

## Communication Skills

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### Communication Skills: Definitions and Examples

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Communication skills are important in any job because they allow you to understand and be understood by others. These can include but are not limited to effectively communicating ideas to others, actively listening in conversations, giving and receiving critical feedback and speaking in front of groups. In this article, we discuss different communication skills and provide examples of each.

#### What are communication skills?

Communication skills are abilities that allow you to give and receive different types of information. Some examples include communicating ideas, feelings or what's happening around you. Being able to communicate with those around you is important because it can help you work together as a team or relay ideas that you might have to a broader group.

Communication skills involve listening, speaking, observing and empathizing. Two of the most important communication skills are listening and speaking. Whether you work

independently or in a big team, you likely use both skills in some capacity. For example, you need to listen and understand client requests in order to do your job. In that same manner, being able to explain your work or strategy to your team helps create a more efficient process.

It is also helpful to understand how to communicate through in-person interactions, phone conversations and digital communication. Each method of communication involves different skills in order to have meaningful conversations.

### **Examples of communication skills**

Here are some communication skills you can practice to be more effective in the workplace:

- Active listening
- Adapting your communication style
- Friendliness
- Confidence
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Volume and clarity
- Empathy
- Respect
- Understanding nonverbal cues
- Responsiveness

### **Active listening**

Active listening means paying close attention to the person that you are speaking with. When you listen actively, you also pay attention to the speaker's face, posture and gestures to learn more about the meaning of the message. This ability helps you better understand your colleagues and clients, which allows you to form better connections.

You can be an active listener by focusing on the speaker, avoiding distractions and preparing questions, comments or ideas to thoughtfully respond. When a colleague comes to speak to you about something, make eye contact with them so they know you are participating in the conversation. You can even nod or make other affirmations, like nodding or smiling, to show you are listening.

**Related:** [Active Listening Skills: A Key To Effective Communication In The Workplace](#)

### **Adapting your communication style**

All situations are different, so it's important to know when and how to communicate in different scenarios. To make the best use of your communication skills, consider your audience and the most effective format to communicate with them.

For example, if you are communicating with your direct manager, it's better to send a formal email or call them on the phone. If you are communicating with a colleague that you have a good rapport with, you can use less formal means of communication, like a text or online message. In the workplace, you may find it's easier to communicate complex information in person or via a video conference than in an email.

**Related:** [Important Skills Every Good Writer Must Possess](#)

### **Friendliness**

In friendships, characteristics such as honesty and kindness often foster trust and understanding. The same character traits are important in workplace relationships. When working with others, try to approach your interactions with a positive attitude. Keep an open mind, and ask questions to help you understand the speaker's message. Small gestures, such as asking someone how they're doing, smiling as they speak or offering praise for work well done can help you foster productive relationships with both colleagues and managers.

### **Confidence**

People are more likely to respond to ideas and individuals that present confidence because they are more engaging. When you speak confidently, you can capture and maintain your audience's attention, making it easier for you to convey your message.

Body language that can help you feel and look more confident includes making eye contact when you're addressing someone, sitting up straight with your shoulders back and preparing ahead of time so your thoughts are clear and easy to understand. Make sure to also enunciate your words clearly so your audience can hear you.

### **Giving and receiving feedback**

A good communicator is someone that is able to not only give but also receive feedback. Accepting constructive criticism allows you to learn where you can improve to become a better colleague. You should also be able to give constructive feedback that your employees can use.

When providing feedback to other people, be sure to use a positive tone and language. Start with a compliment about the person's work, then follow it with feedback on what they could improve. Close the feedback with more praise. This method, sometimes called the feedback sandwich, praises and encourages the person to continue working hard.

**Related:** [Feedback Examples \(Plus Why it Is Important and Tips\)](#)

### **Volume and clarity**

Any time you are communicating with someone, it's important to make sure that your voice is clear and audible. Adjusting your speaking voice so you can be heard in a variety of settings is a skill, and it's critical to communicating effectively.

Ensure you speak loudly enough for your audience to hear without interrupting other conversations. If you're unsure of what volume is appropriate, read the room to see how others are communicating. Enunciate each word carefully so everyone can hear you without repeating yourself.

**Related:** [Guide to Verbal Communication Skills](#)

## **Empathy**

Being empathetic means that you have the ability to understand and share the emotions of others. This communication skill is important in both team and one-on-one settings. In both cases, you will need to understand other people's emotions and select an appropriate response. Being able to empathize with them will make your colleagues feel heard and respected, making a more positive workplace.

For example, if you worked in a customer service role and had a frustrated client call you, empathy can help you acknowledge and diffuse their emotion and the situation. At the same time, being able to understand when someone is feeling positive and enthusiastic can help you get support for your ideas and projects.

## **Respect**

Another important communication skill in the workplace is respect, both giving it and receiving it. A key aspect of respect is knowing when to initiate communication and also when to respond. In a team or group setting, allowing others to speak without interruption is a necessary communication skill tied to respectfulness.

Being able to communicate respectfully also means using your time with someone else wisely. You should always aim to stay on topic, ask clear questions and respond fully to any questions.

**Related:** [12 Tips for How To Show Respect in the Workplace](#)

## **Understanding nonverbal cues**

A great deal of communication happens through nonverbal cues, such as body language, facial expressions and eye contact. When you're listening to someone, you should be paying attention to what they're saying as well as their nonverbal language.

You should also be conscious of your body language when you're communicating to ensure you're sending appropriate cues to others. Standing in front of a mirror when you're talking on the phone is a great way to get a sense of your nonverbal cues. Try to pretend as if the person is standing right in front of you and work on perfecting your eye contact, facial expressions and body language.

**Related:** [Understanding Nonverbal Communication With Examples of Eight Nonverbal Forms](#)

## Responsiveness

Whether you're returning a phone call or sending a reply to an email, your colleagues will appreciate it when you respond quickly. People will feel more respected if you get back to them promptly.

One method is to consider how long your response will take: Is this a request or question you can answer in the next five minutes? If so, it may be a good idea to address it as soon as you see it. If it's a more complex request or question, feel free to still acknowledge that you've received the message and let the other person know you will respond in full later.

## How to improve your communication skills

With practice, you can learn and improve your communication skills. Here are some processes you can try to develop your communication skills:

1. **Ask for constructive criticism.** To get an objective opinion about your abilities, ask a trusted friend or colleague for their honest feedback. Understanding where you can improve allows you to identify certain areas, like being more responsive or practicing your enunciation, that you can practice.
2. **Practice your communication habits.** Many communication skills are habits you develop over time. You can improve those skills by practicing new routines that make you a better communicator. That might include making more eye contact, reminding yourself to focus on the speaker, practicing giving positive feedback and asking questions in conversations.
3. **Attend workshops or classes.** Seek an online class or workshop on communication or other skills involved in communication. These classes may include instruction, roleplay, written assignments and open discussions.
4. **Seek different opportunities to communicate.** Find opportunities that require you to use communication skills. For example, you could volunteer to lead a presentation or participate more in team meetings.