is akin to gossip, which is ever good.
- **What questions do you have for me?** Before the interview, think of questions you would like answered about the company, the job, or the industry. Having good questions will tell the interviewer a lot about your listening skills and your degree of preparation. If you can, tie your questions back to something the interviewer said earlier. Do not ask questions that the interviewer has already answered. Remember, an interview is not just the company checking you out, it's also you checking out the company. *Business Insider* provides examples of questions you might consider asking at the end of an interview: <https://www.businessinsider.com/questions-to-ask-at-end-of-job-interview-2016-4>

Trick Questions in Interviews

These happen to the best of interviewees. The only wrong answer to an impossible question is "I don't know." Hiring managers are looking for employees who think through tough challenges. They want to know if you keep your cool under pressure if you can think on your feet, whether you start rambling or maintain your credibility, and how you respond to the unfamiliar. So show them: think aloud. Talk about what you know about the problem; work out the process in front of them. You are being judged not only on your ability to solve problems but also on your intelligence and potential. There is no potential in "I don't know."

Prepare yourself physically. Like a final exam, an interview can cause anxiety, and too much anxiety can result in a poor interview. Make sure you eat well and get a good night's sleep before the interview. Hunger, use of energy drinks, and lack of sleep all contribute to interview anxiety.

Dress to impress. Research indicates many job applicants have unsuccessful interviews because they didn't dress professionally. If you're not sure, ask the person who schedules you for an interview what the dress code is. A suit or jacket, dress slacks, dress shirt, and a tie are usually fine for men. A suit or blouse and a skirt or slacks are fine for women. The rule of thumb is to dress one notch above that group's normal attire. If in doubt, a suit is never inappropriate for men or women. Remember, you're going to a job interview, not a casual event. See more recommendations at [How to Dress at a Job Fair - Men](#) and [How to dress at a Job Fair - Women](#).

Punctuality counts. Confirm the date and time of the interview a day or two before. Make sure you know how to get there and how long it takes. Arrive at least ten to fifteen minutes before your interview. You may be asked to complete an application or other form when you arrive. If not, it's a good time to do some relaxation exercises.

Tips for Success During the Interview

Now is the time to demonstrate your listening, thinking, and communication skills. Avoid unexpected distractions, and turn off your cell phone before you even enter the building. Know whom you will be interviewing with and what his or her role is in the company; if possible, get something in writing from the interview coordinator so you can get the names spelled correctly (for follow-up purposes). Once you are face-to-face with the interviewer, do the following:

- Turn your cell phone off and put it away. Remove earbuds and give the interviewer your full attention.
- Relax, take a deep breath, and smile. You should be genuinely pleased to be there, as you were selected from a pool of many other candidates.
- Be yourself. That's whom you want them to hire, not someone you're trying to act like.
- Keep your tone conversational but not too informal. Avoid slang and expletives. Avoid vocal fillers such as uh, um, and so on.
- Make eye contact but don't stare. If you are participating in a virtual or one-way interview, look at the camera, not the screen.
- When answering questions, keep your answers focused on your skills and knowledge.
- Avoid one-word answers, but be succinct and direct; don't ramble.
- Be truthful. Any statements discovered to be untrue are grounds for not hiring you.
- If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification.
- Listen carefully.
- If you don't have the exact fact an interviewer is asking for, offer to find out and get back to them.
- Be prepared to ask questions.
- At the end of the interview, thank the interviewer and tell him or her you enjoyed your conversation. If the interviewer hasn't already told you, it is appropriate to ask about the next steps.

After the Interview

Be sure to send a thank-you note to each person you interviewed with. It is also courteous to send a short note of thanks to the person who coordinated your schedule with the company, even if he or she didn't interview you. This person is often asked for his or her impressions of you. Keep your notes short but personal; refer to a comment or question from the interview that you found significant. An e-mail is usually acceptable, especially if the employer required you to submit an electronic application or résumé. Be sure to send it within twenty-four hours.

Key Takeaways

- Successful interviewing depends on careful preparation.
- Most interview questions can be anticipated and prepared for.
- An interview is as important for you to evaluate the company and its working environment as it is for the company to evaluate your skills and "fit."

Exercises

1. Practice, even with mock interviews, will make you more comfortable in an interview situation. If time permits, conduct a mock employment interview with a classmate for a job you select from an Internet posting. Switch roles so that you are both the interviewer and interviewee. Write about what you learned about yourself and your approach to interviews.
2. Prepare and record a 60-second elevator pitch that you can use to answer the interview question, Tell me about yourself, or that you can use to introduce yourself at career fairs. Find guidelines and an example at <https://youtu.be/hGkIVxwxrCk>.

References

Career Services Guide. Southwest Tennessee Community College. 2021.

Indeed Editorial Team. One Way Video Interview Guide: Steps to a Successful Interview. *Indeed.com* <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice...ideo-interview>. 2 Feb. 2021.

SuccessHawk, "Interview Questions to Anticipate," www.successhawk.com/Interview...to-Anticipate (accessed July 13, 2010).

This page titled [7.5: Interviewing](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman](#), [Thomas King](#), & [William Turner](#).

- [12.8: Interviewing for Success](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#).

7.6: Summary and Learning Activities

Summary

In this chapter, you learned about the importance of soft skills in the workplace as well as eight career competencies employers expect from employees. You were informed about expectations of professionalism and ethics in the workplace and were given instruction in career management skills such as career exploration, resumes and cover letters, elevator speeches, and job interviews.

Key Terms

- career fair
- 8 Career Readiness Competencies
- cover letter
- elevator speech
- ethics
- hard skills
- professionalism
- resume
- soft skills

Chapter Exercises

1. Start an e-Portfolio on Google.
 - An electronic or e-Portfolio is a great way for students to keep track of academic achievements, club involvement, leadership experience, and volunteer activities while they are enrolled in college. Your e-Portfolio should be built over time. Add new content each semester to record your new experiences, projects, and activities. Some of the information you include in your e-Portfolio can also be used to build your resume when you get ready to graduate. To start building your e-Portfolio using Google, visit <http://www.southwest.tn.edu/careerservices/docs/e-portfolio.pdf> for step-by-step instructions. (Career Services)
 - Suggested e-Portfolio Categories: 1. About me (your elevator speech) 2. Career assessment information (from Career Coach) 3. Resume 4. Class projects (recorded speeches, photos of artwork or other projects) 5. Activities (such as club membership, etc.)
 - For more information on the e-Portfolio, contact **Career Services** at Southwest. **Phone:** 901-333-4180 (Macon campus) 901-333-5511 (Union campus) Email: careerservices@southwest.tn.edu Website: www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/ Follow us on Twitter @SouthwestCareer
 - If you have not already done so, create and record an elevator speech to use in your search for internships or jobs. Include your elevator speech in your e-Portfolio.
2. If you have not already done so, create a resume using Optimal Resume. After having Career Services review it, include it in your e-Portfolio.
3. Search for and attend virtual career fairs at STCC to help develop your employment communication skills. For more information, visit www.southwest.tn.edu/career-services/.
4. Complete the Workplace Ethics Activity below.

Workplace Ethics Activity:

Making Informed Ethical Decisions

Teacher Instructions

Divide students into groups of three or four. Assign each group of students one of the following scenarios to read and discuss. Then, instruct students to follow the steps below for making ethical decisions. Each group should select a feasible alternative and be prepared to discuss their reasoning for selecting that alternative with the class. Other groups should challenge the decision and give appropriate feedback.

Scenarios

For all scenarios, assume you are employed by Best Computer Systems, a large computer manufacturing company with approximately 1000 employees. The company is in a large metropolitan area.

CASE 1: Lorna is an administrative assistant in the Human Resources Department. Her good friend, Bill, is applying for a job with the company and she has agreed to serve as a reference for him. Bill approaches her for advice on preparing for the interview. Lorna has the actual interview questions asked of all applicants and considers making him a copy of the list so he can adequately prepare.

CASE 2: Emily works in Quality Control. Once a year, her supervisor gives away the refurbished computers to the local elementary school. No specific records are kept of this type of transaction and Emily really needs a computer for her son who is in college. Her supervisor asks her to deliver 12 computer systems to the school.

CASE 3: Marvin is the secretary in the Facilities Management Department. He has just received a new computer and wants to try it out. Though his supervisor has a strict policy about computer use for business purposes only, he wants to learn the e-mail software more thoroughly than his training can provide. One good way to do this, he figures, is to write e-mail messages to his friends and relatives until he gets the knack of it. He is caught up on all his work and only has 30 minutes left to work today. His supervisor left early.

CASE 4: Richard and Conway are talking in the hallway about the employee benefits program. Conway, who has had some recent financial trouble, explains to Richard how the benefits program has a loophole that will allow him to receive some financial assistance that he really needs to help pay health care costs for his mother. Cathy, a fellow worker, overhears the conversation. Later, Cathy is approached by her supervisor who says he heard a rumor that some people were taking advantage of the company benefits program.

CASE 5: Jennie was recently hired to work as a receptionist for the front lobby. As a receptionist, she is responsible for making copies for the associates. Her son, Bruce, comes in and needs some copies for a school project. He brought his own paper and needs 300 copies for his class. If he doesn't bring the copies with him, he will fail the project. The company copier does not require a security key, nor do they keep track of copies made by departments.

Steps for Making Ethical Decisions

1. Identify the ethical issue or problem.
2. List the facts that have the most bearing on the decision.
3. Identify anyone who might be affected by your decision and how.
4. Explain what each affected person would want you to do about the issue.
5. List three alternative actions and identify the best- and worst-case scenario for each alternative, anyone who would be harmed by this choice (and how), any values that would be compromised by selecting this alternative, and any automatic reasons why this alternative should not be selected (legal issues, rules, etc.).
6. Determine a course of action.

Skinner, Tonya. Workplace Ethics Group Activity. Submitted to Merlot by Cathy Swift. Updated February 7, 2021. Retrieved on June 15, 2021. <http://lessonplans.btskinner.com/ethics1.html>

This page titled [7.6: Summary and Learning Activities](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

7.7: Review

Chapter 7: Vocabulary and Questions for Review and Discussion

Vocabulary

- behavioral questions
- career fair
- Career Coach tool
- career ready
- 8 Career Readiness Competencies
- cover letter
- elevator speech
- e-portfolio (also called a digital portfolio)
- ERROR method of taking personal responsibility
- ethics
- Handshake App
- hard skills
- one-way interview
- professionalism
- resume
- screening interview
- soft skills
- STAR technique

Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Discuss the results of the survey that compared employers' perception of graduates' career readiness with the graduates' own perceptions. Did the results surprise you? Why or why not?
2. Consider your own proficiency in the career competencies shown in the chapter. In what categories would you rate yourself as “very” (4) or “extremely” (5) proficient? In what categories would you fall below a “4”?
3. What lapses in ethical judgment would you add to the list of unethical examples provided in the chapter?
4. Look at the list of respectful behaviors for workplace interactions. Is anything missing from the list?
5. Write an example in which you take responsibility for a mistake. Use the ERROR method.
6. Create two appropriate questions to ask an interviewer at the end of a job interview.
7. What is the purpose of an e-Portfolio (digital portfolio)?
8. What is the purpose of a cover letter?
9. What is the purpose of a resume?
10. What is the purpose of an interview?
11. What should you include in a thank-you email or letter?
12. It is difficult for some students to work at the same time as they attend school. What are some things you can do while you are a student that will help you gain valuable soft skills?
13. List and describe 3 important components of professionalism.

7.7: Review is shared under a [not declared](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Leadership and Working in Teams

This module assumes that a thorough understanding of people requires a thorough understanding of groups. Each of us is an autonomous individual seeking our own objectives, yet we are also members of groups—groups that constrain us, guide us, and sustain us. Just as each of us influences the group and the people in the group, so, too, do groups change each one of us. Joining groups satisfies our need to belong, gain information and understanding through social comparison, define our sense of self and social identity, and achieve goals that might elude us if we worked alone. Groups are also practically significant, for much of the world's work is done by groups rather than by individuals. In this chapter, we will discuss small groups, small group development, small group dynamics, leadership, and decision-making in groups.

[8.1: Understanding Small Groups](#)

[8.2: Small Group Development](#)

[8.3: Small Group Dynamics](#)

[8.4: Leadership and Small Group Communication](#)

[8.5: Problem Solving and Decision-Making in Groups](#)

This page titled [8: Leadership and Working in Teams](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

8.1: Understanding Small Groups

Learning Objectives

1. Define small group communication.
2. Discuss the characteristics of small groups.
3. Explain the functions of small groups.
4. Compare and contrast different types of small groups.
5. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of small groups.

Most of the communication skills discussed in this book are directed toward **dyadic communication**, meaning that they are applied in two-person interactions. While many of these skills can be transferred to and used in small group contexts, the more complex nature of group interaction necessitates some adaptation and some additional skills. Small group communication refers to interactions among three or more people who are connected through a common purpose, mutual influence, and a shared identity. In this section, we will learn about the characteristics, functions, and types of small groups.

Size of Small Groups

There is no set number of members for the ideal small group. A small group requires a minimum of three people (because two people would be a pair or **dyad**), but the upper range of group size is contingent on the purpose of the group. When groups grow beyond fifteen to twenty members, it becomes difficult to consider them a small group based on the previous definition. An analysis of the number of unique connections between members of small groups shows that they are deceptively complex. For example, within a six-person group, there are fifteen separate potential dyadic connections, and a twelve-person group would have sixty-six potential dyadic connections (Hargie, 2011). As you can see, when we double the number of group members, we more than double the number of connections, which shows that network connection points in small groups grow exponentially as membership increases. So, while there is no set upper limit on the number of group members, it makes sense that the number of group members should be limited to those necessary to accomplish the goal or serve the purpose of the group. Small groups that add too many members increase the potential for group members to feel overwhelmed or disconnected.

Structure of Small Groups

Internal and external influences affect a group's structure. In terms of internal influences, member characteristics play a role in initial group formation. For instance, a person who is well informed about the group's task and/or highly motivated as a group member may emerge as a leader and set into motion internal decision-making processes, such as recruiting new members or assigning group roles, that affect the structure of a group (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Different members will also gravitate toward different roles within the group and advocate for certain procedures and courses of action. External factors such as group size, task, and resources also affect group structure. Some groups will have more control over these external factors through decision-making than others. For example, a commission that is put together by a legislative body to look into ethical violations in athletic organizations will likely have less control over its external factors than a self-created weekly book club.



Figure 8.1.1: A self-formed study group likely has a more flexible structure than a city council committee. William Rotza – [Group](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Size and structure also affect communication within a group (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). In terms of size, the more people in a group, the more issues with scheduling and coordination of communication. Remember that time is an important resource in most group

interactions and a resource that is usually strained. The structure can increase or decrease the flow of communication. Reachability refers to how one member is or isn't connected to other group members. For example, the "Circle" group structure in Figure 8.1.2 shows that each group member is connected to two other members. This can make coordination easy when only one or two people need to be brought in for a decision. In this case, Erik and Callie are very reachable by Winston, who could easily coordinate with them. However, if Winston needed to coordinate with Bill or Stephanie, he would have to wait on Erik or Callie to reach that person, which could create delays. The circle can be a good structure for groups who are passing along a task and in which each member is expected to progressively build on the others' work. A group of scholars co-authoring a research paper may work in such a manner, with each person adding to the paper and then passing it on to the next person in the circle. In this case, they can ask the previous person questions and write with the next person's area of expertise in mind. The "Wheel" group structure in Figure 8.1.2 shows an alternative organization pattern. In this structure, Tara is very reachable by all members of the group. This can be a useful structure when Tara is the person with the most expertise in the task or the leader who needs to review and approve work at each step before it is passed along to other group members. But Phillip and Shadow, for example, wouldn't likely work together without Tara being involved.

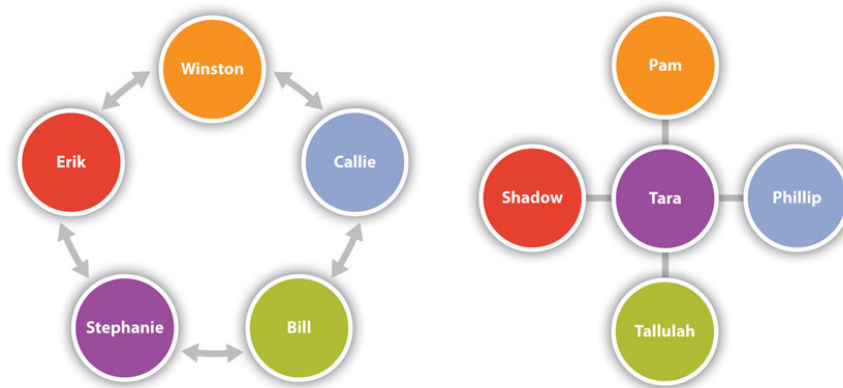


Figure 8.1.2: Small Group Structures

Looking at the group structures, we can make some assumptions about the communication that takes place in them. The wheel is an example of a centralized structure, while the circle is decentralized. Research has shown that centralized groups are better than decentralized groups in terms of speed and efficiency (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). But decentralized groups are more effective at solving complex problems. In centralized groups like the wheel, the person with the most connections, like Tara, is also more likely to be the leader of the group or at least have more status among group members, largely because that person has a broad perspective of what's going on in the group. The most central person can also act as a gatekeeper. Since this person has access to the most information, which is usually a sign of leadership or status, he or she could consciously decide to limit the flow of information. But in complex tasks, that person could become overwhelmed by the burden of processing and sharing information with all the other group members. The circle structure is more likely to emerge in groups where collaboration is the goal and a specific task and course of action aren't required under time constraints. While the person who initiated the group or has the most expertise regarding the task may emerge as a leader in a decentralized group, equal access to information lessens such a rigid structure and the potential for a gatekeeping presence in the more centralized groups.

Interdependence

Small groups exhibit **interdependence**, meaning they share a common purpose and a common fate. If the actions of one or two group members lead to a group deviating from or not achieving their purpose, then all members of the group are affected. Conversely, if the actions of only a few of the group members lead to success, then all members of the group benefit. This is a major contributor to many college students' dislike of group assignments because they feel a loss of control and independence that they have when they complete an assignment alone. This concern is valid in that their grades might suffer because of the negative actions of someone else or their hard work may go to benefit the group member who just skated by. Group meeting attendance is a clear example of the interdependent nature of group interaction. Many of us have arrived at a group meeting only to find half of the members present. In some cases, the group members who show up have to leave and reschedule because they can't accomplish their tasks without the other members present. Group members who attend meetings but withdraw or don't participate can also derail group progress. Although it can be frustrating to have your job, grade, or reputation partially dependent on the actions of

others, the interdependent nature of groups can also lead to higher-quality performance and output, especially when group members are accountable for their actions.

Shared Identity

The shared identity of a group manifests in several ways. Groups may have official charters or mission and vision statements that lay out the identity of a group. For example, the Girl Scout mission states that “Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place” (Girl Scouts, 2012). The mission of this large organization influences the identities of the thousands of small groups called troops. Group identity is often formed around a shared goal and/or previous accomplishments, which adds dynamism to the group as it looks toward the future and back on the past to inform its present. Shared identity can also be exhibited through group names, slogans, songs, handshakes, clothing, or other symbols. At a family reunion, for example, matching t-shirts specially made for the occasion, dishes made from recipes passed down from generation to generation and shared stories of family members that have passed away help establish a shared identity and social reality.

A key element of the formation of shared identity within a group is the establishment of the in-group as opposed to the out-group. The degree to which members share in the in-group identity varies from person to person and group to group. Even within a family, some members may not attend a reunion or get as excited about the matching t-shirts as others. Shared identity also emerges as groups become cohesive, meaning they identify with and like the group’s task and other group members. The presence of cohesion and a shared identity leads to a building of trust, which can also positively influence productivity and members’ satisfaction.



Figure 8.1.3: Cohesion and a shared identity lead to a building of trust. Lostintheredwoods – [Spiral of Hands](#) – CC BY-ND 2.0.

Types of Small Groups

There are many types of small groups, but the most common distinction made between types of small groups is that of **task-oriented** and **relational-oriented** groups (Hargie, 2011). Task-oriented groups are formed to solve a problem, promote a cause, or generate ideas or information (McKay, Davis, & Fanning, 1995). In such groups, like a committee or study group, interactions and decisions are primarily evaluated based on the quality of the final product or output. The three main types of tasks are production, discussion, and problem-solving tasks (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Groups faced with production tasks are asked to produce something tangible from their group interactions such as a report, design for a playground, musical performance, or fundraiser event. Groups faced with discussion tasks are asked to talk through something without trying to come up with a right or wrong answer. Examples of this type of group include a support group for people with HIV/AIDS, a book club, or a group for new fathers. Groups faced with problem-solving tasks have to devise a course of action to meet a specific need. These groups also usually include a production and discussion component, but the end goal isn’t necessarily a tangible product or a shared social reality through discussion. Instead, the end goal is a well-thought-out idea. Task-oriented groups require honed problem-solving skills to accomplish goals, and the structure of these groups is more rigid than that of relational-oriented groups.

Relational-oriented groups are formed to promote interpersonal connections and are more focused on quality interactions that contribute to the well-being of group members. Decision-making is directed at strengthening or repairing relationships rather than completing discrete tasks or debating specific ideas or courses of action. All groups include task and relational elements, so it’s best to think of these orientations as two ends of a continuum rather than as mutually exclusive. For example, although a family unit works together daily to accomplish tasks like getting the kids ready for school and friendship groups may plan a surprise party for one of the members, their primary and most meaningful interactions are still relational. Since other chapters in this book focus specifically on interpersonal relationships, this chapter focuses more on task-oriented groups and the dynamics that operate within these groups.

These task-oriented group members are especially loyal and dedicated to the task and their other group members (Larson & LaFasto, 1989). In professional and civic contexts, the word *team* has become popularized as a means of drawing on the positive connotations of the term—connotations such as “high-spirited,” “cooperative,” and “hardworking.” Scholars who have spent years studying highly effective teams have identified several common factors related to their success. Successful teams have (Adler & Elmhurst, 2005)

- **clear and inspiring shared goals,**
- **a results-driven structure,**
- **competent team members,**
- **a collaborative climate,**
- **high standards for performance,**
- **external support and recognition, and**
- **ethical and accountable leadership.**

Increasingly, small groups and teams are engaging in more virtual interaction. Virtual groups take advantage of new technologies and meet exclusively or primarily online to achieve their purpose or goal. Some virtual groups may complete their task without ever being physically face-to-face. Virtual groups bring with them distinct advantages and disadvantages that you can read more about in the “Getting Plugged In” feature next.

“Getting Plugged In”: Virtual Groups

Virtual groups are now common in academic, professional, and personal contexts, as classes meet entirely online, work teams interface using webinars or video-conferencing programs, and people connect around shared interests in a variety of online settings. Virtual groups are popular in professional contexts because they can bring together people who are geographically dispersed (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003). Virtual groups also increase the possibility for the inclusion of diverse members. The ability to transcend distance means that people with diverse backgrounds and diverse perspectives are more easily accessed than in many offline groups.

One disadvantage of virtual groups stems from the difficulties that technological mediation presents for the relational and social dimensions of group interactions (Walther & Bunz, 2005). As we will learn later in this chapter, an important part of coming together as a group is the socialization of group members into the desired norms of the group. Since norms are implicit, much of this information is learned through observation or conveyed informally from one group member to another. In fact, in traditional groups, group members passively acquire 50 percent or more of their knowledge about group norms and procedures, meaning they observe rather than directly ask (Comer, 1991). Virtual groups experience more difficulty with this part of socialization than co-present traditional groups do since any form of electronic mediation takes away some of the richness present in face-to-face interaction.

To help overcome these challenges, members of virtual groups should be prepared to put more time and effort into building the relational dimensions of their group. Members of virtual groups need to make the social cues that guide new members’ socialization more explicit than they would in an offline group (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003). Group members should also contribute often, even if just supporting someone else’s contribution because increased participation has been shown to increase liking among members of virtual groups (Walther & Bunz, 2005). Virtual group members should also make an effort to put relational content that might otherwise be conveyed through nonverbal or contextual means into the verbal part of a message, as members who include little social content in their messages or only communicate about the group’s task are more negatively evaluated. Virtual groups who do not overcome these challenges will likely struggle to meet deadlines, interact less frequently, and experience more absenteeism. What follows are some guidelines to help optimize virtual groups (Walter & Bunz, 2005):

- **Get started interacting as a group as early as possible, since it takes longer to build social cohesion.**
- **Interact frequently to stay on task and avoid having work build up.**
- **Start working toward completing the task while initial communication about setup, organization, and procedures are taking place.**
- **Respond overtly to other people’s messages and contributions.**
- **Be explicit about your reactions and thoughts since typical nonverbal expressions may not be received as easily in virtual groups as they would be in co-located groups.**
- **Set deadlines and stick to them.**

1. Make a list of some virtual groups to which you currently belong or have belonged in the past. What are some differences between your experiences in virtual groups versus traditional co-located groups?
2. What are some group tasks or purposes that you think lend themselves to being accomplished in a virtual setting? What are some group tasks or purposes that you think would be best handled in a traditional co-located setting? Explain your answers for each.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Small Groups

As with anything, small groups have their advantages and disadvantages. Advantages of small groups include shared decision-making, shared resources, synergy, and exposure to diversity. It is within small groups that most of the decisions that guide our country, introduce local laws, and influence our family interactions are made. In a democratic society, participation in decision-making is a key part of citizenship. Groups also help in making decisions involving judgment calls that have ethical implications or the potential to negatively affect people. Individuals making such high-stakes decisions in a vacuum could have negative consequences given the lack of feedback, input, questioning, and proposals for alternatives that would come from group interaction. Group members also help expand our social networks, which provide access to more resources. A local community-theater group may be able to put on a production with a limited budget by drawing on these connections to get set-building supplies, props, costumes, actors, and publicity in ways that an individual could not. The increased knowledge, diverse perspectives, and access to resources that groups possess relate to another advantage of small groups—**synergy**.

Synergy refers to the potential for gains in performance or heightened quality of interactions when complementary members or member characteristics are added to existing ones (Larson Jr., 2010). Because of synergy, the final group product can be better than what any individual could have produced alone. When I worked in housing and residence life, I helped coordinate a “World Cup Soccer Tournament” for the international students that lived in my residence hall. As a group, we created teams representing different countries around the world, made brackets for people to track progress and predict winners, got sponsors, gathered prizes, and ended up with a very successful event that would not have been possible without the synergy created by our collective group membership. The members of this group were also exposed to international diversity that enriched our experiences, which is also an advantage of group communication.

Participating in groups can also increase our exposure to diversity and broaden our perspectives. Although groups vary in the diversity of their members, we can strategically choose groups that expand our diversity, or we can unintentionally end up in a diverse group. When we participate in small groups, we expand our social networks, which increases the possibility to interact with people who have different cultural identities than ourselves. Since group members work together toward a common goal, shared identification with the task or group can give people with diverse backgrounds a sense of commonality that they might not have otherwise. Even when group members share cultural identities, the diversity of experience and opinion within a group can lead to broadened perspectives as alternative ideas are presented and opinions are challenged and defended. One of my favorite parts of facilitating the class discussion is when students with different identities and/or perspectives teach one another things in ways that I could not on my own. This example brings together the potential of synergy and diversity. People who are more introverted or just avoid group communication and voluntarily distance themselves from groups—or are rejected from groups—risk losing opportunities to learn more about others and themselves.



Figure 8.1.4: A social loafer is a dreaded group member who doesn't do his or her share of the work, expecting that others in the group won't notice or will pick up the slack. Henry Burrows – [Sleeping On The Job](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

There are also disadvantages to small group interaction. In some cases, one person can be just as or more effective than a group of people. Think about a situation in which a highly specialized skill or knowledge is needed to get something done. In this situation, one very knowledgeable person is probably a better fit for the task than a group of less knowledgeable people. Group interaction

also tends to slow down the decision-making process. Individuals connected through a hierarchy or chain of command often work better in situations where decisions must be made under time constraints. When group interaction does occur under time constraints, having one “point person” or leader who coordinates action and gives final approval or disapproval on ideas or suggestions for actions is best.

Group communication also presents interpersonal challenges. A common problem is coordinating and planning group meetings due to busy and conflicting schedules. Some people also have difficulty with the other-centeredness and self-sacrifice that some groups require. The interdependence of group members that we discussed earlier can also create some disadvantages. Group members may take advantage of the anonymity of a group and engage in social loafing, meaning they contribute less to the group than other members or than they would if working alone (Karau & Williams, 1993). **Social loafers** *expect that no one will notice their behaviors or that others will pick up their slack*. It is this potential for social loafing that makes many students and professionals dread group work, especially those who tend to cover for other group members to prevent the social loafer from diminishing the group’s productivity or output.

“Getting Competent”: Improving Your Group Experiences

Like many of you, I also had some negative group experiences in college that made me think similarly to a student who posted the following on a teaching blog: “Group work is code for ‘work as a group for a grade less than what you can get if you work alone’” (Weimer, 2008). But then I took a course called “Small Group and Team Communication” with an amazing teacher who later became one of my most influential mentors. She emphasized the fact that we all needed to increase our knowledge about group communication and group dynamics to better our group communication experiences—and she was right. So the first piece of advice to help you start improving your group experiences is to closely study the group communication chapters in this textbook and to apply what you learn to your group interactions. Neither students nor faculty is born knowing how to function as a group, yet students and faculty often think we’re supposed to learn as we go, which increases the likelihood of a negative experience.

The second piece of advice is to meet often with your group (Myers & Goodboy, 2005). Of course, to do this you have to overcome some scheduling and coordination difficulties, but putting other things aside to work as a group helps set up a norm that group work is important and worthwhile. Regular meetings also allow members to interact with each other, which can increase social bonds, build a sense of interdependence that can help diminish social loafing, and establish other important rules and norms that will guide future group interaction. Instead of committing to frequent meetings, many student groups use their first meeting to equally divide up the group’s tasks so they can then go off and work alone (not as a group). While some group work can definitely be done independently, dividing up the work and assigning someone to put it all together doesn’t allow group members to take advantage of one of the most powerful advantages of group work—synergy.

Last, establish group expectations and follow through with them. I recommend that my students come up with a group name and create a contract of group guidelines during their first meeting (both of which I learned from my group communication teacher whom I referenced earlier). The group name helps begin to establish a shared identity, which then contributes to interdependence and improves performance. The contract of group guidelines helps make explicit the group norms that might have otherwise been left implicit. Each group member contributes to the contract and then they all sign it. Groups often make guidelines about how meetings will be run, what to do about lateness and attendance, the type of climate they’d like for discussion, and other relevant expectations. If group members end up falling short of these expectations, the other group members can remind the straying member of the contract and the fact that he or she signed it. If the group encounters further issues, they can use the contract as a basis for evaluating the other group member or for communicating with the instructor.

1. Do you agree with the student’s quote about group work that was included at the beginning? Why or why not?
2. The second recommendation is to meet more with your group. Acknowledging that schedules are difficult to coordinate and that that is not really going to change, what are some strategies that you could use to overcome that challenge to get time together as a group?
3. What are some guidelines that you think you’d like to include in your contract with a future group?

Key Takeaways

- Getting integrated: Small group communication refers to interactions among three or more people who are connected through a common purpose, mutual influence, and a shared identity. Small groups are important communication units in academic, professional, civic, and personal contexts.

- Several characteristics influence small groups, including size, structure, interdependence, and shared identity.
 - In terms of size, small groups must consist of at least three people, but there is no set upper limit on the number of group members. The ideal number of group members is the smallest number needed to competently complete the group's task or achieve the group's purpose.
 - Internal influences such as member characteristics and external factors such as the group's size, task, and access to resources affect a group's structure. A group's structure also affects how group members communicate, as some structures are more centralized and hierarchical and other structures are more decentralized and equal.
 - Groups are interdependent in that they have a shared purpose and a shared fate, meaning that each group member's actions affect every other group member.
 - Groups develop a shared identity based on their task or purpose, previous accomplishments, future goals, and an identity that sets their members apart from other groups.
- Small groups serve several functions as they meet instrumental, interpersonal, and identity needs.
 - Groups meet instrumental needs, as they allow us to pool resources and provide access to information to better help us survive and succeed.
 - Groups meet interpersonal needs, as they provide a sense of belonging (inclusion), an opportunity to participate in decision making and influence others (control), and emotional support.
 - Groups meet identity needs, as they offer us a chance to affiliate ourselves with others whom we perceive to be like us or whom we admire and would like to be associated with.
- There are various types of groups, including task-oriented, relational-oriented, primary, and secondary groups, as well as teams.
 - Task-oriented groups are formed to solve a problem, promote a cause, or generate ideas or information, while relational-oriented groups are formed to promote interpersonal connections. While there are elements of both in every group, the overall purpose of a group can usually be categorized as the primary task or relational oriented.
 - Primary groups are long-lasting groups that are formed based on interpersonal relationships and include family and friendship groups, and secondary groups are characterized by less frequent interaction and less emotional and relational communication than in primary groups. Our communication in primary groups is more frequently other-oriented than our communication in secondary groups, which is often self-oriented.
 - Teams are similar to task-oriented groups, but they are characterized by a high degree of loyalty and dedication to the group's task and other group members.
- Advantages of group communication include shared decision-making, shared resources, synergy, and exposure to diversity. Disadvantages of group communication include unnecessary group formation (when the task would be better performed by one person), difficulty coordinating schedules, and difficulty with accountability and social loafing.

Exercises

1. Getting integrated: For each of the following examples of a small group context, indicate what you think would be the ideal size of the group and why. Also indicate who the ideal group members would be (in terms of their occupation/major, role, level of expertise, or other characteristics) and what structure would work best.
 - A study group for this class
 - A committee to decide on library renovation plans
 - An upper-level college class in your major
 - A group to advocate for more awareness of and support for abandoned animals
2. List some groups to which you have belonged that focused primarily on tasks and then list some that focused primarily on relationships. Compare and contrast your experiences in these groups.
3. Synergy is one of the main advantages of small group communication. Explain a time when a group you were in benefited from or failed to achieve synergy. What contributed to your success/failure?

References

Adler, R. B., and Jeanne Marquardt Elmhurst *Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Businesses and the Professions*, 8th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 248–50.

- Ahuja, M. K., and John E. Galvin, "Socialization in Virtual Groups," *Journal of Management* 29, no. 2 (2003): 163.
- Barker, D. B., "The Behavioral Analysis of Interpersonal Intimacy in Group Development," *Small Group Research* 22, no. 1 (1991): 79.
- Comer, D. R., "Organizational Newcomers' Acquisition of Information from Peers," *Management Communication Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (1991): 64–89.
- Ellis, D. G., and B. Aubrey Fisher, *Small Group Decision Making: Communication and the Group Process*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 57.
- Girl Scouts, "Facts," accessed July 15, 2012, http://www.girlscouts.org/who_we_are/facts.
- Hargie, O., *Skilled Interpersonal Interaction: Research, Theory, and Practice*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 2011), 452–53.
- Karau, S. J., and Kipling D. Williams, "Social Loafing: A Meta-Analytic Review and Theoretical Integration," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 65, no. 4 (1993): 681.
- Larson, C. E., and Frank M. J. LaFasto, *TeamWork: What Must Go Right/What Must Go Wrong* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989), 73.
- Larson Jr., J. R., *In Search of Synergy in Small Group Performance* (New York: Psychology Press, 2010).
- McKay, M., Martha Davis, and Patrick Fanning, *Messages: Communication Skills Book*, 2nd ed. (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 1995), 254.
- Myers, S. A., and Alan K. Goodboy, "A Study of Groupware in a Course on Small Group Communication," *Psychological Reports* 97, no. 2 (2005): 385.
- Walther, J. B., and Ulla Bunz, "The Rules of Virtual Groups: Trust, Liking, and Performance in Computer-Mediated Communication," *Journal of Communication* 55, no. 4 (2005): 830.
- Weimer, M., "Why Students Hate Groups," *The Teaching Professor*, July 1, 2008, accessed July 15, 2012, www.teachingprofessor.com/art.ts-hate-groups.

This page titled [8.1: Understanding Small Groups](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [13.1: Understanding Small Groups](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/sociology-comprehensive-edition>.

8.2: Small Group Development

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the process of group development.
2. Discuss the characteristics of each stage of group development.

Small groups have to start somewhere. Even established groups go through changes as members come and go, as tasks are started and completed, and as relationships change. In this section, we will learn about the stages of group development, which are **forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning** (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). As with most models of communication phenomena, although we order the stages and discuss them separately, they are not always experienced in a linear fashion. Additionally, some groups don't experience all five stages, may experience stages multiple times, or may experience more than one stage at a time.

Forming

During the **forming stage**, group members begin to reduce the uncertainty associated with new relationships and/or new tasks through initial interactions that lay the foundation for later group dynamics. Groups return to the forming stage as group members come and go over the life span of a group. Although there may not be as much uncertainty when one or two new people join a group as there is when a group first forms, groups spend some time in the forming stage every time group membership changes.

Given that interpersonal bonds are likely not yet formed and people are unfamiliar with the purpose of the group or task at hand, there are high levels of uncertainty. Early stages of role negotiation begin and members begin to determine goals for the group and establish rules and norms. Group cohesion also begins to form during this stage. **Group cohesion** refers to *the commitment of members to the purpose of the group and the degree of attraction among individuals within the group* (Hargie, 2011). The cohesion that begins in this stage sets the group on a trajectory influenced by group members' feelings about one another and their purpose or task. Groups with voluntary membership may exhibit high levels of optimism about what the group can accomplish. Although optimism can be motivating, unrealistic expectations can lead to disappointment, making it important for group members to balance optimism with realism. Groups with assigned or mandatory membership may include members that carry some degree of resentment toward the group itself or the goals of the group. These members can start the group off on a negative trajectory that will lessen or make difficult group cohesiveness. Groups can still be successful if these members are balanced out by others who are more committed to and positive in regards to the purpose of the group.

Storming

During the **storming stage** of group development, conflict emerges as people begin to perform their various roles, have their ideas heard, and negotiate where they fit in the group's structure. The uncertainty present in the forming stage begins to give way as people begin to occupy specific roles and the purpose, rules, and norms of a group become clearer. Conflict develops when some group members aren't satisfied with the role that they or others are playing or the decisions regarding the purpose or procedures of the group. For example, if a leader begins to emerge or is assigned during the forming stage, some members may feel that the leader is imposing his or her will on other members of the group. As we will learn in our section on group leadership, leaders should expect some degree of resentment from others who wanted to be the leader, have interpersonal conflicts with the leader, or just have general issues with being led.

Although the word *storming* and the concept of conflict have negative connotations, conflict can be positive and productive. Just like storms can replenish water supplies and make crops grow, storming can lead to group growth. While conflict is inevitable and should be experienced by every group, a group that gets stuck at the storming stage will likely not have much success in completing its task or achieving its purpose. Influences from outside the group can also affect the conflict in the storming stage. Interpersonal conflicts that predate the formation of the group may distract the group from the more productive idea- or task-oriented conflict that can be healthy for the group and increase the quality of ideas, decision making, and output.



Figure: Although we often have negative connotations of storming and conflict, the group conflict that happens in this stage is necessary and productive. Benjamin Benson – [Lightning Storm](#) – CC BY 2.0.

Norming

During the **norming stage** of group development, the practices and expectations of the group are solidified, which leads to more stability, productivity, and cohesion within the group. Group norms are behaviors that become routine but are not explicitly taught or stated. In short, group norms help set the tone for what group members ought to do and how they ought to behave (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Many implicit norms are derived from social norms that people follow in their everyday life. Norms within the group about politeness, lateness, and communication patterns are typically similar to those in other contexts. Sometimes a norm needs to be challenged because it is not working for the group, which could lead a group back to the storming stage. Other times, group members challenge norms for no good reason, which can lead to punishment for the group member or create conflict within the group.

Performing

During the **performing stage** of group development, group members work relatively smoothly toward the completion of a task or achievement of a purpose. Although interactions in the performing stage are task-focused, the relational aspects of group interaction provide underlying support for the group members. Socialization outside of official group time can serve as a needed relief from the group's task. During task-related interactions, group members ideally begin to develop a synergy that results from the pooling of skills, ideas, experiences, and resources. Synergy is positive in that it can lead group members to exceed their expectations and perform better than they could individually. Glitches in the group's performance can lead the group back to previous stages of group development. Changes in membership, member roles, or norms can necessitate a revisiting of aspects of the forming, storming, or norming stages. One way to continue to build group cohesion during the performing stage is to set short-term attainable group goals. Accomplishing something, even if it's small, can boost group morale, which in turn boosts cohesion and productivity.

Adjourning

The **adjourning stage** of group development occurs when a group dissolves because it has completed its purpose or goal, membership is declining and support for the group no longer exists, or it is dissolved because of some other internal or external cause. Some groups may live on indefinitely and not experience the adjourning stage. Other groups may experience so much conflict in the storming stage that they skip norming and performing and dissolve before they can complete their task. For groups with high social cohesion, adjourning may be a difficult emotional experience. However, group members may continue interpersonal relationships that formed even after the group dissolves. In reality, many bonds, even those that were very close, end up fading after the group disbands. This doesn't mean the relationship wasn't genuine; interpersonal relationships often form because of proximity and shared task interaction. Once that force is gone, it becomes difficult to maintain friendships, and many fade away. For groups that had negative experiences, the adjourning stage may be welcomed.

To make the most out of the adjourning stage, it is important that there be some guided and purposeful reflection. Many groups celebrate their accomplishments with a party or ceremony. Even groups that had negative experiences or failed to achieve their purpose can still learn something through reflection in the adjourning stage that may be beneficial for future group interactions. Often, group members leave a group experience with new or more developed skills that can be usefully applied in future group or individual contexts. Even groups that are relational rather than task-focused can increase members' interpersonal, listening, or empathetic skills or increase cultural knowledge and introduce new perspectives.

Key Takeaways

- Small groups have to start somewhere, but their course of development varies after forming based on many factors. Some groups go through each stage of development in a progressive and linear fashion, while other groups may get stuck in a stage, skip a stage, or experience a stage multiple times.
- The five stages of group development include forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.
 1. During the forming stage, group members engage in socially polite exchanges to help reduce uncertainty and gain familiarity with new members. Even though their early interactions may seem unproductive, they lay the groundwork for cohesion and other group dynamics that will play out more prominently in later stages.
 2. During the storming stage, conflict emerges as group members begin to perform their various roles, have their ideas heard, and negotiate where they fit in the group's structure. Conflict is inevitable and important as a part of group development and can be productive if it is managed properly.
 3. During the norming stage, the practices and expectations (norms and rules) of the group are solidified, which leads to more stability, productivity, and cohesion within the group.
 4. During the performing stage, group members work relatively smoothly toward the completion of a task or the achievement of their purpose, ideally capitalizing on the synergy that comes from the diverse experiences group members bring to the decision-making process.
 5. During the adjourning stage, a group dissolves because its purpose has been met because membership has declined or the group has lost support, or due to some other internal or external cause. It is important that groups reflect on the life of the group to learn any relevant lessons and celebrate accomplishments.

Exercises

1. Recall a previous or current small group to which you belonged/belong. Trace the group's development using the five stages discussed in this section. Did you experience all the stages? In what order? Did you stay in some stages more than others?
2. During the norming stage of group development, interaction patterns and group expectations solidify. Recall a current or former group. What were some of the norms for the group? What were some rules? How did you become aware of each?
3. Many people don't think about the importance of the adjourning stage. What do you think is the best way to complete the adjourning stage for a group that was successful and cohesive? What about a group that was unsuccessful and not cohesive?

References

- Ellis, D. G., and B. Aubrey Fisher, *Small Group Decision Making: Communication and the Group Process*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 14.
- Hargie, O., *Skilled Interpersonal Interaction: Research, Theory, and Practice*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 2011), 445.
- Tuckman, B. W., and Mary Ann C. Jensen, "Stages of Small-Group Development Revisited," *Group and Organizational Studies* 2, no. 4 (1977): 419–27.

This page titled [8.2: Small Group Development](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [13.2: Small Group Development](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/sociology-comprehensive-edition>.

8.3: Small Group Dynamics

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the relationship between group cohesion and group climate.
2. Describe the process of group member socialization.
3. Explain the relationship between conformity and groupthink.
4. Define various types of group conflict and identify strategies for managing each type.

Any time a group of people comes together, new dynamics are put into place that differs from the dynamics present in our typical dyadic interactions. The impressions we form about other people's likeability and the way we think about a group's purpose are affected by the climate within a group that is created by all members. Groups also develop norms, and new group members are socialized into a group's climate and norms just as we are socialized into larger social and cultural norms in our everyday life. The pressure to conform to norms becomes more powerful in group situations, and some groups take advantage of these forces with positive and negative results. Last, the potential for productive and destructive conflict increases as multiple individuals come together to accomplish a task or achieve a purpose. This section explores the dynamics mentioned previously in order to better prepare you for future group interactions.

Group Cohesion and Climate

Appropriate levels of group cohesion usually create a positive group climate, since group climate is affected by members' satisfaction with the group. Climate has also been described as group morale. Following are some qualities that contribute to a positive group climate and morale (Marston & Hecht, 1988):

- **Participation.** Group members feel better when they feel included in the discussion and a part of the functioning of the group.
- **Messages.** Confirming messages help build relational dimensions within a group, and clear, organized, and relevant messages help build task dimensions within a group.
- **Feedback.** Positive, constructive, and relevant feedback contribute to the group climate.
- **Equity.** Aside from individual participation, group members also like to feel as if participation is managed equally within the group and that appropriate turn-taking is used.
- **Clear and accepted roles.** Group members like to know how status and hierarchy operate within a group. Knowing the roles isn't enough to lead to satisfaction, though—members must also be comfortable with and accept those roles.
- **Motivation.** Member motivation is activated by perceived connection to and relevance of the group's goals or purpose.



Figure 8.3.1: Cohesion and shared identity help create symbolic convergence as group members develop a group identity and shared social reality. Ram K – [Watching the big game](#) – CC BY-NC 2.0.

“Getting Real”: Working in Teams

Although most college students hate working in groups, in the “real world” working in teams has become a regular part of professional expectations. Following Japan's lead, corporations in the United States began adopting a more team-based approach for project management decades ago (Jain et al., 2008). This model has become increasingly popular in various

organizational settings since then as means to increase productivity and reduce bureaucracy. Teams in the workplace have horizontally expanded the traditional vertical hierarchy of organizations, as the aim of creating these teams was to produce smaller units within an organization that is small enough to be efficient and self-manageable but large enough to create the synergy that we discussed in the earlier part of the chapter.

Aside from efficiency, teams are also valued for the potential for innovation. The strategic pooling of people with diverse knowledge, experience, and skills can lead to synergistic collaborative thinking that produces new knowledge (du Chatenier et al., 2010). This potential for innovation makes teams ideal in high-stakes situations where money, contracts, or lives are at stake. Large corporations are now putting together what has been termed *inter-organizational high-performance research and development teams* consisting of highly trained technical and scientific experts from diverse backgrounds to work collectively and simultaneously on complex projects under very challenging conditions (Daniel & Davis, 2009). In markets where companies race to find the next generation of technological improvement, such research and development teams are critical for an organization's success. Research on such teams in real-world contexts has found that in order to be successful, high-performance teams should have a clear base such as a project mission, a leader who strategically assigns various tasks to members based on their specialized expertise, and shared leadership in which individual experts are trusted to make decisions relevant to their purview within the group. Although these high-performance teams are very task-oriented, research has also found that the social element cannot be ignored, even under extreme internal and external pressures. In fact, cohesion and interdependence help create a shared reality that in turn improves productivity, because team members feel a sense of shared ownership over their charge (Solansky, 2011).

Some challenges associated with working in teams include the potential for uncertainty or conflict due to the absence of traditional hierarchy, pressures that become overwhelming, lack of shared history since such teams are usually future-oriented, and high expectations without resources necessary to complete the task (du Chatenier et al., 2010). To overcome these challenges, team members can think positively but realistically about the team's end goal, exhibit trust in the expertise of other team members, be reliable and approachable to help build a good team spirit, take initiative with actions and ideas, ask critical questions, and provide critical but constructive feedback.

1. Given your career goals, what sorts of teamwork do you think you might engage in?
2. Would you welcome the opportunity to work on a high-performance team? Why or why not?
3. Members of teams are often under intense pressure to produce or perform at high levels. What is the line at which the pressure becomes too much? Ethically, how far should companies push teams and how far should team members go to complete a task?

Socializing Group Members

Group socialization refers to the process of teaching and learning the norms, rules, and expectations associated with group interaction and group member behaviors. Group norms, rules, and cohesion can only be created and maintained through socialization (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003). It is also through socialization that shared identity and social reality develop among group members, but this development is dependent on several factors. For example, groups with higher levels of cohesion are more likely to have members that “buy into” rules and norms, which aids in socialization. The need for socialization also changes throughout a group's life span. If membership in a group is stable, long-term members should not need much socialization. However, when new members join a group, existing members must take time to engage in socialization. When a totally new group is formed, socialization will be an ongoing process as group members negotiate rules and procedures, develop norms, and create a shared history over time.

The information exchanged during socialization can be broken down into two general categories: technical and social knowledge (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003). Technical knowledge focuses on skills and information needed to complete a task, and social knowledge focuses on behavioral norms that guide interaction. Each type of information is usually conveyed through a combination of formal and informal means. Technical knowledge can be fairly easily passed along through orientations, training, manuals, and documents because this content is often fairly straightforward. Social knowledge is more ambiguous and is usually conveyed through informal means or passively learned by new members through observation. To return to our earlier terminology, technical knowledge relates more to group rules and social knowledge relates more to group norms.

Group rules and norms provide members with a sense of predictability that helps reduce uncertainty and increase a sense of security for one's place within the group. They also guide group members' involvement with the group, help create a shared social reality, and allow the group to function in particular ways without having actual people constantly educating, monitoring, and then

correcting member behaviors (Hargie, 2011). Of course, the degree to which this is successful depends on the buy-in from group members.

Group Pressures

There must be some kind of motivating force present within groups in order for the rules and norms to help govern and guide a group. Without such pressure, group members would have no incentive to conform to group norms or buy into the group's identity and values. In this section, we will discuss how rules and norms gain their power through internal and external pressures and how these pressures can have positive and negative effects.



Figure 8.3.2: Even though group members are different, failure to conform to the group's identity could create problems.
Airwolfhound – [Odd one out](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Conformity

In general, some people are more likely to accept norms and rules than others, which can influence the interaction and potential for conflict within a group. While some people may feel a need for social acceptance that leads them to accept a norm or rule with minimal conformity pressure, others may actively resist because they have a valid disagreement or because they have an aggressive or argumentative personality (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Such personality traits are examples of internal pressures that operate within the individual group member and act as a self-governing mechanism. When group members discipline themselves and monitor their own behavior, groups need not invest in as many external mechanisms to promote conformity. Deviating from the group's rules and norms that a member internalized during socialization can lead to self-imposed feelings of guilt or shame that can then initiate corrective behaviors and discourage the member from going against the group.

Conformity pressure can also stem from external forces when the whole group stands to receive a reward or punishment based on its performance, which ties back to the small group characteristic of interdependence. Although these pressures may seem negative, they also have positive results. Groups that exert an appropriate and ethical amount of conformity pressure typically have higher levels of group cohesion, which as we learned leads to increased satisfaction with group membership, better relationships, and better task performance. Groups with a strong but healthy level of conformity also project a strong group image to those outside the group, which can raise the group's profile or reputation (Hargie, 2011). Pressures toward conformity, of course, can go too far, as is evidenced in tragic stories of people driven to suicide because they felt they couldn't live up to the conformity pressure of their group and people injured or killed enduring hazing rituals that take expectations for group conformity to unethical and criminal extremes.

"Getting Critical": Hazing: Taking Conformity Pressures to the Extreme

Hazing can be defined as actions expected to be performed by aspiring or new members of a group that are irrelevant to the group's activities or mission and are humiliating, degrading, abusive, or dangerous (Richardson, Wang, & Hall, 2012). People who have participated in hazing or have been hazed often note that hazing activities are meant to build group identification and unity. Scholars note that hazing is rationalized because of high conformity pressures and that people who were hazed internalize the group's practices and are more likely to perpetuate hazing, creating a cycle of abuse (Campo, Poulos, & Sipple, 2005). Hazing is not new; it has been around in academic and athletic settings since ancient Greece, but it has gotten much attention lately on college campuses as the number of student deaths attributed to hazing behaviors has increased steadily over the past years. In general, it is believed that hazing incidents are underreported, because these activities are done in secret within tightly knit organizations such as fraternities, sororities, and athletic teams that have strong norms of conformity (Richardson, Wang, & Hall, 2012).

The urge to belong is powerful, but where is the line when it comes to the actions people take or what people are willing to endure in order to be accepted? Hazing is meant to have aspiring group members prove their worth or commitment to the group. Examples of hazing include, but aren't limited to, being "kidnapped, transported, and abandoned"; drinking excessively in games or contests; sleep deprivation; engaging in or simulating sexual acts; being physically abused; being required to remain silent; wearing unusual clothes or costumes; or acting in a subservient manner to more senior group members (Campo, Poulos, & Supple, 2005; Cimino, 2011). Research has found that people in leadership roles, who are more likely to have strong group identification, are also more likely to engage in hazing activities (Campo, Poulos, & Sipple, 2005). The same research also found that group members who have supportive friends outside of the organization are more likely to remove themselves from a hazing situation, which points to the fact that people who endure hazing may be doing so out of a strong drive to find acceptance and belonging they do not have elsewhere.

1. What is your definition of hazing? When does something cross the line from a rite of passage or tradition to hazing?
2. What are some internal and external pressures that might lead to hazing activities?
3. Do some research on hazing incidents on college campuses. What concepts from this chapter do you think could be used in anti-hazing education campaigns to prevent incidents like the ones you researched?

Groupthink

Groupthink is a negative group phenomenon characterized by a lack of critical evaluation of proposed ideas or courses of action that results from high levels of cohesion and/or high conformity pressures (Janis, 1972). We can better understand groupthink by examining its causes and effects. When group members fall victim to groupthink, the effect is an uncritical acceptance of decisions or suggestions for plans of action to accomplish a task or goal. Group meetings that appear to go smoothly with only positive interaction among happy, friendly people may seem ideal, but these actions may be symptomatic of groupthink (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). When people rush to agreement or fear arguments, groupthink has a tendency to emerge. Decisions made as a result of groupthink may range from a poorly thought out presentation method that bores the audience to a mechanical failure resulting in death.

Two primary causes of groupthink are high levels of cohesion and excessive conformity pressures. When groups exhibit high levels of social cohesion, members may be reluctant to criticize or question another group member's ideas or suggestions for fear that it would damage the relationship. When group members have a high level of task cohesion, they may feel invincible and not critically evaluate ideas. High levels of cohesion may actually lessen conformity pressures since group members who identify strongly with the group's members and mission may not feel a need to question the decisions or suggestions made by others. For those who aren't blinded by the high levels of cohesion, internal conformity pressures may still lead them to withhold criticism of an idea because the norm is to defer to decisions made by organization leaders or a majority of group members. External conformity pressures because of impending reward or punishment, time pressures, or an aggressive leader are also factors that can lead to groupthink.

To Avoid Groupthink, Groups Should (Hargie, 2011)

- Divvy up responsibilities between group members so decision-making power isn't in the hands of a few
- Track contributions of group members in such a way that each person's input and output is recorded so that it can be discussed
- Encourage and reward the expression of minority or dissenting opinions
- Allow members to submit ideas prior to a discussion so that opinions aren't swayed by members who propose ideas early in a discussion
- Question each major decision regarding its weaknesses and potential negative consequences relative to competing decisions (encourage members to play "devil's advocate")
- Have decisions reviewed by an outside party that wasn't involved in the decision-making process
- Have a "reflection period" after a decision is made and before it is implemented during which group members can express reservations or second thoughts about the decision

Group Conflict

Conflict can appear in indirect or direct forms within group interaction, just as it can in interpersonal interactions. Group members may openly question each other's ideas or express anger toward or dislike for another person. Group members may also indirectly engage in conflict communication through innuendo, joking, or passive-aggressive behavior. Although we often view conflict

negatively, conflict can be beneficial for many reasons. When groups get into a rut, lose creativity, or become complacent, conflict can help get a group out of a bad or mediocre routine. Conversely, conflict can lead to lower group productivity due to strain on the task and social dimensions of a group. There are three main types of conflict within groups: procedural, substantive, and interpersonal (Fujishin, 2001). Each of these types of conflict can vary in intensity, which can affect how much the conflict impacts the group and its members.

Procedural Conflict

Procedural conflict emerges from disagreements or trouble with the mechanics of group operations. In this type of conflict, group members differ in their beliefs about *how* something should be done. Procedural conflict can be handled by a group leader, especially if the leader puts group procedures into place or has the individual power to change them. If there is no designated leader or the leader doesn't have the sole power to change procedures (or just wants input from group members), proposals can be taken from the group on ways to address a procedural conflict to initiate a procedural change. A vote to reach a consensus or majority can also help resolve procedural conflict.



Figure 8.3.3: Procedural conflict can often be resolved with a group vote. Pixabay – CC0 Public Domain.

Substantive Conflict

Substantive conflict focuses on group members' differing beliefs, attitudes, values, or ideas related to the purpose or task of the group. Rather than focusing on questions of *how*, substantive conflicts focus on questions of *what*. Substantive conflicts may emerge as a group tries to determine its purpose or mission. As members figure out how to complete a task or debate which project to start on next, there will undoubtedly be differences of opinion on what something means, what is acceptable in terms of supporting evidence for a proposal, or what is acceptable for a goal or performance standard. Leaders and other group members shouldn't rush to close this type of conflict down. As we learned in our earlier discussion of groupthink, open discussion and debate regarding ideas and suggestions for group action can lead to higher-quality output and may prevent groupthink. Leaders who make final decisions about substantive conflict for the sake of moving on run the risk of creating a win/lose competitive climate in which people feel like their ideas may be shot down, which could lead to less participation. To resolve this type of conflict, group members may want to do research to see what other groups have done in similar situations, as additional information often provides needed context for conflict regarding information and ideas. Once the information is gathered, weigh all proposals and try to discover common ground among perspectives. Civil and open discussions that debate the merits of an idea are more desirable than a climate in which people feel personally judged for their ideas.

Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict emerges from conflict between individual members of the group. Whereas procedural conflict deals with *how* and substantive conflict deals with *what*, interpersonal conflict deals with *who*. Such conflict can be completely irrelevant to the functioning or purpose of the group, perhaps focusing instead on personality differences. Interpersonal conflict can be the result of avoided or improperly handled procedural or substantive conflict that festers and becomes personal rather than task-focused. This type of conflict can also result from differences in beliefs, attitudes, and values (when such differences are taken personally rather than substantively); different personalities; or different communication styles. While procedural and substantive conflicts may be more easily expressed because they do not directly address a person, interpersonal conflict may slowly build as people avoid openly criticizing or confronting others. Passive-aggressive behavior is a sign that interpersonal conflict may be building under the surface, and other group members may want to intervene to avoid escalation and retaliation. Leaders can also meet with people involved in interpersonal conflict privately to help them engage in perception checking and act as mediators if needed. While people who initiate procedural or substantive conflict may be perceived by other group members as concerned about the group's

welfare and seen as competent in their ability to notice areas on which the group could improve, people who initiate interpersonal conflict are often held in ill-regard by other group members (Ellis & Fisher, 1994).

Managing Conflict in Small Groups

Some common ways to manage conflict include clear decision-making procedures, third-party mediation, and leader facilitation (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). While an up-and-down vote can allow a group to finalize a decision and move on, members whose vote fell on the minority side may feel resentment toward other group members. This can create a win/lose climate that leads to further conflict. Having a leader who makes ultimate decisions can also help move a group toward completion of a task, but conflict may only be pushed to the side and left not fully addressed. Third-party mediation can help move a group past a conflict and may create fewer feelings of animosity since the person mediating and perhaps making a decision isn't a member of the group. In some cases, the leader can act as an internal third-party mediator to help other group members work productively through their conflict.

Tips for Managing Group Conflict (Ellis & Fisher, 1994)

1. Clarify the issue at hand by getting to the historical roots of the problem. Keep in mind that perception leads us to punctuate interactions differently, so it may be useful to know each person's perspective of when, how, and why the conflict began.
2. Create a positive discussion climate by encouraging and rewarding active listening.
3. Discuss needs rather than solutions. Determine each person's needs to be met and goals for the outcome of the conflict before offering or acting on potential solutions.
4. Set boundaries for discussion and engage in gatekeeping to prevent unproductive interactions like tangents and personal attacks.
5. Use "we" language to maintain existing group cohesion and identity, and use "I" language to help reduce defensiveness.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Conflict

Remember that a complete lack of conflict in a group is a bad sign, as it indicates either a lack of activity or a lack of commitment on the part of the members (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Conflict, when properly handled, can lead a group to have a better understanding of the issues they face. For example, substantive conflict brings voice to alternative perspectives that may not have been heard otherwise. Additionally, when people view conflict as healthy, necessary, and productive, they can enter into a conflict episode with an open mind and an aim to learn something. This is especially true when those who initiate substantive conflict are able to share and defend their views in a competent and civil manner. Group cohesion can also increase as a result of well-managed conflict. Occasional experiences of tension and unrest followed by resolutions make groups feel like they have accomplished something, which can lead them to not dread conflict and give them the confidence to more productively deal with it the next time.

Conflict that goes on for too long or is poorly handled can lead to decreased cohesiveness. Group members who try to avoid a conflict can still feel anger or frustration when the conflict drags on. Members who consistently take task-oriented conflict personally and escalate procedural or substantive conflict to interpersonal conflict are especially unpopular with other group members. Mishandled or chronic conflict can eventually lead to the destruction of a group or to a loss of members as people weigh the costs and rewards of membership (Ellis & Fisher, 1994).

Key Takeaways

- *Task cohesion* refers to the degree of commitment of group members to the purpose and activities of the group, and *social cohesion* refers to the degree of attraction and liking among group members. *Group climate* refers to the relatively enduring tone and quality of group interaction that is experienced similarly by group members. The degree of each type of cohesion affects the group's climate. Groups can be very close socially but not perform well if they do not have an appropriate level of task cohesion. Groups that are too focused on the task can experience interpersonal conflict or a lack of motivation if the social cohesion, which helps enhance the feeling of interdependence, is lacking.
- *Group socialization* refers to the process of teaching and learning the norms, rules, and expectations associated with group interaction and group member behaviors. Group members are socialized by receiving technical and social information. Cohesion plays a role in socialization, as groups that have high levels of task and social cohesion are more likely to buy into the norms of the group. Socialization continues after a member has joined, as members are officially or unofficially rewarded or punished for adhering to or deviating from the group's norms.
- Conformity pressures are an important force behind group socialization. Internal pressures such as an internal drive to be seen as part of the group or to avoid feeling ashamed or guilty for deviating from the group influence behavior and communication. Likewise, external pressures such as group policies and the potential for reward or punishment also play

into group dynamics. The pressures toward conformity can manifest in *groupthink*, which is characterized by a lack of critical evaluation of proposed ideas, a high level of agreement, and fear of argument.

- Groups experience different kinds of conflict, including procedural, substantive, and interpersonal conflict.
 - Procedural conflict emerges from disagreements or trouble with the mechanics of group operations and deals with questions about “how” a group should do something. A leader may be able to resolve this conflict by changing or explaining a procedure or taking, from group members, proposals for or votes on procedural revisions.
 - Substantive conflict focuses on group members’ differing beliefs, attitudes, values, or ideas related to the purpose or task of the group. Leaders and other group members should avoid closing off this type of conflict before people have had a chance to be heard, as a lack of substantive conflict can lead to groupthink. Instead, listen to all viewpoints, try to find common ground, and then weigh and evaluate the information as a group.
 - Interpersonal conflict emerges from personal conflict between individual members of a group. Manage interpersonal conflict by getting to the root cause of the conflict. In some cases, interpersonal conflict may be disguised as procedural or substantive conflict, or it may develop as a result of the poorly managed procedural or substantive conflict. Leaders, group members not directly involved in the conflict, or even outside third parties may also be able to effectively mediate interpersonal conflict.

Exercises

1. Group cohesion and climate are important dynamics within a small group. Identify and then compare and contrast a current or former small group that was cohesive and one that was not cohesive, including a discussion of how the presence or lack of cohesion affected the group’s climate.
2. Groupthink is a negative group dynamic that relates to cohesion and conformity pressures. Several historic events with far-reaching and devastating implications have been analyzed through the lens of groupthink. Choose one of the following examples, and do some Internet research on your own. Then explain how groupthink played a role in the event.
 - The Watergate scandal and cover-up (1972–74)
 - The space shuttle Challenger explosion (1986)
 - The rationale for the invasion of Iraq—specifically the supposed existence of weapons of mass destruction (2001–2)
3. Getting integrated: How might you handle group conflict differently in an academic context versus a professional context? Why? Include a reference to a specific type of conflict discussed in this section and discuss which conflict management strategies discussed in the chapter might be best in each context.

References

- Ahuja, M. K. and John E. Galvin, “Socialization in Virtual Groups,” *Journal of Management* 29, no. 2 (2003): 163.
- Bormann, E. G. “Symbolic Convergence Theory: A Communication Formulation,” *Journal of Communication*, 35, no. 4 (1985): 128–38.
- Bormann, E. G., and Nancy C. Borman, *Effective Small Group Communication*, 4th ed. (Santa Rosa, CA: Burgess Publishing, 1988), 72.
- Campo, S., Gretchen Poulos, and John W. Sipple, “Prevalence and Profiling: Hazing among College Students and Points of Intervention,” *American Journal of Health Behavior* 29, no. 2 (2005): 138.
- Cimino, A., “The Evolution of Hazing: Motivational Mechanisms and the Abuse of Newcomers,” *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 11, no. 3–4 (2011): 235.
- Daniel, L. J., and Charles R. Davis, “What Makes High-Performance Teams Excel?” *Research Technology Management* 52, no. 4 (2009): 40–41.
- du Chatenier, E., Jos A. A. M. Verstegen, Harm J. A. Biemans, Martin Mulder, and Onno S. W. F. Omta, “Identification of Competencies in Open Innovation Teams,” *Research and Development Management* 40, no. 3 (2010): 271.
- Ellis, D. G., and B. Aubrey Fisher, *Small Group Decision Making: Communication and the Group Process*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 133.
- Fujishin, R., *Creating Effective Groups: The Art of Small Group Communication* (San Francisco, CA: Acada Books, 2001): 160–61.

- Griffin, E., *A First Look at Communication Theory*, 7th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 28.
- Hargie, O., *Skilled Interpersonal Interaction: Research, Theory, and Practice*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 2011), 445.
- Jain, A. K., Jon M. Thompson, Joseph Chaudry, Shaun McKenzie, and Richard W. Schwartz, "High-Performance Teams for Current and Future Physician Leaders: An Introduction," *Journal of Surgical Education* 65 (2008): 145.
- Janis, I. L., *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-Policy Decisions and Fiascos* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).
- Marston, P. J. and Michael L. Hecht, "Group Satisfaction," in *Small Group Communication*, 5th ed., eds. Robert Cathcart and Larry Samovar (Dubuque, IA: Brown, 1988), 236–46.
- Richardson, B. K., Zuoming Wang, and Camille A. Hall, "Blowing the Whistle against Greek Hazing: The Theory of Reasoned Action as a Framework for Reporting Intentions," *Communication Studies* 63, no. 2 (2012): 173.
- Solansky, S. T., "Team Identification: A Determining Factor of Performance," *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 26, no. 3 (2011): 250.

This page titled [8.3: Small Group Dynamics](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [13.3: Small Group Dynamics](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/sociology-comprehensive-edition>.

8.4: Leadership and Small Group Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the various perspectives on how and why people become leaders.
2. Compare and contrast various leadership styles.

It's important to point out that although a group may have only one official leader, other group members play important leadership roles. Making this distinction also helps us differentiate between leaders and leadership (Hargie, 2011). The **leader** is a group role that is associated with a *high-status position and may be formally or informally recognized by group members*. **Leadership** is a *complex set of beliefs, communication patterns, and behaviors that influence the functioning of a group and move a group toward the completion of its task*. A person in the role of leader may provide no or poor leadership. Likewise, a person who is not recognized as a "leader" in the title can provide excellent leadership. In the remainder of this section, we will discuss some approaches to the study of leadership, leadership styles, and leadership and group dynamics.

Why and How People Become Leaders

Before we move onto specific approaches to studying leadership, let's distinguish between designated and emergent leaders. In general, some people gravitate more toward leadership roles than others, and some leaders are designated while others are emergent (Hargie, 2011). **Designated leaders** are *officially recognized in their leadership role and may be appointed or elected by people inside or outside the group*. Designated leaders can be especially successful when they are sought out by others to fulfill and are then accepted in leadership roles. On the other hand, some people seek out leadership positions not because they possess leadership skills and have been successful leaders in the past but because they have the drive to hold and wield power. Many groups are initially leaderless and must either designate a leader or wait for one to emerge organically. **Emergent leaders** *gain status and respect through engagement with the group and its task and are turned to by others as a resource when leadership is needed*. Emergent leaders may play an important role when a designated leader unexpectedly leaves. We will now turn our attention to three common perspectives on why some people are more likely to be designated leaders than others and how leaders emerge in the absence of or in addition to a designated leader.



Figure 8.4.1: A group leader may be formally designated by someone inside or outside the group or may emerge naturally during early group meetings. [New City Church](#) – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Leaders Emerge Because of Their Traits

The trait approach to studying leadership distinguishes leaders from followers based on traits, or personal characteristics (Pavitt, 1999). Some traits that leaders, in general, share are related to physical appearance, communication ability, intelligence, and personality (Cragan & Wright, 1991). In terms of physical appearance, designated leaders tend to be taller and more attractive than other group members. This could be because we consciously and/or subconsciously associate a larger size (in terms of height and build, but not body fat) with strength and strength with good leadership. As far as communication abilities, leaders speak more fluently, have a more confident tone, and communicate more often than other group members. Leaders are also moderately more intelligent than other group members, which is attractive because leaders need good problem-solving skills. Interestingly, group members are not as likely to designate or recognize an emergent leader that they perceive to be exceedingly more intelligent than

them. Last, leaders are usually more extroverted, assertive, and persistent than other group members. These personality traits help get these group members noticed by others, and expressivity is often seen as attractive and as a sign of communication competence.

Leaders Emerge Because of the Situation

Leaders emerge differently in different groups, but there are two stages common to each scenario (Bormann & Bormann, 1988). During this first stage, about half of the group's members are eliminated from the possibility of being the group's leader. Remember that this is an informal and implicit process—not like people being picked for a kickball team or intentionally vetted. The second stage of leader emergence is where a more or less pronounced struggle for leadership begins. Although the two leading candidates don't overtly fight with each other or say, "I should be leader, not you!" they both take strong stances in regards to the group's purpose and try to influence the structure, procedures, and trajectory for the group. The candidate who retreats will still enjoy a relatively high status in the group and be respected for vying for leadership. The second-place candidate may become a nuisance for the new emergent leader, questioning his or her decisions. Rather than excluding or punishing the second-place candidate, the new leader should give him or her responsibilities within the group to make use of the group member's respected status.



Figure 8.4.2: A group member with expertise in an area relevant to the group's task may emerge to lead the group. For example, a transplant surgeon may lead a team of other doctors and nurses during the surgery while a critical care nurse may take the lead during postsurgery recovery. UCD School of Medicine – [Surgery Image 2](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Leaders Emerge Based on Communication Skill and Competence

This final approach to the study of leadership is considered a functional approach because it focuses on how particular communication behaviors function to create the conditions of leadership. This last approach is the most useful for communication scholars and for people who want to improve their leadership skills because leadership behaviors (which are learnable and adaptable) rather than traits or situations (which are often beyond our control) are the primary focus of study. As we've already learned, any group member can exhibit leadership behaviors, not just a designated or emergent leader. Therefore leadership behaviors are important for all of us to understand even if we don't anticipate serving in leadership positions (Cragan & Wright, 1991).



Figure 8.4.3: A group leader with high communication competence can facilitate brainstorming and group discussion to enhance the creativity and quality of group members' ideas. Luca Mascaro – [Brainstorming](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Leadership Styles

Given the large amount of research done on leadership, it is not surprising that there are several different ways to define or categorize leadership styles. In general, effective leaders do not fit solely into one style in any of the following classifications. Instead, they are able to adapt their leadership style to fit the relational and situational context (Wood, 1977). One common way to

study leadership style is to make a distinction among autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leaders (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). These leadership styles can be described as follows:

- **Autocratic leaders** set policies and make decisions primarily on their own, taking advantage of the power present in their title or status to set the agenda for the group.
- **Democratic leaders** facilitate group discussion and like to take input from all members before making a decision.
- **Laissez-faire leaders** take a “hands-off” approach, preferring to give group members freedom to reach and implement their own decisions.

While this is a frequently cited model of leadership styles, we will focus in more detail on a model that was developed a few years after this one. I choose to focus on this later model because it offers some more specifics in terms of the communicative elements of each leadership style. The four leadership styles used in this model are directive, participative, supportive, and achievement-oriented (House & Mitchell, 1974).

Directive Leaders

Directive leaders help provide psychological structure for their group members by *clearly communicating expectations, keeping a schedule and agenda, providing specific guidance as group members work toward the completion of their task, and taking the lead on setting and communicating group rules and procedures*. Although this is most similar to the autocratic leadership style mentioned before, it is more nuanced and flexible. The originators of this model note that a leader can be directive without being seen as authoritarian. To do this, directive leaders must be good motivators who encourage productivity through positive reinforcement or reward rather than through the threat of punishment.



Figure 8.4.4: Directive leaders provide structure and clear expectations for their group. To be effective they must be skilled motivators. The Open University – [Speaker](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

A directive leadership style is effective in groups that do not have a history and may require direction to get started on their task. It can also be the most appropriate method during crisis situations in which decisions must be made under time constraints or other extraordinary pressures. When groups have an established history and are composed of people with unique skills and expertise, a directive approach may be seen as “micromanaging.” In these groups, a more participative style may be the best option.

Participative Leaders

Participative leaders work to include group members in the decision-making process by *soliciting and considering their opinions and suggestions*. When group members feel included, their personal goals are more likely to align with the group and organization’s goals, which can help productivity. In addition to consulting group members for help with decision-making, participative leaders also grant group members more freedom to work independently. This can lead group members to feel trusted and respected for their skills, which can increase their effort and output. The participative method of leadership is similar to the democratic style discussed earlier, and it is a style of leadership practiced in many organizations that have established workgroups that meet consistently over long periods of time. US companies began to adopt a more participative and less directive style of management in the 1980s after organizational scholars researched teamwork and efficiency in Japanese corporations. Japanese managers included employees in decision-making, which blurred the line between the leader and other group members and enhanced productivity. These small groups were called “quality circles” because they focused on group interaction intended to improve quality and productivity (Cragan & Wright, 1991).

Supportive Leaders

Supportive leaders show concern for their followers' needs and emotions. They want to support group members' welfare through a positive and friendly group climate. These leaders are good at reducing the stress and frustration of the group, which helps create a positive climate and can help increase group members' positive feelings about the task and other group members. Supportive leaders do not provide unconditionally positive praise. They competently provide constructive criticism in order to challenge and enhance group members' contributions. A supportive leadership style is more likely in groups that are primarily relational rather than task-focused. For example, support groups and therapy groups benefit from a supportive leader. While maintaining positive relationships is an important part of any group's functioning, most task-oriented groups need to spend more time on tasks than social functions in order to efficiently work toward the completion of their task.

Achievement-Oriented Leaders

Achievement-oriented leaders strive for excellence and *set challenging goals, constantly seeking improvement and exhibiting confidence that group members can meet their high expectations*. These leaders often engage in systematic social comparison, keeping tabs on other similar high-performing groups to assess their expectations and the group's progress. This type of leadership is similar to what other scholars call transformational or visionary leadership and is often associated with leaders like former Apple CEO Steve Jobs, talk show host and television network CEO Oprah Winfrey, former president Bill Clinton, and business magnate turned philanthropist Warren Buffett. Achievement-oriented leaders are likely less common than the other styles, as this style requires a high level of skill and commitment on the part of the leader and the group. Although rare, these leaders can be found at all levels of groups ranging from local school boards to *Fortune* 500 companies. Certain group dynamics must be in place in order to accommodate this leadership style. Groups for which an achievement-oriented leadership style would be effective are typically intentionally created and are made up of members who are skilled and competent in regard to the group's task. In many cases, the leader is specifically chosen because of his or her reputation and expertise, and even though the group members may not have a history of working with the leader, the members and leader must have a high degree of mutual respect.

"Getting Plugged In": Steve Jobs as an Achievement-Oriented Leader

"Where can you find a leader with Jobs' willingness to fail, his sheer tenacity, persistence, and resiliency, his grandiose ego, his overwhelming belief in himself?" (Deutschman, 2012) This closing line of an article following the death of Steve Jobs clearly illustrates the larger-than-life personality and extraordinary drive of achievement-oriented leaders. Jobs, who founded Apple Computers, was widely recognized as a visionary with a brilliant mind during his early years at the helm of Apple (from 1976 to 1985), but he hadn't yet gained respect as a business leader. Jobs left the company and later returned in 1997. After his return, Apple reached its height under his leadership, which was now enhanced by the business knowledge and skills he gained during his time away from the company. The fact that Jobs was able to largely teach himself the ins and outs of business practices is a quality of achievement-oriented leaders, who are constantly self-reflective and evaluate their skills and performance, making adaptations as necessary.

Achievement-oriented leaders also often possess good instincts, allowing them to make decisions quickly while acknowledging the potential for failure but also showing a resiliency that allows them to bounce back from mistakes and come back stronger. Rather than bringing in panels of experts, presenting ideas to focus groups for feedback, or putting a new product through market research and testing, Jobs relied on his instincts, which led to some embarrassing failures and some remarkable successes that overshadowed the failures. Although Jobs made unilateral decisions, he relied heavily on the creative and technical expertise of others who worked for him and were able to make his creative, innovative, and some say genius ideas reality. As do other achievement-oriented leaders, Jobs held his group members to exceptionally high standards and fostered a culture that mirrored his own perfectionism. Constant comparisons to other technological innovators like Bill Gates, CEO of Microsoft, pushed Jobs and those who worked for him to work tirelessly to produce the "next big thing." Achievement-oriented leaders like Jobs have been described as maniacal, intense, workaholics, perfectionists, risk-takers, narcissists, innovative, and visionary. These descriptors carry positive and negative connotations but often yield amazing results when possessed by a leader, the likes of which only seldom come around.

1. Do you think Jobs could have been as successful had he employed one of the other leadership styles? Why or why not? How might the achievement-oriented leadership style be well suited for a technology company like Apple or the technology field in general?
2. In what circumstances would you like to work for an achievement-oriented leader, and why? In what circumstances would you prefer not to work with an achievement-oriented leader, and why?

3. Do some research on another achievement-oriented leader. Discuss how that leader's traits are similar to and/or different from those of Steve Jobs.

"Getting Real": Leadership as the Foundation of a Career

As we've already learned, leaders share traits, some more innate and naturally tapped into than others. Successful leaders also develop and refine leadership skills and behaviors that they are not "born with." Since much of leadership is skill and behavior-based, it is never too early to start developing yourself as a leader. Whether you are planning to start your first career path fresh out of college, you've returned to college in order to switch career paths, or you're in college to help you advance more quickly in your current career path, you should have already been working on your leadership skills for years; it's not something you want to start your first day on the new job. Since leaders must be able to draw from a wealth of personal experience in order to solve problems, relate to others, and motivate others to achieve a task, you should start to seek out leadership positions in school and/or community groups. Since you may not yet be sure of your exact career path, try to get a variety of positions over a few years that are generally transferrable to professional contexts. In these roles, work on building a reputation as an ethical leader and as a leader who takes responsibility rather than playing the "blame game." Leaders still have to be good team players and often have to take on roles and responsibilities that other group members do not want. Instead of complaining or expecting recognition for your "extra work," accept these responsibilities enthusiastically and be prepared for your hard work to go unnoticed. Much of what a good leader does occurs in the background and isn't publicly praised or acknowledged. Even when the group succeeds because of your hard work as the leader, you still have to be willing to share that praise with others who helped, because even though you may have worked the hardest, you didn't do it alone.

As you build up your experience and reputation as a leader, be prepared for your workload to grow and your interpersonal communication competence to become more important. Once you're on your career path, you can draw on this previous leadership experience and volunteer or step up when the need arises, which can help you get noticed. Of course, you have to be able to follow through on your commitment, which takes discipline and dedication. While you may be excited to prove your leadership chops in your new career path, I caution you about taking on too much too fast. It's easy for a young and/or new member of a work team to become overcommitted, as more experienced group members are excited to have a person to share some of their work responsibilities with. Hopefully, your previous leadership experience will give you confidence that your group members will notice. People are attracted to confidence and want to follow people who exhibit it. Aside from confidence, good leaders also develop dynamism, which is a set of communication behaviors that conveys enthusiasm and creates an energetic and positive climate. Once confidence and dynamism have attracted a good team of people, good leaders facilitate quality interaction among group members, build cohesion, and capitalize on the synergy of group communication in order to come up with forward-thinking solutions to problems. Good leaders also continue to build skills in order to become better leaders. Leaders are excellent observers of human behavior and are able to assess situations using contextual clues and nonverbal communication. They can then use this knowledge to adapt their communication to the situation. Leaders also have a high degree of emotional intelligence, which allows them to better sense, understand, and respond to others' emotions and to have more control over their own displays of emotions. Last, good leaders further their careers by being reflexive and regularly evaluating their strengths and weaknesses as a leader. Since our perceptions are often skewed, it's also good to have colleagues and mentors/supervisors give you formal evaluations of your job performance, making explicit comments about leadership behaviors. As you can see, the work of a leader only grows more complex as one moves further along a career path. But with the skills gained through many years of increasingly challenging leadership roles, a leader can adapt to and manage this increasing complexity.

1. What leadership positions have you had so far? In what ways might they prepare you for more complex and career-specific leadership positions you may have later?
2. What communication competencies do you think are most important for a leader to have and why? How do you rate in terms of the competencies you ranked as most important?
3. Who do you know who would be able to give you constructive feedback on your leadership skills? What do you think this person would say? (You may want to consider actually asking the person for feedback).

Key Takeaways

- Leaders fulfill a group role that is associated with status and power within the group that may be formally or informally recognized by people inside and/or outside of the group. While there are usually only one or two official leaders within a group, all group members can perform leadership functions, which are a complex of beliefs, communication patterns, and behaviors that influence the functioning of a group and move a group toward the completion of its tasks.
- There are many perspectives on how and why people become leaders:
 - Designated leaders are officially recognized in their leadership roles and may be appointed or elected.
 - Emergent leaders gain status and respect through engagement with the group and its task and are turned to by others as a resource when leadership is needed.
 - The trait approach to studying leadership distinguishes leaders from followers based on traits or personal characteristics, such as physical appearance, communication ability, intelligence, and personality. While this approach is useful for understanding how people conceptualize ideal leaders, it doesn't offer communication scholars much insight into how leadership can be studied and developed as a skill.
 - Situational context also affects how leaders emerge. Different leadership styles and skills are needed based on the level of the structure surrounding a group and on how group interactions play out in initial meetings and whether or not a leadership struggle occurs.
 - Leaders also emerge based on communication skill and competence, as certain communication behaviors function to create the conditions of leadership. This approach is most useful to communication scholars because in it leadership is seen as a set of communication behaviors that are learnable and adaptable rather than traits or situational factors, which are often beyond our control.
- Leaders can adopt a directive, participative, supportive, or achievement-oriented style.
 - Directive leaders help provide psychological structure for their group members by clearly communicating expectations, keeping a schedule and agenda, providing specific guidance as group members work toward the completion of their task, and taking the lead on setting and communicating group rules and procedures.
 - Participative leaders work to include group members in the decision-making process by soliciting and considering their opinions and suggestions.
 - Supportive leaders show concern for their followers' needs and emotions.
 - Achievement-oriented leaders strive for excellence and set challenging goals, constantly seeking improvement and exhibiting confidence that group members can meet their high expectations.

Exercises

1. In what situations would a designated leader be better than an emergent leader, and vice versa? Why?
2. Think of a leader that you currently work with or have worked with who made a strong (positive or negative) impression on you. Which leadership style did he or she use most frequently? Cite specific communication behaviors to back up your analysis.
3. Getting integrated: Teachers are often viewed as leaders in academic contexts along with bosses/managers in professional, politicians/elected officials in civic, and parents in personal contexts. For each of these leaders and contexts, identify some important leadership qualities that each should possess, and discuss some of the influences in each context that may affect the leader and his or her leadership style.

References

- Bormann, E. G., and Nancy C. Bormann, *Effective Small Group Communication*, 4th ed. (Santa Rosa, CA: Burgess CA, 1988), 130–33.
- Cragan, J. F., and David W. Wright, *Communication in Small Group Discussions: An Integrated Approach*, 3rd ed. (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing, 1991), 120.
- Deutschman, A., “Exit the King,” *The Daily Beast*, September 21, 2011, accessed August 23, 2012, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2011/08/28/steve-jobs-american-genius.html>.
- Fiedler, F. E., *A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).

- French Jr., J. R. P., and Bertram Raven, "The Bases of Social Power," in *Studies in Social Power*, ed. Dorwin Cartwright (Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, 1959), 150–67.
- Hargie, O., *Skilled Interpersonal Interaction: Research, Theory, and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2011), 456.
- House, R. J., and Terrence R. Mitchell, "Path-Goal Theory of Leadership," *Journal of Contemporary Business* 3 (1974): 81–97.
- Lewin, K., Ronald Lippitt, and Ralph K. White, "Patterns of Aggressive Behavior in Experimentally Created 'Social Climates,'" *Journal of Social Psychology* 10, no. 2 (1939): 269–99.
- Pavitt, C., "Theorizing about the Group Communication-Leadership Relationship," in *The Handbook of Group Communication Theory and Research*, ed. Lawrence R. Frey (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999), 313.
- Wood, J. T., "Leading in Purposive Discussions: A Study of Adaptive Behavior," *Communication Monographs* 44, no. 2 (1977): 152–65.

This page titled [8.4: Leadership and Small Group Communication](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [14.1: Leadership and Small Group Communication](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/sociology-comprehensive-edition>.

8.5: Problem Solving and Decision-Making in Groups

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the common components and characteristics of problems.
2. Explain the five steps of the group problem-solving process.
3. Discuss the various influences on decision-making.

Although the steps of problem-solving and decision-making that we will discuss next may seem obvious, we often don't think to or choose not to use them. Instead, we start working on a problem and later realize we are lost and have to backtrack. I'm sure we've all reached a point in a project or task and had the "OK, now what?" moment. I've recently taken up some carpentry projects as a functional hobby, and I have developed a great respect for the importance of advanced planning. It's frustrating to get to a crucial point in building or fixing something only to realize that you have to unscrew a support board that you already screwed in, have to drive back to the hardware store to get something that you didn't think to get earlier, or have to completely start over. In this section, we will discuss the group problem-solving process, methods of decision making, and influences on these processes.



Figure 8.5.1: Group problem solving can be a confusing puzzle unless it is approached systematically. Muness Castle – [Problem Solving](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Group Problem-Solving Process

There are several variations of similar problem-solving models based on US American scholar John Dewey's reflective thinking process (Bormann & Bormann, 1988). As you read through the steps in the process, think about how we can apply what we have learned regarding the general and specific elements of problems. Some of the following steps are straightforward, and they are things we would logically do when faced with a problem. However, taking a deliberate and systematic approach to problem-solving has been shown to benefit group functioning and performance. A deliberate approach is especially beneficial for groups that do not have an established history of working together and will only be able to meet occasionally. Although a group should attend to each step of the process, group leaders or other group members who facilitate problem-solving should be cautious not to dogmatically follow each element of the process or force a group along. Such a lack of flexibility could limit group member input and negatively affect the group's cohesion and climate.

Step 1: Define the Problem

Define the problem by considering the three elements shared by every problem: the **current undesirable situation**, the **goal** or more desirable situation, and **obstacles** in the way (Adams & Galanes, 2009). At this stage, group members share what they know about the current situation, without proposing solutions or evaluating the information. Here are some good questions to ask during this stage: What is the current difficulty? How did we come to know that the difficulty exists? Who/what is involved? Why is it meaningful/urgent/important? What have the effects been so far? What, if any, elements of the difficulty require clarification? At the end of this stage, the group should be able to compose a single sentence that summarizes the problem called a problem statement. Avoid wording in the problem statement or question that hints at potential solutions. A small group formed to investigate ethical violations of city officials could use the following problem statement: "Our state does not currently have a mechanism for citizens to report suspected ethical violations by city officials."

Step 2: Analyze the Problem

During this step, a group should analyze the problem and the group's relationship to the problem. Whereas the first step involved exploring the "what" related to the problem, this step focuses on the "why." At this stage, group members can discuss the potential causes of the difficulty. Group members may also want to begin setting out an agenda or timeline for the group's problem-solving process, looking forward to the other steps. To fully analyze the problem, the group can discuss the five common problem variables discussed before. Here are two examples of questions that the group formed to address ethics violations might ask: Why doesn't our city have an ethics reporting mechanism? Do cities of similar size have such a mechanism? Once the problem has been analyzed, the group can pose a problem question that will guide the group as it generates possible solutions. "How can citizens report suspected ethical violations of city officials and how will such reports be processed and addressed?" As you can see, the problem question is more complex than the problem statement, since the group has moved on to a more in-depth discussion of the problem during step 2.

Step 3: Generate Possible Solutions

During this step, group members generate possible solutions to the problem. Again, solutions should not be evaluated at this point, only proposed and clarified. The question should be what *could* we do to address this problem, not what *should* we do to address it. It is perfectly OK for a group member to question another person's idea by asking something like "What do you mean?" or "Could you explain your reasoning more?" Discussions at this stage may reveal a need to return to previous steps to better define or more fully analyze a problem. Since many problems are multifaceted, it is necessary for group members to generate solutions for each part of the problem separately, making sure to have multiple solutions for each part. Stopping the solution-generating process prematurely can lead to groupthink. For the problem question previously posed, the group would need to generate solutions for all three parts of the problem included in the question. Possible solutions for the first part of the problem (How can citizens report ethical violations?) may include "online reporting system, e-mail, in-person, anonymously, on-the-record," and so on. Possible solutions for the second part of the problem (How will reports be processed?) may include "daily by a newly appointed ethics officer, weekly by a nonpartisan nongovernment employee," and so on. Possible solutions for the third part of the problem (How will reports be addressed?) may include "by a newly appointed ethics commission, by the accused's supervisor, by the city manager," and so on.

Step 4: Evaluate Solutions

During this step, solutions can be critically evaluated based on their credibility, completeness, and worth. Once the potential solutions have been narrowed based on more obvious differences in relevance and/or merit, the group should analyze each solution based on its potential effects—especially negative effects. Groups that are required to report the rationale for their decision or whose decisions may be subject to public scrutiny would be wise to make a set list of criteria for evaluating each solution. Additionally, solutions can be evaluated based on how well they fit with the group's charge and the abilities of the group. To do this, group members may ask, "Does this solution live up to the original purpose or mission of the group?" and "Can the solution actually be implemented with our current resources and connections?" and "How will this solution be supported, funded, enforced, and assessed?" Secondary tensions and substantive conflict, two concepts discussed earlier, emerge during this step of problem-solving, and group members will need to employ effective critical thinking and listening skills.

Decision-making is part of the larger process of problem-solving and it plays a prominent role in this step. While there are several fairly similar models for problem-solving, there are many varied decision-making techniques that groups can use. For example, to narrow the list of proposed solutions, group members may decide by majority vote, by weighing the pros and cons, or by discussing them until a consensus is reached. There are also more complex decision-making models like the "six hats method," which we will discuss later. Once the final decision is reached, the group leader or facilitator should confirm that the group is in agreement. It may be beneficial to let the group break for a while or even to delay the final decision until a later meeting to allow people time to evaluate it outside of the group context.

Step 5: Implement and Assess the Solution

Implementing the solution requires some advanced planning, and it should not be rushed unless the group is operating under strict time restraints or delay may lead to some kind of harm. Although some solutions can be implemented immediately, others may take days, months, or years. As was noted earlier, it may be beneficial for groups to poll those who will be affected by the solution as to their opinion of it or even do a pilot test to observe the effectiveness of the solution and how people react to it. Before implementation, groups should also determine how and when they would assess the effectiveness of the solution by asking, "How

will we know if the solution is working or not?" Since solution assessment will vary based on whether or not the group is disbanded, groups should also consider the following questions: If the group disbands after implementation, who will be responsible for assessing the solution? If the solution fails, will the same group reconvene or will a new group be formed?



Figure 8.5.2: Once a solution has been reached and the group has the “green light” to implement it, it should proceed deliberately and cautiously, making sure to consider possible consequences and address them as needed. Jocko Benoit – [Prodigal Light](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Certain elements of the solution may need to be delegated out to various people inside and outside the group. Group members may also be assigned to implement a particular part of the solution based on their role in the decision-making or because it connects to their area of expertise. Likewise, group members may be tasked with publicizing the solution or “selling” it to a particular group of stakeholders. Last, the group should consider its future. In some cases, the group will get to decide if it will stay together and continue working on other tasks or if it will disband. In other cases, outside forces determine the group’s fate.

“Getting Competent”: Problem Solving and Group Presentations

Giving a group presentation requires that individual group members and the group as a whole solve many problems and make many decisions. Although having more people involved in a presentation increases logistical difficulties and has the potential to create more conflict, a well-prepared and well-delivered group presentation can be more engaging and effective than a typical presentation. The main problems facing a group giving a presentation are (1) dividing responsibilities, (2) coordinating schedules and time management, and (3) working out the logistics of the presentation delivery.

In terms of dividing responsibilities, assigning individual work at the first meeting and then trying to fit it all together before the presentation (which is what many college students do when faced with a group project) is not the recommended method. Integrating content and visual aids created by several different people into a seamless final product takes time and effort, and the person “stuck” with this job at the end usually ends up developing some resentment toward his or her group members. While it’s OK for group members to do work independently outside of group meetings, spend time working together to help set up some standards for content and formatting expectations that will help make later integration of work easier. Taking the time to complete one part of the presentation together can help set those standards for later individual work. Discuss the roles that various group members will play openly so there isn’t role confusion. There could be one point person for keeping track of the group’s progress and schedule, one point person for communication, one point person for content integration, one point person for visual aids, and so on. Each person shouldn’t do all that work on his or her own but help focus the group’s attention on his or her specific area during group meetings (Stanton, 2009).

Scheduling group meetings is one of the most challenging problems groups face, given people’s busy lives. From the beginning, it should be clearly communicated that the group needs to spend considerable time in face-to-face meetings, and group members should know that they may have to make an occasional sacrifice to attend. Especially important is the commitment to scheduling time to rehearse the presentation. Consider creating a contract of group guidelines that include expectations for meeting attendance to increase group members’ commitment.

Group presentations require members to navigate many logistics of their presentation. While it may be easier for a group to assign each member to create a five-minute segment and then transition from one person to the next, this is definitely not the

most engaging method. Creating a master presentation and then assigning individual speakers creates a more fluid and dynamic presentation and allows everyone to become familiar with the content, which can help if a person doesn't show up to present and during the question-and-answer section. Once the content of the presentation is complete, figure out introductions, transitions, visual aids, and the use of time and space (Stanton, 2012). In terms of introductions, figure out if one person will introduce all the speakers at the beginning, if speakers will introduce themselves at the beginning, or if introductions will occur as the presentation progresses. In terms of transitions, make sure each person has included in his or her speaking notes when presentation duties switch from one person to the next. Visual aids have the potential to cause hiccups in a group presentation if they aren't fluidly integrated. Practicing with visual aids and having one person control them may help prevent this. Know how long your presentation is and know how you're going to use the space. Presenters should know how long the whole presentation should be and how long each of their segments should be so that everyone can share the responsibility of keeping time. Also, consider the size and layout of the presentation space. You don't want presenters huddled in a corner until it's their turn to speak or trapped behind furniture when their turn comes around.

1. Of the three main problems facing group presenters, which do you think is the most challenging and why?
2. Why do you think people tasked with a group presentation (especially students) prefer to divide the parts up and have members work on them independently before coming back together and integrating each part? What problems emerge from this method? In what ways might developing a master presentation and then assign parts to different speakers be better than the more divided method? What are the drawbacks to the master presentation method?

Specific Decision-Making Techniques

Some decision-making techniques involve determining a course of action based on the level of agreement among the group members. These methods include **majority**, **expert**, **authority**, and **consensus rule**. Figure 8.5.4 “Pros and Cons of Agreement-Based Decision-Making Techniques” reviews the pros and cons of each of these methods.



Figure 8.5.3: Majority rule is a simple method of decision-making based on voting. In most cases, a majority is considered half plus one. Becky McCray – [Voting](#) – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Majority rule is a commonly used decision-making technique in which *a majority (one-half plus one) must agree before a decision is made*. A show-of-hands vote, a paper ballot, or an electronic voting system can determine the majority choice. Many decision-making bodies, including the US House of Representatives, Senate, and Supreme Court, use majority rule to make decisions, which shows that it is often associated with democratic decision-making since each person gets one vote and each vote counts equally. Of course, other individuals and mediated messages can influence a person's vote, but since the voting power is spread out over all group members, it is not easy for one person or party to take control of the decision-making process. In some cases—for example, to override a presidential veto or to amend the constitution—a supermajority of two-thirds may be required to make a decision.

Minority rule is a decision-making technique in which *a designated authority or expert has the final say over a decision and may or may not consider the input of other group members*. When a designated expert makes a decision by minority rule, there may be buy-in from others in the group, especially if the members of the group didn't have relevant knowledge or expertise. When a designated authority makes decisions, buy-in will vary based on group members' level of respect for the authority. For example, decisions made by an elected authority may be more accepted by those who elected him or her than by those who didn't. As with majority rule, this technique can be time-saving. Unlike majority rule, one person or party can have control over the decision-making process. This type of decision-making is more similar to that used by monarchs and dictators. An obvious negative

consequence of this method is that the needs or wants of one person can override the needs and wants of the majority. A minority deciding for the majority has led to negative consequences throughout history. The white Afrikaner minority that ruled South Africa for decades instituted apartheid, which was a system of racial segregation that disenfranchised and oppressed the majority population. The quality of the decision and its fairness really depends on the designated expert or authority.

Consensus rule is a decision-making technique in which *all members of the group must agree on the same decision*. On rare occasions, a decision may be ideal for all group members, which can lead to a unanimous agreement without further debate and discussion. Although this can be positive, be cautious that this isn't a sign of groupthink. More typically, the consensus is reached only after a lengthy discussion. On the plus side, consensus often leads to high-quality decisions due to the time and effort it takes to get everyone in agreement. Group members are also more likely to be committed to the decision because of their investment in reaching it. On the negative side, the ultimate decision is often one that all group members can live with but not one that's ideal for all members. Additionally, the process of arriving at a consensus also includes conflict, as people debate ideas and negotiate the interpersonal tensions that may result.

Figure 8.5.4: Pros and Cons of Agreement-Based Decision-Making Techniques

Decision-Making Technique	Pros	Cons
Majority rule	• Quick • Efficient in large groups • Each vote counts equally	• Close decisions (5–4) may reduce internal and external “buy-in” • Doesn't take advantage of group synergy to develop alternatives that more members can support • The minority may feel alienated
Minority rule by expert	• Quick • Decision quality is better than what less knowledgeable people could produce • Experts are typically objective and less easy to influence	• Expertise must be verified • Experts can be difficult to find/pay for • Group members may feel useless
Minority rule by authority	• Quick • Buy-in could be high if authority is respected	• Authority may not be seen as legitimate, leading to less buy-in • Group members may try to sway the authority or compete for his or her attention • Unethical authorities could make decisions that benefit them and harm group members
Consensus rule	• High-quality decisions due to time invested • Higher level of commitment because of participation in decision • Satisfaction with the decision because of shared agreement	• Time-consuming • Difficult to manage idea and personal conflict that can emerge as ideas are debated • The decision may be OK but not ideal

“Getting Critical”: Six Hats Method of Decision Making

Edward de Bono developed the Six Hats method of thinking in the late 1980s, and it has since become a regular feature in decision-making training in business and professional contexts (de Bono, 1985). The method's popularity lies in its ability to help people get out of habitual ways of thinking and to allow group members to play different roles and see a problem or decision from multiple points of view. The basic idea is that each of the six hats represents a different way of thinking, and when we figuratively switch hats, we switch the way we think. The hats and their style of thinking are as follows:

- **White hat.** Objective—focuses on seeking information such as data and facts and then processes that information in a neutral way.
- **Red hat.** Emotional—uses intuition, gut reactions, and feelings to judge information and suggestions.
- **Black hat.** Negative—focus on potential risks, point out possibilities for failure, and evaluates information cautiously and defensively.

- **Yellow hat.** Positive—is optimistic about suggestions and future outcomes gives constructive and positive feedback, points out benefits and advantages.
- **Green hat.** Creative—try to generate new ideas and solutions, think “outside the box.”
- **Blue hat.** Philosophical—uses metacommunication to organize and reflect on the thinking and communication taking place in the group, facilitates who wears what hat and when group members change hats.

Specific sequences or combinations of hats can be used to encourage strategic thinking. For example, the group leader may start off wearing the Blue Hat and suggest that the group start their decision-making process with some “White Hat thinking” in order to process through facts and other available information. During this stage, the group could also process through what other groups have done when faced with a similar problem. Then the leader could begin an evaluation sequence starting with two minutes of “Yellow Hat thinking” to identify potential positive outcomes, then “Black Hat thinking” to allow group members to express reservations about ideas and point out potential problems, then “Red Hat thinking” to get people’s gut reactions to the previous discussion, then “Green Hat thinking” to identify other possible solutions that are more tailored to the group’s situation or completely new approaches. At the end of a sequence, the Blue Hat would want to summarize what was said and begin a new sequence. To successfully use this method, the person wearing the Blue Hat should be familiar with different sequences and plan some of the thinking patterns ahead of time based on the problem and the group members. Each round of thinking should be limited to a certain time frame (two to five minutes) to keep the discussion moving.

1. This decision-making method has been praised because it allows group members to “switch gears” in their thinking and allows for role-playing, which lets people express ideas more freely. How can this help enhance critical thinking? Which combination of hats do you think would be best for a critical thinking sequence?
2. What combinations of hats might be useful if the leader wanted to break the larger group up into pairs and why? For example, what kind of thinking would result from putting Yellow and Red together, Black and White together, or Red and White together, and so on?
3. Based on your preferred ways of thinking and your personality, which hat would be the best fit for you? Which would be the most challenging? Why?



Figure 8.5.5: Personality affects decision-making. For example, “emotional” group members make rash decisions. One Way Stock – [Tough Decisions Ahead](#) – CC BY-ND 2.0.

Influences on Decision Making

The personalities of group members, especially leaders and other active members, affect the climate of the group. Group member personalities can be categorized based on where they fall on a continuum anchored by the following descriptors: dominant/submissive, friendly/unfriendly, and instrumental/emotional (Cragan & Wright, 1999). The more group members there are in any extreme of these categories, the more likely it that the group climate will also shift to resemble those characteristics.

- **Dominant versus submissive.** Group members that are more dominant act more independently and directly, initiate conversations, take up more space, make more direct eye contact, seek leadership positions, and take control over decision-making processes. More submissive members are reserved, contribute to the group only when asked to, avoid eye contact, and leave their personal needs and thoughts unvoiced or give in to the suggestions of others.
- **Friendly versus unfriendly.** Group members on the friendly side of the continuum find a balance between talking and listening, don’t try to win at the expense of other group members, are flexible but not weak, and value democratic decision-making. Unfriendly group members are disagreeable, indifferent, withdrawn, and selfish, which leads them to either not invest in decision making or direct it in their own interest rather than in the interest of the group.
- **Instrumental versus emotional.** Instrumental group members are emotionally neutral, objective, analytical, task-oriented, and committed followers, which leads them to work hard and contribute to the group’s decision-making as long as it is orderly and follows agreed-on rules. Emotional group members are creative, playful, independent, unpredictable, and expressive, which leads them to make rash decisions, resist group norms or decision-making structures and switch often from relational to task focus.

Domestic Diversity and Group Communication

While it is becoming more likely that we will interact in small groups with international diversity, we are guaranteed to interact in groups that are diverse in terms of the cultural identities found within a single country or the subcultures found within a larger cultural group.

Gender stereotypes sometimes influence the roles that people play within a group. For example, the stereotype that women are more nurturing than men may lead group members (both male and female) to expect that women will play the role of supporters or harmonizers within the group. Since women have primarily performed secretarial work since the 1900s, it may also be expected that women will play the role of the recorder. In both of these cases, stereotypical notions of gender place women in roles that are typically not as valued in group communication. The opposite is true for men. In terms of leadership, despite notable exceptions, research shows that men fill an overwhelmingly disproportionate amount of leadership positions. We are socialized to see certain behaviors by men as indicative of leadership abilities, even though they may not be. For example, men are often perceived to contribute more to a group because they tend to speak first when asked a question or to fill a silence and are perceived to talk more about task-related matters than relationally oriented matters. Both of these tendencies create a perception that men are more engaged with the task. Men are also socialized to be more competitive and self-congratulatory, meaning that their communication may be seen as dedicated and their behaviors seen as powerful, and that when their work isn't noticed they will be more likely to make it known to the group rather than take silent credit. Even though we know that the relational elements of a group are crucial for success, even in high-performance teams, that work is not as valued in our society as task-related work.

Despite the fact that some communication patterns and behaviors related to our typical (and stereotypical) gender socialization affects how we interact in and form perceptions of others in groups, the differences in group communication that used to be attributed to gender in early group communication research seem to be diminishing. This is likely due to the changing organizational cultures from which much group work emerges, which have now had more than sixty years to adjust to women in the workplace. It is also due to a more nuanced understanding of gender-based research, which doesn't take a stereotypical view from the beginning as many of the early male researchers did. Now, instead of biological sex being assumed as a factor that creates inherent communication differences, group communication scholars see that men and women both exhibit a range of behaviors that are more or less feminine or masculine. It is these gendered behaviors, and not a person's gender, that seem to have more of an influence on perceptions of group communication. Interestingly, group interactions are still masculinist in that male and female group members prefer a more masculine communication style for task leaders and that both males and females in this role are more likely to adapt to a more masculine communication style. Conversely, men who take on social-emotional leadership behaviors adopt a more feminine communication style. In short, it seems that although masculine communication traits are more often associated with high-status positions in groups, both men and women adapt to this expectation and are evaluated similarly (Haslett & Ruebush, 1999).

Other demographic categories are also influential in group communication and decision-making. In general, group members have an easier time communicating when they are more similar than different in terms of race and age. This ease of communication can make group work more efficient, but the homogeneity, meaning the members are more similar, may sacrifice some creativity. In general, groups that are culturally heterogeneous have better overall performance than more homogenous groups (Haslett & Ruebush, 1999). These groups benefit from the diversity of perspectives in terms of the quality of decision-making and creativity of output.

The benefits and challenges that come with the diversity of group members are important to consider. Since we will all work in diverse groups, we should be prepared to address potential challenges in order to reap the benefits. Diverse groups may be wise to coordinate social interactions outside of group time in order to find common ground that can help facilitate interaction and increase group cohesion. We should be sensitive but not let sensitivity create fear of "doing something wrong" which then prevents us from having meaningful interactions.

Key Takeaways

- Every problem has common components: an undesirable situation, the desired situation, and obstacles between the undesirable and desirable situations. Every problem also has a set of characteristics that vary among problems, including task difficulty, number of possible solutions, group member interest in the problem, group familiarity with the problem, and the need for solution acceptance.
- The group problem-solving process has five steps:
 1. Define the problem by creating a problem statement that summarizes it.

2. Analyze the problem and create a problem question that can guide solution generation.
 3. Generate possible solutions. Possible solutions should be offered and listed without stopping to evaluate each one.
 4. Evaluate the solutions based on their credibility, completeness, and worth. Groups should also assess the potential effects of the narrowed list of solutions.
 5. Implement and assess the solution. Aside from enacting the solution, groups should determine how they will know the solution is working or not.
- Common decision-making techniques include majority rule, minority rule, and consensus rule. Only a majority, usually one-half plus one, must agree before a decision is made with majority rule. With minority rule, designated authority or expert has final say over a decision, and the input of group members may or may not be invited or considered. With consensus rule, all members of the group must agree on the same decision.
 - Several factors influence the decision-making process:
 - Situational factors include the degree of freedom a group has to make its own decisions, the level of uncertainty facing the group and its task, the size of the group, the group's access to information, and the origin and urgency of the problem.
 - Personality influences on decision making include a person's value orientation (economic, aesthetic, theoretical, political, or religious), and personality traits (dominant/submissive, friendly/unfriendly, and instrumental/emotional).
 - Cultural influences on decision making include the heterogeneity or homogeneity of the group makeup; cultural values and characteristics such as individualism/collectivism, power distance, and high-/low-context communication styles; and gender and age differences.

Exercises

1. In terms of situational influences on group problem solving, task difficulty, number of possible solutions, group interest in the problem, group familiarity with the problem, and need for solution acceptance are five key variables discussed in this chapter. For each of the two following scenarios, discuss how the situational context created by these variables might affect the group's communication climate and the way it goes about addressing its problem.
 - **Scenario 1.** Task difficulty is high, the number of possible solutions is high, group interest in the problem is high, group familiarity with the problem is low, and the need for solution acceptance is high.
 - **Scenario 2.** Task difficulty is low, the number of possible solutions is low, group interest in the problem is low, group familiarity with the problem is high, and the need for solution acceptance is low.
2. Getting integrated: Certain decision-making techniques may work better than others in academic, professional, personal, or civic contexts. For each of the following scenarios, identify the decision-making technique that you think would be best and explain why.
 - **Scenario 1: Academic.** A professor asks his or her class to decide whether the final exam should be an in-class or take-home exam.
 - **Scenario 2: Professional.** A group of coworkers must decide which person from their department to nominate for a company-wide award.
 - **Scenario 3: Personal.** A family needs to decide how to divide the belongings and estate of a deceased family member who did not leave a will.
 - **Scenario 4: Civic.** A local branch of a political party needs to decide what five key issues it wants to include in the national party's platform.
3. Group communication researchers have found that heterogeneous groups (composed of diverse members) have advantages over homogenous (more similar) groups. Discuss a group situation you have been in where diversity enhanced your and/or the group's experience.

References

- Adams, K., and Gloria G. Galanes, *Communicating in Groups: Applications and Skills*, 7th ed. (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 220–21.
- Allen, B. J., *Difference Matters: Communicating Social Identity*, 2nd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 2011), 5.

- Bormann, E. G., and Nancy C. Bormann, *Effective Small Group Communication*, 4th ed. (Santa Rosa, CA: Burgess CA, 1988), 112–13.
- Clarke, G., “The Silent Generation Revisited,” *Time*, June 29, 1970, 46.
- Cragan, J. F., and David W. Wright, *Communication in Small Group Discussions: An Integrated Approach*, 3rd ed. (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing, 1991), 77–78.
- de Bono, E., *Six Thinking Hats* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1985).
- Delbecq, A. L., and Andrew H. Ven de Ven, “A Group Process Model for Problem Identification and Program Planning,” *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 7, no. 4 (1971): 466–92.
- Haslett, B. B., and Jenn Ruebush, “What Differences Do Individual Differences in Groups Make?: The Effects of Individuals, Culture, and Group Composition,” in *The Handbook of Group Communication Theory and Research*, ed. Lawrence R. Frey (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999), 133.
- Napier, R. W., and Matti K. Gershenfeld, *Groups: Theory and Experience*, 7th ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 292.
- Osborn, A. F., *Applied Imagination* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1959).
- Spranger, E., *Types of Men* (New York: Steckert, 1928).
- Stanton, C., “How to Deliver Group Presentations: The Unified Team Approach,” *Six Minutes Speaking and Presentation Skills*, November 3, 2009, accessed August 28, 2012, <http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/group-presentations-unified-team-approach>.
- Thomas, D. C., “Cultural Diversity and Work Group Effectiveness: An Experimental Study,” *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 30, no. 2 (1999): 242–63.

This page titled [8.5: Problem Solving and Decision-Making in Groups](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [14.3: Problem Solving and Decision Making in Groups](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/sociology-comprehensive-edition>.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Front Matter

[TitlePage](#)

[InfoPage](#)

[Licensing](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

Southwest Tennessee Community College
9: Mass Communication and Social Media

Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner

This text is disseminated via the Open Education Resource (OER) LibreTexts Project (<https://LibreTexts.org>) and like the hundreds of other texts available within this powerful platform, it is freely available for reading, printing and "consuming." Most, but not all, pages in the library have licenses that may allow individuals to make changes, save, and print this book. Carefully consult the applicable license(s) before pursuing such effects.

Instructors can adopt existing LibreTexts texts or Remix them to quickly build course-specific resources to meet the needs of their students. Unlike traditional textbooks, LibreTexts' web based origins allow powerful integration of advanced features and new technologies to support learning.



The LibreTexts mission is to unite students, faculty and scholars in a cooperative effort to develop an easy-to-use online platform for the construction, customization, and dissemination of OER content to reduce the burdens of unreasonable textbook costs to our students and society. The LibreTexts project is a multi-institutional collaborative venture to develop the next generation of open-access texts to improve postsecondary education at all levels of higher learning by developing an Open Access Resource environment. The project currently consists of 14 independently operating and interconnected libraries that are constantly being optimized by students, faculty, and outside experts to supplant conventional paper-based books. These free textbook alternatives are organized within a central environment that is both vertically (from advance to basic level) and horizontally (across different fields) integrated.

The LibreTexts libraries are Powered by [NICE CXOne](#) and are supported by the Department of Education Open Textbook Pilot Project, the UC Davis Office of the Provost, the UC Davis Library, the California State University Affordable Learning Solutions Program, and Merlot. This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 1246120, 1525057, and 1413739.

Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation nor the US Department of Education.

Have questions or comments? For information about adoptions or adaptations contact info@LibreTexts.org. More information on our activities can be found via Facebook (<https://facebook.com/Libretexts>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/libretexts>), or our blog (<http://Blog.Libretexts.org>).

This text was compiled on 10/16/2023

Licensing

A detailed breakdown of this resource's licensing can be found in [Back Matter/Detailed Licensing](#).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Licensing](#)

[9.1: Mass Communication - A Definition](#)

[9.2: Quick Look- Mass Communication and Media](#)

[9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0](#)

[9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication](#)

[9.5: Ethics of Mass Media](#)

- [9.5.1: Ethical Issues in Mass Media](#)
- [9.5.2: How Newspapers Control the Public's Access to Information and Impact American Pop Culture](#)

[Index](#)

[Glossary](#)

[Detailed Licensing](#)

9.1: Mass Communication - A Definition

Mass Communication - A Definition

We define communication as the process of generating meaning by sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal symbols and signs that are influenced by multiple contexts. Mass Communication does that on a grander scale as it is the imparting or exchanging of information to a wide range of people. Even a brief history of media and mass communication can leave one breathless. The speed, reach, and power of the technology are humbling. Evolution can seem almost natural and inevitable, but it is important to stop and ask a basic question: Why? Why do media and mass communication seem to play such an important role in our lives and our culture? According to the website Chron.com we see that the four functions of mass communications are: surveillance, correlation, cultural transmission, and entertainment:

- Media provide *entertainment* acting as a springboard for our imaginations, a source of fantasy, and an outlet for escapism.
- Media provide *information* and *education*. Information can come in many forms, and often blurs the line with entertainment.
- Media provide **public forums** for the discussion of important issues.
- Media provide watchdog services to *monitor government, business, and other institutions*. Online journalists today try to uphold this role.

Thinking more deeply, we can recognize that certain media are better at certain roles. Media have characteristics that influence how we use them. While some forms of mass media are better suited to entertainment, others make more sense as a venue for spreading information. The 1960s media theorist Marshall McLuhan took these ideas one step further with the phrase “**the medium is the message.**” McLuhan emphasized that each medium delivers information in a different way and that content is fundamentally shaped by that medium.

We do not have to cast value judgments but can affirm: People who get the majority of their news from a particular medium will have a particular view of the world shaped not just by the *content* of what they watch but also by its *medium*. Or, as computer scientist Alan Kay put it, “Each medium has a special way of representing ideas that emphasize particular ways of thinking and de-emphasize others.” Alan Kay, “The Infobahn is Not the Answer,” *Wired*, May 1994. The Internet has made this discussion even richer because it seems to hold all other media within it—print, radio, film, television, and more. If indeed the medium is the message, the Internet provides us with an extremely interesting message to consider.

Key Takeaways

Media fulfill several roles in culture, including the following:

- Entertaining and providing an outlet for the imagination
- Educating and informing
- Serving as a public forum for the discussion of important issues
- Acting as a watchdog for government, business, and other institutions

This page titled [9.1: Mass Communication - A Definition](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- **1.4: How Did We Get Here? The Evolution of Media** by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/sociology-comprehensive-edition>.

9.2: Quick Look- Mass Communication and Media

Learning Objectives

- Discuss events that impacted the adaptation of mass media.
- Explain how different technological transitions have shaped media industries.
- Identify four roles the media perform in our society.

A Brief History of Mass Media/Communication

“Well, how did I get here?” a baffled David Byrne sings in the Talking Heads song, “Once in a Lifetime.” The contemporary media landscape is so rich, deep, and multifaceted that it’s easy to imagine American media consumers asking themselves the same question. People can turn on their television and find 24-hour news channels, sports channels, as well as music videos, nature documentaries, and reality shows about everything from hoarders to fashion models. That’s not to mention movies available on-demand from cable providers. We watch television, film and video available online for streaming or downloading from creators like Netflix and Hulu, curators like Tubi and Crunchyroll, or Network-specific like Disney+, CBS All Access, HBOmax, or NBC Peacock. The estimated total U.S. daily newspaper circulation (print and digital combined) in 2020 was 24.3 million for weekdays and 25.8 million for Sunday, each down 6% from the previous year. Visit [Trends and Facts on Newspapers \(journalism.org\)](https://www.journalism.org/trends-and-facts-on-newspapers/) (accessed July 1, 2021) for more information.

A University of California San Diego study by Doug Ramsey claimed that U.S. households consumed around 3.6 zettabytes of information in 2008, the digital equivalent of a 7-foot high stack of books covering the entire United States, including Alaska—a 350 percent increase since 1980. Americans are exposed to media in taxicabs and busses, in classrooms and doctors’ offices, on highways, and in airplanes.

Books and Newspapers

The printing press is a device that allows for the mass production of uniform printed matter, mainly text in the form of books, pamphlets and newspapers. It was created in China sometime during the first millennium with the oldest surviving document being *The Diamond Sutra* from 868 A. D. The printing press revolutionized society in China before being further developed in Europe 600 years later by German Johannes Gutenberg when he created the Gutenberg press. [Printing Press - HISTORY](#)

Gutenberg’s 15th-century invention of the metal movable type printing press made the mass production of print media easier. Not only was it much cheaper to produce written material, but new transportation technologies helped texts to reach a wider audience. In 1810, another German printer, Friedrich Koenig, pushed media production even further when he essentially hooked the steam engine up to a printing press, enabling the industrialization of printed media. In 1800, a hand-operated printing press could produce about 480 pages per hour; Koenig’s machine more than doubled this rate. (By the 1930s, many printing presses had an output of 3000 pages an hour.) This increased efficiency helped lead to the rise of the daily newspaper.

As Europeans colonized the land that would come to be called the United States of America, the newspaper was an essential medium. At first, newspapers helped the Europeans stay connected with events in their respective countries. But as a more common way of life started throughout the states newspapers helped give expression to a burgeoning "American" culture. Political scientist Benedict Anderson has argued that newspapers helped forge this sense of national identity by treating readers across the country as part of one unified group with common goals and values. Newspapers, he said, helped create an “imagined community.”

In the 1830s, the major daily newspapers faced a new threat with the rise of the penny press—newspapers that were low-priced broadsheets. These papers served as a cheaper, more sensational daily news source and privileged news of murder and adventure over the dry political news of the day. While earlier newspapers catered to a wealthier, more educated audience, the penny press attempted to reach a wide swath of readers through cheap prices and entertaining (often scandalous) stories. The penny press is the forerunner to today’s gossip tabloids.

The Real Joe Gould.
THE UNFOLD STORY
OF THE MAKING OF
A CHARACTER AND LIFE.
In The Sunday World.

PRICE ONE CENT.

SIBERIA A LIVING HELL. SEE THE SUNDAY WORLD.

LAST EDITION.

THE PAUPER-SMUGGLERS.

New York Officials Seeking a Method to Bring Them to Justice.

THIS CITY A DUMPING GROUND.

Massachusetts Authorities Practically Confess the Role of H. & L. and Fly.

GEN. BEN BUTLER SAYS IT'S SO.

Paupers and Lunatics Have Been Shipped Here Systematically for Years.

The above, published under the title of "The Pauper-Smugglers," is a story of the most sordid and disgusting of crimes, and one which has been the subject of much investigation and discussion in the past few years. It is a story of the most sordid and disgusting of crimes, and one which has been the subject of much investigation and discussion in the past few years.



WATER MARK.

Smugglers of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, as well as the House of Representatives, have been the subject of much investigation and discussion in the past few years. It is a story of the most sordid and disgusting of crimes, and one which has been the subject of much investigation and discussion in the past few years.

GEN. BEN BUTLER SAYS IT'S SO.

The above, published under the title of "The Pauper-Smugglers," is a story of the most sordid and disgusting of crimes, and one which has been the subject of much investigation and discussion in the past few years. It is a story of the most sordid and disgusting of crimes, and one which has been the subject of much investigation and discussion in the past few years.

The BROOKLYN EVENING EDITION World.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1922.

I Want That \$500.00.
I estimate that the average number of copies of The Worldpaper per day during 1922 will be found to have been
Name _____
Address _____
DECEMBER 10, 1922. Address The World, Box 2,000 N.Y.

PRICE ONE CENT.

MANY PATIENTS EXPOSED.

Typhus Carries Off an Infant of Sullivan's Alcoholic Ward.

Park View Lodging-House Now Closely Watched.

John C. Sullivan, a member of the Sullivan family, was found dead in his room at the Park View Lodging-House, 1234 Ave. C, on Saturday morning. The cause of death was typhus fever, which had been contracted while he was in the Sullivan family's alcoholic ward.

MRE. LESLIE WANTS TIPPED.

Justice Dean Now Think Her Absence Was Purposely Concealed.

Justice Dean, who has been absent from the court for some time, is now expected to return. Her absence was thought to be purposely concealed, and she is now being watched closely.

ALBERT HANDECKER DEAD.

Charles Rubin Dies This Morning After a Long Illness.

Charles Rubin, a well-known figure in the community, died this morning after a long illness. He was a man of great character and a man who had done much good for his fellow citizens.

PODGES HAD INDUSTRIOUS.

Mr. Podges Had a Busy Day with the Industrial Commission.

Mr. Podges, a member of the Industrial Commission, had a very busy day today. He was seen at the commission's offices, where he was discussing various matters of importance.

MAN BURNED TO DEATH.

Explosion in the Cane Mill's Boiler Room.

A man was burned to death today in an explosion in the boiler room of the Cane Mill. The explosion was caused by a faulty boiler, and the man was killed instantly.

BE WEDD FOUR TIMES A YEAR.

Armed Men Will Meet at a Wedding.

A wedding ceremony is being held today, and it is expected that there will be some interesting incidents. The bride and groom are both well-known figures in the community.

CAN THEY STOP IT?



PALLIARD AND WIFE IN JAIL.

The Dallas City Hall for the Immigrants.

Palliard and his wife have been arrested and are now in jail. They are accused of various crimes, and their case is being handled by the Dallas City Hall.

THIS STATUE STORY TOO LATE.

Will Be Shipped to the Statue of Liberty.

A statue of a famous figure is being shipped to the Statue of Liberty. The statue is a work of art, and it is expected that it will be a great attraction for visitors.

REVEREND CURE TO TOWN.

Will Visit Mother in Buffalo for Her Health.

A reverend figure is visiting his mother in Buffalo. He is on his way back to town, and he is expected to stay for some time.

PROOF FOR BILLESSEN SENT TO JAIL.

Will Know Whether Mink's Evidence Held for Grand Jury.

Proof for Billesen has been sent to jail. The case is being handled by the Grand Jury, and it is expected that there will be some interesting developments.

DR. CECIL DROPPED.

A Member of the Court to Inform.

Dr. Cecil, a member of the court, has been dropped. The case is being handled by the court, and it is expected that there will be some interesting developments.

JUDGE T. J. JEFFERSON DEAD.

After a Long Illness.

Judge T. J. Jefferson, a well-known figure in the community, died today after a long illness. He was a man of great character and a man who had done much good for his fellow citizens.

MANOR FOUNDED BY FATHER.

Manor Founded by Father of the Manor.

A manor has been founded by the father of the manor. The manor is a work of art, and it is expected that it will be a great attraction for visitors.

CONTRACTOR SENT TO AN ASYLUM.

Not Found, N.Y. in the Asylum.

A contractor has been sent to an asylum. He is accused of various crimes, and his case is being handled by the asylum.

WILSON DROPPED BY LATE HOUR.

Wilson Dropped by Late Hour.

Wilson has been dropped by the late hour. The case is being handled by the court, and it is expected that there will be some interesting developments.

LAST EDITION.

LABRETAGNE'S SMASH.

The French Liar Daily Damaged by Crashing Into a Pier.

Labretagne's ship has crashed into a pier, causing significant damage. The ship is now in a state of disrepair, and it is expected that it will be a great attraction for visitors.

WEDDED AT A PORNOQUE.

They Were Married in the Parnassus.

A couple has been married in a unique location. The wedding was a great success, and it is expected that there will be some interesting developments.

MALLETIER IS FOUND ASLEEP.

Found in the Parnassus.

Malletier has been found asleep. The case is being handled by the court, and it is expected that there will be some interesting developments.

A VERDICT FOR \$10,000.

John Morris Wins the Case.

A verdict of \$10,000 has been awarded to John Morris. The case is being handled by the court, and it is expected that there will be some interesting developments.

ELIAS PUBIN MISSING.

Went Out to Look for Work and Did Not Return.

Elias Pubin has been missing. He went out to look for work, and he has not returned. His case is being handled by the court, and it is expected that there will be some interesting developments.

RECEIVED RESTRAINED.

Miss Legeron Under the Reins and Ties Central.

Miss Legeron has been restrained. The case is being handled by the court, and it is expected that there will be some interesting developments.

ONE MORE CRIMINAL VICTIM.

Victim of a Crime.

A criminal has been found guilty of a crime. The case is being handled by the court, and it is expected that there will be some interesting developments.

THE FATHER OF THE FATHER.

The Father of the Father.

The father of the father has been found. The case is being handled by the court, and it is expected that there will be some interesting developments.

HEAVEN OR HELL?

Is Dr. Talmage Right in His View of Hell?

Dr. Talmage has expressed his view of hell. The case is being handled by the court, and it is expected that there will be some interesting developments.

NEXT SUNDAY WORLD?

Next Sunday World.

The next Sunday World is expected to be a great success. It is expected that there will be some interesting developments.

The penny press appealed to readers' desires for lurid tales of murder, scandal, and racial fear-mongering which leads to today's tabloids. Magazine covers of Tabloid covers for the week of February 13, 2012 * starcasm.net



Radio, Television, Film

In the early decades of the 20th century, the first major non-print forms of mass media—film and radio—exploded in popularity. Radios, which were less expensive than telephones and widely available by the 1920s, especially had the unprecedented ability to allow huge numbers of people to listen to the same event at the same time. In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge's pre-election speech reached more than 20 million people. Radio was a boon for advertisers, who now had access to a large and captive audience. An early advertising consultant claimed that the early days of radio were “a glorious opportunity for the advertising man to spread his sales propaganda” thanks to “a countless audience, sympathetic, pleasure-seeking, enthusiastic, curious, interested, approachable in the privacy of their homes.”Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005).

The reach of radio also further helped forge an American culture. The medium was able to downplay regional differences and encourage a unified sense of the American lifestyle—a lifestyle that was increasingly driven and defined by consumer purchases. “Americans in the 1920s were the first to wear ready-made, exact-size clothing...to play electric phonographs, to use electric vacuum cleaners, to listen to commercial radio broadcasts, and to drink fresh orange juice year-round.”Digital History, “The Formation of Modern American Mass Culture,” *The Jazz Age: The American 1920s*, 2007, www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/dat...y.cfm?hhid=454(accessed July 15, 2010).

The post-World War II era in the United States was marked by prosperity, and by the introduction of a seductive new form of mass communication: Television. In 1946, there were about 17,000 televisions in the entire United States. Within seven years, two-thirds of American households owned at least one set. As the United States' gross national product (GNP) doubled in the 1950s, and again in the 1960s, the American home became firmly ensconced as a consumer unit.

Broadcast television was the dominant form of mass media. From the '60s to '90s there were just three major networks (ABC, NBC, CBS), and they controlled over 90 percent of the news programs, live events, and sitcoms viewed by Americans. On some nights, close to half the nation watched the same show! Some social critics argued that television was fostering a homogenous, conformist culture by reinforcing ideas about what “normal” American life looked like. But television also contributed to the

counterculture of the 1960s. The Vietnam War was the nation's first televised military conflict, and nightly images of war footage and war protestors helped intensify the nation's internal conflicts.

Broadcast technology, including radio and television, had such a hold of the American imagination that newspapers and other print media found themselves having to adapt to the new media landscape. Print media was more durable and easily archived, and allowed users more flexibility in terms of time—once a person had purchased a magazine, they could read it whenever and wherever they'd like. Broadcast media, in contrast, usually aired programs on a fixed schedule, which allowed it to both provide a sense of immediacy but also impermanence—until the advent of digital video recorders (DVRs) in the 21st century, it was impossible to pause and rewind a television broadcast.

The media world faced drastic changes once again in the 1980s and 1990s with the spread of cable television. During the early decades of television, viewers had a limited number of channels from which to choose. In 1975, the three major networks accounted for 93 percent of all television viewing. By 2004, however, this share had dropped to 28.4 percent of total viewing, thanks to the spread of cable television. Cable providers allowed viewers a wide menu of choices, including channels specifically tailored to people who wanted to watch only golf, weather, classic films, sermons, or videos of sharks. Still, until the mid-1990s, television was dominated by the three large networks. The Telecommunications Act of 1996, an attempt to foster competition by deregulating the industry, actually resulted in many mergers and buyouts of small companies by large companies. The broadcast spectrum in many places was in the hands of a few large corporations. In 2003, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) loosened regulation even further, allowing a single company to own 45 percent of a single market (up from 25 percent in 1982).

Technological Transitions Shape Media Industries

New media technologies both spring from and cause cultural change. For this reason, it can be difficult to neatly sort the evolution of media into clear causes and effects. Technological innovations such as the steam engine, electricity, wireless communication, and the Internet have all had lasting and significant effects on American culture. Electricity altered the way people thought about time, since work and play were no longer dependent on the daily rhythms of sunrise and sunset. Wireless communication collapsed distance. The Internet revolutionized the way we store and retrieve information.

The contemporary media age can trace its origins back to the electrical telegraph, patented in the United States by Samuel Morse in 1837. Thanks to the telegraph, communication was no longer linked to the physical transportation of messages. Suddenly, it didn't matter whether a message needed to travel five or five hundred miles. Telegraph lines began to stretch across the globe, making their own kind of worldwide web.

Not long after the telegraph, wireless communication (which eventually led to the development of radio, television, and other broadcast media) emerged as an extension of telegraph technology. Although many 19th-century inventors, including Nikola Tesla, had a hand in early wireless experiments, it was Italian-born Guglielmo Marconi who is recognized as the developer of the first practical wireless radio system. This mysterious invention, where sounds seemed to magically travel through the air, captured the world's imagination. Early radio was used for military communication, but soon the technology entered the home.

The 19th-century development of photographic technologies would lead to the later innovations of cinema and television. As with wireless technology, several inventors independently came up with photography at the same time, among them, the French inventors, Joseph Niepce and Louis Daguerre, and British scientist William Henry Fox Talbot. In the United States, George Eastman developed the Kodak camera in 1888. Moving pictures were first seen around the turn of the century, with the first U.S. projection hall opening in Pittsburgh in 1905. By the end of the 1930s, Americans were watching color films with full sound, including *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

Television existed before World War II but really began to take off in the 1950s. In 1947, there were 178,000 television sets made in the United States; five years later, there were 15 million. Radio, cinema, and live theater all saw a decline in the face of this new medium that allowed viewers to be entertained with sound and moving pictures without having to leave their homes.

For the last stage in this fast history of media technology, how's this for a prediction? In 1969, management consultant Peter Drucker predicted that the next major technological innovation after television would be an "electronic appliance" that would be "capable of being plugged in wherever there is electricity and giving immediate access to all the information needed for schoolwork from first grade through college." He said it would be the equivalent of Edison's light bulb in its ability to revolutionize how we live. He had, in effect, predicted the computer. He was prescient about the effect that computers and the Internet would have on education, social relationships, and the culture at large. The inventions of random access memory (RAM) chips and microprocessors in the 1970s were important steps along the way to the Internet age. As Briggs and Burke note, these advances meant that "hundreds of thousands of components could be carried on a microprocessor." The reduction of many different

kinds of content to digitally stored information meant that “print, film, recording, radio and television and all forms of telecommunications [were] now being thought of increasingly as part of one complex.”

Key Takeaways

- Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press enabled the mass production of media, which was then industrialized by Friedrich Koenig in the early 1800s. These innovations enabled the daily newspaper, which united the urbanized, industrialized populations of the 19th century.
- In the 20th century, radio allowed advertisers to reach a mass audience and helped spur the consumerism of the 1920s—and the Great Depression of the 1930s. After World War II, television boomed in the United States and abroad, though its concentration in the hands of three major networks led to accusations of conformity. The spread of cable and subsequent deregulation in the 1980s and 1990s led to more channels, but not necessarily more diverse ownership.
- Technological transitions have also had a great effect on the media industry, although it is difficult to say whether technology caused a cultural shift or rather resulted from it. The ability to make technology small and affordable enough to fit into the home is an important aspect of the popularization of new technologies.

Exercise

Choose two different types of mass communication—radio shows, television broadcasts, Internet sites, newspaper advertisements, and so on from two different kinds of media. Make a list of what role(s) each one fills, keeping in mind that much of what we see, hear, or read in the mass media has more than one aspect. Consider the following questions: Does the type of media suit the social role? Why did the creators of this particular message present it in a particular way, and in this particular medium?

Reference

Doug Ramsey, “UC San Diego Experts Calculate How Much Information Americans Consume.” University of San Diego News Center, December 9, 2009

This page titled [9.2: Quick Look- Mass Communication and Media](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [1.4: How Did We Get Here? The Evolution of Media](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/sociology-comprehensive-edition>.

9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0

Learning Objectives

- Identify some major social networking sites and give possible uses and demographics for each one.
- Show the positive and negative effects of blogs on the distribution and creation of information.
- Explain the ways privacy has been addressed on the Internet.
- Identify new information that marketers can use because of social networking.

Although GeoCities lost market share, Friendster fell stagnant, and theGlobe.com never really made it to the 21st century, social networking has persisted. There are many different types of social media available today, from social networking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn, to video centers like YouTube and Vimeo, multimedia communication platforms like Tik-Tok and Snapchat, photo repositories like Instagram, Tumblr and Flickr, or micro-communicators like Twitter, or blogging services like Livejournal, Blogger, and WordPress. All these sites bring something different to the table, and a few of them even try to bring just about everything to the table at once. Some are optimized to work best on mobile/cellular devices, while all have access via a desktop platform.

Social Networking and Mass Communication



Social networking services—like Facebook, Twitter, Tik-Tok, and LinkedIn—provide a limited but public platform for users to create a “personal profile” that can reach a mass communication level. As Internet technology evolves rapidly, most users have few qualms about moving to whichever site offers the better experience; most users have profiles and accounts on many services at once. But as relational networks become more and more established and concentrated on a few social media sites, it becomes increasingly difficult for newcomers and lagging challengers to offer the same rich networking experience. The character of social networking is highly dependent on the type of social circle.

Started in 2004, Mark Zuckerberg’s [Facebook](#) is the largest social media platform in the world. With over two billion subscribers, Facebook has, arguably, every

conceivable type of message and audience within reach. However, it is important to note that younger generations are beginning to move away from Facebook, favoring platforms such as [Instagram](#) and [Snapchat](#).

As is the case with all social media, Facebook primarily serves to connect people, which makes social media platforms ideal places for companies to connect with their customers in a way that feels personal. In the “About” section of Facebook’s brand pages, Facebook provides stats on how responsive different brands are. You can see that Pampers uses Facebook as a place to engage with their customers and that they typically reply within a day (Figure 9.3.1). They also encourage engagement with their posts by inviting parents to share photos of themselves with their babies. One of Facebook’s greatest tools is its ability to share posts from other social media sites: you can share YouTube videos, you can set up your Instagram account so your posts are automatically cross-posted to Facebook, and you can link to any other site on the internet.



Figure 9.3.1: Pampers Facebook page

[LinkedIn](#) caters to business professionals looking for networking opportunities. LinkedIn is free to join and allows users to post resumes and job qualifications to make "connections" of various degrees. Its tagline, "Relationships matter," emphasizes the role of an increasingly networked world in business, a LinkedIn user can use the site to promote professional services.

Twitter offers a different approach to social networking, allowing users to "tweet" 140+-character messages to their "followers," making it something of a hybrid of instant messaging and blogging. [Twitter](#) is openly searchable, meaning that anyone can visit the site and quickly find out what other Twitter users are saying about any subject. Twitter has proved useful for journalists reporting on breaking news, as well as highlighting the "best of" the Internet. Twitter has also been useful for marketers looking for a free public forum to disseminate marketing messages.

Another category of social media, blogs began as an online, public version of a diary or journal. Short for "web logs," these personal sites give anyone a platform to write about anything they want to. Posting tweets on the Twitter service is considered micro-blogging (because of the extremely short length of the posts). Some services, like [LiveJournal](#), highlighted their ability to provide up-to-date reports on personal feelings, even going so far as to add a "mood" shorthand at the end of every post. The [Blogger service](#) allows users with Google accounts to follow friends' blogs and post comments. [WordPress.com](#), the company that created the open-source blogging platform [WordPress.org](#), and LiveJournal both started the "freemium" model by allowing a basic selection of settings for free, with the option to pay for things like custom styles and photo hosting space. What these all have in common, however, is their bundling of social networking (such as the ability to easily link to and comment on friends' blogs) with an expanded platform for self-expression. At this point, most traditional media companies have incorporated blogs, Twitter, and other social media as a way to allow their reporters to update instantly and often. This form of media convergence is now a necessary part of doing business.

There are many other [types of social media](#) out there, many of which can be called to mind with a single name: [YouTube](#) (video sharing), [Wikipedia](#) (an open-source encyclopedia composed of “wikis” editable by any user), [Reddit](#) and [Discord](#) (community billboards), [Flickr](#) (photo sharing), [Digg](#) (content sharing), [Instagram](#) (photoblogging), [SnapChat](#) (video communication) and [TikTok](#) with hundreds more that cater to niche audiences. Traditional media outlets have begun referring to these social media services and others like them as “Web 2.0.” Web 2.0 is not a new version of the web; rather, the term is a reference to the increased focus on user-generated content and social interaction on the web, as well as the evolution of online tools to facilitate that focus. Instead of relying on professional reporters to get information about a protest in Iran, a person could just search for “Iran” on Twitter and likely end up with hundreds of tweets linking to everything from blogs to [CNN.com](#) to YouTube videos from Iranian citizens themselves. In addition, many of these tweets may actually be instant updates from people using Twitter in Iran. This allows people to receive information straight from the source, without being filtered through news organizations or censored by governments.

Going Viral



Figure 9.3.2: A homemade music video of the band Ok Go went viral in 2006 creating an international marketing phenomenon.

Media that is spread from person to person when, for example, a friend sends you a link saying, “You’ve got to see this!” is said to have “gone viral.” Marketing and advertising agencies have deemed advertising that makes use of this phenomenon as “viral marketing.” Yet many YouTube/Snapchat/TikTok sensations have not come from large marketing firms. For instance, the four-piece pop-punk band OK Go filmed a music video on a tiny budget for their song “[Here It Goes Again](#)” and released it exclusively on YouTube in 2006. Featuring a choreographed dance done on eight separate treadmills, the video quickly became a viral sensation. The video helped OK Go attract millions of new fans and earned them a Grammy award in 2007, making it one of the most notable successes of viral Internet marketing. As of May 2021, the remastered official video released in 2009 has over 56,265,825 views and counting. Viral marketing is, however, notoriously unpredictable and is liable to spawn remixes, spin-offs, and spoofs that can dilute or damage the messages that marketers intend to spread. Yet, when it is successful, viral marketing can reach millions of people for very little money and can even make it into mainstream news.

Recent successes and failures in viral marketing demonstrate how difficult it is for marketers to control their message as it is unleashed virally.

Not all viral media is marketing, however. In 2007, someone posted a link to a new trailer for *Grand Theft Auto IV* on the video games message board of the web forum 4chan.org. When users followed the link, they were greeted not with a video game trailer but with Rick Astley singing his 1987 hit “[Never Gonna Give You Up](#).” This technique—redirecting someone to that particular music video—became known as “Rickrolling” and quickly became one of the most well-known Internet memes of all time. Even then-President [Obama](#) succumbed to an attack. *Fox News*, “The Biggest Little Internet Hoax on Wheels Hits Mainstream,” April 22, 2008, www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,352010,00.html.

An Internet meme is a concept that quickly replicates itself throughout the Internet, and it is often nonsensical and absurd. One of the earliest memes, “Lolcats,” consists of misspelled captions—“I can has cheezburger?” is a classic example—over pictures of cats. Often, these memes take on a metatextual quality, such as the meme “Milhouse is not a meme,” in which the character Milhouse (from the television show *The Simpsons*) is told that he is not a meme. Chronicling memes is notoriously difficult, because they typically spring into existence seemingly overnight, propagate rapidly, and disappear before ever making it onto the radar of mainstream media—or even the mainstream Internet user.

Benefits and Problems of Social Media

Social media allows an unprecedented volume of personal, informal communication in real-time from anywhere in the world. It allows users to keep in touch with friends on other continents, yet keeps the conversation as casual as a Facebook post. In addition, blogs allow us to gauge a wide variety of opinions and have given “breaking news” a whole new meaning. Now, news can be distributed through many major outlets almost instantaneously, and different perspectives on any one event can be aired concurrently. In addition, news organizations can harness bloggers as sources of real-time news, in effect outsourcing some of their news-gathering efforts to bystanders on the scene. This practice of harnessing the efforts of several individuals online to solve a problem is known as crowdsourcing.

The downside of the seemingly infinite breadth of online information is that there is often not much depth to the coverage of any given topic. The superficiality of information on the Internet is a common gripe among many journalists who are now rushed to file news reports several times a day in an effort to complete with the “blogosphere,” or the crowd of bloggers who post both original news stories and aggregate previously published news from other sources. Whereas traditional print organizations at least had the “luxury” of the daily print deadline, now journalists are expected to blog or tweet every story and file reports with little or no analysis, often without adequate time to confirm the reliability of their sources. Ken Auletta, “Non-Stop News,” *Annals of Communications*, *New Yorker*, January 25, 2010.

Additionally, news aggregators like Google News profit from linking to journalists’ stories at major newspapers and selling advertising, but these profits are not shared with the news organizations and journalists who created the stories. It is often difficult for journalists to keep up with the immediacy of the nonstop news cycle, and with revenues for their efforts being diverted to news aggregators, journalists and news organizations increasingly lack the resources to keep up this fast pace. Twitter presents a similar problem: Instead of getting news from a specific newspaper, many people simply read the articles that are linked from a Twitter feed. As a result, the news cycle leaves journalists no time for analysis or cross-examination. Increasingly, they will simply report, for example, what a politician or public relations representative says without following up on these comments or fact-checking them. This further shortens the news cycle and makes it much easier for journalists to be exploited as the mouthpieces of propaganda.

Consequently, the very presence of blogs and their seeming importance even among mainstream media has made some critics wary. Internet entrepreneur Andrew Keen is one of these people, and his book *The Cult of the Amateur* follows up on the famous thought experiment suggesting that infinite monkeys, given infinite typewriters, will one day randomly produce a great work of literature: Proposed by T. H. Huxley (the father of Aldous Huxley), this thought experiment suggests that infinite monkeys given infinite typewriters would, given infinite time, eventually write *Hamlet*. “In our Web 2.0 world, the typewriters aren’t quite typewriters, but rather networked personal computers, and the monkeys aren’t quite monkeys, but rather Internet users.” Andrew Keen, *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today’s Internet Is Killing Our Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2007). Keen also suggests that the Internet is really just a case of my-word-against-yours, where bloggers are not required to back up their arguments with credible sources. **“These days, kids can’t tell the difference between credible news by objective professional journalists and what they read on [a random website],”** Keen said. Commentators like Keen worry that this trend will lead to people’s inability to distinguish credible information from a mass of sources, eventually leading to a sharp decrease of credible sources of information.

For defenders of the Internet, this argument seems a bit overwrought: “A legitimate interest in the possible effects of significant technological change in our daily lives can inadvertently dovetail seamlessly into a ‘kids these days’ curmudgeonly sense of generational degeneration, which is hardly new.” Greg Downey, “Is Facebook Rotting Our Children’s Brains?” *Neuroanthropology.net*, March 2, 2009, <http://neuroanthropology.net/2009/03/02/is-facebook-rotting-our-childrens-brains/>. Greg Downey, who runs the collaborative blog Neuroanthropology, says that fear of kids on the Internet—and on social media in particular—can slip into “a ‘one-paranoia-fits-all’ approach to technological change.” For the argument that online experiences are “devoid of cohesive narrative and long-term significance,” Downey offers that, on the contrary, “far from evacuating narrative, some social networking sites might be said to cause users to ‘narrativize’ their experience, engaging with everyday life already with an eye toward how they will represent it on their personal pages.”

Another argument in favor of social media defies the warning that time spent on social networking sites is destroying the social skills of young people. “The debasement of the word ‘friend’ by [Facebook’s] use of it should not make us assume that users can’t tell the difference between friends and Facebook ‘friends,’” writes Downey. On the contrary, social networks (like the Usenet of the past) can even provide a place for people with more obscure interests to meet one another and share commonalities. Twitter has, in many ways, changed yet again the way social media is conceived. Rather than connecting with “friends,” Twitter allows social

media to be purely a source of information, thereby making it far more appealing to adults. In addition, while 140 characters may seem like a constraint to some, it can be remarkably useful to the time-strapped user looking to catch up on recent news.

Social media's detractors also point to the sheer banality of much of the conversation on the Internet. Again, Downey keeps this in perspective: "The banality of most conversation is also pretty frustrating," he says. Downey suggests that many of the young people using social networking tools see them as just another aspect of communication. However, Downey warns that online bullying can pervade larger social networks while shielding perpetrators through anonymity.

Another downside of many of the Internet's segmented communities is that users tend to be exposed only to the information **they are interested in and opinions they agree with**. This lack of exposure to novel ideas and contrary opinions can create or reinforce a lack of understanding among people with different beliefs, and make political and social compromise more difficult to come by.

There are clearly some important arguments to consider regarding the effects of the web and social media in particular. The main concerns come down to two things: the possibility that the volume of amateur, user-generated content online is overshadowing better-researched sources, and the questionable ability of users to tell the difference between the two.

Marketing & Privacy Issues with Social Networking

Social networking provides unprecedented ways to keep in touch with friends, but that ability can sometimes be a double-edged sword. Users can update friends with every latest achievement—"[your name here] just won three straight games of solitaire!"—but may also unwittingly be updating bosses and others from whom particular bits of information should be hidden. The shrinking of privacy online has been rapidly exacerbated by social networks, and for a surprising reason: conscious decisions made by participants. Putting personal information online—even if it is set to be viewed by only select friends—has become fairly standard.



Figure 9.3.3: Photo by Saksham Choudhary from Pexels.

Dr. Kieron O'Hara studies privacy in social media and calls this era "Intimacy 2.0," [Zoe Kleinman, "How Online Life Distorts Privacy Rights for All," BBC News, January 8, 2010](#), a riff on the buzzword "Web 2.0." One of O'Hara's arguments is that legal issues of privacy are based on what is called a "reasonable standard." According to O'Hara, the excessive sharing of personal information on the Internet by *some* constitutes an offense to the privacy of *all*, because it lowers the "reasonable standard" that can be legally enforced. In other words, as cultural tendencies toward privacy degrade on the Internet, it affects not only the privacy of those who choose to share their information but also the privacy of those who do not.

Social media on the Internet has been around for a while, and it has always been of some interest to marketers. The ability to target advertising based on demographic information given willingly to the service—age, political preference, gender, and location—allows marketers to target advertising extremely efficiently. Increasingly, marketers are turning to social networks as a way to reach these consumers even creating a new category of employment called social media "Influencers" and "Content Creators" who monetize their fanbase on various sites and apps. Culturally, these developments indicate a mistrust among consumers of traditional marketing techniques; marketers must now use new and more personalized ways of reaching consumers if they are going to sell their products.

Key Takeaways

- Social networking sites often encompass many aspects of other social media. For example, Facebook began as a collection of profile pictures with very little information but soon expanded to include photo albums (like Flickr) and micro-blogging (like Twitter). Other sites, like MySpace, emphasize connections to music and customizable pages, catering to a younger demographic. LinkedIn specifically caters to a professional demographic by allowing only certain kinds of information that is professionally relevant.
- Blogs speed the flow of information around the Internet and provide a critical way for nonprofessionals with adequate time to investigate sources and news stories without the necessary platform of a well-known publication. On the other hand, they can lead to an “echo chamber” effect, where they simply repeat one another and add nothing new. Often, the analysis is wide-ranging, but it can also be shallow and lack the depth and knowledge of good critical journalism.
- Facebook has been the leader in privacy-related controversy, with its seemingly constant issues with privacy settings. One of the critical things to keep in mind is that as more people become comfortable with more information out in the open, the “reasonable standard” of privacy is lowered. This affects even people who would rather keep more things private.
- Social networking allows marketers to reach consumers directly and to know more about each specific consumer than ever before. Search algorithms allow marketers to place advertisements in areas that get the most traffic from targeted consumers. Whereas putting an ad on TV reaches all demographics, online advertisements can now be targeted specifically to different groups.

Exercise

1. Draw a Venn diagram of two social networking sites mentioned in this chapter. Sign up for both of them (if you’re not signed up already) and make a list of their features and their interfaces. How do they differ? How are they the same?
2. Write a few sentences about how a marketer might use these tools to reach different demographics.

This page titled [9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- **11.3: Social Media and Web 2.0** by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/sociology-comprehensive-edition>.

9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication

Learning Objectives

- Describe the effects of globalization on culture.
- Identify the possible effects of news migrating to the Internet.
- Define the Internet paradox.

It's in the name: *World Wide Web*. The Internet has broken down communication barriers between cultures in a way that could only be dreamed of in earlier generations. Now, almost any news service across the globe can be accessed on the Internet and, with the various translation services available (like Babelfish and Google Translate), be relatively understandable. In addition to the spread of American culture throughout the world, smaller countries are now able to cheaply export culture, news, entertainment, and even propaganda.

All around the world, the internet continues to transform how we connect with others, organize the flow of things, and share information. With its growing influence on individual consumers and large economies alike, the internet has become an increasingly vital part of our day-to-day lives. In 2019, the [number of internet users worldwide](#) stood at 3.97 billion, which means that [more than half of the global population is currently connected to the world wide web](#). But while the digital population is visibly growing in many parts of the world, internet access and availability can differ significantly depending on the region. (Jeff Johnson at [statistica.com](#))



The Internet has been a key factor in driving globalization in recent years. Many jobs can now be outsourced entirely via the Internet. Teams of software programmers in India can have a website up and running in very little time, for far less money than it would take to hire American counterparts. Communicating with these teams is now as simple as sending emails and instant messages back and forth, and often the most difficult aspect of setting up an international video conference online is figuring out the time difference. Especially for electronic services such as software, outsourcing over the Internet has greatly reduced the cost to develop a professionally coded site.

Electronic Media and the Globalization of Culture

The increase of **globalization** has been an economic force throughout the last century, but economic interdependency is not its only by-product. At its core, globalization is *the lowering of economic and cultural impediments to communication between countries all over the globe*. Globalization in the sphere of culture and communication can take the form of access to foreign newspapers (without the difficulty of procuring a printed copy) or, conversely, the ability of people living in previously closed countries to communicate experiences to the outside world relatively cheaply.

Television, film, and videos (especially YouTube) have the primary ways for American entertainment to reach foreign shores. This trend has been going on for some time now as American popular culture is, and has been, a crucial export. This idea of a truly globalized culture—one in which content can be distributed as easily as it can be received—now has the potential to be realized through the Internet. While some political and social barriers still remain, from a technological standpoint there is nothing to stop the two-way flow of information and culture across the globe.

New Media: Internet Convergence and American Society

One only needs to go to CNN's official Twitter feed and begin to click random faces in the "Following" column to see the effect of **media convergence** through the Internet. Media convergence is understood as the "flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want." (Jenkins, 2006)

Hundreds of different options abound, many of them individual journalists' Twitter feeds, and many of those following other journalists. Traditional media outlets use Twitter not as a communication tool in itself but as a way to allow viewers to aggregate a

large amount of information they may have missed. Instead of visiting multiple home pages to see the day's top stories from multiple viewpoints, Twitter users only have to check their own Twitter pages to get updates from all the organizations they "follow." Media conglomerates then use Twitter as part of overall integration of media outlets; the Twitter feed is there to support the news content, not to report the content itself.

Internet-Only Sources

The Internet overtook print media as a primary source of information for national and international news in the United States in 2008. Television was still far in the lead, but especially among younger demographics, the Internet and social media are primary ways to learn about the day's news. With 40 percent of the public receiving their news from the Internet (see Figure 11.8, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, "Internet Overtakes Newspapers as News Outlet," December 23, 2008) media outlets had to shift focus to make their presence known on the web. One of the most remarkable shifts out of that rush was the establishment of online-only news sources.

The conventional argument claims that the anonymity and the echo chamber of the Internet undermine worthwhile news reporting, especially for topics that are expensive to report on. The ability of large news organizations to put reporters in the field is one of their most important contributions and (because of its cost) is often one of the first things to be cut back during times of budget problems. However, as the Internet has become a primary news source for more and more people, new media outlets—publications existing entirely online—have begun to appear.

In 2006, two reporters for the *Washington Post*, John F. Harris and Jim VandeHei, left the newspaper to start a politically centered website called **POLITICO**. Rather than simply repeating the day's news in a blog, they were determined to start a journalistically viable news organization on the web. The different ways that Politico reaches out to its supporters—blogs, Twitter feeds, regular news articles, and now even a print edition—show how media convergence has even occurred within the Internet itself. The interactive nature of its services and the active comment boards on the site also show how the media have become a two-way street: more of a public forum than a straight news service.



Key Takeaways

- The Internet has made pop culture transmission a two-way street. The power to influence popular culture no longer lies with the relative few with control over traditional forms of mass media; it is now available to the great mass of people with access to the Internet. As a result, the cross-fertilization of pop culture from around the world has become a commonplace occurrence.
- The Internet's key difference from traditional media is that it does not operate on a set intervallic time schedule. It is not "periodical" in the sense that it comes out in daily or weekly editions; it is always updated. As a result, many journalists file both "regular" news stories and blog posts that may be updated and that can come at varied intervals as necessary. This allows them to stay up-to-date with breaking news without necessarily sacrificing the next day's more in-depth story.

? Exercise

Pick a method of in-person communication and a method of Internet communication and compare and contrast these using a Venn diagram.

This page titled 9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner.

- 11.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication by Anonymous is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 3.0. Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/sociology-comprehensive-edition>.

SECTION OVERVIEW

9.5: Ethics of Mass Media

9.5.1: Ethical Issues in Mass Media

9.5.2: How Newspapers Control the Public's Access to Information and Impact American Pop Culture

This page titled [9.5: Ethics of Mass Media](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

9.5.1: Ethical Issues in Mass Media

Learning Objectives

- Explain the importance of racial and gender diversity in mass media.
- Identify the ethical concerns associated with race and gender stereotypes.
- List some common concerns about sexual content in the media.

In the competitive and rapidly changing world of mass-media communications, media professionals—overcome by deadlines, bottom-line imperatives, and corporate interests—can easily lose sight of the ethical implications of their work. However, as entertainment law specialist Sherri Burr points out, “Because network television is an audiovisual medium that is piped free into ninety-nine percent of American homes, it is one of the most important vehicles for depicting cultural images to our population.” Sherri Burr, “Television and Societal Effects: An Analysis of Media Images of African-Americans in Historical Context,” *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice* 4 (2001): 159. Considering the profound influence mass media like television have on cultural perceptions and attitudes, it is important for the creators of media content to grapple with ethical issues.

Stereotypes, Prescribed Roles, and Public Perception

The U.S. population is becoming increasingly diverse. According to [U.S. Census statistics from 2019](#), 39.9% of the population identifies its race as non-white, 51% as female or female-identifying, and 8.6% are disabled yet in network television broadcasts, major publications, and other forms of mass media and entertainment, representation is either absent or presented as heavily stereotyped, two-dimensional characters. Rarely are Black, Indigenous or People of Color depicted as complex characters with the full range of human emotions, motivations, and behaviors. Meanwhile, the stereotyping of women, gays, lesbians, and individuals with disabilities in mass media has also been a source of concern.

The word *stereotype* originated in the printing industry as a method of making identical copies, and the practice of stereotyping people is much the same: a system of identically replicating an image of an “other.” In D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*, a film that relied on racial stereotypes to portray Southern whites as victims in the American Civil War, stereotypes—especially those disseminated through mass media—become a form of social control, shaping collective perceptions and individual identities. In American mass media, the white man is still shown as the standard: the central figure of television narratives and the dominant perspective on everything from trends, to current events, to politics. White maleness becomes an invisible category because it gives the impression of being the norm according to Joanna Hearne, “[Hollywood Whiteness and Stereotypes](#).”

This page titled [9.5.1: Ethical Issues in Mass Media](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [14.2: Ethical Issues in Mass Media](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/sociology-comprehensive-edition>.

9.5.2: How Newspapers Control the Public's Access to Information and Impact American Pop Culture

Learning Objectives

- Describe two ways that newspapers control stories.
- Define watchdog journalism.
- Describe how television has impacted journalistic styles.

Since 1896, *The New York Times* has printed the phrase “All the News That’s Fit to Print” as its masthead motto. The phrase itself seems innocent enough, and it has been published for such a long time now that many probably skim over it without giving it a second thought. Yet, the phrase represents an interesting phenomenon in the newspaper industry: control. Papers have long been criticized for the way stories are presented, yet newspapers continue to print—and readers continue to buy them.

“All the News That’s Fit to Print”

In 1997, *The New York Times* publicly claimed that it was “an independent newspaper, entirely fearless, free of ulterior influence and unselfishly devoted to the public welfare.”Edward S. Herman, “All the News Fit to Print: Structure and Background of the New York Times,” *Z Magazine*, April 1998, www.thirdworldtraveler.com/He...it_Herman.html. Despite this public proclamation of objectivity, the paper’s publishers have been criticized for choosing which articles to print based on personal financial gain. In reaction to that statement, scholar Edward S. Herman wrote that the issue is that *The New York Times* “defin[es] public welfare in a manner acceptable to their elite audience and advertisers.”Edward S. Herman, “All the News Fit to Print: Structure and Background of the New York Times,” *Z Magazine*, April 1998, www.thirdworldtraveler.com/He...it_Herman.html. *The New York Times* has continually been accused of determining what stories are told. For example, during the 1993 debate over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), *The New York Times* clearly supported the agreement. In doing so, the newspaper exercised editorial control over its publication and the information that went out to readers.

However, *The New York Times* is not the only newspaper to face accusations of controlling which stories are told. In his review of *Read All About It: The Corporate Takeover of America’s Newspapers*, Steve Hoenisch, editor of *Criticism.com*, offers these harsh words about what drives the stories printed in today’s newspaper:

I’ve always thought of daily newspapers as the guardians of our—meaning the public’s—right to know. The guardians of truth, justice, and public welfare and all that. But who am I fooling? America’s daily newspapers don’t belong to us. Nor, for that matter, do they even seek to serve us any longer. They have more important concerns now: appeasing advertisers and enriching stockholders. Steven Hoenisch, “Corporate Journalism,” review of *Read All About It: The Corporate Takeover of America’s Newspapers*, by James D. Squires, <http://www.criticism.com/md/crit1.html#section-Read-All-About-It>.

More and more, as readership declines, newspapers must answer to advertisers and shareholders as they choose which stories to report on.

However, editorial control does not end there. Journalists determine not only what stories are told but also how those stories are presented. This issue is perhaps even more delicate than that of selection. Most newspaper readers still expect news to be reported objectively and demand that journalists present their stories in this manner. However, careful public scrutiny can burden journalists, while accusations of controlling information affect their affiliated newspapers. However, this scrutiny takes on importance as the public turns to journalists and newspapers to learn about the world.

Journalists are also expected to hold themselves to high standards of truth and originality. Fabrication and plagiarism are prohibited. If a journalist is caught using these tactics, then his or her career is likely to end for betraying the public’s trust and for damaging the publication’s reputation. For example, *The New York Times* reporter Jayson Blair lost his job in 2003 when his plagiarism and fabrication were discovered, and *The New Republic* journalist Stephen Glass was fired in 1998 for inventing stories, quotes, and sources.

Despite the critiques of the newspaper industry and its control over information, the majority of newspapers and journalists take their roles seriously. Editors work with journalists to verify sources and to double-check facts so readers are provided accurate information. In this way, the control that journalists and newspapers exert serves to benefit their readers, who can then be assured that the articles printed are correct.

The New York Times Revisits Old Stories

Despite the criticism of *The New York Times*, the famous newspaper has been known to revisit their old stories to provide a new, more balanced view. One such example occurred in 2004 when, in response to criticism on their handling of the Iraq War, *The New York Times* offered a statement of apology. The apology read as follows:

We have found a number of instances of coverage that was not as rigorous as it should have been. In some cases, information that was controversial then, and seems questionable now, was insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged. Looking back, we wish we had been more aggressive in re-examining the claims as new evidence emerged—or failed to emerge. Editorial, “The Times and Iraq,” *New York Times*, May 26, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/26/international/middleeast/26FTE_NOTE.html.

Although the apology was risky—it essentially admitted guilt in controlling a controversial story—*The New York Times* demonstrated a commitment to ethical journalism.

Watchdog Journalism

One way that journalists control stories for the benefit of the public is by engaging in watchdog journalism. This form of journalism provides the public with information about government officials or business owners while holding those officials to high standards of operation. Watchdog journalism is defined as “(1) independent scrutiny by the press of the activities of government, business, and other public institutions, with an aim toward (2) documenting, questioning, and investigating those activities, to (3) provide publics and officials with timely information on issues of public concern.” W. Lance Bennett and William Serrin, “The Watchdog Role,” in *The Institutions of American Democracy: The Press*, ed. Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 169.

One of the most famous examples of watchdog journalism is the role that Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of *The Washington Post* played in uncovering information about the Watergate break-in and scandal that ultimately resulted in President Richard Nixon’s resignation. Newspapers and journalists often laud watchdog journalism, one of the most important functions of newspapers, yet it is difficult to practice because it requires rigorous investigation, which in turn demands more time. Many journalists often try to keep up with news as it breaks, so journalists are not afforded the time to research the information—nor to hone the skills—required to write a watchdog story. “Surviving in the newsroom—doing watchdog stories—takes a great deal of personal and political skill. Reporters must have a sense of guerilla warfare tactics to do well in the newsroom.” W. Lance Bennett and William Serrin, “The Watchdog Role,” in *The Institutions of American Democracy: The Press*, ed. Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 182.

To be successful, watchdog journalists must investigate stories, ask tough questions, and face the possibility of unpopularity to alert the public to corruption or mismanagement while elevating the public’s expectations of the government. At the same time, readers can support newspapers that employ this style of journalism to encourage the press to engage in the challenging watchdog form of journalism. As scholars have observed, “not surprisingly, watchdog journalism functions best when reporters understand it and news organizations and their audiences support it.” W. Lance Bennett and William Serrin, “The Watchdog Role,” in *The Institutions of American Democracy: The Press*, ed. Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 185.

Impact of Television and the Internet on Print

Newspapers have control over which stories are told and how those stories are presented. Just as the newspaper industry has changed dramatically over the years, journalistic writing styles have been transformed. Many times, such changes mirrored a trend shift in readership; since the 1950s, however, newspapers have had to compete with television journalism and, more recently, the Internet. Both television and the Internet have profoundly affected newspaper audiences and journalistic styles.

Case Study: *USA Today*

USA Today, founded in 1982 and known for its easy-to-read stories, is but one example of a paper that has altered its style to remain competitive with television and the Internet. In the past, newspapers placed their primary focus on the written word. Although some newspapers still maintain the use of written narration, many papers have shifted their techniques to attract a more television-savvy audience. In the case of *USA Today*, the emphasis lies on the second track—the visual story—dominated by large images accompanied by short written stories. This emphasis mimics the television presentation format, allowing the paper to cater to readers with short attention spans.

A perhaps unexpected shift in journalistic writing styles that derives from television is the more frequent use of present tense, rather than past tense, in articles. This shift likely comes from television journalism's tendency to allow a story to develop as it is being told. This subtle but noticeable shift from past to present tense in narration sometimes brings a more dramatic element to news articles, which may attract readers who otherwise turn to television news programs for information.

Like many papers, *USA Today* has redesigned its image and style to keep up with the sharp immediacy of the Internet and with the entertainment value of television. In fact, the paper's management was so serious about their desire to compete with television that from 1988 to 1990 they mounted a syndicated television series titled *USA Today: The Television Show* (later retitled *USA Today on TV*). "U.S.A Today: The Television Series," Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0094572/>. Despite its short run, the show demonstrated the paper's focus on reaching out to a visual audience, a core value that it has maintained to this day. Today, *USA Today* has established itself as a credible and reliable news source, despite its unorthodox approach to journalism.

Key Takeaways

- Newspapers control which stories are told by selecting which articles make it to print. They also control how stories are told by determining the way in which information is presented to their readers.
- Watchdog journalism is an investigative approach to reporting that aims to inform citizens of occurrences in government and businesses.
- Television has not only contributed to the decline of readership for newspapers but has also impacted visual and journalistic styles. Newspapers, such as *USA Today*, have been profoundly affected by the television industry. *USA Today* caters to television watchers by incorporating large images and short stories, while primarily employing the present tense to make it seem as though the story is unfolding before the reader.

? Exercise

Please respond to the following writing prompts. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Compare the journalistic styles of *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Examine differences in the visual nature of the newspapers as well as in the journalistic style.
2. How has television affected these particular newspapers?
3. What noticeable differences do you observe? Can you find any similarities?
4. How did each newspaper cover events differently? How did each newspaper's coverage change the focus and information told? Did you find any watchdog stories, and, if so, what were they?

This page titled [9.5.2: How Newspapers Control the Public's Access to Information and Impact American Pop Culture](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Back Matter

[Index](#)

[Glossary](#)

[Detailed Licensing](#)

Index

E

encrypted

9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication

G

globalization

9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication

I

Internet memes

9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0

Internet paradox

9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication

M

Media conglomerates

9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication

media convergence

9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication

N

News aggregators

9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0

O

opposing frames

9.5.1: Ethical Issues in Mass Media

P

public forum

9.2: Quick Look- Mass Communication and Media

S

social media

9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0

social networking

9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0

socialization agents

9.5.1: Ethical Issues in Mass Media

T

Traditional media

9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication

V

viral marketing

9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0

W

watchdog journalism

9.5.2: How Newspapers Control the Public's Access to Information and Impact American Pop Culture

Detailed Licensing

Overview

Title: 9: Mass Communication and Social Media

Webpages: 17

Applicable Restrictions: Noncommercial

All licenses found:

- [Undeclared](#): 52.9% (9 pages)
- [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#): 47.1% (8 pages)

By Page

- [9: Mass Communication and Social Media](#) - [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [Front Matter](#) - [Undeclared](#)
 - [TitlePage](#) - [Undeclared](#)
 - [InfoPage](#) - [Undeclared](#)
 - [Licensing](#) - [Undeclared](#)
 - [Table of Contents](#) - [Undeclared](#)
 - [9.1: Mass Communication - A Definition](#) - [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [9.2: Quick Look- Mass Communication and Media](#) - [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0](#) - [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication](#) - [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [9.5: Ethics of Mass Media](#) - [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [9.5.1: Ethical Issues in Mass Media](#) - [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [9.5.2: How Newspapers Control the Public's Access to Information and Impact American Pop Culture](#) - [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [Back Matter](#) - [Undeclared](#)
 - [Index](#) - [Undeclared](#)
 - [Glossary](#) - [Undeclared](#)
 - [Detailed Licensing](#) - [Undeclared](#)

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Public Speaking

- [10.1: A Brief History of Public Speaking](#)
- [10.2: The Purposes of Public Speaking](#)
- [10.3: The Topic and Thesis](#)
- [10.4: The Body](#)
- [10.5: Incorporating Evidence](#)
- [10.6: Introductions and Conclusions](#)
- [10.7: Visual Aids](#)
- [10.8: Delivery](#)
- [10.9: Informative Speech Examples](#)
- [10.10: Persuasive Speech Examples](#)

This page titled [10: Public Speaking](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman](#), [Thomas King](#), & [William Turner](#).

10.1: A Brief History of Public Speaking

Learning Objectives

After completing this section, students should be able to:

1. explain the relationship between the development of democracy and public speaking.
2. identify Aristotle as the author of the three modes of proof.
3. differentiate ethos, pathos, and logos.
4. explain the tension between content and delivery.
5. explain the role of the sophists and how they differed from Aristotle.
6. identify Cicero and Quintilian.
7. list and define the five canons of rhetoric.
8. identify how radio, television, film, and the internet influenced present-day public speaking.

Since humans have been using language and living in social groups, the act of one person speaking to many has been occurring in some form or other. Whether it was to instruct, to persuade, to motivate, to celebrate, or to mourn, language is the tool humans use to form and maintain social connections.

Even though we know public speaking is as old as language itself, in our Western culture, we typically consider the foundations of our current understanding of public speaking to have been laid in Ancient Greece, more than 2,500 years ago.

In the online, open-source public speaking text found at www.publicspeakingproject.org, Dr. Peter A. DeCaro of the University of Fairbanks, Alaska, lays out the development of public speaking from the Greeks and Romans, through the Renaissance, and into our Modern Period. What follows is a condensed, summarized version of Dr. DeCaro's work, along with some additional information. For more details, visit the free online text and review *Chapter 2: Origins of Public Speaking*.

Public Speaking and Democracy

The development of public speaking as a specific skill is strongly linked to the development of democracy in Ancient Greece. Starting in 621 B.C. in Athens, laws began to convert from an oral tradition heavily controlled by nobility to a written form that could be applied equally and consistently. This codification (creating an organized system of laws) took power from the nobility and moved it into the courts. Assemblies were formed to review, revise, and create laws. Accordingly, there had to be substantive debate and persuasion to reach agreements on how to manage this evolution of legal doctrine, and those coming before the courts needed to engage in public speaking to advocate for their position. Dr. DeCaro states,

In a free society, it is persuasion that decides rules, determines behavior, and acts as the governing agent in human physical and mental activities. In every free society individuals are continuously attempting to change the thoughts and/or actions of others. It is a fundamental concept of a free society.

Democracy demands public speaking as a tool for self-governance. Since being proficient in public speaking was so valuable, the study of how it works likewise became important, emerging as the study of rhetoric.

The Athenian Greeks and Aristotle

Widely considered the founder of the study of rhetoric, **Aristotle** (384-322 B.C.), Figure 10.1.1, was the first philosopher to consider the dynamics of public speaking and persuasion and to compile those observations in *The Rhetoric*. In effect, this became the first textbook on public speaking. Aristotle defined rhetoric as “all available means of persuasion.” In other words, **rhetoric** and **rhetorical theory** refer to the study of techniques for persuasion as they apply to various audiences and occasions.

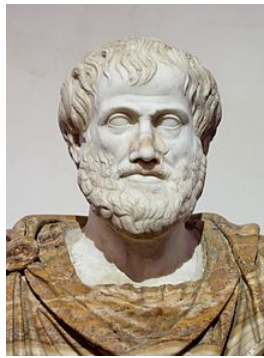


Figure 10.1.1

In his work, Aristotle presented three methods, or “modes,” of persuading an audience. We still consider these Aristotelian modes of proof the core of how we teach and study persuasion.

Ethos: *persuading another based on the character of the speaker.* We all have friends or family members we trust, and if they tell us something, we assume they are telling the truth and should be believed. This persuasion by the nature of the speaker’s character is ethos.

An especially important aspect of ethos is that credibility is something the audience *gives* the speaker. Since the audience can judge the character of the speaker only on their performance at that moment, the speaker’s credibility is a function of the perception the audience has of that speaker at that time. No matter how trustworthy and honest a speaker is, their credibility is only as strong as the audience believes it to be. Accordingly, speakers need to prove their trustworthiness through their delivery and content. Since this is a standard consideration in the development of a speech introduction, specific methods of enhancing credibility are addressed there.

Pathos: *engaging the emotions of the audience.* Human beings are deeply emotional creatures, and we are most emotionally comfortable when our beliefs and actions align. If James believes giving to the community is an important activity, that may lead him to donate blood during the college blood drive. He may feel a sense of satisfaction and contentment that his actions and beliefs align. On the other hand, if he avoids giving blood, he may feel troubled that his actions are not aligning with his beliefs. This disconnect is at the core of using emotion to persuade.

Humans like feeling positive emotions and don’t like negative emotions. A speaker can offer an audience a way to act that will make them feel good and avoid negative emotions. For example, a famous charity advertisement for Feed the Children claimed, “For the price of a cup of coffee, you can feed a starving child.” This simple statement aims to trigger a sense of guilt each time we buy a cup of coffee, and then offers a way to erase the negative emotion of guilt and replace it with the satisfaction of helping those less fortunate: donate your coffee money to Feed the Children.

Logos: *using argument and logical reasoning.* While we are deeply emotional creatures, we also place a high value on rational thinking and thoughtful decision-making. Through the application of logical reasoning accompanied by credible evidence, we aim to persuade the audience of the best course of action. The study of logic and reasoning are huge fields of study, and we encourage you to consider additional courses in Logic, Argumentation, or Debate.

Content versus Delivery

During Aristotle’s time, a perpetual tension in the study of public speaking was debated: content versus delivery. For some, the content of the speech is far more important than how that content is presented. Others, however, assert that how the content is presented is as important, if not more important, than the substance of the content. Dr. DeCaro shows that Aristotle was well aware of this distinction: “For Aristotle, rhetoric is the process of developing a persuasive argument, and oratory is the process of delivering that argument.” Aristotle emphasized the rhetorical perspective, while the **sophists** emphasized the oratorical perspective.

The sophists were traveling instructors who would teach their students persuasive methods, good delivery, and other techniques they could use to advance their position. While the rhetorical emphasis focused on the speaker’s message, the oratorical perspective as taught by the sophists emphasized the speaker’s delivery style. The rhetorical tradition emphasized using rhetoric to find and advance truth, while the oratorical tradition emphasized these skills as a toolkit to be used however the speaker needed to use them.

This tension exists to this day. A criticism occasionally leveled toward a speaker is that of “mere sophistry,” which means the speaker has good style, but the arguments lack conviction and substance, or they are downright deceitful; that the speaker is relying on good delivery without providing substantive content along with it. As you will see, this tension continues even to today in public speaking.

The Romans

After the time of the Athenian Greeks passed and the Roman Republic emerged, two Romans emerged to make significant impacts on the study of rhetoric: Cicero and Quintilian.

Cicero (106-43 B.C.), Figure 10.1.2 argued for a balance of content and delivery, that “the perfect orator should be able to speak wisely and eloquently on any subject with a dignified, restrained delivery.” He also believed, however, that style without substance was to be avoided. DeCaro states, “Cicero despised the shallowness of orators who depended exclusively on perfect diction and elegant words that lacked substance. His ideal person was the philosopher-statesman-learned orator who used rhetoric to mold public opinion.” Cicero’s importance lies in his writings. DeCaro explains, “His work on rhetoric, the *Institutio Oratoria*, is an exhaustive volume of twelve books and was a major contribution to education theory and literary criticism.”

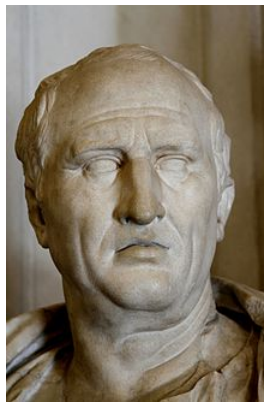


Figure 10.1.2

Quintilian (35-95 A.D.), Figure 10.1.3 wrote extensively on speaking, style, and content. He organized what we now know and teach as the five canons of rhetoric:

1. **Invention:** compiling the content of the speech.
2. **Disposition:** arranging the content in an effective order.
3. **Style:** the wording of the presentation.
4. **Memorization:** knowing the presentation and content thoroughly.
5. **Delivery:** the presentation of the content.



Figure 10.1.3

Quintilian’s five canons reference both content and delivery, acknowledging that both are important to the success of the persuasion. As Quintilian stated, rhetoric was “the good man speaking well.” In other words, effective public speaking combined substantive, ethical content with good, effective delivery.

Present Day Influences

Today, what we consider good public speaking has been altered by several factors from the twentieth century. It has been heavily influenced by the introduction of radio, film, television, and the internet.



Figure 10.1.4: President FDR's "Fireside Chats" from History.com

First, radio introduced audiences to the ability to hear the natural voice of political figures in their own home. Most renowned of these is the “Fireside Chats” of President Franklin Roosevelt. According to History.com, “From March 1933 to June 1944, Roosevelt addressed the American people in some thirty speeches broadcast via radio, speaking on a variety of topics from banking to unemployment to fighting fascism in Europe. Millions of people found comfort and renewed confidence in these speeches, which became known as the “fireside chats.” (History.com, 2010) Instead of the loud, projected vocal style needed to fill an auditorium, this new medium allowed a far more intimate, conversational style of presentation.

Second, putting an elocutionist-style speaker, such as William Jennings Bryan, in the close-up view of a movie enhanced the artificial nature of this style of delivery. Since such delivery was intended to reach an audience of several hundred without the aid of a sound system, to now show the speaker’s exaggerated vocal factors, gestures, facial expressions, and body movements up close via film or television made the speaker appear cartoonish by today’s standards. Since we can now see speakers up close regardless of the size of the venue, a more natural delivery works more effectively at establishing trust and sincerity.

Third, now that we could not only hear but see the speakers, the nonverbal and visual elements of the speaker have become more pronounced. In the 1960 election, U.S. citizens saw the first televised presidential debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon. A mark of the impact of this new medium of television is that those who listened via radio felt Nixon won the debate, while those who watched overwhelmingly felt Kennedy won: “Nixon was recovering from a hospital visit and had a 5-o’clock shadow, having refused makeup. In contrast, Kennedy’s delivery was smooth and charismatic. Viewers focused on what they saw, not what they heard. Kennedy won the election.” (Newsweek, 2016) Accordingly, “The Kennedy-Nixon debates not only had a major impact on the election’s outcome but ushered in a new era in which crafting a public image and taking advantage of media exposure became essential ingredients of a successful political campaign.” (History.com 2010) The delivery aspects of public speaking, especially appearance, emerged as a far more crucial element than before.



Figure 10.1.5: "The Kennedy-Nixon debates", History.com

Fourth, with the emergence of the internet giving us 24/7 access to all the knowledge in the world, a speaker's words can be carefully assessed for accuracy. Instead of taking a speaker at their word, we can check and cross-check the truthfulness of a speaker's claims in a matter of moments. We have seen the emergence of fact-checking sites that specialize in holding speakers accountable for what they say. Politifact.com, FactCheck.org, and Snopes.com produce daily assessments of current claims by public figures. More than ever, speakers must carefully cite evidence and sources.



Figure 10.1.6

Key Concepts

The terms and concepts students should be familiar with from this section include:

The role of public speaking in democracy

The Athenian Greeks

- Aristotle
 - Rhetoric
 - Rhetorical Theory
 - Ethos
 - Pathos
 - Logos
- Content versus Delivery
 - Sophists

The Romans

- Cicero
- Quintilian
 - Invention
 - Disposition
 - Style
 - Memorization
 - Delivery

Present Day Influences

Definition text

References

Decaro, P.(2011) The origins of public speaking in *Public Speaking: The Virtual Text*, Retrieved from <http://www.publicspeakingproject.org/origins.html>

Gross, D. (2011, March 21). *5 Ways Twitter Changed How We Communicate*. CNN. Retrieved from www.cnn.com/2011/TECH/social...ion/index.html

The Fireside Chats. (2010). Retrieved from <http://www.history.com/topics/fireside-chats>

The Kennedy-Nixon Debates. (2010), Retrieved from <http://www.history.com/topics/us-pre...-nixon-debates>

Jehlen, M, & Warner, M. (1997), *The English Literature of America, 1500-1800*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Reuters. (2016, September 22). Presidential debates' iconic moments, from Kennedy-Nixon to Obama-Romney. In *Newsweek*. Retrieved from <http://www.newsweek.com/presidential...moments-501670>

This page titled [10.1: A Brief History of Public Speaking](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- **8.1: A Brief History of Public Speaking** by [Keith Green, Ruth Fairchild, Bev Knudsen, & Darcy Lease-Gubrud](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

10.2: The Purposes of Public Speaking

Learning Objectives

After completing this section, students should be able to:

1. describe how public speaking differs from Interpersonal Communication and Small Group Communication.
2. apply the traits of a good speech in creating and presenting a speech.
3. describe the general speech purposes.

The oldest form of public communication and the precursor to mass media is the simple act of one person rising and expressing their thoughts to the group. Public discourse is the foundation of society; it is how groups of people address and resolve differences collectively and peacefully. With the rise of democracy in Ancient Greece, the value of public speaking gained prominence. A citizen's ability to speak their mind in public was highly valued and a sign of civic engagement.

Although we have so many avenues to express ourselves, from in-person to online, the ability to craft and share a thoughtful, intelligent message is still an important skill. For a person's career, civic involvement, and political engagement, becoming proficient in public speaking is highly valuable.



Figure 10.2.1

The Nature of Public Speaking

Public speaking has three striking characteristics that set it off from interpersonal communication and small group communication.

First, **public speaking** is *the act of one person speaking to many*. Instead of focusing on an interactive nature, public speaking focuses on one person, the speaker, developing and presenting a message to a group of individuals.



Figure 10.2.2

Second, public speaking is a more formal presentation, meaning it is bound by specific strategies and techniques. Good public speaking requires more planning, development, and self-reflexiveness than the other two contexts.

Third, in the other two contexts, we see all members communicating from a position of shared, equal responsibility. In public speaking, the speaker bears more responsibility as the message is one-directional, and the feedback the speaker receives from the audience is subtler, such as facial expressions, body posture, and fidgeting. Public speaking is still an interaction, just like an interpersonal and small group, but the responsibility for success is less balanced with more responsibility being placed on the speaker.



Figure 10.2.3

A "Good" Speech

Unfortunately, for most people, our exposure to public speaking has left us with a distorted view of what makes a "good" speech. Virtually anytime we ask a class, "What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of listening to a speech," the answer is "boring." This does not have to be the case; it is the job of the speaker to make choices that directly influence how interesting or boring a speech is going to be.

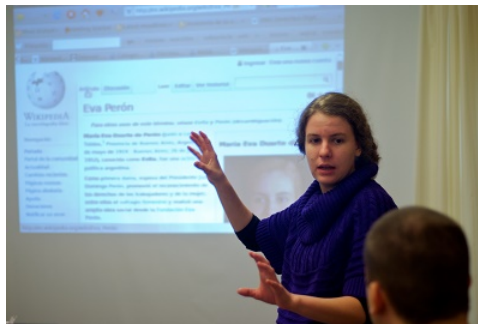


Figure 10.2.4

As speakers, we have the obligation and ability to choose how effectively and dynamically we will present ourselves and the information to the audience. We can give interesting, dynamic, energetic, and engaging speeches. Each of us has experienced teachers who were boring and monotone, but we have also experienced teachers who were dynamic and energetic. The latter group *chose* to make the speeches (lectures) more interesting. To make a speech more interesting and effective, we need to understand what makes a good speech:

- A good speech is well structured and signposted to enhance clarity and memory value. A good speech is organized and easily followed with clear, obvious transitions. Our job as speakers is to present a message clearly and thoughtfully, and a clear structure facilitates that.
- A good speech should sound like an "organized conversation." The phrase is meant to invoke the image of a speaker presenting naturally and comfortably; just talking to the audience, in an organized, easily followed manner.
- A good speech has a purpose, clear to the audience and to which the speaker adheres. Good speakers make their purpose clear, and they fulfill that. They do not wander, drift about, shift purposes, or mislead the audience. They do not start off informing the audience, and then suddenly shift to persuasion.
- A good speaker is active, not passive. Too many speakers, especially novice speakers, tend to use the "open my mouth, let the words fall out" approach to speaking. This thoughtless approach to public speaking is not effective. Good speakers make choices, determining throughout their speech the best strategy for the given audience. Through the preparation and practice process, we make decisions based on what we think will increase the likelihood of success. Such strategic thinking requires careful consideration of the topic, the audience, the speaker, and knowledge of the interaction of these three components.

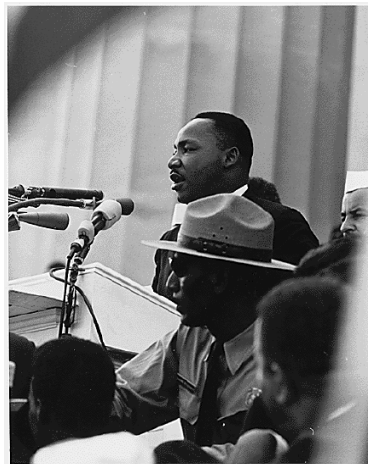


Figure 10.2.5

- A good speaker works to create **immediacy** with the audience. Immediacy is *a sense of connection; that the speaker, the topic, and the audience are all working together*. Good speakers see a speech as a time to share a message with an audience, building a bridge between the speaker and the audience. Too often novice speakers see the audience as a barrier to success, a collective of judgmental individuals out to embarrass the speaker. However, that is simply not true for most audiences. Audiences want the speech to be good because it validates the time spent listening, it is more enjoyable, and it simply makes the time go faster. If a speaker taps into the audience's interests and personality, they can be quite effective in engaging the audience. Such engagement does not happen automatically; it is the result of thoughtful planning and preparation.



Figure 10.2.6: youtu.be/i0a61wFaF8A

The public speaking situation is quite different from interpersonal communication and small group communication. The degree of advanced planning, conscious decision-making, and communicator responsibility is much higher when giving a speech. We have been taught that when a person goes to the front of the room to speak, the speaker is now "in charge" of the event. We must meet that expectation, take charge of the event, and fulfill our responsibilities for success. Speeches are only as good as the audience thinks they are; the speaker must rise to the challenge of presenting a good speech.

General Speech Purposes

When developing a speech, we need to know why we are speaking. Before even considering the topic, we need to know if our purpose is to inform, persuade, entertain, or if it is a special occasion.

Speeches to Inform

Speeches to inform are those in which we are aiming to enlighten or to further educate the audience, but in an objective, non-directive manner. We provide the information about the topic to the audience, but we are not directing the audience to believe, feel, or act in a specific manner.

There are four types of informative speeches.

- **Objects:** The term “objects” encompasses many topics we might not ordinarily consider to be “things.” It’s a category of speech that discusses the history or development of people, institutions, places, substances, and inanimate things. The following are some of these topics: *Catherine the Great, Dream catchers, Aristotle, Hubble telescope, Seattle’s Space Needle, Malta, Silicon chip, Spruce Goose, Medieval armor, DDT insecticide, Soy inks, and NAACP.*
- **Processes:** If your speech topic is a “process,” your goal should be to make a speech that helps your audience understand it or be able to perform it. In either instance, processes involve a predictable series of changes, phases, or steps. The following are some of these topics: *Soil erosion, Cell division, Physical therapy, Volcanic eruption, Paper recycling, Consumer credit evaluations, Scholarship money searches, Navy Seal training, Portfolio building, and the development of Alzheimer’s disease.*

Organizing your facts is crucially important when discussing a process. Every stage of a process must be clear and understandable. When two or more things occur at the same time, as they might in the development of Alzheimer’s disease, it is important to make it clear that several things are occurring at once. For example, as plaque is accumulating in the brain, the patient is likely to begin exhibiting various symptoms.

- **Events:** An “event” can be something that occurred only once or an event that is repeated. The following are some of these topics: *the murder of Emmett Till, the Iditarod Dogsled Race, the Industrial Revolution, the discovery of the smallpox vaccine, the Bikini Atoll atomic bomb tests, the Bay of Pigs, the Super Bowl, and the Academy Awards.*
- **Concepts:** “Concepts” are abstract ideas that exist independent of whether they are observed or practiced, such as the example of social equality that follows. Concepts can include hypotheses and theories. The following are some of these topics: *the glass ceiling, Ethnocentrism, Honor codes, Autism, Karma, Wellness, Fairness theory, Bioethics, The American Dream, and Social equality.*

Speeches to Persuade

Speeches to persuade are those in which we are aiming to influence the audience in some fashion. They are subjective and highly directive. The speaker has a bias toward a specific belief, attitude, or action, and the speaker works to direct the audience on what to believe, what opinion to have, or what action to undertake.

In persuasion, the issue of ethics becomes paramount. Some students erroneously believe that speakers always must give both sides of the issue to be ethical, but that is not true. When Lisa shops for a car, she knows the salesperson is out to persuade her to buy; thus, she expects messages designed to urge her to that action. If the salesperson gives accurate, verifiable, and truthful information, there is no ethical violation.

It is our job to provide the audience with the most accurate information we can find, and to present that information honestly, not distorting it. We must cite our sources to give due credit, and the topic should be one that can be justified as beneficial to the audience, not just to the speaker.

There are three types of persuasive speeches.

- **Questions of Fact:** These persuasive speeches influence **beliefs**. A belief is *what we hold to be true or false*. For example, the knowledge that the Earth rotates around the sun is a belief; we believe it to be a fact. The idea that smoking can cause cancer is a belief. If we try to persuade the audience that consuming too much fat can cause colon cancer, we are trying to get the audience to believe what is true or false about the impact of fat in our diets.
- **Questions of Value:** These persuasive speeches influence **attitudes**. We attempt to influence how an audience judges an event or idea; the speaker is trying to influence the audience’s opinion of something. For these speeches, the speaker is attempting to make the audience think of the topic on a scale of good to bad, or desirable to not desirable. To argue the Governor of Minnesota is doing “a good job” (or “a bad job”) is an attempt to influence an attitude or opinion. With statements like these, it is not a matter of true or false, black or white. It is a matter of placing the Governor on a range of opinions from highly positive to highly negative.
- **Questions of Policy:** These persuasive speeches influence **action**. These propositions are easy to identify because they usually have the word “should” in them. These propositions call for a change in policy or practice (including those in a government,

community, or school), or they can call for the audience to adopt a certain behavior. Speeches with propositions of policy can be those that call for passive acceptance and agreement from the audience and those that try to instigate the audience to action, to do something immediately or in the long-term. For example, *The state of Georgia should require drivers over the age of 75 to take a vision test and present a certificate of good health from a doctor before renewing their licenses.*

The three types of persuasive speeches build on each other. If Yousef is going to give a "Call to Action" speech asking for the audience to donate blood during Ridgewater College's annual blood drive, he will need to show the audience there is a need for blood (a belief), that donating blood is a good thing to do (an attitude), and how to participate in the blood drive (an action).

Speeches to Entertain



Figure 10.2.7: A Valedictorian Speaking



Figure 10.2.8: An Acceptance Speech



Figure 10.2.9: A Eulogy

Although not commonly done in an introductory Communication Studies class, there is a third general speech purpose: a speech to entertain. We would hope all speeches are entertaining in some fashion, whether through humor, interest, or seriousness, so the audience found the speech engaging and intriguing. This also includes special occasion speeches designed to fit the specific event at which they are being given. While each one has its own unique guidelines, the key point is to develop the speech consistent with that occasion.

Some common special occasion speeches include:

Eulogy: a speech given at a funeral or memorial service to honor the deceased.

Introduction: a speech given to introduce a speaker to an audience.

Toast: a speech given honoring a person or group, such as a wedding toast.

Giving an Award: a speech given to bestow honor on a person.

Accepting an Award: a speech given to communicate appreciation for an award.

Commencement: a speech given at graduation, typically addressing the past (the work done to achieve a goal) and the future (challenging the graduates to learn more, help others, get involved in social issues, or otherwise continue personal growth).

Special occasion speeches are short and focused on the event at hand. Humor is commonly used, even with many eulogies, but only when appropriate for the event and audience.

Key Concepts

The terms and concepts students should be familiar with from this section include:

The Nature of Public Speaking

The Value of Public Speaking

- Societal functions
- Personal benefits

A Good Speech

- Immediacy

General Speech Purposes

- To inform
 - Objects
 - Processes
 - Events
 - Concepts
- To persuade
 - Beliefs
 - Attitudes
 - Actuation
- To entertain
 - Eulogy
 - Introduction
 - Toast
 - Giving an Award
 - Accepting an Award
 - Commencement

References

Gallup. (2001, March 19). *Snakes Top List of Americans' Fears*. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1891/snak...ans-fears.aspx>

This page titled [10.2: The Purposes of Public Speaking](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [8.2: The Purposes of Public Speaking](#) by [Keith Green, Ruth Fairchild, Bev Knudsen, & Darcy Lease-Gubrud](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

10.3: The Topic and Thesis

Learning Objectives

After completing this section, students should be able to:

1. explain how creating a speech is a holistic process.
2. develop a speech in the proper order.
3. create a speech using the appropriate lengths for sections.
4. apply topic selection criteria to the selection of a topic for an audience.
5. develop a specific speech purpose.
6. translate a specific speech purpose into a properly worded thesis statement.

A Holistic Approach to Speech Development

Although there are "steps" to preparing a speech, a more appropriate way of thinking of speech preparation is as a dynamic process. Instead of seeing speech development as a linear process, it is better to see it as a holistic process of creating all components of speech, so they fit together as an effective whole. A puzzle metaphor demonstrates this approach.

As the model illustrates, the core of this dynamic process is the audience analysis, and the speech is built around our understanding of our audience. We then develop the content (selecting the topic, finding the content, and organizing the speech), and prepare the content for presentation (practice the delivery).

Although there is a sense of a linear process, sticking to some sort of artificial step process is not as important as making sure that all the pieces fit together as an effective, unified whole. Although we may have developed one area, as we prepare the whole speech, we may need to revisit earlier parts of the process and alter those to achieve a unified whole.

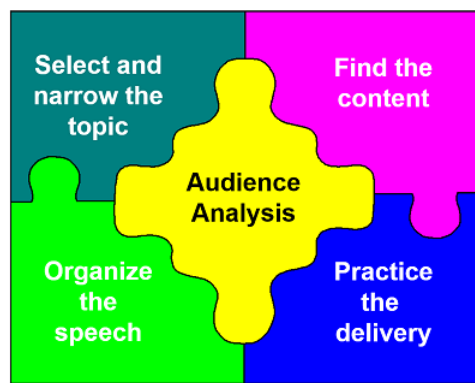


Figure 10.3.1

Parts of the Speech

While there are a variety of ways to organize a speech, the most common structure breaks the speech into four parts:

- **Introduction**
- **Thesis/preview**
- **Body of the speech**
- **Conclusion**

Portions of the Speech

The **introduction**, ending with the **thesis/preview**, comprises approximately 10% of the speech. The **body of the speech** is about 85% of the speech, and the remaining 5% is the **conclusion**.

The percentages should be used as guidelines for the speaker, not as absolutes. Most of the speaker's efforts should be focused on relating the core information or arguments the speaker needs to share and the audience is there to hear. Since the body of the speech contains this core information, most of the time should be spent in that area.

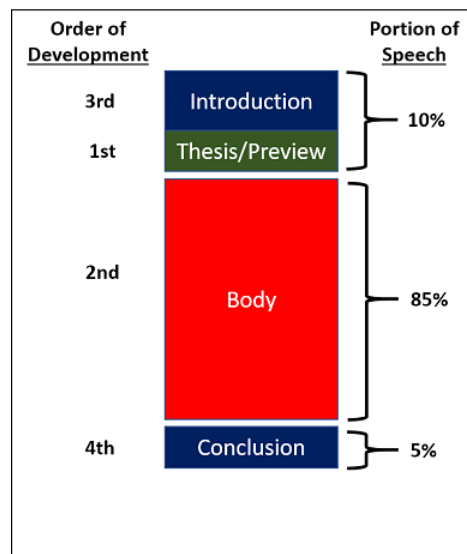


Figure 10.3.2

Order of development

In developing the speech, novice speakers often make the mistake of starting with the introduction. Since the introduction comes first, it seems logical to start there; however, this is wrong. Creating the thesis is the **first step** in good speech development. Until we know what the speech is about, we cannot effectively determine an introduction. Just as we cannot introduce a person we do not know; we cannot introduce a topic not yet developed. The most effective order of preparation is:

1. **Thesis.** Since the thesis defines what the speech is about and what it is not about, developing it first helps guide the speaker in developing the body, doing research, and staying properly focused.
2. **Body.** The body of the speech is the key content the audience is there to hear, so the speaker should spend a substantive amount of time researching, organizing, and fine-tuning this core content.
3. **Introduction.** A speech introduction is the most creative part of the process. Since it is intended to pull the audience into the thesis and prepare them for the body, by waiting until after developing the body, the speaker will have a clear sense of what the introduction should do. During research for the body, it is common to come across a quotation, example, or some other idea for the attention-getting device of the introduction.
4. **Conclusion.** While it is the shortest part of a speech, it is especially important as it is the last thing the audience will hear, leaving the audience with their final impression of the speech. This is developed last as there are ways to conclude a speech that is built on how the speaker begins the speech.

While this order of development is important, always remember the “puzzle” metaphor: we must work to make all the parts fit together, so there can be a lot of revisiting parts to alter or fine-tune them. Speech development is a dynamic process in which changing one part of the speech may have a ripple effect, affecting other parts. In the end, a good speaker makes sure that the speech is consistent, coherent, organized, and flows well for the audience.

One of the most challenging steps classroom students face when given the classic speech assignment is to select and narrow a topic to fit the time limits of the assignment.

Topic Selection

Producing a topic “out of the blue” is quite difficult. Realistically, finding a topic for a classroom speech is far more difficult than finding one for a speech in a work or community setting.

Most presentations outside the classroom will be on topics in which the speaker is well versed and comfortable. If asked to speak, it will typically be to share knowledge within their field of expertise. If a business hires a Communication Studies instructor to present at a training session, they are clearly hiring them for expertise in communication. Even then, the speaker still has a responsibility to narrow it to a specific topic, to adapt it to their audience and the occasion, and to fit the time limits. So outside of the initial step, determining the overall subject, speakers still must go through the topic development process.



Figure 10.3.3

Topic Selection Criteria

In selecting a topic, one of the most common mistakes novice speakers make is to take a sender-based approach. This is assuming the audience has a strong interest in the same things the speaker feels passionate about. Just because a speaker may be deeply into video gaming does not inherently mean the audience shares that interest. To select a good topic, the speaker needs to be receiver-based and objectively consider what is most likely to be successful. While the speaker's interest can certainly serve as a good starting point to identify a general topic, the specific topic and approach to the topic must be carefully considered.

There are four criteria to determine the appropriateness of a topic:

Time Limits - The speaker must fit the speech into the given time limits. The speech needs to fill the allotted time, and yet it cannot exceed that given time. It is a core speaker's responsibility to treat the audience with respect and to fill those time limits appropriately. Exceeding time limits is simply not an option. If a topic cannot be covered within a given time, the speaker has two options: limit the topic, or get a new topic.

As we know from looking at culture, Americans are quite monochronic, events are scheduled one at a time, with one event following another. We see time as a resource, like money, to be budgeted and spent wisely. When speeches end on time, we have gotten what we have paid for. If they run a little short, we may feel we got a deal, but if they run quite short, we feel we got cheated. The audience is spending their time on the speaker; give them their money's worth. On the other hand, if the speech runs too long, the speaker is "stealing" time from the audience, taking our time resources without our permission. Time limits are important in a monochronic culture.

1. **Audience Interest** - We need to select a topic we think will appeal to a specific audience. This may be a topic we know the audience will have an immediate interest in or one in which the audience will have an interest once we develop the topic. Being receiver-based, the speaker must be honest in their assessment of the topic and the audience, careful not to project their own interests onto the audience.
2. **Speaker Interest** - Although audience interest is certainly key, the speaker must also have an interest in the topic. A lack of speaker interest can be deadly. If the speaker is unmotivated to develop and present the speech, the speech usually sounds as if the speaker is bored and does not care. The speaker loses their own sense of desire to do an excellent job. A good topic is one that has a healthy balance of audience interest and speaker interest.
3. **Occasion Appropriateness** - We need to consider why the audience is gathered and select a topic that fits the occasion. If the audience is gathered at a business conference, learning new ways of interacting with clients, an informative topic on some aspect of communication skills may be appropriate. For a commencement address, talking about the dire state of the economy may not fit the celebratory nature of the event; the topic should invoke growth, opportunity, and an optimistic future. We want our topic to complement the reason the audience is gathered.

Narrowing a Topic

Since the speaker needs to fit the speech into the allotted time, we need to move from a broader topic to a narrower, much more specific topic. Finding a specific topic is a process of analysis, selection, and narrowing. The goal of the process is to find a specific topic that fits the same criteria as discussed above: audience interest; speaker interest; occasion appropriateness; and time limits.

An effective way to narrow the topic is to start with a broader topic and brainstorm a large list of sub-topics. Using the previous four criteria, narrow the topic to the best fit. If the topic is still too large, repeat the process as often as needed to reach a

manageable topic.

Specific Speech Purpose

After finding that specific topic, develop the **specific speech purpose**. The specific speech purpose is *the narrow, focused direction the speech will be taking*. The function of the specific speech purpose is twofold: to identify what goes in the speech, and to identify what does *not* go in the speech. The specific speech purpose establishes the parameters of the speech. We use the parameters as guidance as to what to include in the speech and what to keep out of the speech. This is an important consideration. Unless the speaker keeps a tight rein on the development of the speech, the speech can get out of control, suddenly diverting into a different area or expanding beyond the time limit.

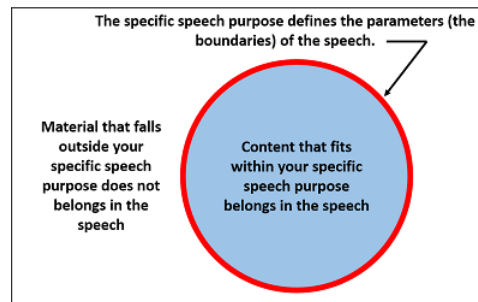


Figure 10.3.4

For example, in an informative speech:

- To inform my audience on how to write an effective resume.
- To inform my audience of alternative forms of financial aid.
- To inform my audience of creative ways of using macaroni and cheese.

For persuasion, the specific speech purposes would be slightly different, reflecting the idea of changing an audience's belief, attitude, or action:

- To persuade my audience to donate blood.
- To persuade my audience to vote for the school referendum.
- To persuade my audience to use a designated driver.

The Thesis

Once the specific speech purpose has been developed, we can easily create the **thesis**. The thesis is *the specific, concise statement of intent for the speech*. It is the one, single sentence clearly stating exactly what the speech will address. Converting the specific speech purpose to the thesis is simple:

"To inform my audience on how to write an effective resume."

becomes

"Today I'll take you through the steps of writing an effective resume."

"To inform my audience of alternative forms of financial aid."

becomes

"There are several alternate forms of financial aid for you to consider."

"To inform my audience of creative ways of using macaroni and cheese."

becomes

"I'll show you several creative ways of using macaroni and cheese."

"To persuade my audience to donate blood."

becomes

"Today I'll show you why it is important that you donate blood."

"To persuade my audience to vote for the school referendum."

becomes

"Voting for the upcoming school referendum is important for the success of our schools."

"To persuade my audience to use a designated driver."

becomes

"When you go out partying, you should use a designated driver."

Good Thesis Traits

- **Concise.** The thesis is a simple, straightforward sentence clearly telling the audience what the speech is going to be about.
- **Grammatically simple.** There is one subject and one predicate; it is not a compound sentence, nor a compound-complex sentence. The thesis is not a question.
- **Blatant.** A speech thesis is blunter and more obvious than what we might use in writing.
- **Identifies the parameters of the speech.** It tells the audience what the speaker will be doing, which, by definition, also tells the audience what the speaker is not doing.
- **Consistent with the speaker's overall speech purpose.** The wording reflects the proper informative or persuasive tone.

Key Concepts

The terms and concepts students should be familiar with from this section include:

Speech Development

Parts of the Speech

- Portions of the speech
- Order of development

Topic Selection Criteria

- Audience interest
- Speaker interest
- Occasion appropriateness
- Time limits

Specific Speech Purpose

The Thesis

- Concise
- Grammatically simple
- Blatant
- Identifies parameters
- Consistent with purpose

This page titled [10.3: The Topic and Thesis](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- 8.4: The Topic and Thesis by Keith Green, Ruth Fairchild, Bev Knudsen, & Darcy Lease-Gubrud is licensed CC BY-NC 4.0.

10.4: The Body

Learning Objectives

After completing this section, students should be able to:

- explain the difference between writing a speech and constructing a speech.
- determine the main points for a thesis.
- explain the importance of clear organization.
- use the appropriate pattern of arrangement for the body of the speech.
- use subordination and coordination to organize the body of the speech.
- incorporate transitions.

After doing an audience analysis, selecting a topic considering the audience's needs and interests, and creating the thesis, we need to develop the **body of the speech**. The body is the largest component of a speech, about 85 percent, and where we specifically do what the thesis says. In the body, *the speaker gives the information or arguments necessary to fulfill the intention of the thesis*.

“Writing” the Body of a Speech

When a student says, “I’m going to write my speech,” we cringe. The way we use language is different when spoken versus when written. Inevitably, if a student sits down to write a speech, they will slip into a written style of language, like they are writing a paper for class. However, when this written speech is presented orally, it will sound dull, awkward, and artificial; it will sound like someone reading a paper for class. Instead, we develop or create speeches. We work from outlines to plan the flow of ideas and to keep the oral style of language. Avoid writing out any more than necessary to keep the speech in a conversational style.

Most commonly, speeches are broken into 2-4 **main points**. The main points are *the major subdivisions of the thesis*. Having too many main points can be overwhelming to the audience; fewer main points are more manageable for the speaker and the listener. Imagine hearing a speaker say, “Today I want to review 14 types of financial aid.” Chances are most audience members would feel a sense of dread over how long they assume the speech will be. If, however, that speaker groups those 14 types into 4, saying “Today I want to review four categories of financial aid,” most would find the thesis far less overwhelming.

Coordination and Subordination

The **main points** have two key issues. First, the main points are **coordinate** with each other, *meaning that they are of equal importance*, justifying them being set off as separate points. Second, each main point is part of the thesis, and once they are addressed, they fulfill the thesis. The main points are **subordinate** to the thesis, *meaning that they fit within it and are part of it*.

Figure 10.4.1 is a generic sample of an outline demonstrating coordination and subordination. There are many different formats for outlines, so be aware that specific expectations for instructors will vary.

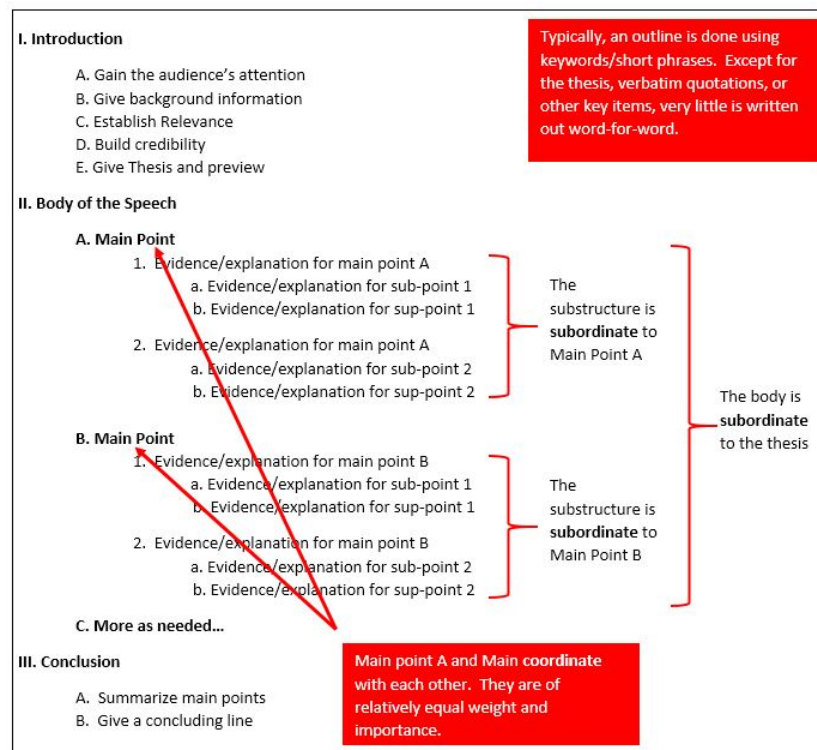


Figure 10.4.1

Organizing the Main Points

When developing the speech, a crucial step is to decide the order in which to present the main points. Speakers need to remember although they will have a thorough understanding of the content, they need to stop and think about what will work well with the given audience. Just because the speaker is well versed in the information does not mean the audience will understand it clearly, unless the speaker presents it in a well-planned structure based on the audience's needs.

Clear organization is important for three reasons:

- It makes the information much more memorable for the audience. To remember information, we need it organized, and it is up to the speaker to provide the organization.
- It reduces the chance of the audience getting lost or confused. Once they are lost, it is extremely hard to get the audience back on track. Creating confusion is easy; reducing confusion is difficult.
- A well-organized speech is easier for the speaker to better recall the order of the ideas to be presented.

In ordering the main points, use a **logical idea development pathway**. The speaker considers *which order of presentation will be most effective with the audience in leading them to an understanding of the material*. There are no concrete rules about what does/does not work because it depends on the topic and audience, but there are some common ways to do this:

Both Informative and Persuasive Speeches

- Organize the speech **topically**. *Divide the speech into major subtopics and order them in a logical pattern*. Start from specific and go broad or start broad and move to specifics. For example, to inform about a disease, you would start with background information, then on to the symptoms of the disease, and then look at the techniques for treatment. With persuasive speeches, each main point would be a reason the speaker's thesis is correct. For example, if you were proving that a law should be enacted/enforced/repealed, each main point would be a unique reason for why this should happen.
- Organize the speech with the **cause/effect** format. For speeches *attempting to show two things are linked causally, tell us about the causes and the impacts of those causes*. For an informative speech example, a speaker could inform an audience on how caffeine affects memory by discussing how caffeine works chemically and then how it interacts with the body. For a persuasive speech, the speaker could use the same structure to persuade the audience that artificial sweetener is bad for a person by talking about how it works and the effects on the body.

Informative Speeches Only

- Organize the speech **chronologically**. For a process speech, *take us through it in time order*, e.g., first step, second step, etc. Obviously, this works for any historically based informative speeches.
- Organize the speech **spatially**. In describing a place or an object, take us through it by its location or structure, i.e. *breaking up the space that it inhabits*. For example, if describing vacation opportunities in Minnesota, dividing the state into southern, central, and northern Minnesota provides structure to the information.

Persuasive Speeches Only

- Organize the speech with the **problem/solution** format. Using only two main points, *show us the problem being addressed, and then lay out the solution that is being used or advocated*. For example, if a student wants to argue that college textbook prices are too high, they might first explain why they are expensive, then offer an alternative to using traditional bookstore texts.
- Organize the speech with the **problem/cause/solution** format. Using three main points, *show us the problem being addressed, then prove what causes or caused the problem, and then lay out the solution(s) to stop the causes*. For example, if you had the problem of childhood obesity, you would show the intensity of the problem, prove the causes of obesity (like a lack of activity or improper diet), then you would provide solutions to counteract the causes (like fun physical activities or nutritious food substitutes).
- Organize the speech with **Monroe's Motivated Sequence**. This is an organizational pattern that attempts to convince the audience to respond to a need that is delineated in the speech. Five separate steps characterize the Motivated Sequence organization style:
 - The **"Attention" step** should get the audience's attention as well as describe your goals and preview the speech. (This is technically not a **"main point,"** but the **introduction** section of the speech.)
 - The **"Need" step** should provide a description of the **"problem"** as well as the consequences that may result if the problem goes unresolved. In this step, the speaker should also alert audience members to their role in mitigating the issue. (This would be considered the first **main point**.)
 - The **"Satisfaction" step** is used to outline your **"solutions"** to the problems you have previously outlined as well as deal with any objections that may arise. (This would be considered the second **main point**.)
 - In the **"Visualization" step**, audience members are asked to imagine what will happen if your solutions are implemented and what will happen if they do not come to fruition. Visualizations should be rich with detail. (This would be considered the third **main point**.)
 - The **"Call to Action" appeal step** should be used to make a direct appeal for action. In this step, you should describe precisely how the audience should react to your speech and how they should carry out these actions. (This last step is included in the **conclusion** section of your speech.)

Regardless of how the speaker orders the main point, the goal is always the same, moving the audience along an idea development pathway that is logical, easy to follow, and enhances memory value and understanding.

The Substructure

The substructure of the speech is the content included within each main point. The substructure contains the actual information, data, and arguments the speaker wishes to communicate to the audience. Within the substructure, the speaker must continue to determine the best order for items to be presented so the speaker and the audience can follow the development of ideas. This is the core of the speech. How to use evidence and sources will be addressed in a later section.

Incorporating Transitions

Transitions are a vital component of any good speech. Their role is to verbally move the audience from point to point, keep the audience on track, and clearly lead the audience through the organization. It is important to have the audience on track from the start and to keep them on track. If a reader gets lost, they can simply go back and re-read, but in speaking, if the audience gets lost, it can be extremely hard to get them back on track.

In public speaking, we like to use **signpost** transitions which are *blatant transitions*, such as "My second point is...." We are far less subtle in speaking than in writing.

There are five types of transitions we use in speaking:

"Today I will be telling you about some other forms of financial aid. I'll be looking at special scholarships, work reimbursement programs, and grants designed for individuals in exceptional cases."

Note the thesis and the brief reference to the three main points. Another version of a preview is incorporated directly into the thesis. For example,

“Today I will tell you about three forms of financial aid you probably have not considered.”

Although not as detailed as the first example, it does let the audience know there are three main points to be covered. Regardless of which type is used, a key to a good preview is that it is not overdone, and merely mentions what is coming up. **Do not over-preview.**

- **Thesis/Preview:** This is a special transition used immediately after the thesis to preview the main points. Each point is briefly mentioned to let the audience know what is coming.
- **Single Words/Phrases:** These are general transition terms used throughout the speech but in the substructure. These include terms and phrases such as "also," "in addition to," "furthermore," "another," and so on.
- **Numerical Terms:** Numbering is a common and effective way to aid an audience in keeping track of a series of points. Terms such as "first," "second," and "third," can be highly effective in clearly identifying major points. The major danger with these is their overuse. If a speaker uses numerical terms as transitions between main points, then uses them again in the substructure, the audience is likely to get confused.

“One type of alternative financial aid is special scholarships.”

“Another type of alternative financial aid is work reimbursement.”

“Another type of alternative financial aid is special grants.”

When heard back-to-back, they seem redundant. There will be several substructure sentences between the main point statements, so when they appear, they jump out as main point markers.

- **Parallel Structure:** This previous example is also considered parallel structure and is typically used for main point transitions. The main point statements are worded very similarly. Once the audience hears these similarly worded statements, they know they are moving into a new topic.
- **Summary/Preview:** Summary/Preview transitions are an excellent choice for moving between main points. When you are leaving one main point to go to the next point, the speaker says one sentence in which the first half summarizes what was just covered, and the second half previews what is coming up. For example, "Now that we have looked at special scholarships, we can move on and consider reimbursements you can get from your workplace." This is a very distinct, clean, and effective transition. Also, by stating the focus of the next main point, the speaker can now move directly into the sub-structure of the main point.

Key Concepts

The terms and concepts students should be familiar with from this section include:

Body of the Speech

Writing a speech versus Developing a speech

Main Points

- Coordination and Subordination

Organization Patterns

- Logical idea development pathway
- Chronological
- Spatial
- Topical
- Problem/solution
- Cause/effect

Substructure

Transitions

- Thesis/Preview
- Single words/phrases
- Numerical terms
- Parallel Structure
- Summary/Preview

This page titled [10.4: The Body](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- **8.5: The Body** by Keith Green, Ruth Fairchild, Bev Knudsen, & Darcy Lease-Gubrud is licensed [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

10.5: Incorporating Evidence

Learning Objectives

After completing this section, students should be able to:

- explain how using support materials impacts speaker credibility.
- differentiate between internal and external evidence.
- distinguish the three types of testimony.
- distinguish the three types of examples.
- differentiate between descriptive and inferential statistics.
- cite a source appropriately.
- judge the validity of a source.

Once we have a clever idea of what we want to say in the speech, we need to find and include **supporting materials**. Supporting materials refer to *any type of evidence, explanation, or illustration we use in the speech to enhance the likelihood the audience will accept and believe what we say*.

Credibility

We use support materials because we need to enhance the **credibility**, *the believability*, of our message to the audience. Our audiences will only believe our messages if they can have faith that what we are saying is reflective of the truth or the best ideas. Audiences should believe in us as speakers and in our message. The use of supporting materials builds our credibility and the credibility of our message.

In today's political climate, the ability to identify quality evidence is extremely important. With claims of "fake news" being used to dismiss any information not meeting one's pre-existing beliefs, our ethical obligation to identify the best sources of information is greater than ever. Compounding this challenge is the plethora of websites established to advocate certain viewpoints, cherry-pick news stories for the most sensational tidbits, or outright fabricate news stories. More than ever, we must be critical consumers of information, carefully assessing what we are reading and hearing to separate truth from fiction, and reality from sensationalism. As speakers, we must use that same critical process to ensure we are presenting evidence to our audience that can withstand scrutiny. To that end, later in this section, we present the **CRAAP Test** for evaluating sources.

- When using evidence, especially from outside our own experiences, we rely on **credibility transfer**. We select good, quality sources we anticipate the audience will find credible, with the hope that by using that source, *the credibility attributed to the source will transfer to us as speakers*. That is why good, clear source citations are so important. By citing the source, we are giving information to the audience to allow them to establish the credibility of the source and enhance our credibility as the speaker.
- There are two broad categories of evidence: internal and external. **Internal evidence** refers to *our own firsthand experiences, knowledge, and opinions*. The evidence can be strong if the audience sees us as having expertise in the area. As the audience's perception of the speaker's credibility increases, the speaker can rely more on internal evidence and less on external. However, even highly credible speakers will still use external evidence as well to enhance their expertise.
- **External evidence** is *the experiences, information, and opinion from someone other than the speaker*. For external evidence to carry weight, the audience **must** view these external sources as credible.

Types of External Evidence

There are three types of evidence: testimony, examples, and statistics. Each one has its strengths and weaknesses.

Testimony

Testimony refers to *quotations by others about the topic*. When quoting someone, we can either quote verbatim, or we can paraphrase. When quoting **verbatim**, the speaker is *quoting the person exactly as the person said it*. This works well if the quotation is worded in a powerful, memorable, impactful manner. **Paraphrasing** is *restating what the source said in the speaker's own words but keeping the meaning of what was said*. Paraphrasing is especially valuable when dealing with longer quotations, or with quotations in which the wording is confusing or not as engaging as the speaker wants. Regardless of why the information is

paraphrased, the speaker has an ethical obligation to make sure the quotation is translated in a manner keeping the intent of the original.

There are three types of testimony: lay, prestige, and expert.

- **Lay testimony** refers to *statements by the "person on the street."* These can be effective as audience members may relate more to "someone like me." Infomercials use lay testimony heavily to try to prove the advertised product will work for "someone just like you." It is important to remember a lay person is **not** an expert, so the proof value may not be as high as the speaker assumes.
- **Prestige testimony** is *from someone who is well known but is not considered an expert in their field.* Examples would include statements by celebrities like John Stewart, Stephen Colbert, or from the world of movies, television, or literature. They are usually used because of their interesting, engaging nature, although their ability to seriously prove a point is not strong. These are virtually always quoted verbatim.
- **Expert testimony** is *from someone who is an expert on the topic.* These quotations carry the most weight of the three types of testimony if the audience sees this person as being highly credible. Expert testimonies are usually found in newspapers, magazines, journals, or off internet research sites. Their weakness is often the wording can be dry and "academic" in tone, so frequently the speaker will need to paraphrase the quotation to have it carry more "punch" with the audience.

Examples

Examples are *narratives relating to the topic.* They can range from instances to examples to stories, depending on length.

- An **instance** is *a quick reference, usually in a word or two, about a specific occurrence.* For example, "D-Day" would remind the audience of a larger specific event, or "9/11" would remind the audience of the attacks on the World Trade Centers. Be sure the audience understands the reference. For example, for many people today, making a reference to "Columbine" may not be as effective as it was a few years ago.

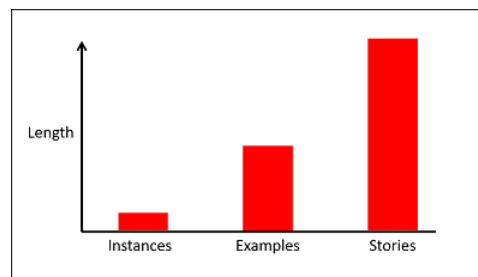


Figure 10.5.1

- On the other end of the continuum are **stories**. Stories are *fully developed narratives with a beginning, middle, and end.* They can be used for longer speeches but are usually too involved for shorter speeches. The advantage of stories, if given well, is that they can be very involving and interesting. If they are not told well, they can end up being boring. The keys to using stories effectively are that the speaker tells the story well, and the story has a point that adds significantly to the purpose of the speech.
- In the middle is the more common **example**. When using an example, *the speaker gives the pertinent details* but does not develop it as a full-blown story. For example, to illustrate a speech on drinking and driving, a speaker might give some examples of individuals who were injured and the long-lasting effects. Saying only the name of the victim would not work, nor would the speaker want to tell the whole story of each person. The speaker gives the vital details of each example, enough so the audience understands the point of the example.

Examples are a highly effective form of proof with an audience, although by themselves they do not often prove the breadth of the problem; one or two examples do not prove there is a widespread problem. However, due to the human interest that we experience with examples, they have the ability, when well delivered, to involve the audience more on a human, emotional level than on a rational, cognitive level.

Statistics

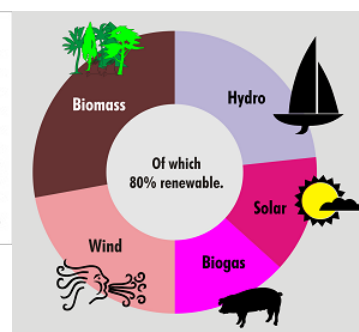
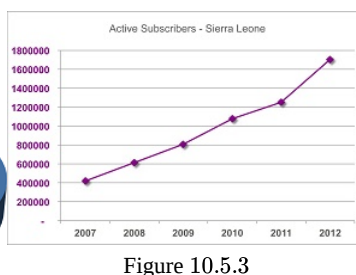
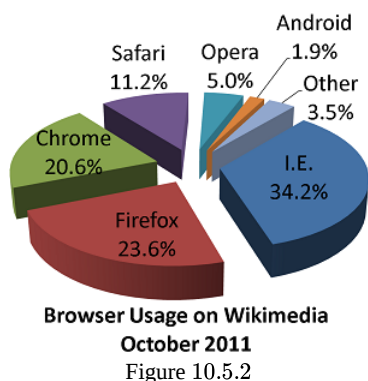
Statistics refer to the *numerical representation of data.* Statistics can be the most powerful form of evidence to prove the extent of a problem; however, they can also be horrendously misused. In western culture, we tend to believe once a problem has been quantified and expressed in statistics, the statistics are inherently truthful. Statistics can be manipulated, misused, and misrepresented just as any other evidence can be misused. Speakers must be especially cautious when selecting statistics to be sure

the numbers come from a quality source and are accurate reflections of reality. Statistics are used in two ways: descriptively and inferentially.

- **Descriptive statistics** describe what was true at a given moment in time. They describe data from the past. The past can be distant, such as in years, or recent, such as hours or days. The statistics reflect what was found when the statistics were gathered. For example, if a poll is taken on a Monday to determine which of two candidates is ahead in a political race, the statistics reflect what was found on the day. If on Wednesday, the media reports one candidate was arrested for drug dealing 10 years earlier, the results of Monday's poll become worthless as they reflected the results prior to the revelation of the drug dealing. When asked what the enrollment of Ridgewater College is, we usually refer to what is called "10th day enrollment." The enrollment of Ridgewater on the 10th day of the semester is used as the official attendance figure, but since students tend to drop out throughout the semester even on the 11th day the number may be wrong. Descriptive statistics report what was found on the day at the time. Descriptive statistics are the type we encounter most of the time.
- **Inferential statistics** are used to predict what may happen in the future. Simply taking descriptive statistics and assuming what they report will be true in the future is a faulty assumption. Rather, inferential statistics are specifically developed to predict behavior. For example, if a study establishes through valid research that as the poverty rate increases crime increases, we could infer if a community experiences a rise in the poverty rate, they are likely to experience a rise in the crime rate. The statistics link behaviors together. Physicians use statistics inferentially daily. As medications are tested, statistical relationships between variables, such as weight, and therapeutic effect are determined. Doctors then use the statistics to determine the appropriate dosage for a given patient, predicting with a high degree of confidence the medical outcome.

Whether used descriptively or inferentially, statistics have some distinct issues:

- **The Source:** Hundreds of organizations in the U.S. have the goal of persuading the American people and the American government to a specific position. Since their goal is inherently biased to one position, statistics released by the organizations are inherently biased. Even if the statistics they release were gathered and processed properly, they will be selective in which statistics they release, publishing only ones supporting their position.
- **Gathering/Processing:** Gathering and processing statistics have distinct guidelines. If statistics are not gathered using the guidelines, the quality of the statistics is highly questionable. Get statistics from reliable sources to produce quality statistical data.
- **Interpretation:** It is important speakers use statistics honestly, not inferring conclusions from them the statistics may not support. For example, if a speaker has statistics that 60% of Americans favor "handgun control," they should not use those to claim that most Americans favor "gun control;" the statistics are specific to *handgun* control, not gun control in general.
- **Presentation:** Statistics can be very confusing. The use of graphs helps immensely in clarifying numbers. It is up to the speaker to make sure the audience understands what the statistics are saying.



Evaluating Sources

Regardless of the type of evidence used, a core ethical speaker's responsibility is to present the audience with quality, trustworthy information. One way to do this is to apply the **CRAAP Test** to sources. Adapted from "Evaluating Information—Applying the CRAAP Test," from the Meriam Library of California State University, Chico, there are five criteria to apply when evaluating sources:

Currency: The timeliness of the information.

- When was the information published or posted?

- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Does the topic require current information, or will older sources work as well?
- Are the links functional?

Relevance: The importance of the information for the speech.

- Does the information relate to the specific purpose of the speech?
- Who is the intended audience for the information?
- Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e. not too elementary or advanced for the needs)?
- Is this the best of several sources reviewed?
- Will providing this information from this source increase the likelihood that the audience will accept the speech content as valid and credible?

Authority: The source of the information.

- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
- What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations?
- Is the author qualified to write on the topic?
- Is there contact information, such as a publisher or email address?
- Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source? Examples: .com .edu .gov .org .net
- Will this source be viewed as credible by the audience?

Accuracy: The reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content.

- Where does the information come from?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
- Can the information be verified in another source or from personal knowledge?
- Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion?
- Are there spelling, grammar, or typographical errors?
- Can the accuracy of this source be easily defended?

Purpose: The reason the information exists.

- What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, teach, sell, entertain, or persuade?
- Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
- Is the information fact, opinion, or propaganda?
- Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases?

Oral Citations

Whenever a speaker uses any external sources, **an oral citation must be given**. One major reason is to avoid **plagiarism**, *presenting others' ideas and words as one's own*. Citing sources also facilitates the credibility transfer process discussed earlier. If the speaker does not cite the sources, the audience will not know the sources were used; hence, the credibility transfer process will not occur.

In a speech, sources are cited differently than in writing. Obviously, we cannot use footnotes or give a list of works cited at the end of our speech. Instead, the speaker should orally cite the sources **where they are used**.

Speakers can be creative and vary how the source is cited and when it is cited. They should be cited smoothly, fitting into the overall flow of the speech. When citing the source, give enough information so that an audience member could locate the source in the future and the audience can also decide on its credibility.

Here are some examples of typical oral citations:

- "According to the May 3, 2009, *Star Tribune* article by Dr. Amy Fisher..."
- "Dr. Dana Brown, Director of the Breast Cancer Research Fund, said in last week's *Time* magazine, that..."
- "John Gray, in his 1992 book, *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus*, explained..."
- "Just last month in *Esquire* magazine, Stephen Colbert said..."

They are more casual and succinct than citations in a research paper would be. Some instructors require students to hand in a typed bibliography and will usually want it in either MLA or APA format. Students should pay attention to their instructor's expectations.

Key Concepts

The terms and concepts students should be familiar with from this section include:

Supporting Materials

Credibility

- Credibility transfer

Categories of evidence

- Internal
- External

Types of External Evidence

- Testimony
 - Lay
 - Prestige
 - Expert
 - Paraphrasing
 - Quoting Verbatim
- Examples
 - Instances
 - Examples
 - Stories
- Statistics
 - Descriptive
 - Inferential
 - Evaluating Statistics

Evaluating Sources

- Currency
- Relevance
- Authority
- Accuracy
- Purpose

Source Citations

Reference

Meriam Library, California State University, Chico. (2010). *Evaluating Information—Applying the CRAAP Test*. Retrieved from www.csuchico.edu/lins/handou...l_websites.pdf

This page titled [10.5: Incorporating Evidence](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- **8.6: Incorporating Evidence** by [Keith Green, Ruth Fairchild, Bev Knudsen, & Darcy Lease-Gubrud](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

10.6: Introductions and Conclusions

Learning Objectives

After completing this section, students should be able to:

- construct an introduction fulfilling the purposes of an introduction.
- select, develop, and use an attention-getting device.
- identify methods to build speaker credibility.
- employ methods to enhance speaker and topic relevance.
- develop a summary of the speech.
- employ a concluding method to end a speech.

Introductions and conclusions are especially important parts of the speech. Unfortunately, they tend to get far too little attention, being left to be quickly tossed together at the end of the speech development process. Instead, time needs to be spent on creating and practicing high-quality introductions and conclusions.

Introductions

Regardless of how well developed the body of the speech is, the speaker must be able to grab and keep the audience's interest. The speaker gets them to want to listen. How well a speaker starts and ends the speech will significantly affect how the audience attends to the message and remembers the message.

So, if the introduction is strong, establishing a positive initial impression, the audience will assume the rest of the speech will be good. Since we are driven to find evidence affirming our expectations, the audience will tend to focus on the positive, minimizing the negative. The reverse is also true; if the beginning of the speech is poor, we then expect a poor speech, and we tend to highlight the speaker's mistakes to prove our assumption to be true.

The Purposes of the Introduction

Introductions have four purposes. In the initial 10% of the speech, the speaker wants to make sure they establish the best possible conditions for the reception of the body of the speech.

1. Gain Attention:

At the beginning of the introduction, the speaker needs to verbally grab the audience, so they are ready to attend to the message. We need to move the audience from not paying attention to focusing on us. **Attention-Getting devices** are tools we use to accomplish this, and they will be addressed later in this section.

2. Reveal the Topic

- **Establish Background Information** - Since the audience does not know what exactly the speaker will be addressing, the introduction can serve to start broadly and funnel the audience's thinking toward the specific thesis. This would also include providing the audience with any relevant background information to get them "up to speed," so to speak. For example, if the speaker is addressing drinking and driving, they might reference any recent alcohol-related crashes in the area to aim the audience's thinking in a specific direction. For informative speaking, since we want to start at the audience's existing knowledge and move them forward, the speaker may remind the audience of what they already know to prepare them to move forward. For example, "You already know the internet is just a large web of interconnected computers. But do you know where this all came from?"
- **Establish Relevance** - For an audience to really pay attention to the speech, the speaker needs to show the audience how the topic is relevant to them, their lives, or their concerns. The speaker needs to connect the topic to the audience in some manner. For example, "As college students, the web is a crucial communication tool. We use it to research assignments, for entertainment, and to connect with our friends. Since it is such a core part of our lives, it makes sense we have a better idea of where it all came from."

3. Establish Credibility

Beyond specifically mentioning the speaker's expertise and/or connection to the topic, the introduction is the first moment in which the audience begins to establish expectations for the presentation. A strong beginning typically establishes positive expectations and high credibility, and a weak beginning has just the opposite effect. Consider the first day of class in a semester. Students go to a class, the instructor walks in, and in a matter of moments, the students will make a series of assumptions as to the nature of that class. Because of perceptual influences, we know first impressions are difficult to change. Good speakers want to begin their speech with a sense of confidence, preparation, and audience-centeredness to establish positive expectations for the speech.



Figure 10.6.1

A concept that comes into play with speaker credibility is **grace**. In religion, grace refers to the forgiveness of sins. In public speaking, grace refers to *the audience's ability to overlook minor mistakes the speaker makes*. If a speaker begins a speech in a strong, confident manner, the audience assumes the speech will be strong and minor errors get overlooked. However, if the speaker starts weakly, giving the impression they are not prepared, the audience expects a poor speech and will look for evidence fulfilling the expectation. Each mistake, even minor, is noticed as it proves the audience's expectations were correct. Speakers want to start off by establishing positive expectations to receive grace from the audience.

4. The Thesis/Preview

At the end of the introduction, the speaker gives their thesis and preview, telling the audience specifically what the speech is about and how the speaker will approach the topic. As addressed elsewhere, a good thesis is concise, simple, and direct, and a good preview is brief and clear. At this point, the thesis/preview is not only telling the audience the specific purpose of the speech, it is also serving as a transition into the body of the speech.

Caution

A common mistake novice speakers make in fulfilling the four purposes is to think of them as four sentences which is a completely erroneous approach. Whether the introduction is 30 seconds long or 10 minutes long, the functions need to be met, regardless of how many sentences it takes. Furthermore, except for the thesis/preview, the functions do not have to be handled separately. The attention-grabbing part of the speech can certainly aid in preparing the audience for the thesis, establishing relevance, and setting the tone for the speech. The speaker needs to consider these in combinations, not singularly.

Attention-Getting Devices

To get the audience's attention, we use attention-getting devices. Attention-getting devices, or AGDs, are techniques speakers use to grab the audience's focus and get the audience intrigued by what is coming up. They aim to get the audience to want to listen. There are a variety of attention-getting devices, and they can be used singularly or in combination.

Questions

The speaker can use either responsive questions or rhetorical questions to gain the audience's attention. **Responsive questions** *ask for an actual response from the audience*. A "show of hands" is the most asked, but with smaller audiences, it could include verbal comments. Responsive questions can be extremely effective as they require the audience to become involved immediately, reducing the likelihood of them acting more passively. Important guidelines for asking a responsive question are:

- **Use the response.** When the audience responds to the question, incorporate the response immediately. Otherwise, the audience may be left wondering what the purpose of the question was. Even a simple phrase like, "That's about what I expected," acknowledges their input.

- **Use brief questions.** If the question is long and involved, the audience will not be sure what they are responding to, so they are less likely to respond if they are not sure. If needed, ask a series of brief questions versus a single long, complicated one.
- **Use safe questions.** Consider where the audience is and what they would be comfortable disclosing in front of other audience members. For example, to ask a question such as, "How many of you have an alcohol problem?" would be a very unsafe question in most settings. Also, consider the wording. "How many of you have quit using illegal drugs?" is a bad question; there are only two responses: a) "I used to and now I do not," or b) "I still use illegal drugs." The wording of the question traps the audience.
- **Encourage the audience to respond.** Audiences will virtually always assume a question is rhetorical, not respond. The speaker should either say something like, "I'd like to see a show of hands," or use nonverbal regulators, such as raising their own hand, or a combination of the two, to let the audience know they really want a response. Sometimes speakers need to be blunt in encouraging a response.

Rhetorical questions do not call for a specific response. They are asked *to trigger the audience to think in a manner consistent with the focus of the speech*. A good rhetorical question takes time and careful thought to develop. They can be deceptively simple. For example, if a speaker is going to argue against drinking and driving, asking, "How many of you have heard of drinking and driving?" is not a good rhetorical question; it is too simplistic and obvious. Something like, "How many of you realize getting killed by a drunk driver is the most typical form of death on a late Saturday night?" is more thought-provoking and directed.

Narratives

The speaker tells a story or gives an example related to the topic. These can be very effective in that audiences tend to relate much better to stories about real people; such stories create a much greater sense of empathy and identification. For example, Jason might start his speech about pediatric nursing with a story from his sibling's experience with cancer. Emma could begin her speech about organic farming with the story of her family's work shifting from conventional to organic methods. If using a narrative, deliver it in a manner that "tells the story." Use vocal variety to aid the audience in imagining the seriousness or the humor of the situation. Giving a narrative in a flat, monotone style negates the impact of the story.

Quotations

The speaker can begin the speech by quoting another person. The quotation selected should be used because of its intriguing or insightful nature. As with testimony as evidence, the speaker can use lay, prestige, or expert quotations, and should always make sure the source is cited.

Some things to consider when using quotations:

- **Quoting verbatim.** While the speaker could paraphrase the quotation, typically opening quotations are given verbatim. The speaker needs a quotation that is worded well, funny, inspiring, and/or ear-catching. The quotation needs to have a unique quality that makes it meaningful and interesting for the audience. Quotations should be carefully introduced and cited. Speakers should avoid using a gesture to make "air quotes" while speaking.
- **Known source.** When selecting the quotation, if recognizing the source of the quotation is important, be sure the audience is likely to be able to do so. Years ago, a social commentator, Will Rogers, was well known. He was a forerunner of humorists such as John Stewart and Stephen Colbert, focusing on politics and current events. However, today virtually no one would know who he was, so even though his quotations might be quite relevant, given the audience does not know the source, using his words may not be as effective.

Startling Statements or Statistics

The speaker begins the speech with a statement that, for some reason, takes the audience aback and makes them want to hear more. Whether a statement or a statistic, it should be something that triggers interest and curiosity. However, it should not be shocking. Swearing, yelling, telling off-color jokes, or other over-the-top comments should be avoided to not create a barrier between the audience and speaker. A classic example of this approach goes as follows:

"Last year in the Sudan, over 10,000 people die every month from starvation. That's a very shocking number. Even more shocking is that you don't give a s***. What's more, you were more shocked when I said s*** than you were when I told you 10,000 people were dying every month."

While it does use a mild expletive, the impact of the attention-getter is quite strong. Depending on the audience, such a startling statement and statistics could be quite effective, while other audiences may be too repulsed by using "s***." As with everything, appropriateness is all based on the audience.

Humor

An adage says, "Always start a speech with a joke." This is wrong. Starting a serious speech on child abuse with a joke would be offensive, not engaging. However, if appropriate for the topic and audience, humor is fine, if the speaker is prepared for what may happen. Specifically, the speaker needs to:

- **Make sure the humor is funny.** There is nothing more discomfoting than watching a speaker attempting to make jokes they think are funny, and the audience is not responding. Preview the joke with a trusted friend, and urge them to give an honest opinion, and take their opinion to heart. Too often enthusiasm overrides thoughtfulness.
- **Be careful not to offend.** In today's culture of sensitivity to racial, ethnic, gender, and physical diversity, it is quite easy to tell a joke that will offend someone in the audience.
- **The safest object of humor is the speaker.** Self-deprecating humor (making fun of oneself) is a safe tactic if the speaker does not overdo the humor and impact credibility. While poking fun at oneself can be good, if taken too far it can suggest a lack of confidence in oneself or one's message.
- **Consider what to expect.** Often, the best humor elicits a chuckle, a smile, or other subtler responses. To expect boisterous laughter is usually unrealistic.
- **Be prepared for the humor to fail.** Be emotionally prepared for the audience to not laugh. If that happens, simply go on. Attempting to restate the joke or explain the humor emphasizes failure and makes the speaker look weak.



Figure 10.6.2

Reference to Audience/Occasion

The speaker can begin the speech by making a reference directed to the makeup, interests, or unique characteristics of the audience, or by making a reference to the event at which the audience is in attendance. For example, if giving a speech to college students on financial aid, a speaker may start by referring to the perpetual need for college students to find more money. When opening a commencement address, speakers often refer to the honor of being selected to speak at such an important occasion.

Building Relevance

The audience needs to have a sense of how or why the topic is relevant to them. In the introduction, the speaker should work to build a connection between the topic and the audience's needs or concerns. Building relevance has three pathways:

- **Refer to obvious relevance.** At times, the value of the topic to the audience is self-evident. Speaking to a group of parents of college freshmen, a topic such as financial aid and paying for school is clearly relevant, so a brief reference to the importance of the topic should suffice.
- **Refer to a current but unknown relevance.** Quite common for classroom speeches, a speaker has a topic that is current and of value to the audience, but the audience may not be aware of the relevance. For example, if attempting to persuade a classroom audience to support a bill pending in the state legislature, until the speaker lays out the impact of the bill on the audience, they will not see the topic as relevant. When building relevance, the speaker can appeal to a serious need, like paying for college, or that something should be of interest, such as how to snowboard. Regardless, the speaker needs to make sure the connection between the audience and the topic is clear.
- **Refer to future relevance.** A more challenging task is to connect an audience to a topic that will be relevant to them in the future but is not relevant now. This is a common issue for teachers, trying to convince students that learning the content will

benefit them in the future. Regardless, it is the speaker's job to show the audience the value of the topic, even if the value is not realized until a later time.

Building Speaker Credibility

As mentioned previously, during the introduction, the audience is developing a perception of the competence and credibility of the speaker. It is particularly important to understand the speaker's credibility is something the audience gives the speaker. **Credibility** is *the audience's perception of the speaker's competence and believability*. The speaker needs to offer evidence to the audience that the speaker is prepared, confident, and believable. Some ways to influence the audience's perception include:

- **Strong delivery.** Strong delivery factors can add significantly to communication confidence and assurance. These include:
 - Good eye contact
 - Clear, confident vocal factors
 - Open gestures
 - Skilled use of visual aids
 - Minimal anxiety displays
- **Content comfort.** Displaying confidence in the topic itself and being able to speak about it easily, without hesitation or uncertainty.
- **Use of sources.** One of the benefits of using sources is credibility transfer when the credibility of the source cited becomes part of the speaker's credibility. Citing sources, especially ones the audience already holds as credible, will enhance the speaker's believability.
- **Personal experience.** When addressing a topic the speaker knows well, letting the audience know about that experience can influence credibility. For example, if Brittany is giving a classroom speech on the culture of South Africa, telling her audience she spent a year as an exchange student in Johannesburg lets us know she has relevant experience. When attempting to persuade an audience to become organ donors, Jack sharing a personal experience of a loved one receiving an organ enhances his credibility.



Figure 10.6.3

Conclusions

While the introduction establishes the overall tone and expectations for the speech, the conclusion provides the audience with the final impression. The conclusion is about half the length of the introduction, with two primary purposes: to summarize, and to provide closure.

- First, the conclusion offers a summary of the speech. In the introduction, the speaker previewed the points right after the thesis in a short, concise manner. Here, the speaker should *review* the main points, albeit in a slightly more involved manner than the preview. Remind the audience of the key points, but **do not over-summarize**. Touch on what the main points were and, for longer speeches, some of the major sub-points. However, do not get so detailed that it sounds as if the conclusion is repeating

the body of the speech. **Do not** make any new points in the conclusion. Gently remind the audience of what the speech addressed.

- The second purpose of the conclusion is to provide closure, which is more than simply ending the speech. Providing closure is to end the speech on a powerful note which gives the audience a feeling that the speech is finished and is finished appropriately and comfortably. Without a sense of closure, the audience feels the speech ended abruptly as if it was cut off, without a sense of finality. Given how important the ending of the speech is, a good speaker will take time to plan the last few lines to make sure they provide closure. Most of us have had the uncomfortable experience of reaching the end of a speech and realizing we do not have a good, final line. Some basic preparation can avoid such an awkward situation.



Figure 10.6.4

There is a range of options for a speaker in ending the speech.

- **Use any of the attention-getting devices:** end with a quotation, a reference to the audience or occasion, or any other technique that ends the speech in a comfortable manner.
- Use a **reference to the introduction.** The speaker ends the speech by referring to how it started. For example, if a speech on child abuse starts with a story of an abused child, the conclusion might bring us up to date on where the child is now. If the speaker started with a response question, they may refer to how the audience responded and make some sort of observation about how, after hearing the speech, their response may change. The positive effect of referencing the introduction is that it ties the speech up in a nice, neat package.
- **End with a challenge.** Especially for persuasion, end the speech by challenging the audience to engage in a specific action to fix a problem or situation. In effect, the speaker attempts to motivate the audience to set a goal and work to achieve it. For example, at a commencement address, it is common to hear the speaker challenge the students to take risks and to strive hard to achieve lofty goals.
- **Call for action:** Especially for persuasion, end the speech by reinforcing the steps the audience can take to implement the solution. For example, if the speaker is working to persuade the audience to exercise more, they may end with something like, “So when you leave here today, find that exercise, that physical activity, that thing you do that makes you feel good, and just do it.”

Key Concepts

The terms and concepts students should be familiar with from this section include:

The Purposes of the Introduction

- To get attention
- To prepare the audience for the thesis
- To establish relevance
- To set expectations for the speech and speaker
- To give the thesis and preview

Attention-Getting Devices

- Questions
 - Responsive
 - Rhetorical
- Narratives

- Quotations
- Startling Statement or Statistics
- Humor
- Reference to Audience/Occasion

Building Relevance

- Obvious relevance
- Current but unknown relevance
- Future relevance

Building Speaker Credibility**Conclusions**

- Offer a summary
- Provide closure

This page titled [10.6: Introductions and Conclusions](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [8.7: Introductions and Conclusions](#) by Keith Green, Ruth Fairchild, Bev Knudsen, & Darcy Lease-Gubrud is licensed [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

10.7: Visual Aids

Learning Objectives

After completing this section, students should be able to:

- explain the rationale for using visual aids.
- identify the characteristics of good slides.
- use slideware appropriately.

Quite commonly, we employ **visual aids** to assist us in presenting the message in a clear, easily followed manner. Although they are called **visual aids**, they are *any sensory element added to the speech to enhance the speaker's message*. Typically, speakers use visual elements, such as graphs and charts, but visual aids can also include items for the audience to hear, touch, taste, or smell.

It is important to understand that visual aids are used to aid the speaker, not to replace the speaker. At all times, the focus of the event should be on the speaker and the verbal message, not on the sensory aids. The speaker needs to **smoothly integrate** the visual aids into the presentation so as not to distract from the core message of the speech. A general rule of thumb is if the speech cannot be presented without the visual aids, the visual aids are being used too heavily. Visual aids can be forgotten, may not work, or equipment may break down. Struggling to deal with non-functioning visual aids can severely damage the credibility of the speaker, so a good speaker is ready to adapt and move forward, adapting to the challenge of not having the aids.

Purposes of Visual Aids

We use visual aids for four reasons:

- **To Clarify:** A picture really is worth a thousand words. In many cases, a visual aid can communicate a message more clearly than words. Imagine trying to explain the beauty of a Caribbean Island or the complexity of an automobile engine without the use of a visual element. Words alone will not have the same impact as when combined with an image.
- **To Enhance Memory Value:** When the audience receives the message in multiple ways, through the speaker's spoken message and through the visual aids, the memory value of the message increases. For some audience members, hearing the message will suffice, but for others, a visual element is more memorable. Using a visual aid allows the audience to tap into the message in a way that works best for them.
- **To Fulfill Audience Expectations:** With the advent of slideware, such as PowerPoint, audiences have become accustomed to seeing these types of visuals accompanying a presentation. At times, the speaker needs to use a visual aid because the audience expects it. For example, at conferences, it is common that audience members will need a printout of slides to validate attendance, so not using a visual aid becomes a barrier to audience engagement.
- **To Add Variety:** Although this should not be used as a primary purpose, if the speaker is using a visual aid to clarify or to enhance memory value, the aids also provide some nice variety for the audience. Avoid using aids just for variety, as they can too easily become more important than the message.

Slideware

While PowerPoint, Prezi, and other software options are excellent tools for creating professional, intriguing, and informative visual aids, many of us have experienced horrible slideware presentations in which the speaker talked to the screen, read from the screen, or failed to coordinate what they were saying with what the audience was viewing. By now, students have had enough experience viewing these presentations that most should have an idea of what **not to do**.

When creating slideware presentations, each slide should be purposeful and thoughtfully created. Each word, bullet point, or image should be on the slide for a distinct reason, not simply as decoration. Good slideware is created with a clear goal in mind.

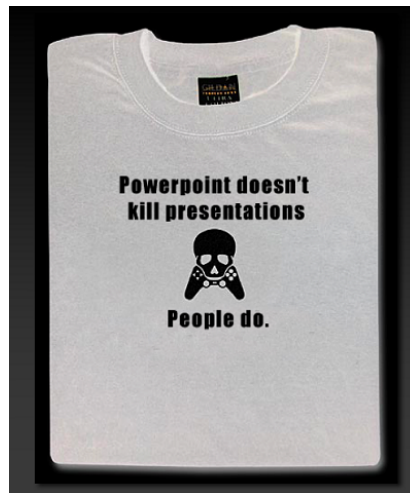


Figure 10.7.1

Creating slides

- Use a consistent theme from slide to slide, keeping colors and fonts the same throughout.
- Use no less than an 18-size font, but do not make them so large they are “yelling” at the audience.
- Avoid the tendency to put too much on the screen. Use keywords or phrases, leaving *the speaker* to fill in the details.
- Use the transition tools to reveal points one at a time. Whenever a visual aid appears, regardless of what it is, the audience will immediately attempt to decode the whole thing. The speaker should reveal only what they want the audience to focus on at that moment.
- Use only significant images. A significant image is one that is selected to make a specific point, and one the speaker will deliberately draw to the audience’s attention. Images should not be used for background or decoration. Since the audience will look at everything on the screen, the images can be too distracting.
- Do not fill slides to the edge. Leave space to stand slightly overlapping the screen to keep the speaker and the slide as one visual element.
- Do not overload the slide. Find a nice balance between too sparse and too crowded.
- Use black slides or blank slides for when there is nothing to show the audience. Plan them right into the presentation. If using a remote with a blackout option, plan when to use the feature in place of blank/black slides.
- Carefully consider the opening slide. Most people assume a title slide is needed, but many times they are unnecessary distractions. For most speeches, simply start with a black slide and only reveal the content slides as they become relevant to the speech content.
- Do not use any more slides or visual information than necessary but use what is needed. Be thoughtful in deciding what is needed to aid your audience in understanding the point, but at the same time do not use it too much so it distracts from the speaker and the message.
- Always be prepared for the presentation to not work. Technology is prone to failure, so being able to give a presentation without slideware is an important skill. A common situation in professional settings is to provide the audience with a printout of the slides, so while not ideal, in the event of technology failure, the speaker can guide the audience through the printed version of the slideware.

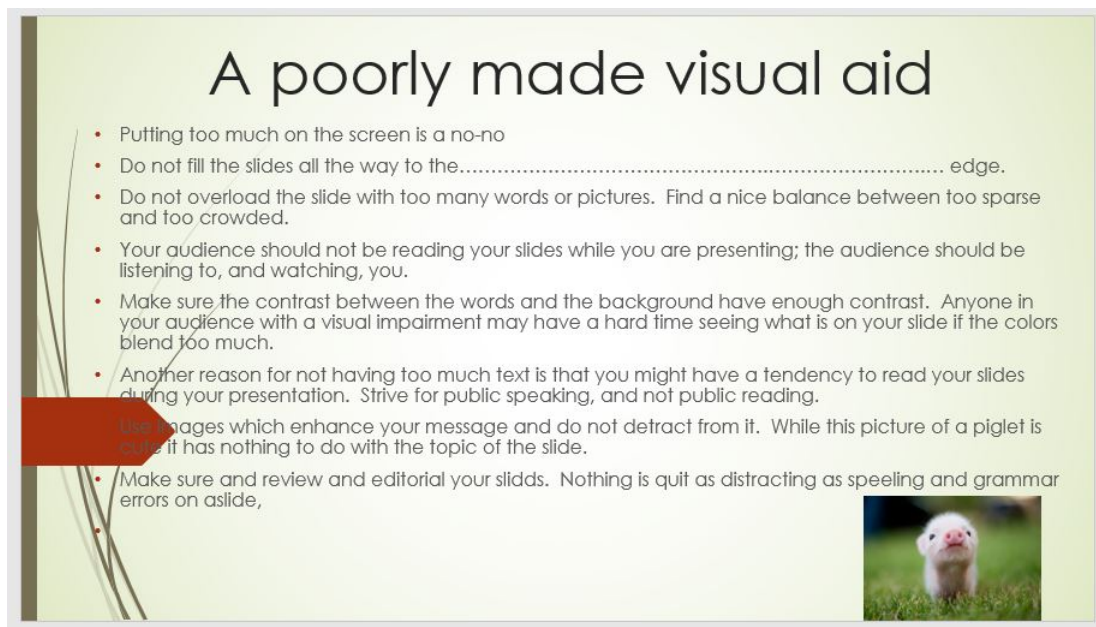


Figure 10.7.2



Figure 10.7.3

One final caution: slideware can hijack development time away. These are powerful tools allowing the speaker to create detailed animations, special effects, and a plethora of visually energetic and stimulating imagery. The vast majority of these are unnecessary in public speaking, and the speakers can easily find themselves spending hours on an effect that ends up having little value. Instead, work for a minimal, concise, neat slideware presentation, and then put time into practicing with it to create a smooth, unified speech.

Speaking with slideware

Many of us have seen poor slideware presentations. One of the reasons audiences may dread PowerPoint is how poorly the speaker uses it. It is a tool and needs to be handled carefully and appropriately. Using it effectively can enhance the message but using it poorly can make the speech a trying time for the audience.

- First, and most importantly, **do not read from the slides**. This is one of the most common complaints regarding speakers using slideware. Most of us read fine, and to have the speaker read the slide to us is insulting. While the slide helps us focus on what

is being emphasized at that moment, it does not convey the core message; that is the speaker's job.

- A second major mistake some speakers make is speaking to the screen. While it is good to glance at the screen to make sure the correct slide is being projected and to draw the audience's attention to a specific item, the **speaker's focus must remain on the audience**. Always remember, every time the speaker glances at the screen, the audience follows even if there is nothing substantial to look at.
- **Control focus.** For the audience to take in both the speaker and the screen, if possible, stand next to the screen, creating a unified visual picture. If the speaker wants the audience's full attention, they should take a step or two away from the screen while displaying a black or blank slide. Do not stand in front of the screen, in the light, or in a manner that blocks the audience's view.

As mentioned above, use the transitions tools in the slideware to control when specific items appear and disappear, but also use gestures to control the focus by pointing out specific items on the screen. For instance, if Kathryn is describing how horses are judged at a county fair and she has an image of a horse on the screen, she should point to the various parts of the horse as she describes them. It is Kathryn's job to guide the audience's focus to the key part of the image.

- **Use a remote**, if possible. A presentation remote gives enormous freedom to move, gesture, and otherwise vary the visual image being presented to the audience. Prior to speaking, it is crucial the speaker is comfortable with how the remote works and can use it quickly and confidently. It is important to know what buttons to use, and equally important, which ones to avoid (and how to recover if a button gets hit). How well the speaker uses the remote and interacts with the slideware influences credibility, so being proficient is important.
- **Test prior to speaking.** Make very sure the technology works before starting the presentation. Just because something worked at home on a personal laptop does not mean it will work in the presentation venue. Some technical issues to consider:
 - Is the speaker expected to provide the laptop? Or will it be sufficient to bring the presentation file to be used on the host's equipment?
 - Is the host system compatible with the specific slideware program used?
 - Is there a presentation remote?
 - Is sound required? If so, make sure to test before the presentation.
 - Is internet access required? If so, is there a password required or other obstacles to getting online? Is the link fast enough for what you need?
 - How does the projector work? If connecting to a personal laptop, who provides the cables?
 - How far away is the nearest electrical outlet? Is an extension cord needed? Who will provide one?

The best assumption about using technology is something will go wrong, so the norm should be to arrive early, set up, and test thoroughly. Failing to have the technology ready and working is the responsibility of the speaker. Problems may be seen as the speaker being unprepared, hurting their credibility.

Corporate comedian, Don McMillan, identifies some of the pitfalls of PowerPoint:



Figure 10.7.4: youtu.be/MjcO2ExtHso

Using Visual Aids

In addition to the suggestions on using slideware, when using visual aids of any type, three overriding guidelines are:

Even when the visual aid is revealed, use gestures and movement to control the audience's focus more precisely. For example, for a list of items on a chart, the speaker should gesture to draw focus to whichever item they want their audience to focus on.

Always remember, whatever the speaker looks at, the audience looks at. If the speaker keeps making nervous glances at the visual aid, the audience will follow, diverting their focus.

- **Control Audience Focus:** When a visual aid is revealed, the audience will focus on the visual aid, working to figure out what it is, what it says, and what it means. The speaker should have the aids visible only when they want the audience to pay attention to them. Determine the right time to unveil the visual aid and the right time to put the visual aid away.
- **Practice:** Being comfortable in the use of visual aids communicates preparation and confidence. Practice with them to get a strong feeling for when and how to manipulate them. If the speaker begins to appear less confident and less sure of what to do with the aids, the audience becomes uncomfortable, anticipating failure versus anticipating success.
- **Limit Them:** The speaker must carefully consider what is important and what is not. Too many aids shift the focus from the speaker to the aids, the movement of the aids, and the general confusion caused by the amount of movement in the front of the room. Fewer well-developed aids have more impact than using many.



Figure 10.7.5

Key Concepts

The terms and concepts students should be familiar with from this section include:

Purpose of Visual Aids

- To clarify
- To enhance memory value
- To fulfill audience expectations
- To add variety

Slideware

- Speaking with slideware

Using Visual Aids

- Control audience focus
- Practice
- Limit them

This page titled [10.7: Visual Aids](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- **8.8: Visual Aids** by [Keith Green, Ruth Fairchild, Bev Knudsen, & Darcy Lease-Gubrud](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

10.8: Delivery

Learning Objectives

After completing this section, students should be able to:

- describe the four methods of speech delivery.
- use the extemporaneous style of speaking.
- make effective verbal communication choices.
- make appropriate nonverbal communication choices.
- manage speech anxiety.

No matter how well a speech is constructed, how qualified the sources of evidence are, or how good the visual aids are, a speech is still a performance. If a speech is not delivered well, the speech is weak. A well-delivered speech with weaker content will be seen as better than a speech that is strong in content but is poorly delivered. For example, a highly intelligent, well-learned teacher may have excellent information, but if they cannot communicate in a clear, pleasant manner, students will struggle to be engaged. How we present information is as important as the quality of the content, and we need to be responsible to do the best job we can with both.

In our highly mediated culture, we are well accustomed to information being packaged for us in enjoyable ways. We expect good television shows, movies, music, and websites. If we do not like the way they are packaged, we turn the channel, flip the switch, or surf away. Since we are speaking to audiences that expect the speaker to make the speech interesting, we must take on that responsibility to make good choices for an effective presentation. If a speech is boring, it is because the speaker chose to make it that way. To understand what kinds of choices can be made, we need to consider the various methods of giving speeches, the characteristics of good verbal and nonverbal delivery, and the impact our speech anxiety can have on effective speaking.

Four Delivery Methods

Impromptu

Impromptu speaking is *speaking with little or no preparation when the speaker was unaware that he/she would be speaking*. It is only impromptu speaking if the speaker truly did not know they would be asked to speak. Simply failing to prepare for a known speech is not impromptu; that is irresponsibility. Impromptu speaking is the most usual form of speaking. Whether in a classroom or a business meeting, we are often called upon to state our ideas in a thoughtful organized way. We are not necessarily standing in front of a room when we do it, but even if sitting, our credibility and believability are still being judged. Realistically, anytime a person is called upon to say something intelligent, they are placed in an impromptu speaking situation.

There are three keys to speaking impromptu: organization, fluidity, and delivery. First, the speaker needs to have the information well organized so the listeners can follow the development of ideas. Second, the speaker needs to be fluid, carefully monitoring the use of vocal pauses, hesitations, and restatements. Third, the speaker needs to have a strong, outwardly focused delivery with especially good eye contact. Since the audience realizes this is impromptu, meeting the three standards demonstrates a powerful degree of confidence and ability.

Manuscript

Manuscript speaking is *speaking from a verbatim (word by word) script*. The speech is written out and then is read directly to the audience. For most speakers in most situations, manuscript speaking is **not** the appropriate delivery method:

- When writing a speech out, it is too easy to slip from an oral style of language to a written style; thus, the speech sounds **very unnatural and awkward**.
- Manuscript speaking focuses the speaker on the flow of words, not the flow of ideas.
- Manuscript speaking can be very boring and monotone, with little eye contact.
- The speaker is so locked onto the manuscript, that he/she has little freedom for movement or variety in general.
- Manuscript speaking virtually removes any ability to adapt the speech to the moment or at the last minute.



Figure 10.8.1

However, in a few situations, manuscript speaking may be appropriate. If the exact wording must be so precise, a manuscript is appropriate. When the President speaks, he speaks from a manuscript as a simple misstatement can have dramatic consequences. The CEO of a company speaking to stockholders will speak from a manuscript to present the issues carefully. A commencement speaker will typically speak from a manuscript. However, for most speaking situations and speakers, manuscript speaking is rarely justified.

Memorized

Memorized speaking is *committing a manuscript to memory* which is a very weak and dangerous method of delivering a speech. It has all the hazards of manuscript speaking with the added problems of forgetting and poor delivery. Memorized speaking usually leads to the highest levels of anxiety. Overall, unless there is some specific, extenuating circumstance, it is difficult to imagine a situation in which memorized delivery is appropriate.

Extemporaneous

Extemporaneous speaking is *speaking from limited notes, but well prepared. This is the speaking style that most speakers do use and should use.* It has the best parts of the impromptu, manuscript, and memorized styles. The method focuses the speaker properly on the flow of ideas instead of the flow of words. Extemporaneous speaking combines two particularly important traits of good speaking: the speaker is well-practiced and prepared, and the speaker retains flexibility in wording to adapt to the present audience.



Figure 10.8.2

To speak effectively extemporaneously:

1. Carefully prepare an outline of the speech, getting the flow of ideas developed to a comfortable point.

2. Practice the speech from the outline. There are three major benefits to this step. First, the speaker is getting comfortable with communicating the information. They start to get a sense of what the actual situation will be like. Second, what looks good on paper may not necessarily sound good when delivered. The speaker may realize a need to reorder or redo sections of the speech to have a comfortable "flow" to the presentation. Third, the speaker gets a realistic sense of the length of the speech. The only way to really know how long a speech will last is to stand up and give it, so the process is vital. The speaker may find the speech runs long, so they must edit something out, or if the speech runs short, they may be looking to add ideas and material.
3. Develop note cards or a speaking outline. It is important to balance having enough notes to do the job while keeping them minimal to reduce the amount of time spent focusing on them. Always remember, the more notes a speaker has, the more they look at their notes and not the audience. Try to work with minimal notes. Use words and phrases on the card to allow for glancing at the notes as a reminder of what to say next.
4. Practice with and refine the note cards. Practice the speech from the note cards, making any necessary alterations. Once the final card is developed, focus the remainder of the practice on developing a strong delivery. Be sure to practice being able to glance at the note cards, **don't read** from them.
5. When practicing, it is important to not start over every time a mistake occurs. First, by starting over repeatedly, the opening of the speech gets practiced a lot, but the same attention does not get paid to the remainder of the speech. This can lead to a noticeable decline in comfort and confidence when the speech is delivered. Second, by working through the entire speech, the speaker can practice adjusting to mistakes to be more prepared for when those slips occur in the actual presentation.

Verbal Delivery Factors

Vocal delivery includes components of speech delivery that relate to your voice. Incorporating vocal variety in terms of volume, pitch, rate, and pauses is key to being a successful speaker. Our voice is important to consider when delivering our speech for two main reasons. First, vocal delivery can help us engage and interest the audience. Second, vocal delivery helps ensure that our ideas are communicated clearly.

Volume

Volume refers to *the relative softness or loudness of your voice*. If you speak too softly ("too little" volume), your audience will struggle to hear and understand you and may give up trying to listen. If you speak with "too much" volume, your audience may feel that you are yelling at them, or at least feel uncomfortable with your shouting. The volume you use should fit the size of the audience and the room.

Pitch

Pitch is *the relative highness or lowness of your voice*, and like everything, you can have too much or too little (with regard to the variation of it). Too much pitch variation occurs when people "sing" their speeches, and their voices oscillate between very high pitched and very low pitched. While uncommon, this is sometimes attributed to nerves. More common is *too little variation in pitch*, which is known as being **monotone**. Delivering a speech in a monotone manner is usually caused by reading too much.

Rate

The **rate** of speaking refers to *how fast or slow you speak*. Too little rate (i.e. speaking too slowly) will make it sound like you may not fully know your speech or what you are talking about, and will ultimately cost you some credibility with your audience. By contrast, too much rate (i.e. speaking too fast) can be overly taxing on an audience's ability to keep up with and digest what you are saying.

Pauses

The common misconception for public speaking students is that pausing during your speech is bad, but that isn't necessarily true. You pause in normal conversations, so you shouldn't be afraid of pausing while speaking. This is especially true if you are making a particularly important point or want for a statement to have a more powerful impact: you will want to give the audience a moment to digest what you have said.

Vocalized pauses

At various points during your speech, you may find yourself in need of a moment to collect your thoughts or prepare for the next section of your speech. At those moments, you will be pausing, but we don't always like to let people know that we're pausing. So, what many of us do to "trick" the audience is fill in those pauses with sounds so that we haven't paused. These are known as **vocalized pauses**, or sometimes "fillers" or "nonfluencies." These can be distracting to the audience and may hurt your credibility.

Catching yourself and being aware of how often you use vocalized pauses will help you begin the process of reducing your dependence on them and hopefully get rid of them completely.

Vocal Variety

Overall, the lesson to take away from this section is that variety is key. **Vocal variety** includes *changes in your rate, volume, and pitch* that can make you look more prepared, seem more credible, and be able to engage your audience better. Employing vocal variety is not something that takes natural ability or advanced skills training. It is something that beginning speakers can start working on immediately and everyone can accomplish. The key is to become aware of how you use your voice when you speak.

Articulation

Articulation refers to *the clarity of sounds and words we produce*. If someone is articulate, they speak words clearly, and speakers should strive to speak clearly. Poor articulation results when speakers do not speak clearly. For example, a person may say *dinnt* instead of *didn't*, *gonna* instead of *going to*, *wanna* instead of *want to*, or *hunnerd* instead of *hundred*. Unawareness and laziness are two common challenges to articulation.

Pronunciation

Unlike articulation, which focuses on the clarity of words, **pronunciation** refers to *speaking words correctly, including the proper sounds of the letters and the proper emphasis*. Mispronouncing words can damage a speaker's credibility, especially when the correct pronunciation of a word is commonly known.

Nonverbal Delivery Factors

Many speakers are more nervous about physical delivery than vocal delivery. Putting our bodies on the line in front of an audience often makes us feel more vulnerable than putting our voices out there. Yet most audiences are not as fixated on our physical delivery as we think they are. Knowing this can help relieve some anxiety, but it doesn't give us a free pass when it comes to physical delivery. We should still practice physical delivery that enhances our verbal message.

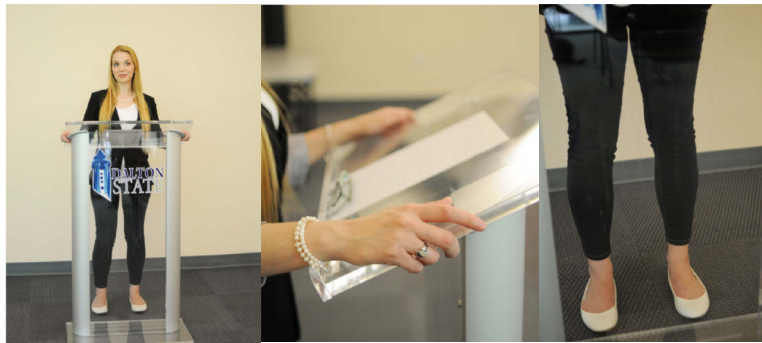


Figure 10.8.3

Figure 10.8.4

Figure 10.8.5

In addition to expanded conversation, some specific nonverbal items to consider include:

Eye Contact

Good speakers make eye contact with the audience which develops a connection between the audience and speaker and demonstrates confidence. Work to make eye contact with all parts of the audience at some point, working left-to-right and front-to-back.

Facial Expression

Good speakers use their natural expressiveness when in front of audiences to reflect the overall tone of the speech. The rule of thumb is the speaker should display what they want their audience to feel. Audiences are amazingly fast at sensing and responding to the emotional tone the speaker expresses.

Gestures

Good speakers realize we normally use our hands when we talk, so using hand gestures is important. Comfortable gestures demonstrate confidence, open the speaker's posture, and help push the speaker's message out to the audience. They should, however, be used in the upper area of the body, and they should not be used in distracting ways. For example, avoid fidgeting with

note cards, wringing hands, or playing with jewelry. Ideally, do what comes naturally, but avoid putting hands in the pockets, crossing arms, or clasping hands behind the back. If you have nothing else to do with your hands, such as meaningful gestures, the default position for them is to be resting gently on the sides of the lectern (see Figure 10.8.4).

Body Movement

Good speakers, unless forced to stay at a microphone, will move around to some degree. The movement should not appear to be a sign of anxiety. Instead, movement can add visual variety, aid in the transitions between points, and help the speaker work out some anxiety. Just like your hands, a lot of nervous energy is going to try to work its way out of your body through your feet. The default position for your feet, then, is to have them shoulder-width apart with your knees slightly bent (see Figure 10.8.5).

Personal Appearance

Looking like a credible and prepared public speaker will make you feel more like one and will make your audience more likely to perceive you as such. This applies to all speaking contexts: academic, professional, and personal. Although the standards for appropriate personal appearance vary between contexts, meeting them is key.

The overall rule for effective delivery is "Once a delivery factor is noticed, it has hurt the speaker." A good speaker's delivery blends into the content as one, unified experience. If the audience is focusing on something such as gesturing, body movement, or eye contact, they are not focusing on the message of the speech.

Speech Anxiety

Glossophobia is the irrational fear of public speaking, far beyond normal speech anxiety. A glossophobic person would avoid a speech class completely. Anyone who has ever experienced an intense, phobic reaction to something like heights, water, snakes, or spiders, knows the anxiety is irrational and highly magnified beyond what the situation warrants. A person with this degree of public speaking fear needs to be assisted by a mental health professional.

To be able to deliver an effective presentation, speakers must understand, appreciate, and cope with speech anxiety. Speech anxiety is a perfectly normal, natural, and healthy reaction to a speaking situation. Everyone who is healthy and understands the dynamics of the speaking situation will experience some degree of speech anxiety. The difference between novice and experienced speakers is experienced speakers do not fear their anxiety and they know how to work with it instead of working against it. Speech anxiety does not go away; it can fade and become a secondary issue, but it is always there, at least for mentally healthy speakers. We do not address "getting rid" of anxiety; rather, we address understanding and coping with it, not fighting it.



Figure 10.8.6

Managing Anxiety

When managing anxiety, focus on three key areas: preparation, expectation, and practice.

Preparation

Preparation addresses two areas: preparing the speech and preparing the speaker. First, being confident in the amount and quality of preparation will help moderate anxiety. If the speaker believes they are prepared and have done what is necessary to get ready, this can help moderate anxiety.

Some other suggestions include:

- Dress comfortably. While it is important to dress appropriately for the occasion, be sure to wear comfortable clothes that enhance confidence. Since anxiety tends to make speakers feel warm, wear "cooler" clothes to avoid overheating. Wear

comfortable shoes.

- Avoid too much caffeine. Since the noradrenaline is already providing additional energy, adding caffeine may create an uncomfortable, shaky situation.
- Even though anxiety can cause stomach upset, it is better to eat something than to leave the stomach empty. Bland food, such as toast or a bagel, can ward off nausea.
- Avoid drugs or alcohol. While it may seem tempting to use things to relax, drugs or alcohol can reduce the speaker's focus, mental acuity, and overall ability to manage the event. If an audience perceives the speaker as intoxicated or under the influence, the speaker's credibility may be ruined. The chances of doing or saying something embarrassing run high, so it is best to not use alcohol. Of course, if a physician has prescribed medications for anxiety, follow the doctor's directions.
- Avoid inflating the anxiety. A scene far too common in a public speaking class is students, already anxious for the speech, inflating their anxiety. Sharing how they feel, how nervous they are, and engaging in a lot of anxious movement tends to magnify anxiety. Sitting quietly, breathing deeply, and visualizing a successful speech are far more beneficial.

Expectations

Carefully think through what is likely to happen during the speaking event to have reasonable expectations. Avoid the extremely positive or negative expectations and anticipate the event as realistically as possible. Most audiences will be quiet, attentive, and respectful. As a speaker, the chances of really "bombing" are extremely low, assuming adequate preparation and practice. Speakers using an extemporaneous, conversational style will have a few vocal pauses, may misstate a word, or must check their notes to remind them of what to say. These minor slips are non-issues if the speaker does not call attention to them. The audience determines how to respond to a speaker's mistakes based on the speaker's reaction. If the speaker simply moves past them or quickly corrects themselves, the audience will pay little attention to them.

Practice

Finally, and most importantly, engage in active practice. Active practice means giving the speech as realistically as possible, not just thinking, or mumbling through it. Speakers have a lot to do, and just as with any complex activity, practice is necessary to train themselves to do the best job. Through active practice, the speaker gets more comfortable with the physical process of standing, moving, and gesturing, all while speaking a well-organized, coherent message. If visual aids are being used, they become comfortable with when to reveal and when to remove them, and with how to manage them the most effectively. The ideal situation, if possible, is to practice in the actual space in which the speech will be given. By using good, active practice, the speaker is reducing the unknowns, so there is less to be anxious about.

Key Concepts

The terms and concepts students should be familiar with from this section include:

Delivery Methods

- Impromptu
- Manuscript
- Memorized
- Extemporaneous

Verbal Delivery Factors

- Volume
- Pitch
- Rate
- Pauses
- Vocalized Pauses
- Vocal Variety
- Pronunciation
- Articulation

Nonverbal Delivery Factors

- Eye Contact
- Facial Expression

- Gestures
- Body Movement
- Personal Appearance

Speech Anxiety

- Managing
 - Preparation
 - Expectations
 - Practice

This page titled [10.8: Delivery](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- **8.9: Delivery** by [Keith Green, Ruth Fairchild, Bev Knudsen, & Darcy Lease-Gubrud](#) is licensed [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

10.9: Informative Speech Examples

"Getting Plugged In"

TED Talks as a Model of Effective Informative Speaking Over the past few years, I have heard more and more public speaking teachers mention their use of TED speeches in their classes. What started in 1984 as a conference to gather people involved in Technology, Entertainment, and Design has now turned into a worldwide phenomenon that is known for its excellent speeches and presentations, many of which are informative in nature.^[1] The motto of TED is "Ideas worth spreading," which is in keeping with the role that we should occupy as informative speakers. We should choose topics that are worth speaking about and then work to present them in such a way that audience members leave with "take-away" information that is informative and useful. TED fits in with the purpose of the "Getting Plugged In" feature in this book because it has been technology-focused from the start. For example, Andrew Blum's speech focuses on the infrastructure of the Internet, and Pranav Mistry's speech focuses on a new technology he developed that allows for more interaction between the physical world and the world of data. Even speakers who don't focus on technology still skillfully use technology in their presentations, as is the case with David Gallo's speech about exotic underwater life. Here are links to all these speeches:

- [Andrew Blum's speech: What Is the Internet, Really?](#)
- [Pranav Mistry's speech: The Thrilling Potential of Sixth Sense Technology.](#)
- [David Gallo's speech: Underwater Astonishments.](#)

1. What can you learn from the TED model and/or TED speakers that will help you be a better informative speaker?
2. In what innovative and/or informative ways do the speakers reference or incorporate technology in their speeches?

Example Outlines

Sample Speech 1

Title: Going Green in the World of Education

General Purpose: To inform

Specific Purpose: To inform my audience about ways in which schools are going green.

Thesis Statement: The green movement has transformed school buildings, how teachers teach, and the environment in which students learn.

Introduction

Attention Getter: Did you know that attending or working at a green school can lead students and teachers to have fewer health problems? Did you know that allowing more daylight into school buildings increases academic performance and can lessen attention and concentration challenges? Well, the research I will cite in my speech supports both of these claims, and these are just two of the many reasons why more schools, both grade schools, and colleges, are going green.

Introduction of Topic: Today, I'm going to inform you about the green movement that is affecting many schools.

Credibility and Relevance: Because of my own desire to go into the field of education, I decided to research how schools are going green in the United States. But it's not just current and/or future teachers that will be affected by this trend. As students at Eastern Illinois University, you are already asked to make "greener" choices. Whether it's the little signs in the dorm rooms that ask you to turn off your lights when you leave the room, the reusable water bottles that were given out on move-in day, or even our new Renewable Energy Center, the list goes on and on. Additionally, younger people in our lives, whether they be future children or younger siblings, or relatives, will likely be affected by this continuing trend.

Thesis/Preview: In order to better understand what makes a "green school," we need to learn about how K–12 schools are going green, how college campuses are going green, and how these changes affect students and teachers.

Transition: I'll begin with how K–12 schools are going green.

Body

I. According to the "About Us" section on their official website, the US Green Building Council was established in 1993 with the mission to promote sustainability in the building and construction industry, and it is this organization that is responsible for

the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, which is a well-respected green building certification system.

A. While homes, neighborhoods, and businesses can also pursue LEED certification, I'll focus today on K–12 schools and college campuses.

1. It's important to note that principles of “going green” can be applied to the planning of a building from its first inception or be retroactively applied to existing buildings.

a. A 2011 article by Ash in Education Week notes that the pathway to creating a greener school is flexible based on the community and its needs.

i. In order to garner support for green initiatives, the article recommends that local leaders like superintendents, mayors, and college administrators become involved in the green movement. ii. Once local leaders are involved, the community, students, parents, faculty, and staff can be involved by serving on a task force, hosting a summit or conference, and implementing lessons about sustainability into everyday conversations and school curriculum.

b. The US Green Building Council's website also includes a tool kit with a lot of information about how to “green” existing schools.

2. Much of the efforts to green schools have focused on K–12 schools and districts, but what makes a school green?

a. According to the US Green Building Council's Center for Green Schools, green school buildings conserve energy and natural resources.

i. For example, Fossil Ridge High School in Fort Collins, Colorado, was built in 2006 and received LEED certification because it has automatic light sensors to conserve electricity and uses wind energy to offset nonrenewable energy use.

ii. To conserve water, the school uses a pond for irrigation, has artificial turf on athletic fields, and installed low-flow toilets and faucets.

iii. According to the 2006 report by certified energy manager Gregory Kats titled “Greening America's Schools,” a LEED-certified school uses 30–50 percent less energy, 30 percent less water, and reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 40 percent compared to a conventional school.

b. The Center for Green Schools also presents case studies that show how green school buildings also create healthier learning environments.

i. Many new building materials, carpeting, and furniture contain chemicals that are released into the air, which reduces indoor air quality.

ii. So green schools purposefully purchase materials that are low in these chemicals.

iii. Natural light and fresh air have also been shown to promote a healthier learning environment, so green buildings allow more daylight in and include functioning windows.

Transition: As you can see, K–12 schools are becoming greener; college campuses are also starting to go green.

II. Examples from the University of Denver and Eastern Illinois University show some of the potentials for greener campuses around the country.

A. The University of Denver is home to the nation's first “green” law school.

1. According to the Sturm College of Law's website, the building was designed to use 40 percent less energy than a conventional building through the use of movement-sensor lighting; high-performance insulation in the walls, floors, and roof; and infrared sensors on water faucets and toilets.

2. Electric car recharging stations were also included in the parking garage, and the building has extra bike racks and even showers that students and faculty can use to freshen up if they bike or walk to school or work.

B. Eastern Illinois University has also made strides toward a more green campus.

1. Some of the dining halls on campus have gone “trayless,” which according to a 2009 article by Calder in the journal *Independent School* has the potential to dramatically reduce the amount of water and chemical use, since there are no longer trays to wash, and also helps reduce food waste since people take less food without a tray.
2. The biggest change on campus has been the opening of the Renewable Energy Center in 2011, which according to EIU’s website is one of the largest biomass renewable energy projects in the country.
 - a. The Renewable Energy Center uses slow-burn technology to use wood chips that are a byproduct of the lumber industry that would normally be discarded.
 - b. This helps reduce our dependency on our old coal-fired power plant, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions.
 - c. The project was the first known power plant to be registered with the US Green Building Council and is on track to receive LEED certification.

Transition: All these efforts to go green in K–12 schools and on college campuses will obviously affect students and teachers at the schools.

III. The green movement affects students and teachers in a variety of ways.

A. Research shows that going green positively affects a student’s health.

1. Many schools are literally going green by including more green spaces such as recreation areas, gardens, and greenhouses, which according to a 2010 article in the *Journal of Environmental Education* by University of Colorado professor Susan Strife has been shown to benefit a child’s cognitive skills, especially in the areas of increased concentration and attention capacity.
2. Additionally, the report I cited earlier, “Greening America’s Schools,” states that the improved air quality in green schools can lead to a 38 percent reduction in asthma incidents and that students in “green schools” had 51 percent less chance of catching a cold or the flu compared to children in conventional schools.

B. Standard steps taken to green schools can also help students academically.

1. The report “Greening America’s Schools” notes that a recent synthesis of fifty-three studies found that more daylight in the school building leads to higher academic achievement.
2. The report also provides data that show how a healthier environment in green schools leads to better attendance and that in Washington, DC, and Chicago, schools improved their performance on standardized tests by 3–4 percent.

C. Going green can influence teachers’ lesson plans as well their job satisfaction and physical health.

1. There are several options for teachers who want to “green” their curriculum.
 - a. According to the article in *Education Week* that I cited earlier, the Sustainability Education Clearinghouse is a free online tool that provides K–12 educators with the ability to share sustainability-oriented lesson ideas.
 - b. The Center for Green Schools also provides resources for all levels of teachers, from kindergarten to college, that can be used in the classroom.
2. The report “Greening America’s Schools” claims that the overall improved working environment that a green school provides leads to higher teacher retention and less teacher turnover.
3. Just as students see health benefits from green schools, so do teachers, as the same report shows that teachers in these schools get sick less, resulting in a decrease of sick days by 7 percent.

Conclusion

Transition to conclusion and summary of importance: In summary, the going-green era has impacted every aspect of education in our school systems.

Review of main points: From K–12 schools to college campuses like ours, to the students and teachers in the schools, the green movement is changing the way we think about education and our environment.

Closing statement: As Glenn Cook, the editor in chief of the *American School Board Journal*, states on the Center for Green Schools's website, "The green schools movement is the biggest thing to happen to education since the introduction of technology to the classroom."

Works Cited

Ash, K. (2011). "Green schools" benefit budgets and students, report says. *Education Week*, 30(32), 10.

Calder, W. (2009). Go green, save green. *Independent School*, 68(4), 90–93.

The Center for Green Schools. (n.d.). K–12: How. Retrieved from <http://www.centerforgreenschools.org/main-nav/k-12/buildings.aspx>

Eastern Illinois University. (n.d.). Renewable Energy Center. Retrieved from www.eiu.edu/sustainability/eiu_renewable.php

Kats, G. (2006). Greening America's schools: Costs and benefits. A Capital E Report. Retrieved from <http://www.usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=2908>

Strife, S. (2010). Reflecting on environmental education: Where is our place in the green movement? *Journal of Environmental Education*, 41(3), 179–191. doi:10.1080/00958960903295233

Sturm College of Law. (n.d.). About DU law: Building green. Retrieved from www.law.du.edu/index.php/about/building-green

USGBC. (n.d.). About us. *US Green Building Council*. Retrieved from <https://new.usgbc.org/about>

Sample Speech 2

Informative Speech on Lord Byron

Introduction

I. **Attention Grabber:** Imagine an eleven-year-old boy who has been beaten and sexually abused repeatedly by the very person who is supposed to take care of him.

II. **Reveal Topic:** This is one of the many hurdles that George Gordon, better known as Lord Byron, overcame during his childhood. Lord Byron was also a talented poet with the ability to transform his life into the words of his poetry. Byron became a serious poet by the age of fifteen and he was first published in 1807 at the age of nineteen. Lord Byron was a staunch believer in freedom and equality, so he gave most of his fortune, and in the end, his very life, supporting the Greek war for independence.

III. **Credibility:** I learned all about Lord Byron when I took Humanities 1201 last semester.

IV. **Thesis/Preview:** Today, I will discuss his childhood, poetry, and legacy.

Body

I. Lord Byron was born on January 22, 1788, to Captain John Byron and Catherine Gordon Byron.

A. According to Paul Trueblood, the author of *Lord Byron*, Lord Byron's father only married Catherine for her dowry, which he quickly went through, leaving his wife and child nearly penniless.

B. By the age of two, Lord Byron and his mother had moved to Aberdeen in Scotland and shortly thereafter, his father died in France at the age of thirty-six.

C. Lord Byron was born with a clubbed right foot, which is a deformity that caused his foot to turn sideways instead of remaining straight, and his mother had no money to seek treatment for this painful and embarrassing condition.

1. He would become very upset and fight anyone who even spoke of his lameness.

2. Despite his handicap, Lord Byron was very active and liked competing with the other boys.

D. At the age of ten, his grand-uncle died leaving him the title as the sixth Baron Byron of Rochdale.

1. With this title, he also inherited Newstead Abbey, a dilapidated estate that was in great need of repair.

2. Because the Abbey was in Nottinghamshire England, he and his mother moved there and stayed at the abbey until it was rented out to pay for the necessary repairs.

3. During this time, May Gray, Byron's nurse had already begun physically and sexually abusing him.
4. A year passed before he finally told his guardian, John Hanson, about May's abuse; she was fired immediately.
5. Unfortunately the damage had already been done.
6. In the book Lord Byron, it is stated that years later he wrote "My passions were developed very early- so early, that few would believe me if I were to state the period, and the facts which accompanied it."

E. Although Lord Byron had many obstacles to overcome during his childhood, he became a world-renowned poet by the age of 24.

II. Lord Byron experienced the same emotions we all do, but he was able to express those emotions in the form of his poetry and share them with the world.

A. According to Horace Gregory, The author of Poems of George Gordon, Lord Byron, the years from 1816 through 1824 is when Lord Byron was most known throughout Europe.

B. But according to Paul Trueblood, Childe Harold was published in 1812 and became one of the best-selling works of literature in the 19th century.

1. Childe Harold was written while Lord Byron was traveling through Europe after graduating from Trinity College.
2. Many authors such as Trueblood, and Garrett, the author of George Gordon, Lord Byron, express their opinion that Childe Harold is an autobiography about Byron and his travels.

C. Lord Byron often wrote about the ones he loved the most, such as the poem "She Walks in Beauty" written about his cousin Anne Wilmont, and "Stanzas for Music" written for his half-sister, Augusta Leigh.

D. He was also an avid reader of the Old Testament and would write poetry about stories from the Bible that he loved.

1. One such story was about the last king of Babylon.
2. This poem was called the "Vision of Belshazzar," and is very much like the bible version in the book of Daniel.

E. Although Lord Byron is mostly known for his talents as a poet, he was also an advocate for the Greek war for independence.

III. Lord Byron, after his self-imposed exile from England, took the side of the Greeks in their war for freedom from Turkish rule.

A. Byron arrived in Greece in 1823 during a civil war.

1. The Greeks were too busy fighting amongst themselves to come together to form a formidable army against the Turks.
2. According to Martin Garrett, Lord Byron donated money to refit the Greeks' fleet of ships but did not immediately get involved in the situation.
3. He had doubts as to if or when the Greeks would ever come together and agree long enough to make any kind of a difference in their war effort.
4. Eventually the Greeks united and began their campaign for the Greek War of Independence.
5. He began pouring more and more of his fortune into the Greek army and finally accepted a position to oversee a small group of men sailing to Missolonghi.

B. Lord Byron set sail for Missolonghi in Western Greece in 1824.

1. He took a commanding position over a small number of the Greek army despite his lack of military training.

2. He had also made plans to attack a Turkish-held fortress but became very ill before the plans were ever carried through.

C. Lord Byron died on April 19, 1824, at the age of 36 due to the inexperienced doctors who continued to bleed him while he suffered from a severe fever.

1. After Lord Byron's death, the Greek War of Independence, due to his support, received more foreign aid which led to their eventual victory in 1832.

2. Lord Byron is hailed as a national hero by the Greek nation.

3. Many tributes such as statues and road names have been devoted to Lord Byron since the time of his death.

Conclusion

I. **Transition into conclusion/Review of main points:** In conclusion, Lord Byron overcame great physical hardships to become a world-renowned poet, and is seen as a hero to the Greek nation, and is mourned by them still today. I have chosen not to focus on Lord Byron's more liberal way of life, but rather to focus on his accomplishments in life. He was a man who owed no loyalty to Greece, yet gave his life to support their cause.

II. **Closing statement:** Most of the world will remember Lord Byron primarily through his written attributes, but Greece will always remember him as the "Trumpet Voice of Liberty."

References

Fleming, N., "The VARK Helpsheets," accessed March 6, 2012, <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=helpsheets>.

Janusik, L., "Listening Facts," accessed March 6, 2012, d1025403.site.myhosting.com/f.org/Facts.htm.

Olbricht, T. H., *Informative Speaking* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1968), 1–12.

Oxford English Dictionary Online, accessed March 6, 2012, <http://www.oed.com>.

The Past in Pictures, "Teaching Using Movies: Anachronisms!" accessed March 6, 2012, www.thepastinthepictures.wild.ctoryunit!.htm.

Scholasticus K, "Anachronism Examples in Literature," February 2, 2012, accessed March 6, 2012, www.buzzle.com/articles/anachronism-examples-in-literature.html.

Society for Technical Communication, "Defining Technical Communication," accessed March 6, 2012, <http://www.stc.org/about-stc/the-profession-all-about-technical-communication/defining-tc>.

Verderber, R., *Essentials of Informative Speaking: Theory and Contexts* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1991), 3.

Vuong, A., "Wanna Read That QR Code? Get the Smartphone App," *The Denver Post*, April 18, 2011, accessed March 6, 2012, http://www.denverpost.com/business/ci_17868932.

1. "About TED," accessed October 23, 2012, <http://www.ted.com/pages/about>. ↵

This page titled [10.9: Informative Speech Examples](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [11.1: Informative Speeches](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/sociology-comprehensive-edition>.

10.10: Persuasive Speech Examples

Example Outlines

Sample Cause/Effect Persuasive Speech

Specific Purpose: To persuade my classmates to eliminate their Facebook use.

Introduction

Attention-Getter: There she was late into the night still wide awake staring at her phone's screen. In fact, she had to be at work early in the morning but scrolling through her Facebook account kept her awake.

Reveal Topic: That girl was me before I deactivated my Facebook account. I honestly could not tell you how many hours I spent on Facebook. In the survey that I presented to you all, one person admitted to spending "too much" time on Facebook.

Credibility: That was me in the past, I spent too much time on Facebook. Time is precious and once it is gone it does not return. So why do you spend precious time on Facebook? The time that could be spent with family, resting, or just being more productive.

Thesis/Preview: Facebook users should eliminate their usage because Facebook can negatively affect their relationships with others, their sleeping patterns and health, and their ability to focus on schoolwork.

Body

I. Family relationships can be affected by your Facebook usage.

A. In the survey conducted in class, 11 of 15 students confessed to having ignored someone while they were speaking.

1. I found myself ignoring my children while they spoke.

2. Noticed other people doing the same thing, especially in parks and restaurants.

B. According to Lynn Postell-Zimmerman on hg.org, Facebook has become a leading cause of divorce.

C. In the United States, 1 in 5 couples mentioned Facebook as a reason for divorce in 2009.

Transition: We have discussed how Facebook usage can lead to poor relationships with people, next we will discuss how Facebook can affect your sleep patterns and health.

II. Facebook usage can negatively affect your sleep patterns and health.

A. Checking Facebook before bed.

1. In my survey 11 students said they checked their Facebook account before bed.

2. Staying on Facebook for long hours before bed.

B. Research has shown that Facebook can cause depression, anxiety, and addiction.

1. According to researchers Steels, Wickham, and Acitelli in an article in the Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology titled "Seeing everyone else's highlight reels: How Facebook usage is linked to depressive symptoms," because Facebook users only view the positive of their friend's life, they become unhappy with their life, and it can lead to becoming depressed and unhappy.

2. Marissa Maldonado on psychcentral.com, concluded from recent studies that, "Facebook increases people's anxiety levels by making them feel inadequate and generating excess worry and stress."

3. Facebook addiction is a serious issue, according to the article "Too much Facebook leads to anger and depression" found on cnn.com and written by Cara Reedy.

a. Checking Facebook everywhere we go is a sign of addiction

b. Not being able to deactivate your Facebook account.

Transitions: Many of you have probably never thought of Facebook as a threat to your health, but we will now review how it can affect you as a college student.

III. Facebook negatively affects students.

- A. I often found myself on Facebook instead of doing schoolwork.
- B. I was constantly checking Facebook which takes away from study time.
- C. I also found myself checking Facebook while in class, which can lead to poor grades and getting in trouble with the professor.
- D. A study of over 1,800 college students showed a negative relationship between the amount of Facebook time and GPA, as reported by Junco in a 2012 article titled, "Too much face and not enough books" from the journal Computers and Human Behavior.

Conclusion

I. In conclusion, next time you log on to Facebook try deactivating your account for a few days and see the difference. You will soon see how it can bring positive changes in your family relationships, will avoid future health problems, will help you sleep better, and will improve your school performance.

II. Instead of communicating through Facebook try visiting or calling your close friends. Deactivating my account truly helped me, and I can assure you we all can survive without Facebook.

Works Cited

Junco, R. (2012). Too much face and not enough books: The relationship between multiple indices of Facebook use and academic performance. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(1), 187-198.

Maldonado, M. (2014). The anxiety of Facebook. Psych Central. Retrieved from <http://psychcentral.com/lib/the-anxiety-of-facebook/>

Postell-Zimmerman, L. (1995-2015). Facebook has become a leading cause in divorce cases. HG.org. Retrieved from <http://www.hg.org/article.asp?id=27803>

Reedy, C. (2015, March 2). Too much Facebook leads to envy and depression. CNNMoney. Retrieved from <http://money.cnn.com/2015/03/02/technology/facebook-envy/>

Steers, M. L. N., Wickham, R. E., & Acitelli, L. K. (2014). Seeing everyone else's highlight reels: How Facebook usage is linked to depressive symptoms. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 33(8), 701-731. DOI: 10.1521/jscp.2014.33.8.701

Sample Problem/Solution Persuasive Speech

Topic: Antibacterial Chemicals

Specific Purpose: To persuade my audience that the use of antibacterial chemicals in household products is creating health and environmental problems.

Central Idea or Thesis: After looking at the problems created by antibacterial products, we'll explore some solutions.

Introduction

I. (Attention Grabber) In the film *The Boy in the Plastic Bubble*, a boy born with a deficient immune system is forced to live in a germ-free environment to prevent him from contracting infections. His room is sealed against bacteria and viruses, his food is specially prepared, and his only human contact comes in the form of gloved hands.

II. (Reveal Topic) Today millions of Americans are trying to build a bubble around themselves and their families to keep out germs. The bubble is not made of plastic, however, but millions of dollars' worth of antibacterial hand wipes, soaps, and sponges.

III. (Credibility) Before I studied antibacterial products in my public health class, I always used antibacterial hand soaps and antibacterial all-surface cleaner for my apartment. I also know from my class survey that 70 percent of you use antibacterial soaps, cleaners, and other products. But after learning about the subject in class and reading research studies for this speech, I'm here to tell you that, try as we might, we cannot build a bubble between ourselves and germs with antibacterial products and that these products actually create more problems than they solve.

IV. (Thesis) After looking at the problems created by antibacterial products, we'll explore some solutions.

Body

I. The use of antibacterial chemicals in household products is a serious problem.

A. The place to begin is by noting that antibacterial products are popping up just about everywhere.

1. The next time you go to the store, try to find a liquid soap that is not antibacterial.

a. According to the Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics, 75 percent of all liquid soaps and 33 percent of all bar soaps are antibacterial.

b. In fact, there are more than 1,000 antibacterial household products on the market.

2. In addition to all the soaps and cleaning products, there are also antibacterial cotton swabs, tons of antibacterial shampoos, and this antibacterial cutting board from Williams Sonoma.

a. You can even get antibacterial socks, mouthwash, toothpaste, and, to protect you while away from home, this travel toothbrush with antibacterial bristles.

3. The Boston Globe reports that larger items such as mattresses, countertops, high chairs, and even children's toys have been coated with antibacterial chemicals.

4. The New York Times calls the antibacterial craze, "the biggest marketing coup since bottled water."

B. There's no doubt that antibacterial products are popular with consumers, but there is a great deal of doubt about whether they're effective in stopping the spread of germs.

1. Elaine Larson, associate dean of the Columbia University School of Nursing, studied 238 families who used antibacterial products and found that they were just as likely to get fevers, sore throats, coughs, rashes, and stomach problems as families who used regular products.

2. Larson's findings are echoed by Eric Kupferberg, associate director of the Harvard School for Public Health, who states: "Antimicrobial products don't significantly eliminate the number of germs you encounter on a daily basis."

3. Nor do antibacterial products prevent the transmission of diseases such as colds and flu.

a. Why? Because these illnesses come from viruses, not from bacteria. Antibacterial products don't kill viruses.

b. As Dr. Larson explains, "Most of the infections healthy people get are colds, flu, and diarrhea caused by viruses"—none of which can be prevented by the use of antibacterial products.

4. Not only do antibacterial products fail to deliver what they promise, but they actually increase your chances of getting sick.

a. According to Stuart Levy, a professor of microbiology and medicine at Tufts University, excessive use of antibacterial products in the home can make children more likely to develop allergies and asthma.

b. In addition, people who use antibacterial products may become more susceptible to infections.

5. Dr. James Chin, a research scientist in New South Wales, Australia, says: "The way we stay healthy is by low-dose exposure to bacteria and viruses.

a. You need to exercise your immune system in the same way you need to exercise your muscles to be fit.

b. If you don't do that, your immune system doesn't have a chance to do battle when it engages with an infection."

6. The problems caused by antibacterial products are so serious that Dr. Myron Genel, chairman of the American Medical Association's council on scientific affairs, fears one result may be the creation of antibiotic-resistant bacteria "that are largely untreatable because they are resistant to existing drugs."

C. And that's not all. Besides being ineffective at preventing diseases and being potentially dangerous to our health, antibacterial household products also appear to harm the environment.

1. Rolf Halden of Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health reports that each year the United States releases into the water supply more than 2 million pounds of the active chemicals in antibacterial soaps.
 - a. The U.S. Geological Survey reports that chemicals from antibacterial products are winding up in streams and groundwater from the Denver area to remote locations in the Rocky Mountains.
 - b. These chemicals are known to pollute the water supply, disrupt fish reproduction and growth, and because they do not decompose quickly, remain active for years and years.

Transition: Now that we've seen the seriousness of the problem, let's look at some solutions.

II. Solving these problems requires a combination of government and consumer action.

A. First, we need federal legislation regulating the use of household antibacterial products.

1. Just as the Food and Drug Administration has regulations controlling the use of antibiotics, so, too, should it institute regulations controlling the use of antibacterial products.
2. We don't let people purchase antibiotics without a doctor's prescription, and there's no reason we should allow makers of soap, tissues, hand wipes, toothbrushes, and other products to add powerful antibacterial agents without oversight from the Food and Drug Administration.
3. Given the problems being caused by these products, it is time for the federal government to take action.

B. Second, we all need to take action as consumers.

1. Most obviously, we need to stop buying these products.
2. The best way to avoid germs, says the Centers for Disease Control, is to wash your hands for 10 to 15 seconds with plain soap and water.
 - a. In fact, a study at the University of North Carolina found that washing your hands with soap and water is more effective at getting rid of germs than using antibacterial hand wipes.
 - b. Emily Sickbert-Bennett, a public epidemiologist and co-author of the study, explains that when you use soap and water, the germs go down the drain, but with waterless antibacterial hand wipes, "you never rinse your hands. You are just rubbing a chemical into your hand and letting it dry."

Conclusion

I. In conclusion, Americans spend millions of dollars every year on products that promise to "kill germs on contact." But as we have seen today, the antibacterial craze is a marketing coup rather than a proven way of stopping either the spread of germs or the incidence of colds, flu, and other virus-borne illnesses. Worse, these products appear to contribute to health problems, and they are creating environmental problems in the U.S. water supply. The federal government should start regulating these products and we, as consumers, should stop throwing our money away on them.

II. We need to resist the false notion that we can use these products to create a bubble around ourselves to keep out germs and diseases. Instead, we can burst the bubble of marketers who are selling us a false bill of goods, and then we can thoroughly wash our hands of the whole mess.

Works Cited

Nelson, Kathleen. "To Kill Germs, It's Simple: Wash Your Hands." The Boston Globe 4 Nov. 2003, 3rd Ed.: C3.

Roach, Mary. "Germs, Germs Everywhere. Are You Worried? Get Over It." The New York Times 9 Nov. 2004, Final Ed.: F1, pg. 6

Sickbert-Bennett, Emily, David J. Weber, Maria F. Gergen-Teague, Mark D. Sobsey,

Gregory P. Samsa, and William A. Rutala. "Comparative efficacy of hand hygiene agents in the reduction of bacteria and viruses." American Journal of Infection Control 33(2) (2005):67-77.

Underwood, Anne. "The Real Dirt on Antibacterial Soaps." Newsweek v. 140 no. 19 (November 4 2002): 53.

Sample Monroe's Motivated Sequence Persuasive Speech

Topic: Sponsoring a Child in Poverty

Specific Purpose: To persuade my audience to sponsor a child through an agency such as Compassion International.

Introduction (Attention Step)

I. **Attention-Grabber:** How much is \$38? That answer depends on what you make, what you are spending it for, and what you get back for it.

II. **Reveal Topic:** \$38 per month breaks down to a little more than \$1.25 per day, which is probably what you spend on a snack or soda in the break room. For us, it's not very much.

III. **Credibility:** I found out that I can provide better health care, nutrition, and even education for a child in Africa, South America, or Asia for \$38 per month by sponsoring a child through Compassion International. If I can do it, maybe you can too.

IV. **Thesis/Preview:** Through a minimal donation each month, you can make the life of a child in the developing world much better. In the next few minutes, I would like to discuss the problem, the work of organizations that offer child sponsorships, how research shows they really do alleviate poverty, and what you can do to change the life of a child. Body

Body

I. **(Need Step)** The problem is the continued existence and effects of poverty.

A. Poverty is real and rampant in much of the world.

1. According to a 2018 report by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, 9.2% of the world lives on less than \$1.90 per day.

- a. That is 600 million people on the planet.

2. This number is supported by the World Poverty Clock of the World Data Lab, which states that 8% of the world's population lives in extreme poverty.

- a. The good news is that this number is one-third of what it was in 1990, mostly due to the rising middle class in Asia.

- b. The bad news is that 70% of the poor will live in Africa, with Nigeria labeled the "Poverty Capital of the World," according to the Brookings Institute.

B. Poverty means children do not get adequate health care.

1. One prevalent but avoidable disease is malaria, which takes the lives of three thousand children every day, according to UNICEF.

2. According to the World Health Organization, diarrheal diseases claimed 2.46 million lives in 2012 and is the second leading cause of death of children under 5.

C. Poverty means children do not get adequate nutrition, as stated in a report from UNICEF.

1. Inadequate nutrition leads to stunted growth.

2. Undernutrition contributes to more than one-third of all deaths in children under the age of five.

D. Poverty means children are unlikely to reach adult age, according to the CIA World Fact Book quoted on the Infoplease website.

1. Child mortality rate in Africa is 8.04% (percentage dying before age 5), while in North America, it is .64%

2. Life expectancy in Sub-Saharan Africa is almost 30 years less than in the U.S.

E. Poverty also means children are unlikely to receive education and be trained for profitable work.

1. Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names, states the Global Issues website on Poverty Facts.

2. UNESCO, a part of the United Nations, reports that less than a third of adults in Sub-Saharan Africa have completed primary education.

Transition: Although in all respects poverty is better in 2019 than it has been in the past, poverty is still pervasive and needs to be addressed. Fortunately, some great organizations have been addressing this for many years.

II. **(Satisfaction Step)** Some humanitarian organizations address poverty directly through child sponsorships.

A. These organizations vary in background, but not in purpose. The following information is gleaned from each organization's website.

1. Compassion International is faith-based, evangelical.
 - a. Around since the early 1950's, started in Korea.
 - b. Budget of \$887 Million.
 - c. Serves 1.92 million babies, children, and young adults.
 - d. Works through local community centers and established churches.
2. World Vision is faith-based, and evangelical.
 - a. Around since the 1950's.
 - b. Budget of far over \$1 Billion.
 - c. 60% goes to local community programs but more goes to global networks, so that 86% goes to services.
 - d. World Vision has more extensive services than child sponsorship, such as water purification and disaster relief.
 - e. Sponsors three million children across six continents
3. Children International is secular.
 - a. Around since 1936.
 - b. Budget of \$125 Million.
 - c. 88% of income goes directly to programs and children.
 - d. Sponsors children in ten countries on four continents
 - e. Sponsors X across X continents
4. Save the Children is secular, through...
 - a. One hundred years of history, began in post WWI Europe.
 - b. Budget of \$880 Million.
 - c. 87% goes to services.
 - d. Sponsors 134 million children in 120 countries, including 450,000 in U.S.
5. There are other similar organizations, such as ChildFund and PlanUSA.

B. These organizations work directly with local community, on-site organizations.

1. The children are involved in a program, such as after school.
2. The children live with their parents and siblings.
3. The sponsor's donation goes for medicine, extra healthy, nutritious food, shoes for school, and other items.
4. Sponsors can also help donate for birthdays and holidays to the whole family to buy food or farm animals.

Transition: Of course, any time we are donating money to an organization, we want to be sure our money is being effectively and ethically used.

III. **(Visualization Step)** This concern should be addressed in two ways: Is the money really helping, and are the organizations honest?

A. The organizations' honesty can be investigated.

1. You can check through Charity Navigator.

2. You can check through the Better Business Bureau-Charity.
3. You can check through Charity Watch.
4. You can check through the organizations' websites.

B. Secondly, is sponsoring a child effective? Yes.

1. According to Bruce Wydick, Professor of Economics at the University of San Francisco, child sponsorship is the fourth most effective strategy for addressing poverty, behind water purification, mosquito nets, and deworming treatments.
2. Dr. Wydick and colleagues' work has been published in the prestigious Journal of Political Economy from the University of Chicago.
3. He states, "Two researchers and I recently carried out a study (sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development) on the long-term impacts of Compassion International's child sponsorship program. The study, gathering data from over 10,000 individuals in six countries, found substantial impact on adult life outcomes for children who were sponsored through Compassion's program during the 1980s and '90s...In adulthood, formerly sponsored children were far more likely to complete secondary school and had a much higher chance of having a white-collar job. They married and had children later in life, were more likely to be church and community leaders, were less likely to live in a home with a dirt floor and more likely to live in a home with electricity."

C. To this point I have spoke of global problems and big solutions. Now I want to bring it down to real life with one example. I'd like to use my sponsored child, Ukwishaka in Rwanda, as an example of how you can.

1. I have sponsored her for five years.
2. She is now ten years old.
3. She lives with two siblings and both parents.
4. She writes me, I write her back, and we share photos at least every two months.
5. The organization gives me reports on her project.
6. I hope one day to go visit her.
7. I believe Ukwishaka now knows her life can be more, can be successful.

Transition: We have looked at the problem of childhood poverty and how reliable, stable nongovernmental organizations are addressing it through child sponsorships. Where does that leave you?

IV. **(Action Step)** I challenge you to sponsor a child like Ukwishaka.

- A. Although I sponsor her through Compassion International, there are other organizations.
- B. First, do research.
- C. Second, look at your budget and be sure you can do this.
 1. You don't want to start and have to stop.
 2. Look for places you "waste" money during the month and could use it this way.
 3. Fewer snacks from the break room, fewer movies at the Cineplex, brown bag instead of eating out.
- D. Talk to a representative at the organization you like.
- E. Discuss it with your family.
- F. Take the plunge. If you do.
 1. Write your child regularly.
 2. Consider helping the family, or getting friends to help with extra gifts.

Conclusion

I. In this speech, we have taken a look at the state of poverty for children on this planet, at organizations that are addressing it through child sponsorships, at the effectiveness of these programs, and what you can do. My goal today was not to get an emotional response, but a realistically compassionate one.

II. You have probably heard this story before but it bears repeating. A little girl was walking with her mother on the beach, and the sand was covered with starfish. The little girl wanted to rescue them and send them back to the ocean and kept throwing them in. “It won’t matter, Honey,” said her mother. “You can’t get all of them back in the ocean.” “But it will matter to the ones that I do throw back,” the little girl answered. We can’t sponsor every child, but we can one, maybe even two. As Forest Witcraft said, “What will matter in 100 years is that I made a difference in the life of a child.” Will you make a difference?

Works Cited

- AGScientific. (2019). Top ten deadly diseases in the world. Retrieved from <http://agscientific.com/blog/2016/04/top-10-deadly-diseases/>
- Compassion International. (2019). Financial integrity: The impact of our compassion. Retrieved from <https://www.compassion.com/about/financial.htm>
- Children’s International. (2019). Accountability. Retrieved from <https://www.children.org/learn-more/accountability>
- Global Issues. (2013, January 7). Poverty facts and stats. Retrieved from <https://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats>
- Infoplease. (2019). What life expectancy really means. Retrieved form <https://www.infoplease.com/world/health-and-social-statistics/life-expectancy-countries-0>
- Kharas, H., Hamel, K., & Hofer, M. (2018, Dec. 13). Rethinking global poverty reduction in 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2018/12/13/rethinking-global-poverty-reduction-in-2019/>
- Roser, M. (2019). Child and infant mortality rates. Retrieved from [https:// ourworldindata.org/child-mortality](https://ourworldindata.org/child-mortality)
- Save the Children. (2019). Financial information. Retrieved from <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/a...al-information>
- UNICEF.(2008).
- Tracking progress on child and maternal nutrition: A survival and development priority. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Tracking_Progress_on_Child_and_Maternal_Nutrition_EN_110309.pdf UNICEF 2019.
- The reality of Malaria. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/health/files/health_africamalaria.pdf United Nations. (2019).
- Poverty eradication. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/povertyeradication>
- World Vision. (2019). Financial accountability. Retrieved from [https:// www.worldvision.org/about-us/financial-accountability-2](https://www.worldvision.org/about-us/financial-accountability-2)
- Wydick, B., Glewwe, P., & Rutledge, L. (2013).
- Does international child sponsorship work? A six-country study of impacts on adult life outcomes. Journal of Political Economy, 121(2), 393–436. <https://doi.org/10.1086/670138> Wydick, B. (2012, Feb.).
- Cost-effective compassion. Christianity Today, 56(2), 24-29. Wydick, B. (2013). Want to change the world? Sponsor a child. Christianity Today, 57(5), 20–27.

This page titled [10.10: Persuasive Speech Examples](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Lisa Coleman, Thomas King, & William Turner](#).

- [11.1: Informative Speeches](#) by Anonymous is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#). Original source: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/sociology-comprehensive-edition>.

Index

A

adjourning stage

8.2: Small Group Development

affiliation

3.2: Types of Language

B

biases

2.3: Barriers to Intercultural Communication

C

channel

1.2: The Process of Communication

clarity

1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator

clear

1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator

Clichés

3.3: Formal and Informal Language

Colloquialisms

3.3: Formal and Informal Language

communication

1.2: The Process of Communication
2: Culture and Communication

communication process

1.2: The Process of Communication

Competent communication

1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator

concise

1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator

conformity

8.3: Small Group Dynamics

conscious communication

4.2: Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication

context

1.2: The Process of Communication

continuous communication

4.2: Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication

Culture

2: Culture and Communication

2.1: The Impact of Culture on Behavior

culture shock

2.1: The Impact of Culture on Behavior

D

discrimination

2.3: Barriers to Intercultural Communication

distinct communication

4.2: Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication

E

egalitarian

1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator

encrypted

9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication

environment

1.2: The Process of Communication

External interference

1.2: The Process of Communication

F

feedback

1.2: The Process of Communication

Feng Shui

4.3: Types of Nonverbal Communication

Fixed Mindset

1.4: Creating Success Through Growth Mindset

Formal Language

3: Verbal Elements of Communication

forming stage

8.2: Small Group Development

G

gesture

4.1: Nonverbal Communication- A Definition

globalization

9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication

group climate

8.3: Small Group Dynamics

group cohesion

8.2: Small Group Development
8.3: Small Group Dynamics

group pressures

8.3: Small Group Dynamics

group socialization

8.3: Small Group Dynamics

groupthink

8.3: Small Group Dynamics

Growth Mindset

1.4: Creating Success Through Growth Mindset

H

haptics

4.3: Types of Nonverbal Communication

hazing

8.3: Small Group Dynamics

I

Informal Language

3: Verbal Elements of Communication

Intercultural

2: Culture and Communication

Internal Interference

1.2: The Process of Communication

Internet memes

9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0

Internet paradox

9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication

intrapersonal communication

1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator

J

jargon

3.3: Formal and Informal Language

K

kinesics

4.3: Types of Nonverbal Communication

L

language

3: Verbal Elements of Communication

language adaptation

3.4: Improving Verbal Communication

language awareness

3.4: Improving Verbal Communication

leadership

8.4: Leadership and Small Group Communication

M

Media conglomerates

9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication

media convergence

9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication

message

1.2: The Process of Communication

multiple channel communication

4.2: Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication

N

NCA Credo for Ethical Communication

1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator

News aggregators

9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0

nonverbal

1.2: The Process of Communication

norming stage

8.2: Small Group Development

O

opposing frames

9.5.1: Ethical Issues in Mass Media

P

paralanguage

4.3: Types of Nonverbal Communication

performing stage

8.2: Small Group Development

personal appearance

4.3: Types of Nonverbal Communication

Plagiarism

1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator

process

1.2: The Process of Communication

provisionalism

2.1: The Impact of Culture on Behavior

proxemics

4.3: Types of Nonverbal Communication

public forum

9.2: Quick Look- Mass Communication and Media

punctual

1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator

punctuality

1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator

R

racism

2.3: Barriers to Intercultural Communication

receiver

1.2: The Process of Communication

S

sexism

[3.2: Types of Language](#)

shared identity

[8.1: Understanding Small Groups](#)

significant symbol

[4.1: Nonverbal Communication- A Definition](#)

single channel communication

[4.2: Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication](#)

slang

[3.3: Formal and Informal Language](#)

small group

[8.1: Understanding Small Groups](#)

social media

[9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0](#)

social networking

[9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0](#)

socialization agents

[9.5.1: Ethical Issues in Mass Media](#)

stereotype

[2.3: Barriers to Intercultural Communication](#)

storming stage

[8.2: Small Group Development](#)

T

Traditional media

[9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication](#)

Types of Language

[3: Verbal Elements of Communication](#)

U

unconscious communication

[4.2: Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication](#)

understanding

[1.2: The Process of Communication](#)

V

verbal

[1.2: The Process of Communication](#)

verbal communication

[3: Verbal Elements of Communication](#)

viral marketing

[9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0](#)

W

watchdog journalism

[9.5.2: How Newspapers Control the Public's Access to Information and Impact American Pop Culture](#)

worldview

[1.2: The Process of Communication](#)

Detailed Licensing

Overview

Title: [Competent Communication - 2e](#)

Webpages: 97

Applicable Restrictions: Noncommercial

All licenses found:

- [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#): 77.3% (75 pages)
- [Undeclared](#): 22.7% (22 pages)

By Page

- [Competent Communication - 2e - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [Front Matter - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [Cover Page - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [TitlePage - Undeclared](#)
 - [Author Page - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [InfoPage - Undeclared](#)
 - [About the Authors - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [Table of Contents - Undeclared](#)
 - [Licensing - Undeclared](#)
 - [Publisher Page - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [1: Introduction to Competent Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [1.1: Why Study Communication? - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [1.2: The Process of Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [1.3: Becoming a Competent Communicator - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [1.4: Creating Success Through Growth Mindset - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [1.5: Review - Undeclared](#)
 - [2: Culture and Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [2.1: The Impact of Culture on Behavior - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [2.2: Understanding Cultural Differences - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [2.3: Barriers to Intercultural Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [2.4: Cultural Communication Competence - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [2.5: Intercultural Communication Activity and Review - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [3: Verbal Elements of Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [3.1: How Words Work - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [3.2: Types of Language - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [3.3: Formal and Informal Language - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [3.4: Improving Verbal Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [3.5: Review - Undeclared](#)
 - [4: Nonverbal Elements of Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4.1: Nonverbal Communication- A Definition - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4.2: Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4.3: Types of Nonverbal Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4.4: Functions of Nonverbal Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4.5: Interpreting Nonverbal Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [4.6: Review - Undeclared](#)
 - [5: Listening - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.1: Listening vs. Hearing - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.2: Stages of Listening - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.3: Listening Styles and Types - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.4: Poor Listening Habits - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.5: Improving Listening Competence - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [5.6: Review - Undeclared](#)
 - [6: Interpersonal Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [6.1: Introduction to Interpersonal Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [6.2: Communication Climate - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [6.3: Friendships - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [6.4: Romantic Relationships - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [6.5: Family - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [6.6: Interpersonal Skills in the Workplace - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [6.7: Conflict Management - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)
 - [6.8: Review - Undeclared](#)
 - [7: Career Communication - CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)

- 7.1: Soft Skills and Career Readiness - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 7.2: Professionalism - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 7.3: Career Exploration - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 7.4: Résumés and Cover Letters - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 7.5: Interviewing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 7.6: Summary and Learning Activities - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 7.7: Review - *Undeclared*
- 8: Leadership and Working in Teams - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 8.1: Understanding Small Groups - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 8.2: Small Group Development - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 8.3: Small Group Dynamics - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 8.4: Leadership and Small Group Communication - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 8.5: Problem Solving and Decision-Making in Groups - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 9: Mass Communication and Social Media - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - Front Matter - *Undeclared*
 - TitlePage - *Undeclared*
 - InfoPage - *Undeclared*
 - Licensing - *Undeclared*
 - Table of Contents - *Undeclared*
 - 9.1: Mass Communication - A Definition - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 9.2: Quick Look- Mass Communication and Media - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 9.3: Social Media and Web 2.0 - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 9.4: The Effects of the Internet and Globalization on Popular Culture and Interpersonal Communication - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 9.5: Ethics of Mass Media - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 9.5.1: Ethical Issues in Mass Media - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 9.5.2: How Newspapers Control the Public's Access to Information and Impact American Pop Culture - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - Back Matter - *Undeclared*
 - Index - *Undeclared*
 - Glossary - *Undeclared*
 - Detailed Licensing - *Undeclared*
- 10: Public Speaking - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 10.1: A Brief History of Public Speaking - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 10.2: The Purposes of Public Speaking - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 10.3: The Topic and Thesis - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 10.4: The Body - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 10.5: Incorporating Evidence - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 10.6: Introductions and Conclusions - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 10.7: Visual Aids - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 10.8: Delivery - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 10.9: Informative Speech Examples - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - 10.10: Persuasive Speech Examples - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - Back Matter - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
 - Index - *Undeclared*
 - Glossary - *Undeclared*
 - Detailed Licensing - *Undeclared*