

What Is Communication and Why Is It Important?

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how communication skills can help you solve problems, learn new things, and build your career. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Defining Communication

Communication can be defined as the ability to actively seek and deliver information, articulate ideas, effectively listen, and connect to various audiences, settings, and situations; it is key to your success in relationships, in the workplace, as a citizen of your country, and across your lifetime. For the purpose of this course, you will focus on developing your skills in professional communication.

In the workplace, communication can be thought of as a problem-solving activity in which individuals may address the following questions:

- What is the situation?
- What are some possible communication strategies?
- What is the best course of action?
- What is the best way to design the chosen message?
- What is the best way to deliver the message?

Throughout the following lessons, you will examine this problem-solving process and learn to apply it in the kinds of situations you are likely to encounter over the course of your career..



TERMS TO KNOW

Communication

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2. Importance of Workplace Communication

There are infinite reasons why communicating well is essential in professional settings; however, the following represent some of the primary purposes that effective communication at work can fulfill.

2a. Communication Influences Your Thinking About Yourself and Others

When you communicate, you share meaning in what you say and how you say it, both in oral and written forms. If you could not communicate, what would life be like? A series of never-ending frustrations? Not being able to ask for what you need or even to understand the needs of others?

Being unable to communicate might even mean losing a part of yourself, since you communicate your self-concept - your sense of self and awareness of who you are - in many ways.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Do you like to write? Do you find it easy to make a phone call to a stranger or to speak to a room full of people? Part of your self-concept may be that you express yourself through texting, or through writing longer documents like essays and research papers, or through the way you speak.

On the other side of the coin, your communication skills help you to understand others— not just their words, but also their tone of voice, their nonverbal gestures, or the format of their written documents. All of these instances of communication provide you with clues about who people are and what their values and priorities may be.

2b. Communication Influences How You Learn

When you were an infant, you learned to talk over a period of many months. When you got older, you didn't learn to ride a bike or drive a car in one brief moment. You need to begin the process of improving your speaking and writing with the frame of mind that it will require effort, persistence, and self-correction.

You learn to speak in public by first having conversations, then by answering questions and expressing your opinions in class, and finally by preparing and delivering a "stand-up" speech. Similarly, you learn to write by first learning to read, then by actually writing and learning to think critically. Your speaking and writing are reflections of your thoughts, experience, and education. Part of that combination is your level of experience listening to other speakers, reading documents and styles of writing, and studying formats similar to what you aim to produce.

As you study business communication, you may receive suggestions for improvement and clarification from speakers and writers more experienced than yourself. Take their suggestions as challenges to improve; don't give up when your first speech or first draft does not communicate the message you intend. Stick with it until you get it right. Your success in communicating is a skill that applies to almost every field of work, and it makes a difference in your relationships with others.

2c. Communication Represents You and Your Employer

You want to make a good first impression on your friends and family, instructors, and employer. They all want you to convey a positive image, as it reflects on them.

In your career, you will represent your business or company in spoken and written form. Your professionalism and attention to detail will reflect positively on you and set you up for success.

In both oral and written situations, you will benefit from having the ability to communicate clearly. These are skills you will use for the rest of your life.

Positive improvements in these skills will have a positive impact on your relationships, your prospects for employment, and your ability to make a difference in the world.

2d. Communication Skills Are Desired by Business and Industry

Oral and written communication proficiencies are consistently ranked in the top 10 desirable skills by employer surveys year after year. In fact, high-powered business executives sometimes hire consultants to coach them in sharpening their communication skills.

According to the [National Association of Colleges and Employers \(2017\)](#), the following are the top 10 personal qualities or skills potential employers seek:

1. Problem-solving skills
2. Teamwork skills
3. Written communication skills
4. Leadership skills
5. Strong work ethic
6. Analytical/quantitative skills
7. Oral communication skills
8. Initiative
9. Attention to detail
10. Flexibility/adaptability

Knowing this, you can see that one way for you to be successful and increase your promotion potential is to increase your ability to speak and write effectively.



BIG IDEA

An individual with excellent communication skills is an asset to every organization. No matter what career you plan to pursue, learning to express yourself professionally in speech and in writing will help you get there.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that **communication is defined** as the verbal or non-verbal transfer of information between two people or groups or people. It encompasses a set of skills that is critical to your professional success. The **importance of workplace communication** cannot be overstated. **Communication influences your thinking about yourself and others, it influences how you learn, and it represents you and your employer.** It also significantly improves your career prospects, because good **communication skills are desired by business and industry.**

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: This tutorial has been adapted from "Business Communication for Success" Version 1.0 by Scott McLean. Copyright 2010. ISBN 978-1-4533-2742-5 (Licensee Product: Workplace Communication), reprinted with permission from FlatWorld.



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