

Communication Skills

Chapter 4

Lesson 1

The Communication Process



Key Words

audience analysis
channel
feedback
mixed messages
noise
nonverbal
receiver
setting
verbal

What You Will Learn to Do

- Demonstrate how the communication process affects interaction between individuals

Linked Core Abilities

- Communicate using verbal, nonverbal, visual, and written techniques
- Treat self and others with respect

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Describe the communication model for interpersonal interactions
- Compare verbal and nonverbal means of communication
- Explain how to avoid mixed messages
- Evaluate your communication style
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Introduction

Every day, one of your main activities is communicating with others. You communicate at home, at school, with your friends, and in the community. Some of you might also communicate in a job environment. For adults, communication at work can be the difference between success and failure. This lesson shows you the importance of good communication, and how you can communicate more effectively.

The Need for Communication

You fulfill many different needs through communication, and effective communication can give you considerable pleasure. It is pleasing when you have a stimulating conversation with a friend. You are also pleased when you participate in a group discussion that leads to a solution for a problem. You are happy if a letter you write is answered, and it's confirmed that the recipient took what you said seriously.

Sometimes, however, communication does not work, and you end up feeling frustrated.

You have a disagreement with a friend and do not know what to say to fix it. There may be certain subjects your parents do not want to discuss at all. You write a message to someone who completely misunderstands what you said. It's very easy to misinterpret e-mail and get a totally unexpected response.

Even though you have been communicating since birth, you might not always be as effective as possible. Effective communication seems to be a problem for many people.

All communication depends on understanding others and having them understand you. Much of your communication is intended to influence what people think and feel. Most of the time, you want someone to take some action as the result of your communication. You want a friend to spend vacation time with you; you want your friends to like each other; you want your parents to give you permission to go somewhere; you want your employer to more clearly answer a question you have.

Perhaps your most important need is to maintain and improve your relationships with others. You use communication to discover other people's needs and share your own needs with other people.

Our need for communication is important in all areas of our lives. To live is to communicate.

A Definition of Communication

Communication is a process in which people are able to transfer meaning between themselves. The communication process allows people to share information, ideas, and feelings. This is the transfer of meaning. When no meaning is transferred, no communication has taken place.



Courtesy of David M. Grossman/Photo Researchers.

Key Note Terms

channel – in communication theory, a gesture, action, sound, written or spoken word, or visual image used in transmitting information

feedback – the return or a response to information, as in the evaluation of a communication; the return of evaluative or corrective information to the sender (point of origin)

setting – the context and environment in which a situation is set; the background; the time, place, and circumstances in which a narrative, drama, or film takes place

receiver – one or more individuals for whom a message is intended

noise – that which interferes with the successful completion of communication; a disturbance, especially a random and persistent disturbance that obscures or reduces the clarity of communication

Seven Communication Skills

There are many ways to communicate. Your ability to read, listen, think, study, write, remember, and speak are the seven communication skills that will help you to express your feelings, knowledge, and ideas. Communication is innate within everybody; from the cries of a baby, to the smile of a friend, and to the handshake of your doctor. Everybody uses communication skills differently. In JROTC, as in your other high school courses, you will have many opportunities to improve these skills.

Elements of Communication

The communication process (see Figure 4.1.1) is made up of various elements. These elements are communicators (senders), messages, receivers, **channels** (written words, sound, sight, radio, and television), **feedback**, noise, and **setting**.

- **The communicator is the originator of the message. Speakers, writers, artists, and architects can all be considered communicators.**
- **The message is made up of ideas, data, and feelings the communicator wants to share. The medium may be a speech, essay, painting, or building.**
- **The channel is the route traveled by the message as it goes between the communicator and the receivers.**
- **The receiver is the audience for whom the message is intended. The communicator must gain the receiver's attention to have effective communication.**
- **Feedback allows communicators to find out whether they are "getting through" to the receivers. You get feedback from your instructors, your parents, and your friends.**
- **Noise is interference that keeps a message from being understood. Physical noise keeps a message from being heard. For example, the physical noise of a loud television program may interfere with reading a letter. Psychological noise occurs when the communicators and the receivers are distracted by something. For example, the psychological noise caused by hunger can prevent concentration.**
- **Setting is the time, place, and circumstances in which communication takes place. It can also be considered the context and environment in which a situation is set.**



Figure 4.1.1: By using “I” messages, you can communicate your feelings without blaming or judging others.

Courtesy of Blair Seitz/Photo Researchers.

Communicating Effectively

After you understand the process of communication, you can begin to understand why communication does or does not work.

In an ideal situation, the message is perceived in the way it was intended. For example, you write an apology to your friend for a mistake that you made. If the friend accepts the apology, the communication worked. If the friend was offended by your message and the apology was not accepted, the communication did not work.

Your communication may not have worked due to a problem with the message (not written or spoken clearly), the channel used may not have been the best choice (writing a note rather than speaking in person), or psychological noise may have interfered (the recipient couldn’t hear over loud noise in the room). Asking the right questions about why communication did not work is the best way to improve communication skills.

Most of us already have considerable communication skills. We have been sending and receiving **verbal** and **nonverbal** symbols all our lives.

Note

Verbal symbols utilize the words in a language to stand for a particular thing or idea. Nonverbal symbols allow us to communicate without using words. Facial expressions and gestures are examples of nonverbal symbols.

Key Note Terms

verbal – of, relating to, or associated with words

nonverbal – being other than verbal; not involving words: non-verbal communication



Courtesy of Larry Lawfer.

Nevertheless, we have all had times when we have not communicated as effectively as we should. You may have received a lower grade on a paper than you expected. You may have unintentionally hurt someone's feelings. An instructor may not have understood a question when you asked it in class.

You can work to increase the likelihood of effective communication. There are certain basic steps to follow when preparing any oral or written communication.

The following six steps for effective communication are not always used in sequence, nor are they exclusive of each other. Tailor them to your own style and approach; you will not use all these steps each time you communicate. These steps will help you focus your attention on how to increase your effectiveness as a communicator.

Key Note Terms

audience analysis – the examination of the characteristics that describe the receivers of communication, to include categories such as age, background, education, political opinions, and location

mixed messages – communication transmitted by words, signals, or other means from one person, station, or group to another with unclear meaning to the receiver

- **Analyze your purpose and your audience. Make sure you know why you are communicating and to whom you are addressing your ideas. Knowing about the receivers of your communication is called an audience analysis.**
- **Conduct the research. Use a variety of resources.**
- **Support your ideas. Find facts, figures, data, statistics, and explanations that give credibility to your ideas. The more you can back up your ideas, the more your audience will understand what you are communicating.**
- **Get organized. Use an outline or notes to organize your ideas into a logical sequence. A logical sequence helps your audience follow along with you.**
- **Draft and edit. Use language to your best advantage. There may be many ways to express the same idea. Look for the best way. If you are unclear about what you are saying, you may be sending mixed messages.**
- **Get feedback. Test your work with one or more people. Testing your communication with others will ensure that you are not the only one that can make sense out of what you are saying.**

Conclusion

Communication is how you transfer ideas to other people. Because communication does not always work as you intend, you must ensure that your message is delivered so you get your point across without any misunderstanding.

It's important to understand your audience and your purpose. You should conduct research and support your ideas. You should decide on an organization for your information and outline your ideas.

Follow the basic steps and people will pay attention to your ideas and be impressed by your ability to express yourself.

Part of being a good communicator is learning to listen more effectively. The following lesson deals with the topic of becoming a good listener.

Lesson Review

1. Name the various elements of communication presented in this lesson.
2. Define the term *communication*.
3. Compare and contrast verbal and nonverbal communication.
4. Explain how getting organized might help you with a homework assignment.