

Components of Communication

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the eight essential components of communication. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Source

The **source** (also known as the sender) imagines, creates, and sends the message. In a public speaking situation, the source is the person giving the speech.

The speaker conveys the message by sharing new information with the audience, as well as through tone of voice, body language, and choice of clothing.

So how exactly does this work?



STEP BY STEP

1. The speaker begins by first determining the message— what to say and how to say it.
2. Next, the speaker encodes the message by choosing just the right order or the perfect words to convey the intended meaning.
3. The speaker then presents or sends the information to the receiver or audience.
4. Finally, by watching for the audience members' reaction, the source perceives how well they received the message and responds with clarification or supporting information.



TERM TO KNOW

Source

The creator or origin of a message.

2. Message

A **message** is the intended meaning that a source creates to share with a receiver or audience. When you plan to give a speech or write a report, your message may seem to be only the words you choose that will convey your meaning.

But that is just the beginning. The words are brought together with grammar and organization. You may

choose to save your most important point for last.

The message also consists of the way you say it. In a speech, this is with your tone of voice, your body language, and your appearance; in a report, this is with your writing style, punctuation, and the headings and formatting you choose.

In addition, part of the message may be the environment or context you present it in and the noise that might make your message hard to hear or see.

IN CONTEXT

Imagine that you are addressing a large audience of sales reps and are aware that there is a World Series game that night featuring the local team. Your audience might have a hard time settling down, but you may choose to open with, "I understand there is an important game tonight."

In this way, by expressing verbally something that most people in your audience are aware of and interested in, you might grasp and focus their attention.



TERM TO KNOW

Message

The intended meaning that a source creates to share with a receiver.

3. Channel

The **channel** is the medium that carries a message from a source to a receiver.

IN CONTEXT

Think of your television. How many channels do you have? Each channel takes up some space, even in a digital world, in the cable or in the signal that brings the message of each channel to your home. Television combines an audio signal you hear with a visual signal you see. Together they convey the message to the receiver or audience.

Turn off the volume on your television. Can you still understand what is happening? Many times you can, because the body language conveys part of the message of the show. Now turn up the volume, but turn around so that you cannot see the television. You can still hear the dialogue and follow the story line.

Similarly, when you speak or write, you are using a channel to convey your message. Some common examples of spoken channels include:

- Face-to-face conversations
- Speeches
- Telephone conversations and voicemail messages

- Radio
- Public address systems
- Voice over Internet protocol (VoIP)

Some common examples of written channels include:

- Letters
- Memorandums
- Purchase orders
- Invoices
- Newspaper and magazine articles
- Blogs
- Email
- Text messages
- Tweets



TERM TO KNOW

Channel

The medium that carries a message from a source to a receiver.

4. Receiver

The **receiver** obtains and interprets the message from the source.

IN CONTEXT

To better understand this component, think of a receiver on a football team. The quarterback 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.

As a receiver, you listen, see, touch, smell, and/or taste to receive a message. Your audience "sizes you up," much as you might check them out long before you take the stage or open your mouth. The nonverbal responses of your listeners can serve as clues on how to adjust your opening. By imagining yourself in their place, you anticipate what you would look for if you were them.

Just as a quarterback plans where the receiver will be in order to place the ball correctly, you too can recognize the interaction between source and receiver in a business communication context. All of this happens at the same time, illustrating why and how communication is always changing.



TERM TO KNOW

Receiver

The recipient and interpreter of a source's message.

5. Feedback

When you respond to the source, intentionally or unintentionally, you are giving **feedback**. Feedback is composed of messages the receiver sends back to the source. Verbal or nonverbal, all these feedback signals allow the source to see how well and how accurately (or how poorly and 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. The more feedback there is, the more accurate the communication will likely be.

IN CONTEXT

Suppose you are a sales manager participating in a conference call with four sales reps. As the source, you want to tell the reps to take advantage of the fact that it is World Series season to close sales on baseball-related sports gear. You state your message, but you hear no replies from your listeners. You might assume that this means they understood and agreed with you, but later in the month you might be disappointed to find that very few sales were made.

If you instead followed up your message with a request for feedback ("Does this make sense? Do any of you have any questions?"), you might have created an opportunity to clarify your message, and to find out whether any of the sales reps believed your suggestion would not work with their customers.



TERM TO KNOW

Feedback

Verbal or nonverbal messages that a receiver sends back to a source.

6. Environment

The **environment** is the physical or psychological climate where the messaging between the source and receiver is taking place.

➔ **EXAMPLE** A room is a common environment where communication takes place. That environment can then include the tables, chairs, lighting, and sound equipment that are in the room.

The environment can also include factors, like formal dress, that may indicate whether a discussion is open and caring or more professional and formal.



DID YOU KNOW

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 thus influenced by the environment. Several components of communication require you to take your environment into account:

- Who are you addressing?
- What is the setting?
- What kind of nonverbal feedback are you receiving?

As a speaker or writer, your environment will impact and play a role in your message. It's always a good idea to be aware of where you'll be delivering your message before you actually send or present it. By using your **self and social awareness skill**, you can ensure that you deliver your content successfully and in a meaningful way.



TERM TO KNOW

Environment

The physical or psychological climate where messages between a source and receiver are exchanged.

7. Context

The **context** is a combination of the purpose of the communication and the environmental cues that impact the expectations of the source and receiver or audience. A professional communication context may thus involve business suits (environmental cues) that directly or indirectly influence expectations of language and behavior among the participants.

However, a presentation or discussion does not take place as an isolated event.

IN CONTEXT

When you went to a 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 there, do we have homework today?" to be rude and inconsiderate, whereas your classmate sees 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 we often create those expectations out of environmental cues.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Traditional gatherings like weddings are often formal events. There is a time for quiet social greetings, a time for silence as the bride walks down the aisle, and then also a time for more rambunctious celebration and dancing. You may be called upon to give a toast, and the wedding context will influence your presentation, timing, and effectiveness.

So, in a business meeting, who speaks first? That probably has some relation to the position and role each person has outside the meeting. Context plays a very important role in communication, particularly across

cultures.



TERM TO KNOW

Context

The combination of factors, such as the purpose of the communication and the environmental cues, that impact the expectations of the parties involved.

8. Interference

Interference, also called noise, can come from any source. Interference is a factor that can prevent a message from being received, or cause a message to be interpreted in a way other than the one intended by the source.

➞ **EXAMPLE** If you drove a car to work or school, chances are you were surrounded by noise. Car horns, billboards, or perhaps the radio in your car interrupted your thoughts, or your conversation with a passenger.

Psychological noise is what happens when your thoughts occupy your attention while you are hearing, or reading, a message.

IN CONTEXT

Imagine that it is 4:45 p.m. and your boss, who is at a meeting in another city, emails you asking for last month's sales figures, an analysis of current sales projections, and the sales figures from the same month for the past five years. You may open the email, start to read, and think, "Great - no problem - I have those figures and that analysis right here on my computer." You fire off a reply with last month's sales figures and the current projections attached. Then, at 5:00 p.m., you turn off your computer and go home.

The next morning, your boss calls on the phone to tell you he was inconvenienced because you neglected to include the sales figures from the previous years. What was the problem? Interference. By thinking about how you wanted to respond to your boss's message, you prevented yourself from reading attentively enough to understand the whole message.

Interference can come from other sources, too.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Perhaps you are hungry, and your attention to your current situation interferes with your ability to listen. Maybe the office is hot and stuffy. If you were a member of an audience listening to an executive speech, how could this impact your ability to listen and participate?

Noise interferes with normal encoding and decoding of the message carried by the channel between source and receiver. Not all noise is bad, but it interferes with the communication process nonetheless.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Your cell phone ringtone may be a welcome noise to you, but it may interrupt the communication process in class and bother your classmates.



TERM TO KNOW

Interference

A factor that can prevent a message from being received, or cause a message to be interpreted in a way other than the one intended by the source.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that there are eight components of communication. The **source**, or sender, originates a verbal or nonverbal **message** that is shared via some **channel** to a **receiver**, who must interpret the message. The receiver provides the sender with **feedback**, which tells the sender how the message was received. Other factors that affect communication include the physical or psychological **environment** where a message is exchanged, the **context** for the communication, and any **interference** that can disrupt or distort the message from being received as intended.

Best of luck in your learning!

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TERMS TO KNOW

Channel

The medium that carries a message from a source to a receiver.

Context

The combination of factors, such as the purpose of the communication and the environmental cues, that impact the expectations of the parties involved.

Environment

The physical or psychological climate where messages between a source and receiver are exchanged.

Feedback

Verbal or nonverbal messages that a receiver sends back to a source.

Interference

A factor that can prevent a message from being received, or cause a message to be interpreted in a way other than the one intended by the source.

Message

The intended meaning that a source creates to share with a receiver.

Receiver

The recipient and interpreter of a source's message.

Source

The creator or origin of a message.

