

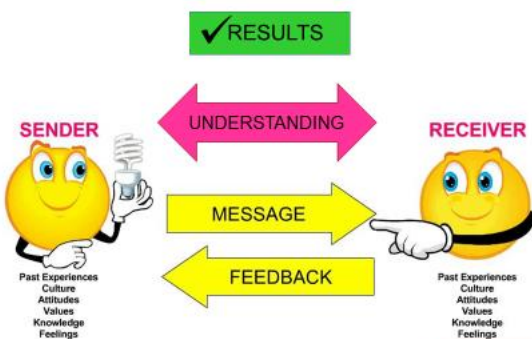
Learning Objectives

- Describe the characteristics of **effective** communication.
- Understand own communication style and the impact of this style on others.
- Respond appropriately to the communication needs of others.
- Commit to strengthening communication skills.



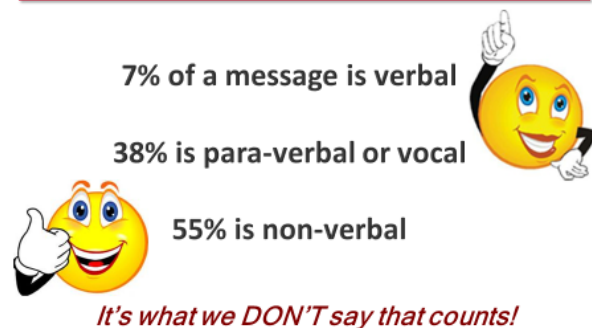
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Effective Communication is...



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How We Communicate



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Listening Skills Assessment

The purpose of this activity is to help you learn about the skills needed to be a good listener and to create an action plan to develop your own listening skills. Based on how often you use these skills today, place an X in one of the boxes to the right of each item. Your candid answers are the most valuable!

When the other person is speaking to me, I	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. Focus on the speaker as much as possible.					
2. Concentrate on the content of the message.					
3. Anticipate what the speaker is going to say.					
4. Establish eye contact with the speaker.					
5. Keep listening even if I disagree with the speaker.					
6. Nod, smile or give other nonverbal cues.					
7. Plan my response in my head.					
8. Get distracted by environmental sounds.					
9. Take notes if necessary to help me remember.					
10. Listen without judging or criticizing.					
11. Interrupt the speaker before he or she has finished.					
12. Think about issues unrelated to the topic.					
13. Pay attention to the speaker's nonverbal cues.					
14. Restate the speaker's message in my own words.					
15. Adapt my response to fit the situation.					
16. Can differentiate between fact and opinion.					
17. Look like I'm listening when I'm not.					
18. Ask questions to gain clarity about the message.					
19. React emotionally to the speaker's message.					
20. Consider how the speaker may react to my response.					
21. Clarify the meaning of the speaker's words if I don't understand.					
22. Allow the speaker to vent his or her frustration.					
23. Think of different views on this topic.					
24. Display an open and caring posture.					
25. Create a nonthreatening environment.					

Listening Skills Assessment

Analysis: If you responded “always,” “frequently,” or “sometimes” for items 3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 17, or 19, these may be areas where you need to focus on improving your listening skills; especially your focus on the speaker and how you filter information.

You may also wish to address any of the remaining statements if you responded with “sometimes,” “rarely,” or “never,” for items 5, 6, 13, 14, 15, 20, and 23. These items directly relate to providing feedback to the speaker effectively during a conversation.

Study this information and the following pages to see why those 25 behaviors are important to be a good listener. Then outline an action plan for self-development on the last page. Make sure it is a realistic plan to which you are willing to fully commit yourself.

The 25 behaviors listed in this assessment are of particular importance if you want to improve your listening skills. They represent areas you may need to address to become a more effective listener. Some of these behaviors, both negative and positive, may require additional attention.

Reduce Ineffective Behaviors

Anticipate what the speaker is going to say. This is a common behavior among listeners and one that some may find difficult to correct. It may help to keep an open mind about what the speaker is saying and focus on the conversation.

Plan a response. This is another behavior that many people engage in, whether they realize it or not. Since it may be difficult to correct, it's important to catch yourself if doing it so you can focus on the speaker and fully comprehend the meaning of the message.

Get distracted by environmental sounds. When we allow external noise to interfere with our ability to listen, it will be harder to understand the speaker's message. It will also signal to the speaker that what he or she has to say isn't important to you.

Interrupt the speaker before he or she is done. Sometimes we are so concerned with our comments, opinions, or responses that we interrupt while the speaker is still talking. Make a conscious effort to stop doing this; it will greatly enhance your ability to listen and will help the speaker communicate his or her thoughts more effectively as well.

Think about issues unrelated to the topic. Daydreaming or just thinking about other issues while someone is speaking can inhibit our listening ability, which can lead to misunderstanding or missing vital information.

React emotionally to the speaker's message. A speaker may find this behavior offensive and may be unwilling to share information with the listener in the future. This may affect the relationship with the speaker and interfere with understanding the speaker's message or view.

Adapted from: Downs, Lisa J. *Listening Skills Training*. ASTD Press, 2008. Pgs. 123-125

Strengthen Effective Behaviors

Concentrate on content of the message. If you are concentrating more on the speaker's physical appearance, you may miss the speaker's message and meaning completely.

Establish eye contact with the speaker. Good eye contact will signal to the speaker that you are ready to listen and will help you focus on the message. It also helps you read the emotions of the speaker to gauge your response.

Nod, smile, or give other nonverbal cues. Positive nonverbal communication shows the speaker that you are paying attention and encourages him or her to continue to share information. This behavior will also help you remain focused.

Listen without judging or critiquing. To be an effective listener, it is important that we take in a speaker's message without rushing to judgment or criticizing his or her views. Otherwise, the focus changes to you as the listener; this may harm your relationship with the speaker and interfere with understanding the message.

Pay attention to the speaker's nonverbal communication. Notice the speaker's facial expression, tone of voice, gestures, and posture to read his or her emotions more effectively and respond accordingly. If we ignore the speaker's body language, we risk alienating him or her with an inappropriate reply.

Restate the speaker's message in your own words. While it may take some practice, this behavior effectively signals to the speaker that you understand the message; it also helps you gain clarity to provide an appropriate response.

Differentiate between fact and opinion. This helps ensure that you are not allowing your response to be clouded by generalizations or false information, which in turn, may help the speaker view the situation with a new perspective.

Allow the speaker to vent his or her frustrations. In many situations, a speaker just wants to get some things off his or her chest; a good listener allows this to happen on occasion. It also shows empathy toward the speaker and a willingness to help. Keep in mind that it is usually beneficial to suggest problem-solving after a while rather than to continue to dwell on the negative.

Create a nonthreatening environment. A relaxing environment encourages the speaker to share information, and it will also help the listener focus on the speaker and be more open to the message. This establishes a positive relationship with the speaker and leads to greater problem-solving.

Adapted from: Downs, Lisa J. *Listening Skills Training*. ASTD Press, 2008. Pgs. 123-125

My Plan for Developing My Listening Skills

1. From your *Listening Skills Assessment*, which two listening behaviors need the most improvement?

2. What action steps will you take to improve these behaviors?

Miscommunication @ Work

Think of a situation where you were misunderstood, or you misunderstood someone else.

- What factors contributed to the misunderstanding?
- What was the impact of the misunderstanding?



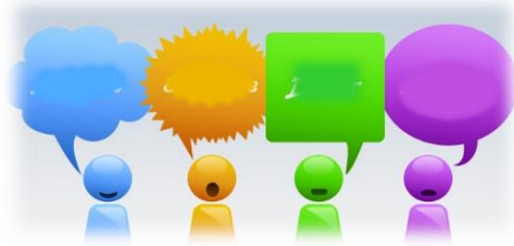
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Task vs. People

Task Orientation	People Orientation
Emphasis on results	Emphasis on relationships
Focus on structure, roles and productivity	Focus on individuals and interactions
Prioritize achievement	Prioritize positive relationships
Emphasis on goal-setting and a clear plan to achieve goals	Emphasis on team communications
Communicates formally and concisely with focus on plan	Communicates frequently and informally



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Communication Style Assessment

Read each statement below and check mark the statements you believe accurately describe how you prefer to be motivated.

What Motivates Me?	✓
1. I like to set realistic challenges and get things done.	
2. I tend to behave non-assertively.	
3. I am concerned about how others regard me.	
4. I tend to dominate conversations.	
5. I am systematic in my approach to tasks.	
6. I avoid cold people, and dislike indifference.	
7. I want others to see me as effective at work.	
8. I like to act as a representative for the group.	
9. I am businesslike and prefer conversations that get to the point.	
10. I tend to start conversations with a social discussion.	
11. I am cautious about changes that will affect me.	
12. I enjoy public recognition for my successes.	
13. I take great pride in a completed task.	
14. I concern myself with colleagues' happiness.	
15. I set targets that can be comfortably met.	
16. I take any opportunity to present ideas to management.	
17. I am good at taking risks.	
18. I actively seek out company.	
19. I react to rather than initiate opinions.	
20. I will volunteer for leading positions.	
21. I actively plan my own development and progression.	
22. I avoid conflict with others, if possible.	
23. I wait until I know people well before I introduce new ideas.	
24. I am concerned about my status at work.	

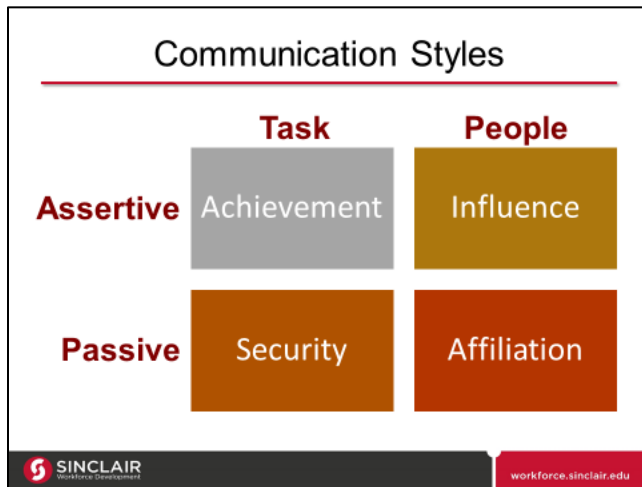
25. I look forward to performance reviews.	
26. I dislike silences, and try to keep conversations going.	
27. I play it safe when making decisions.	
28. I form opinions quickly and try to persuade others to share those opinions.	
29. I like to set measurable targets.	
30. I try to create warm, personal relationships with others.	
31. I am concerned about the organization's financial soundness.	
32. I like to have a high profile at work.	
33. I do not work well under close supervision.	
34. I prefer working with a group.	
35. I lack confidence.	
36. I like to take the lead in situations.	
37. I enjoy new learning situations.	
38. I sympathize with those less fortunate than myself.	
39. I do not take criticism well.	
40. I enjoy debating and competing with people.	

For each check marked statement, circle the corresponding number below. Then count the number of circles in each column and write the total at the bottom. (the highest total for any column is 10)

Achievement Orientation	Affiliation Orientation	Security Orientation	Influence Orientation
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32
33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40
Total	Total	Total	Total

The column or columns with the highest total tends to be your dominant or preferred communication style. The statements are listed by their corresponding style orientation below.

Achievement Oriented	Affiliation Oriented	Security Oriented	Influence Oriented
1. I like to set realistic challenges and get things done.	2. I tend to behave non-assertively.	3. I am concerned about how others regard me.	4. I tend to dominate conversations.
5. I am systematic in my approach to tasks.	6. I avoid cold people and dislike indifference.	7. I want others to see me as effective at work.	8. I like to act as a representative for the group.
9. I am businesslike and prefer dealings to be to the point.	10. I tend to start conversations with a social discussion.	11. I am cautious about changes that will affect me.	12. I enjoy public recognition for my successes.
13. I take great pride in a completed task.	14. I concern myself with colleagues' happiness.	15. I set targets that can be comfortably met.	16. I take any opportunity to present ideas to management.
17. I am good at taking risks.	18. I actively seek out company.	19. I react to rather than initiate opinions.	20. I will volunteer for leading positions.
21. I actively plan my own development and progression.	22. I avoid conflict with others, if possible.	23. I wait until I know people well before I introduce new ideas.	24. I am concerned about my status at work.
25. I look forward to performance reviews.	26. I dislike silences and try to keep conversations going.	27. I play it safe when making decisions.	28. I form opinions quickly and try to persuade others to share that opinion.
29. I like to set measurable targets.	30. I try to create warm personal relationships.	31. I am concerned about the organization's financial soundness.	32. I like to have a high profile at work.
33. I do not work well under close supervision.	34. I prefer working with a group.	35. I lack confidence.	36. I like to take the lead in situations.
37. I enjoy new learning situations.	38. I sympathize with those less fortunate than myself.	39. I do not take criticism well.	40. I enjoy debating and competing with people.



Activity: Communication Styles

1. What are some characteristics of this style?
2. What do you need from others to communicate effectively with you?
3. What do you need to do to communicate effectively with styles that are different from yours?

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Effective Communicators...

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

~ George Bernard Shaw

- Listen more, talk less
- Check for understanding
- Seek other’s perspective
- Address barriers
- Focus on the situation
- Adapt their style

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