



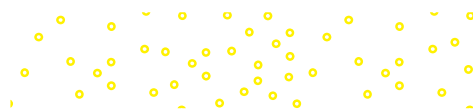
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introduction to human communication

When you have read and thought about this chapter, you will be able to

1. state reasons why the study of communication is essential.
2. define communication.
3. name the components of communication.
4. explain some principles of communication.
5. explain how the contexts of communication differ from each other.
6. list goals for improving yourself as a communicator.

In this chapter you will learn about the importance of communication in your everyday life. You will find that communication is the foundation on which you build your personal, social, and professional life. You will also learn about communication on a deeper level, including the terms, processes, and contexts of communication.



The week of September 10, 2018, was an important week in Athens County, Ohio. The Alexander High School Spartans were scheduled to play the Athens High School Bulldogs in both volleyball and football for games that would be pivotal in the district championship race. Typically, players and fans for both schools, separated by only a few miles, would focus on competition to the point of polarizing the entire southern part of the county into those who bleed red for the Spartans or green for the Bulldogs.



Students and athletes in Athens, Ohio, used several communication strategies, including painting a graffiti wall, to raise awareness about childhood cancer.

Scott Titsworth

to battle a life-threatening disease. But still, Andrew fights. I am so proud of him and the way he carries himself through life. . . . So today, we not only play to win, but we play for Andrew and all the other kids out there fighting cancer.”

Using athletic activism and other communication strategies, students, parents, administrators, and community members partnered with the Houston-based #TurnItGold Foundation to raise over \$28,000. Their success was facilitated by a multifaceted communication effort involving groups of people using compelling messages to unify competitors during what could have been a polarizing week. Communication has power to promote social and personal successes, and that is what we hope you will learn from this course.

September is also Childhood Cancer Awareness month.

Both schools had recently witnessed cancer affect teammates, so under the leadership of athletic directors, coaches, and players, both schools chose to emphasize the color gold to play their part in raising awareness of childhood cancer.

Student athletes, parents, and community members created homemade banners with gold ribbons to line the main street in town, and also staffed tables where individuals could purchase donated “#TurnItGold” shirts to wear at games. Community members and individuals also donated items for silent auctions held during each contest. In a speech to one of the crowds at a volleyball match, the sister of a student battling cancer stated, “It takes guts

The Study of Communication Is Essential

Communication is central to your life. Effective communication can help you solve problems in your professional life and improve relationships in your personal life.¹ In fact, the field of communication studies is on the rise in terms of popularity, degrees earned, and undergraduate majors. Data reported by the National Center for Education Statistics show that communication is the eighth most popular major nationally and that the number of students graduating with a bachelor’s degree in the major has grown by 60% since 2000.² This should not be surprising, given that a recent survey conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities revealed that for both business executives and hiring managers, the ability to communicate effectively was the most sought-after job skill.³

According to *The Huffington Post*, studying communication is timely because, as a discipline, communication studies is well suited for trends in digital and social media

interactions. Knowledge about ideas such as relationship networks on social media, small-group and team communication, and media theory is becoming vitally relevant for you to be ready to succeed now and in the future.⁴

Understanding communication theory, research, and applications will make a significant difference in your life and in the lives of people around the world.⁵ A quick daily review of social media highlights the importance of communication principles. Communication can resolve disputes among nations, as well as among friends and family. Effective communication may not solve all the world's problems, but better communication practices can help us solve many of them.

Communication is everywhere. You cannot avoid communication, and you will engage in communication nearly every minute of every day of your life. Communication plays a major role in nearly every aspect of your life.

Regardless of your interests and goals, the ability to communicate effectively will enhance and enrich your life. Learning about communication will help you know how to be ready to communicate. Studying communication comprehensively offers the following seven advantages:

1. *Studying communication can improve the way you see yourself.* Communication is the single way that we learn about who we are and find ways to develop our own sense of self. Through our communication with others, or *interpersonal* communication, we begin to understand how others see and relate with us. Then, through our own thoughts, or *intrapersonal* communication, we begin to develop self-awareness and perhaps even take steps to alter how others perceive us. People who do not understand the communication process and the development of self-awareness, self-concept, and self-efficacy may not see themselves accurately or may be unaware of their own self-development. Knowing how communication affects self-perception can lead to greater awareness and appreciation of the self.

Learning communication skills can improve the way you see yourself in a second way. As you learn how to communicate effectively in a variety of situations—from interpersonal relationships to public speeches—your self-confidence will increase. In a recent study of more than 2,500 students, researchers found that after taking a course emphasizing communication skills, students reported substantial improvement in their ability to express themselves verbally and nonverbally across a variety of personal and professional situations.⁶ In short, your success in interacting with other people in social situations and your achievements in professional settings will lead to more positive feelings about yourself.

2. *Studying communication can improve the way others see you.* You can control your own behavior to a considerable extent, which will lead to positive outcomes with others. Your interactions can be smoother and you can achieve your goals more easily as you manage the impression you make on others. See Chapter 2 for more on self-presentation and identity management.

You can improve how others see you a second way. Generally, people enjoy communicating with others who can communicate well. Compare your interactions with someone who stumbles over words, falls silent, interrupts, and uses inappropriate language to express thoughts to your interactions with someone who has a strong vocabulary, listens when you speak, reveals appropriate personal information, and smoothly exchanges talk turns with you. Which person do you prefer? Most of us prefer competent communicators. As you become increasingly competent, you will find that others seek you out for conversations, assistance, and advice.



- Effective communication can strengthen interpersonal relationships.

Jordan Siemens/Stone/Getty Images

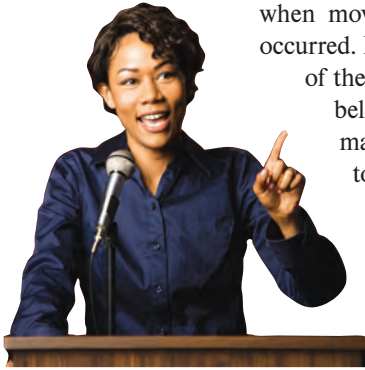
3. *Studying communication and engaging in effective communication behaviors can improve your relationships with others.* The field of communication includes learning about how people relate to each other and about what type of communication is appropriate for a given situation. Most people value human relationships and find great comfort in friends, family, and community. Within these relationships we learn about trust, intimacy, and reciprocity.

Human relationships are vital to each of us. From the time that we are babies, our relationships with others give us a sense of safety, connection, and satisfaction. In fact, we tend to thrive when we have rich interpersonal relationships with friends and family at an early age. Into adulthood, interpersonal relationships continue to nurture us in our education, in our careers, and during times of change in our family structures. Although the strength and quantity of our relationships naturally change over time, they always remain a vital component of our sense of well-being.

We learn about the complexity of human relationships as we study communication. We learn, first, that other people in relationships are vastly different from each other. We learn that they may be receptive or dismissive toward us. We learn that they may behave as if they were superior or inferior to us. We learn that they might be approachable or highly formal.

We also learn that our interactions with others may be helpful or harmful. Communicators can share personal information that builds trust and rapport. The same personal information can be used outside the relationship to humiliate or shame the other person. Whereas some relationships enhance social support, others are riddled with deception and conflict. Interactions are not neutral.

We learn that people create the reality of their relationships through communication. Families, for example, love to tell stories of experiences they have had when on vacation,



• Studying communication improves critical thinking skills and can help people achieve success in college and on the job.
Hill Street Studios/Blend Images/Corbis

when moving across the country, or when some particularly positive or negative event occurred. Indeed, they often take turns “telling the story.” Couples, too, create and tell stories of their lives. Couples’ stories may be positive as the couple emphasizes their feelings of belongingness and their identity as a couple. On the other end of the spectrum, stories may be highly negative as people deceive others with information that allows them to cover up criminal acts, such as drug use, child abuse, or murder.

Human relationships are complex. As you study communication, you will clarify the variables involved in relationships—the people, the verbal and non-verbal cues provided, the effect of time, the nature of the relationship, and the goals of the participants. You will be ready to engage in relationships with an understanding of the communication process.

People who receive communication-skills training experience greater relational satisfaction than those who don’t.^{7,8} The link between communication skills and life satisfaction is strong. The connection holds true in health contexts,⁹ including situations in which family members are experiencing life-threatening illnesses.¹⁰ For example, couples’ communication during early stages of cancer diagnoses impacts their levels of intimacy and adjustment.

4. *Studying communication can teach you important life skills.* Studying communication involves learning important skills that everyone will use at some point in life, such as critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, conflict resolution, team building, media literacy, and public speaking.¹¹ Our visual literacy is improved as we understand the technical and artistic aspects of the visual communication medium.¹² The increasing focus on visual and social media requires us to attend to how communication skills are at work in these contexts.

Studying communication early in your college career can enhance your success throughout college. Consider the centrality of oral communication to all of your college classes. You regularly are called on to answer questions in class, to provide reports, to offer explanations, and to make presentations. In addition, both your oral and written work depend on your ability to think critically and creatively, to solve problems, and to make decisions. Most likely, you will be engaged in group projects in which skills such as team building and conflict resolution will be central. The same skills will be essential throughout your life.

5. *Studying communication can help you recognize how communication affects your community, nation, and world.* Few nations have a bill of rights that invites people to convey their opinions and ideas, yet freedom of speech is essential to a democratic form of government. Being an engaged citizen in a democratic society means knowing about current issues and being able to speak about them in conversations, in speeches, and through the media; it also involves being able to critically examine messages from others.

Our understanding of communication shapes our political lives. Mass communication and communication technology have sharply altered the way we consume and use information as part of the political process. Today many more people have the opportunity to receive information than ever before and through more channels than ever before. Think about how you get information about local, national, and global issues. Do alerts from the CNN app ping your phone? Do you have apps such as Flipboard or Apple News aggregate information from newspapers, magazines, and online outlets organized around your specified interests? Perhaps you watch news or other informative channels on YouTube. In many ways, the methods through which you consume media determine the amount and frequency of the information to which you have access. Through the mass media, and specifically social media, people in remote locations are as well informed as those in large

urban centers. The public agenda is largely set through the media. Pressing problems are given immediate attention. McCombs notes, “The agenda-setting role of the mass media links journalism and its tradition of storytelling to the arena of public opinion, a relationship with considerable consequences for society.”¹³

Whereas some people may feel more enfranchised by advances in communication technology, particularly social media, to advocate their positions, others feel more alienated as they become increasingly passive in the process. Face-to-face town meetings were the focus of democratic decision making in times past, but today people receive answers to questions, solutions to problems, and decisions about important matters from tweets, Facebook messages, and Instagram posts.

Social media has become the most important tool for communicators engaging in political discussions and other forms of public dialogue. According to a recent survey from Pew Research Center, just over half of Americans have been engaged in civic dialogue or discussion using social media in the past year.¹⁴ Also, as noted by an article in *The New Yorker*, entire social movements have been created and sustained through social media. For instance, the #BlackLivesMatter movement was initiated in July 2016 and continues to sustain itself through its prominent hashtag.¹⁵ Have you expressed dissent or agreement about political issues using social media? How did the people in your life react to your posts or involvement? Have your friends or family members been involved in movements that were organized through social media?

Although democracy is indelibly tied to our freedom of speech, we must also recognize that such freedoms sometimes create discomfort. Research reported in *Psychology Today* noted that between 1992 and 2016 the United States had become substantially more polarized.¹⁶ **Polarization occurs when people divide into groups that seemingly share very little common ground, such as political parties.** Although we often observe polarization around politics, polarization can emerge around any number of topics: public versus charter schools, Ohio State versus Michigan, immigration, gun control, vaccines, global warming, and so on.¹⁷ Such polarization has implications for how we communicate. When people talk face-to-face, social norms guide certain politeness behaviors that promote civility; however, on social and broadcast media, those norms are increasingly nonexistent (if not completely reversed to emphasize incivility).¹⁸ In short, our liberty is tied to free thought and open speech. New communication tools disregard traditional social norms for how we talk with one another, which increases polarization and creates a growing negative cycle of strife and disagreement. We are free to disagree, but along with that comes the potential for conflict.

Polarization

The division of people into groups that have conflicting views, perspectives, or ideologies and very little common ground.

By studying communication, you will be more effective in shaping your own messages while at the same time carefully listening to messages from others. You will be a better consumer of information. All of these skills are important for promoting rigorous but civil debate, and in fact, they are the basis for democratic decision-making. As educators, we firmly believe in the importance of public discussion, debate, and advocacy. At the same time, we feel that communication should follow principles of civility and hope that you will use your study of communication to advocate for outcomes that benefit all, even those with whom you disagree. Because polarization and its effects on communication behaviors is so evident in our current culture, we will return to this theme periodically throughout the book.

6. *Studying communication can help you succeed professionally.* A look at job postings, such as those found online, will give you an immediate understanding of the importance of improving your knowledge and practice of communication. The employment section of a newspaper or website has entries such as these:

- “We need a results-oriented, seasoned professional who is a good communicator and innovator,” reads one posting for a marketing manager.

- Another posting, this one for a marketing analyst, reads, “You should be creative, inquisitive, and a good communicator both in writing and orally.”
- A posting for a training specialist calls for “excellent presentation, verbal, and written communication skills, with ability to interact with all levels within organization.”

Employers want to hire people who are competent communicators. In fact, they often say they want effective public communicators and people who can work in teams.¹⁹ You may believe that some professions are enhanced by communication skills but that many are not. However, professionals in fields such as accounting, auditing, banking, counseling, engineering, industrial hygiene, information science, public relations, and sales have all written about the importance of oral communication skills.²⁰ More recently, professionals in engineering,²¹ science,²² farming and ranching,²³ education,²⁴ and the health field²⁵ have stressed the importance of communication skills for success in these fields. The variety of these careers suggests that communication skills are important across the board.

Communication skills are crucial in your first contact with a prospective employer. By studying communication, you can enhance your interviewing skills. Further, human resource interviewers note that oral communication skills, in general, significantly affect hiring decisions.²⁶ One recent survey of over 700 employers indicated that effective communication is vital to career success and that they are finding many college graduates lacking such skills.²⁷ Taking this course and being able to persuasively explain how it has prepared you to be an effective communicator will set you apart from other job applicants.

What communication skills are employers seeking? Employers view your written and oral communication competencies and your ability to listen and analyze messages as essential job skills.²⁸ Unfortunately, there is a big difference between employers and graduating students in how they perceive the career readiness of their communication skills. A recent survey found that only 41.6% of employers thought recent college graduates were proficient in oral and written communication, whereas 79.4% of those same recent graduates thought they were proficient.²⁹ As you begin to improve your communication skills, and consequently your appeal to potential employers, you should concentrate on skills such as listening (Chapter 5) and speaking clearly, succinctly, and persuasively, which you can read more about in Chapters 3, 13, and 15. In many professional settings, group and team-based communication is especially important, particularly as organizations make increasing use of teams working from different locations and using communication technology to connect.³⁰ Employers are also seeking interpersonal skills,³¹ which you can learn about in Chapter 6. Public speaking skills are important in most professions because employees are often required to give talks and presentations.³² You will have an opportunity to improve your writing skills as you prepare outlines and manuscripts for public speeches, which you can learn more about in Chapters 14 and 15. Ultimately, the content and skills in this course will prepare you to be ready to communicate in ways that matter for your professional career.

7. *Studying communication can help you navigate an increasingly diverse world.* As you stroll through a mall, deposit money in a bank, or work at your job, odds are that about one in every five people you come into contact with will speak English as a second language. According to the 2017 American Community Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly 22% of respondents speak a language other than English in their home.³³ The increasingly diverse population of the United States means that multilingual communication encounters are, for most of us, the norm rather than the exception. Learning how to communicate in today’s world, whether English is your first language or not, requires an understanding of communication and culture and how those two concepts are related.

As you develop an understanding of basic communication concepts and learn how to apply those concepts in everyday interactions, you will be better equipped to bridge language and cultural barriers and promote effective interpersonal relationships, teamwork, and digitally mediated communication.

Defining Communication

Now that you have considered why learning how to communicate is important, you should know exactly what the term means. Over the years, scholars have created hundreds of definitions of communication. How they define the term can limit or expand the study of the subject. In *Human Communication*, we will adopt a broad definition of communication that is applicable to many different situations and contexts in which people interact.

Communication comes from the Latin word *communicare*, which means “to make common” or “to share.” The root definition is consistent with our definition of communication. We define **communication** as the process of using messages to generate shared meaning. Communication is considered a **process** because it is an activity, an exchange, or a set of behaviors—not an unchanging product. Communication is not an object you can hold in your hand; it is an activity in which you participate. David Berlo, a pioneer in the field of communication, probably provided the clearest statement about communication as a process:

If we accept the concept of process, we view events and relationships as dynamic, ongoing, ever changing, continuous. When we label something as a process, we also mean that it does not have a beginning, an end, a fixed sequence of events. It is not static, at rest. It is moving. The ingredients within a process interact; each affects all the others. . . .³⁴

In stating that communication is a process, we mean that you cannot look at any particular communication behavior as a snapshot and fully understand what is happening. Suppose that you were in a coffee shop and observed an interaction between a customer and a server. The customer asks for a double-shot espresso, and the barista responds by asking, “Sure you don’t want a latte?” The customer responds by saying, “Definitely no,” to which the barista says, “Wow, must be a bad day.” On its face, this interaction could seem somewhat abrupt—maybe even inappropriate. But, if the customer is a regular, the barista might know that this is an unusual order, inferring that the need for an extra jolt of caffeine is indicative of a hectic day for the patron. In this example, the communication interaction started well before the actual behaviors you observed. Those behaviors were part of an ongoing process of communication between the customer and the barista. How the customer responds to the “bad day” comment, perhaps with annoyance or with a story about what is going on, will further influence that unfolding communication process.

Messages include verbal and nonverbal symbols, signs, and behaviors. When you smile at another person, you are sending a message. When reporters choose language to emphasize the seriousness of a recent event, they are creating a message. Public speakers might spend days choosing just the right words and considering their bodily movements, gestures, and facial expression.

communication

The process of using messages to generate shared meaning.

process

An activity, an exchange, or a set of behaviors that occurs over time.



- Understanding emerges from shared experience.

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meaning

The intent of a message by the sender and the interpretation of a message by the receiver.

source

A message initiator.

receiver

A message target.

message

The verbal and nonverbal form of the idea, thought, or feeling that one person (the source) wishes to communicate to another person or a group of people (the receivers).

People hope to generate common meanings through the messages they provide.

Meaning is the intent of a message by the sender and the interpretation of a message by the receiver. When you communicate, you might intend for a certain meaning to be represented in your messages, but there is also the meaning that others perceive of your message. Of course, not all of the messages you create are understood by others. During a presentation by classmates, you might smile to indicate agreement only to later learn that the speakers thought you were laughing at them. What we say and do can be communication only if the meaning of what we intend is generally shared with the other person. Of course, communication cannot be perfect, so 100% shared meaning is rarely achieved. Yet, maximizing such shared meaning is one of the goals of this course.

Understanding the meaning of another person's message does not occur unless the two communicators can elicit common meanings for words, phrases, and nonverbal codes. During the process of communication, we naturally attempt to negotiate meaning with others. For instance, during class, you might raise a hand to have a professor clarify the meaning of a term. During a conversation with a friend, you might use a shake of the head to indicate that you are not following your friend's point. In both examples, you used verbal or nonverbal symbols or codes to provide feedback and negotiate meaning with another person. This negotiation is constant, and it means that the process of communication is continually unfolding as we attempt to share common meaning with others. Much of what you will learn in this course is intended to help you make that negotiation easier and more natural.

engaging diversity

Age Differences in Social Media

The rising dominance of social media poses a challenge for businesses. How is it possible to get messages to consumers? You might think that advertising can simply translate to social media, but are all social media platforms productive? A recent survey by the Pew Research Center revealed that over 80% of people between the ages of 18 and 49 reported using Facebook and YouTube. However, only the 18 to 24 age group reported high use of Snapchat (78%) and Instagram (71%); Twitter was used the least by this group, at only 45%, with all other age groups trailing behind. This research found that the older people were, the less they reported interacting with these social media. Businesses can use this information to reach target demographics on their most preferred social media. As we interact with people of differing ages, we have to remember that the menu of social media alternatives differs.

Source: Pew Research Center "Social platforms like Snapchat and Instagram are especially popular among those ages 18 to 24." https://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-in-2018/pi_2018-03-01_social-media_0-02/

Components of Communication

In this section you will learn how communication in action really works. The components of communication are people, messages, channels, codes, encoding and decoding, feedback, noise, and situation.

PEOPLE

People are involved in the human communication process in two roles—as both the sources and the receivers of messages. **A source initiates a message, and a receiver is the intended target of the message.** Individuals do not perform these two roles independently; instead, they are the sources and the receivers of messages simultaneously and continually.

The people with whom we communicate are diverse. They are of different ages and genders and perhaps from different cultural backgrounds. Each of these characteristics associated with diversity can influence the process of communication as people attempt to negotiate the meaning of messages.

THE MESSAGE

The message is the verbal and nonverbal form of the idea, thought, or feeling that one person (the source) wishes to communicate to another person or a group of people (the receivers). The message is the content of the interaction. The message includes the symbols (words and phrases) you use to communicate your ideas, as well as your facial expressions, bodily movements, gestures, physical contact, and

tone of voice, as well as other nonverbal codes. The message may be relatively brief and easy to understand or long and complex. Some experts believe that real communication stems only from messages that are intentional, those that have a purpose. However, we believe that some messages can be unintentional. For example, you may not intend to show your emotions during a meeting, but your facial expressions and tone of voice might tip others off that you are angry or anxious. These unintended messages add potentially important information to the communication interaction.

THE CHANNEL

The **channel** is the means by which a message moves from the source to the receiver of the message. Think about how you communicate with your family. In some situations you are face-to-face and use your voice to send messages through sound waves. In other situations you might use your voice to talk over the phone, and other situations might involve text messages or status updates on social media. Each of these examples illustrates how the same communicators—you and your family—can use multiple channels to send messages. Of course, the channel used can potentially influence the meaning assigned to the messages. For instance, what are the implications of breaking up with a partner via text or even Twitter as opposed to a face-to-face conversation?

channel

The means by which a message moves from the source to the receiver of a message.

CODE

A computer carries messages via binary code on cable, wire, or fiber; similarly, you converse with others by using a code called “language.” A **code** is a systematic arrangement of symbols used to create meanings in the mind of another person or persons. Words, phrases, and sentences become “symbols” used to evoke images, thoughts, and ideas in the minds of others. If someone yells “Stop” as you approach the street, the word *stop* has become a symbol that you are likely to interpret as a warning of danger.

code

A systematic arrangement of symbols used to create meanings in the mind of another person or persons.

Verbal and nonverbal codes are the two types of code used in communication. **Verbal codes** consist of symbols and their grammatical arrangement. All languages are codes. **Nonverbal codes** consist of all symbols that are not words, including bodily movements, the use of space and time, clothing and other adornments, and sounds other than words. *Nonverbal* codes should not be confused with *nonoral* codes. All nonoral codes, such as bodily movement, are nonverbal codes. However, nonverbal codes also include oral codes, such as pitch, duration, rate of speech, and sounds such as “eh” and “ah.”

verbal codes

Symbols and their grammatical arrangement, such as languages.

nonverbal codes

Messages consisting of symbols that are not words, including non-word vocalizations.

ENCODING AND DECODING

If communication involves the use of codes, the process of communicating can be viewed as one of encoding and decoding. **Encoding** is the process of translating an idea or a thought into a code. **Decoding** is the process of assigning meaning to that idea or thought. Think about the process you go through when ordering pizza with friends. In response to the typical question of “What do you want?” how often is “I like anything” provided in response? When ordering the pizza, do you take free rein to order a large pie with anchovies, extra onions, and jalapeños? Probably not. You probably know not to interpret “I like anything” too literally. During communication, our use of codes to encode and decode often requires additional explanation to arrive at solid shared meaning. That’s why feedback is so important to the communication process.

encoding

The process of translating an idea or thought into a code.

decoding

The process of assigning meaning to the idea or thought in a code.

FEEDBACK

Feedback is the receiver’s verbal and nonverbal response to the source’s message. Ideally, you respond to another person’s messages by providing feedback so that the source knows the message was received as intended. Feedback is part of any communication situation.

feedback

The receiver’s verbal and nonverbal response to the source’s message.

building behaviors

Current Behaviors 360 Feedback

Write down at least three communication skills you think you regularly do well in your daily conversations with others. Next, list three communication skills you need to improve on over the course of this term. Now ask at least three people from different social groups in your life to answer the same questions about you. For example, you could pick a friend, a sibling, and a parental figure. How do their answers compare to yours? Based on your assessment and those of the people who answered your question, what are the top two communication behaviors you want to focus on improving? Let the people in your life know you are working on these skills; their support will encourage you to practice and improve.

noise

Any interference in the encoding and decoding processes that reduces message clarity.

situation

The location where communication takes place.

Even no response, or silence, is feedback, as are restless behavior and quizzical looks from students in a classroom. It is through feedback that communicators negotiate meaning in the process of communicating. Silence could signal disagreement. A raised eyebrow could imply a lack of understanding. A simple word—"Fantastic!"—could show excitement in response to another person's idea. Because we are simultaneously senders and receivers of messages, we are constantly providing feedback to others in an attempt to negotiate meaning.

NOISE

In the communication process, **noise is any interference in the encoding and decoding processes that reduces the clarity of a message.**

Noise can be physical, such as loud sounds, distracting sights, such as a piece of food between someone's front teeth; or an unusual behavior, such as someone standing too close for comfort. **Noise can be mental, psychological, or semantic, such as daydreams** about a loved one, worry about the bills, pain from a tooth, or uncertainty about what the other person's words mean. Noise can be anything that interferes with receiving, interpreting, or providing feedback about a message.

SITUATION

The final component of communication is the **situation, the location where communication takes place.** Later in the chapter you will learn about six different contexts for communication, ranging from interpersonal to mass communication. Each context provides a different type of situation in which you communicate. For instance, a conversation between two people tends to be less formal, whereas a public speech before hundreds might be more formal. The relationship between people could also affect the situation. You communicate with your boss differently than with your coworkers. Even the channel can influence the situation—face-to-face communication might be more personal than some forms of social media. The situation combines other elements of the communication process to influence the overall tone of the interaction.

Communication Principles

A definition of communication may be insufficient to clarify the nature of communication. To explain communication in more detail, we consider some principles here that guide our understanding of communication.

COMMUNICATION BEGINS WITH THE SELF

How you see yourself can make a great difference in how you communicate. In any particular conversation, interaction, speech, or group meeting, you communicate with others based on your sense of yourself. If you perceive yourself to be an extrovert, you will likely be outgoing in such encounters; if you perceive yourself as an introvert, you might be more quiet and withdrawn. Therefore, how you perceive yourself will influence how you communicate with others. You should remember, however, that no single instance of

communication is truly isolated. Why would you perceive yourself to be extroverted or introverted? Most likely, that self-perception grew because of your interactions with others over time. Although each communication interaction begins with the self, it is also connected to your previous communication experiences in important ways.

As human beings, our sense of self is always changing, and consequently, so are our approaches to communication. Our understanding of the world is limited by our experiences. John Shotter, a former communication professor at the University of New Hampshire, suggests that we cannot understand communication through external, abstract, and systematic processes. Instead, he describes communication as a “ceaseless flow of speech-entwined, dialogically structured, social activity.”³⁵ In other words, communication is participatory; we are actively involved and relationally responsive in our use of communication.

Suppose you have a roommate who is from another country. Over the course of your interactions, you may feel challenged by the belief systems, values, perspectives, and behaviors of your roommate. More specifically, if you impose rules of communication and other behaviors based only on your previous experiences, there may be very little chance of a successful relationship. However, if you are able to move beyond your previous views and allow your perceptions of communication and other behaviors to become products of new interactions, you might learn to communicate in interesting and effective ways. That might sound abstract, but have you ever had a close friendship where you used nicknames and had sort of a secret code to talk? In that relationship you allowed new norms to develop. Could you use that same approach with others to avoid misperceptions, polarizing statements, and even conflict?

You are the center of your own communication behaviors. As we will explain, you have many choices to guide your communication with others. You construct your own messages, you choose channels to use, and you develop your own unique style. Consequently, understanding yourself as a communicator and developing skills to adapt and improve your communication behaviors is essential to your growth in personal, professional, and social interactions.

COMMUNICATION INVOLVES OTHERS

Although communication begins with the self, communication also involves others. Famous philosopher George Herbert Mead pointed out that our sense of self is developed in and through communication, starting early in our childhood.³⁶ Through verbal and nonverbal symbols, a child learns to accept roles in response to the expectations of others. Take the example of Simone Biles, a four-time Gold Medal gymnast from the 2016 U.S. Olympic Team. Simone was a foster child who was eventually adopted by her grandparents. In an op-ed written by Biles for CNN,³⁷ she described how she felt before being adopted: “I remember how it felt to be passed off and overlooked. Like nobody knew me or wanted to know me.” Once adopted, her communication environment changed. She explained, “When I was far too young to know it, others around me saw that I had a gift for gymnastics. Without their encouragement and support, I would never have been a gymnast.” Simone’s example shows how positive, negative, and neutral messages all play a role in how you determine who you are, even at a young age. Her example also illustrates how those messages, and your sense of self, can change over time.

You may be aware of how important your peers are to your academic career. Students report that peers provide support for a variety of reasons: they allow you to vent about teachers and classes; provide you with information about assignments, classes, and other academic matters; offer positive statements that build your self-esteem and sense of worth; and make statements that motivate you to attend class, to do your homework, and to generally succeed at your work.³⁸ Other people are essential to how you feel about yourself during college and throughout your life.



- Understanding can emerge from dialogue.

Kristy-Anne Glubish/Design Pics

dialogue

The act of taking part in a conversation, discussion, or negotiation.

Communication itself is probably best understood as a dialogic process. A dialogue is simply the act of taking part in a conversation, discussion, or negotiation. When we describe and explain our communicative exchanges with others, we are doing so from a perspective of self and from a perspective derived from interacting with others. Our understanding of communication occurs not in a vacuum but in light of our interactions with other people.³⁹

In a more obvious way, communication involves others in the sense that a competent communicator considers the other person's needs and expectations when selecting messages to share. The competent communicator understands that a large number of messages can be shared at any time, but sensitivity and responsiveness to the other communicators are essential. In short, communication begins with the self, as defined largely by others, and involves others, as defined largely by the self.

COMMUNICATION HAS BOTH A CONTENT AND A RELATIONAL DIMENSION

All messages have both a content and a relational dimension. When you form a message to another person, that message has content. For instance, in a workplace situation you might say to a coworker, "One of us needs to take returned items back to the shelves. They are piling up." The content of that message is clear: something needs to be done. A relational dimension also exists in that communication. Notice how the phrase "one of us" does not establish that one person is in charge of the other. Think about how that message might be different if said by a manager. When we communicate, we convey both the content of a message and also cues about the relationship among the communicators. Although we often think about the content of a message as being most important, there are situations in which the relational dimension might carry prominence. Think about classroom situations in which you had to work in a group with peers you had not met before. Much of the initial communication involves group members establishing an effective working relationship to work toward the assigned objectives.

COMMUNICATION INVOLVES CHOICES

Communication is far more than simple information transmission. Communication involves choices about the multiple aspects of the message: the verbal, nonverbal, and behavioral aspects; the choices surrounding the transmission channels used; the characteristics of the speaker; the relationship between the speaker and the audience; the characteristics of the audience; and the situation in which the communication occurs. A change in any one of these variables affects the entire communication process.

The fact that communication involves choices has powerful implications, and it also involves risk. Consider your use of texting and social media. On one hand, your use of digital media allows you to easily stay connected with friends and family. It seems like a good choice in that regard. On the other hand, a recent survey from Common Sense Media found that the percentage of 13- to 17-year-olds who report that social media often distracts them from paying attention during face-to-face conversations has increased by 10 points, from 44% in 2012 to 54% in 2018.⁴⁰ Consequently, the choices we make in using one communication tool can influence our effectiveness in using other tools.

COMMUNICATION QUANTITY DOES NOT INCREASE COMMUNICATION QUALITY

You might believe that a course on communication would stake claims on the importance of increased communication. You may have heard leaders or coaches say, “What we need is more communication.” However, greater amounts of communication do not necessarily lead to more harmony or more accurate and shared meanings. Sometimes people disagree, and more communication can actually increase conflict. Other times people have very poor listening or empathy skills and misunderstand vast quantities of information. Have you ever been in a class where the teacher uses far too many PowerPoint slides? High quantities of poorly crafted communication can be much less effective than carefully planned concise statements.

COMMUNICATION IS PERVASIVE

Although communication involves choices and more communication is not necessarily better communication, communication is pervasive and occurs almost every minute of your life. In other words, communication spreads to all aspects of your life. If you are not communicating with yourself (thinking, planning, reacting to the world around you), you are observing others and drawing conclusions about their behavior. If people yawn while you are talking, you may believe that they are bored with your message. If friends fail to like your social media post, you may assume they are mad. We are continually gleaning meanings from others’ behaviors, and we are constantly behaving in ways that have communicative value for those with whom we communicate.

COMMUNICATION CANNOT BE REVERSED

Once you say something, it cannot be unsaid. Because communication cannot be reversed, you should use sound judgment and think before you speak or write. Part of the polarization we witness in political discourse occurs because some candidates and elected officials attempt to land rhetorical punches before thinking about potential ramifications. Such lack of planning can damage credibility, diminish the effectiveness of valid arguments, and create turmoil that can even lead to threats of violence.⁴¹

Possible negative effects of poorly crafted communication are not limited to political figures, however. Social media has created platforms through which previously private, if not intimate, details are regularly made public. A 2018 national survey by CareerBuilder.com found that 70% of employers research potential job candidates on social media sites,

48% monitor the social media of current employees, and 34% of employers have fired or reprimanded employees because of social media posts.⁴² Negative effects of social media are also observed in romantic relationships. Another recent study reported that romantic partners often feel retroactive jealousy when reviewing each other's social media sites.⁴³ The lessons here are clear. Whether you are speaking in public, posting on social media, or having a casual conversation with a friend, your communication is irreversible.

Communication Contexts

context

A recurring pattern of behaviors and actions that typically take place in similar settings.

intrapersonal communication

The process of using messages to generate meaning within the self.

Communication occurs in a **context**, a recurring pattern of behaviors that typically take place in similar settings. Communication occurs between two friends, among five business acquaintances in a **small-group setting**, and between a lecturer and an audience that fills an auditorium. Each of these is a different context because the pattern of behavior is different, as is the setting. At many colleges and universities, the communication courses are arranged by context: **interpersonal communication, interviewing, small-group communication, public speaking, and mass communication**. Across these contexts of communication there are key similarities and differences. Although the process of making shared meaning might be consistent from one context to another, they differ greatly in terms of the number of people involved, the formality expected by communicators, and the opportunity for feedback.



INTRAPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Intrapersonal communication is the process of using messages to generate meaning within the self. Intrapersonal communication is the communication that occurs **within your own mind**. Think about a situation at work in which you have an ongoing conflict with coworkers. When talking with them in meetings, you likely engage in dialogue with yourself trying to anticipate how they will react to your statements or actions. So, if you say to them, "Great job on that presentation," you might ask yourself if they will interpret your comment as patronizing, even if you were trying to be totally authentic. That internal questioning illustrates how we use intrapersonal communication to try to create and infer meaning when we communicate with others.

Intrapersonal communication occurs, as this example suggests, **when you evaluate or examine the interaction that occurs between yourself and others**, but it is not limited to such situations. This form of communication occurs before and during other forms of communication as well. For instance, you might argue with yourself during a conversation in which someone asks you to do something you do not really want to do: before you accept or decline, you mull over the alternatives in your mind.

Intrapersonal communication also includes such activities as **solving problems internally, resolving internal conflict, planning for the future, and evaluating yourself and your relationships with others**. Intrapersonal communication—the basis for all other communication—involves only the self.

Each one of us is continually engaged in intrapersonal communication. Although you might become more easily absorbed in talking to yourself when you are alone (while walking to class, driving to work, or taking a shower, for instance), you are likely to be involved in this form of communication in crowded circumstances

- Intrapersonal communication occurs in our reflections.

John Lund/Drew Kelly/Sam Diephuis/Blend Images LLC

as well (such as during a lecture, at a party, or with friends). Think about the last time you looked at yourself in a mirror. What were your thoughts? Although intrapersonal communication is almost continuous, people seldom focus on this form of communication.

Indeed, not all communication experts believe that intrapersonal communication should be examined within communication studies. The naysayers argue that communication requires two or more receivers of a message, and since there are no receivers in intrapersonal communication, no communication actually occurs. They reason that intrapersonal communication should be studied in a discipline such as psychology or neurology—fields in which experts study the mind or the brain. Nonetheless, intrapersonal communication is recognized by most scholars within the discipline as one context of communication for you to know and understand.

communicating creatively

Can Rituals Drive Creativity?

How often have you heard people say that you need to “think outside the box”? They seem to imply that to be creative, you must do something totally unique and different from your routine. Art Markman, a psychology and marketing professor at the University of Texas, thinks differently. He recommends that you develop rituals to help you be more creative. For instance, you might create a particular space that will be conducive to your creativity. He also stresses that true creativity comes from significant knowledge and experience with a particular topic. At its heart, creativity happens through intrapersonal communication as you think to yourself about how to accomplish something in new and novel ways.

Source: Markman, A. “The Importance Of Ritual To The Creative Process” Most Creative People. <https://www.fastcompany.com/3035281/the-importance-of-ritual-to-the-creative-process>.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

When you move from intrapersonal to interpersonal communication, you move from communication that occurs within your own mind to communication that involves one or more other people. **Interpersonal communication** is the process of using messages to generate meaning between at least two people in a situation that allows mutual opportunities for both speaking and listening. Like intrapersonal communication, interpersonal communication occurs for a variety of reasons: to solve problems, to resolve conflicts, to share information, to improve perceptions of oneself, or to fulfill social needs, such as the need to belong or to be loved. Through our interpersonal communication, we are able to establish relationships with others that include friendships and romantic relationships.

Dyadic and small-group communication are two subsets of interpersonal communication. **Dyadic communication** is simply two-person communication, such as interviews with an employer or a teacher; talks with a parent, spouse, or child; and interactions among strangers, acquaintances, or friends. Although dyadic interpersonal communication is typically face-to-face, we increasingly rely on various forms of social media and other communication technologies to create and maintain highly fulfilling interpersonal relationships. **Small-group communication** is the interaction among three to nine people working together to achieve an interdependent goal. Small-group communication occurs in families, work groups, support groups, religious groups, and study groups. Communication experts agree that two people are a dyad and that more than two people are a small group if they have a common purpose, goal, or mission. Disagreement exists regarding the maximum number of participants in a small group, though some experts suggest that the upper limit for true group communication is 10 people. Technology also poses questions for communication scholars to debate: for instance, does a small group have to meet face-to-face? That teleconferences can involve small-group communication is

interpersonal communication

The process of using messages to generate meaning between at least two people in a situation that allows mutual opportunities for both speaking and listening.

dyadic communication

Two-person communication.

small-group communication

Interaction among three to nine people working together to achieve an interdependent goal.

uncontroversial, but what about discussions in chat rooms on the Internet? See Chapter 8 for more on this topic.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

public speaking

The process of using messages to generate meanings in a situation in which a single speaker transmits a message to a number of receivers.

Public speaking is the process of using messages to generate meanings in a situation in which a single speaker transmits a message to a number of receivers, who give nonverbal and sometimes question-and-answer feedback. In public speaking, the speaker adapts the message to the audience in an attempt to achieve maximum understanding. Sometimes virtually everyone in the audience understands the speaker's message; other times many people fail to understand.

Public speaking is recognized by its formality, structure, and planning. You probably are frequently a receiver of **public speaking in classes, at convocations,** and at religious services. Occasionally, you also may be a source (for example, **when you present in class,** explain a new procedure in front of coworkers, or make an argument in favor of reducing the cost of higher education for students). Public speaking most often informs or persuades, but it can also entertain, introduce, announce, welcome, or pay tribute.

MASS COMMUNICATION

mass communication

The process of using messages to generate meanings in a mediated system, between a source and a large number of unseen receivers.

Mass communication is the process of using messages to generate meanings in a mediated system, between a source and a large number of unseen receivers. Mass communication always has a transmission system (mediator) between the sender and the receiver. You are engaging in forms of mass communication when you broadcast a statement on Twitter, post a video on YouTube, write for a campus newspaper, or talk about a song on a podcast. Mass communication is often taught in a college or university department of mass communication, radio and television, or journalism.

People who study mass communication may be interested in the processes by which communication is transmitted, and therefore they study the diffusion of information. Alternatively, they may be interested in the effects of media on people and study persuasion or how public opinion is created and altered. Mass communication has become of increasing interest today because of the expanded opportunities for communication through new technologies. **Today many students are interested in media convergence, or the way that technology is unifying what were formerly separate channels for communication.** Now, when you want to listen to news, watch movies, or enjoy music, you do not use separate mediums such as newspapers, television, and radio. Your smartphone and similar devices have converged those traditional forms of media into one easily accessible portal.

media convergence

The unification of separate channels of communication through new communication technology.

online communication

Use of the Internet, particularly social media and other networking resources, to carry out communication with others.

ONLINE COMMUNICATION

The **online communication** context, or the Internet, typically allows social media sites, gaming sites, and similar technologies to help people stay connected with close friends, acquaintances, and others with whom they share similar interests. If you are using Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, or almost any other interactive online resource, you are likely engaging in communication through that site. Many video games allow you to interact with fellow players. Since the early 2000s, social media sites have created an unprecedented convergence of technology related to communication. **Technological convergence** has occurred as voice, data, video, audio, and other channels of communication have become consolidated into online communication tools. Whereas the telephones of our grandparents' generation provided one option for communication, the smartphones of today contain potentially limitless options for how we can send and receive messages with other people.

technological convergence

The consolidation of voice, data, video, audio, and other channels of communication through smartphones and other devices.

As a context for communication, the Internet is unique because of its versatility. First, online communication is mobile. Provided that you have a smartphone, a tablet, or even a smart watch, you can use social media virtually anywhere. Another characteristic of the Internet is that it can facilitate all types of communication ranging from dyadic interactions to mass-mediated messages. A simple tweet about your evening, intended perhaps for close friends, has the potential to go viral and reach thousands. Did you know that the current record for likes on a tweet is from former president Barack Obama, who received more than 4 million likes on a picture of himself greeting toddlers from diverse ethnic backgrounds along with a Nelson Mandela quotation preaching tolerance.⁴⁴ Finally, online communication can be both synchronous and asynchronous.

Synchronous communication occurs when there is instantaneous sending and receiving of messages, such as in face-to-face or Snapchat interactions. **Asynchronous communication** occurs when there is a brief or substantial delay in interaction, such as with responses to Facebook posts or discussion board comments. Because online communication can be synchronous or asynchronous, communicators may encounter some situations in which the prestructuring of messages is required, such as carefully thinking out a post for a discussion board, and other situations in which prestructuring is virtually impossible, such as engaging in a two-way video chat.

In one sense, communication through social media sites simply replicates what we do in other communication contexts. Some scholars argue that the differences between face-to-face interaction and digitally mediated interaction have become increasingly irrelevant as both technology and our comfort in using digital tools have advanced. Others worry that new communication technology has increased our ability to communicate but at the expense of quality communication. Regardless of which view is correct, social networking through the Internet has become one of the most important and pervasive communication tools in our lives. In fact, Cambridge Dictionary selected as the “people’s word of 2018” the term *nomophobia*, which is “the fear or worry at the idea of being without your mobile phone or unable to use it.”⁴⁵

Table 1.1 provides a visual summary of the various contexts discussed here. As you review the table, note how things such as the number of people, the degree of formality, and the need for structure vary across the contexts of communication.

sizing things up

Communication Skills in Context

We communicate in a variety of contexts. To improve your skill as a communicator, you should assess your own communication skills in each of the general communication contexts so that you can identify your strengths and areas for growth. Read each of the following questions carefully, and respond using the following scale:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neither agree nor disagree
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree
1. I can use communication to solve conflicts with friends.
 2. I am able to express my ideas clearly when working in a group.
 3. I am comfortable when giving public speeches.
 4. I can use the Internet to locate highly reputable information.
 5. Other people tell me that I am a good speaker.
 6. My friends tell me that I am a good listener.
 7. Others listen to my opinions in group meetings.
 8. I am skilled at communicating with others online.
 9. I am good at delivering speeches.
 10. I can effectively lead groups to discuss problems.
 11. I make friends easily.
 12. I am skilled at using computers to communicate with others (for example, using Skype, instant messaging, chat rooms, and other communication tools).

Note: This list has no “right” or “wrong” answers. It simply provides an overview of your communication skills at the beginning of the course. You might want to complete the survey again at the end of the course to determine whether your scores have changed. A guide for interpreting your responses appears at the end of the chapter.

synchronous communication

The instantaneous sending and receiving of messages, as occurs in face-to-face or some text-message interactions.

asynchronous communication

Interactions in which there is a small or even substantial delay, as occurs with e-mail or discussion board posts.

Table 1.1 Differences Among Communication Contexts

Contexts	Number of People	Degree of Formality or Intimacy	Opportunities for Feedback	Need for Prestructuring Messages	Degree of Stability of the Roles of Speaker and Listener
Intrapersonal Communication	1	Most intimate	Complete feedback	None	Highly unstable; the individual as both speaker and listener
Interpersonal Communication					
Dyadic Communication	2	Generally intimate; interview is formal	A great deal of feedback	Some	Unstable; speaker and listener alternate
Small-Group Communication	Usually 3 to 10; may be more	Intimate or formal	Less than in intrapersonal communication but more than in public speaking	Some	Unstable; speakers and listeners alternate
Public Speaking	Usually more than 10	Generally formal	Less than in small-group communication but more than in mass communication	A great deal	Highly stable; one speaker with many listeners
Mass Communication	Usually thousands	Generally formal	Usually more	Almost totally scripted	Highly stable; on-air speakers, invisible listeners
Online Communication	2 to millions	Intimate or formal	None to a great deal	None to totally scripted	Unstable to highly stable

Goals of Communication Study

You learned the importance of studying communication at the beginning of this chapter. As we end our introduction to the topic of communication, we want to encourage you to set goals for yourself as a communicator. We believe that great communicators are able to positively impact their own lives, as well as those of the people around them, thus contributing to the greater good of society. It is our hope that through this class you will find ways to improve your skills and knowledge as a communicator. That improvement must start by setting goals. Although you should carefully consider your personal goals and objectives as a communicator, three broad goals to get you started are to become a competent communicator, to become an ethical communicator, and to become knowledgeable about communication theory and research.

communication competence

The ability to effectively exchange meaning through a common system of symbols or behavior.

PRACTICING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Communication competence is simply the ability to effectively exchange meaning through a common system of symbols or behavior. As you will learn in this course, communication competence is not necessarily easy to achieve. Communication competence can be difficult because your goals and others' goals may be discrepant. Similarly, you and those

with whom you communicate may have a different understanding of your relationship. Cultural differences may cause you to view the world and other people differently. Indeed, different perspectives about communication may themselves create problems in your interactions with others. As you read this text, you will learn about the multiple variables involved in communication, and you will become more competent in your communication.

Although communication competence is the goal, the complexity of communication should encourage you to be a student of communication over your lifetime. In this course you will begin to learn the terminology and the multiple variables comprised in communication. Though you will not emerge from the course as an expert, you should see significant changes in your communication abilities. The professional public speaker or comedian, the glib TV reporter, and the highly satisfied spouse in a long-term marriage make communication look easy. However, as you will learn, their skills are complex and interwoven with multiple layers of understanding.

COMMUNICATING ETHICALLY

The second goal in studying communication lies in its ethical dimension. **Ethics may be defined as a set of moral principles or values.** Ethical standards may vary from one discipline to another, just as they differ from one culture to another. The standards within the communication discipline are derived from Western conceptions of communication, democratic decision making, and the ideologies of people in the communication discipline.

Within the communication discipline, the National Communication Association (NCA) has created a set of ethics guidelines.⁴⁶ You may wish to search online and read these guidelines for communication behavior and consider the extent to which they are true in your life. As you listen to politicians, activists, and people with opposing views, consider how these ethical principles are violated.

Communication professionals believe that people should be open, honest, and reasonable. They affirm the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, which guarantees freedom of speech. They agree that respect for other people and their messages is essential. They acknowledge the need for access to information and to people. Finally, they view responsible behavior as important.

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION THEORY AND RESEARCH

Theory and *research* are two commonly used words that cause eye rolls and strike fear among thousands of college students across the world. We want to make a case for you to think differently. Theories are nothing more than stories. Good theories provide clear narratives of how things work. In communication, we develop theories—some simple and some not so simple—to understand the causes, processes, and effects of communication. Whereas your common sense works in many situations, it is not infallible. How often have you made an error in judgment? What happens when you encounter a new type of situation, such as participating in a group-based job interview or communicating with someone from a very different culture? Does common sense always work in these situations?

In this book we use research findings and theories to help you better understand communication. These theories are based on social-scientific research conducted in real situations. Using social-scientific methods, researchers systematically observe people communicating, summarize patterns in what they observed, and then draw conclusions about how those patterns might be generalized into a theory about communication.

Your goal should be to understand these theories and research findings so that you can apply them to your own life. By making those connections, you will have a greater knowledge base from which to plan your communication, and you will become a more

ethics

A set of moral principles or values.



- Ethical communication is critical for the development of relationships and communities.

Burke/Triolo/Brand X Pictures/Getty Images

effective communicator. Common sense works in situations for which you are very familiar, but knowledge of theories provides you with a playbook for the type of new and unique situations that will increasingly confront you as you add new chapters to your life.

In becoming a competent and an ethical communicator and becoming more knowledgeable about communication research and theory, you will be ready to grow as a communicator. However, you should also set more specific and personal goals. As you read each chapter, your intention should be to use the information to improve at least one aspect of your communication. Communication is at the core of your current and future successes—challenge yourself to get better at it.

Communication Skills and Your Career

People take communication courses for a variety of reasons. At many colleges and universities, communication is taught as part of a general education program. Of course, many students enter their college or university with the intention of majoring in some aspect of communication; other students find their way to communication after they start college. Regardless of why you are in the class, understanding the variety of career pathways in communication is important.

The communication field covers many subfields, including public relations, advertising, business communication, journalism, corporate training, health communication, and marketing. Some students use their communication degree to keep many potential career tracks open to them, whereas others combine their degree with highly specialized minors or certificates to pursue specific career paths. We have seen our former students who majored in communication go on to become chief information officers, the CEO of an international produce growing company, a public information officer at the Pentagon, a local news reporter, an event planner for an international nonprofit, and many other successful career pathways. Below are examples of contemporary jobs held by communication graduates:

Field	Job Examples
Human/Speech Communication	Salesperson
	Teacher
	Corporate Trainer
	Event Planner
	Campaign Manager
	College Recruiter
	Fundraiser
	Public Information Officer
	Attorney
	Human Resources Administrator
	Nonprofit Manager
	Government Lobbyist
Media and Entertainment	Audio Engineer
	Videographer/Photographer
	Multimedia Reporter
	Augmented Reality Designer
	Broadcast Engineer
	Publicist
	News Anchor
	Screenwriter
	Film Critic
	Talent Manager
	News Producer
	Filmmaker

Technical Specialties

Public Relations Strategist
Web Designer
Public Health Officer
Data Analyst/Visualizer
Digital Designer
Social Media Analytics Researcher
App Developer
Advertising Project Manager
Creative Director
Network Administrator
Forensic Media Analyst
Animator

Although new graduates are likely to find jobs in a variety of entry-level positions, individuals with communication degrees frequently find that advancement comes quickly. Some communication graduates take advantage of graduate school, professional school, or other postgraduation opportunities to advance their careers. Regardless of the career field, effective communication skills are essential, and through this course you will learn communication theories and skills that will have practical effects on your personal life, on your involvement with your community, and in your career.

be ready... for what's next

Communication Growth as a Lifelong Process

Take a few moments to envision what you define as success. Perhaps it is a certain type of job or a significant relationship with another person that would make you feel successful. For many of us, success is defined along multiple dimensions, both personal and professional. Whatever your definition, communication is the most important skill that will help you achieve your goals. So, the question is, how do you develop the skills needed for success?

Although your communication class is a starting point for developing skills necessary for success, you must develop a commitment to lifelong learning. Below are several strategies for enacting that commitment:

1. *Challenge yourself.* Great communicators do not shy away from challenging communication situations. Find opportunities to communicate as a leader in student organizations, seek out situations in which you can give public speeches, and consider taking other communication classes so that you can gain additional knowledge. Challenging yourself to become a better communicator means that you will embrace many learning opportunities with increasing levels of difficulty.
2. *Be centered.* If you challenge yourself by communicating outside your comfort zone, you will likely make some mistakes. Speeches will not always go as well as you would like, and some people may not connect with you interpersonally. But don't give up. These outcomes are inevitable and part of the learning process. To benefit from these experiences, you must have a clear understanding of what you value. If your objective is to act with integrity, to challenge yourself, and to constantly work toward improving, you can react to these situations with grace and maturity.
3. *Be reflective.* To learn from your experiences, you must be willing to reflect with honesty on how you did, what went well, and what you would improve upon next time. Using a journal, keeping well-organized notes, and actively seeking feedback from others are all strategies that can help you grow as a communicator.

Your growth as a communicator started well before this class, and it will continue long after. Although you will learn many techniques, principles, and theories of effective communication over the course of this term, your true growth as a communicator will stem from an attitude of continual improvement. Your personal and professional future has many possible pathways, and communication will play a critical role in how you navigate those options.

Chapter Review & Study Guide

Summary

In this chapter you learned the following:

1. Communication is essential because
 - understanding communication can improve the way people view themselves and the way others view them.
 - people learn more about human relationships as they study communication and learn important life skills.
 - studying communication can help people feel confident in voicing and advocating their opinions and can create space to give voice to others.
 - an understanding of communication can help people succeed professionally.

2. Communication is the process of using messages to exchange shared meaning.

3. The components of communication are people, messages, channels, codes, encoding and decoding, feedback, noise, and situation.

4. The principles of communication include the ideas that
 - communication begins with the self and involves others.
 - communication has both a content and a relational dimension.

5. Communication involves choices.
 - an increased quantity of communication does not necessarily increase the quality of communication.
 - communication is pervasive, irreversible, and digitally mediated.

5. Communication occurs in intrapersonal, interpersonal, public, mass, and online communication contexts. The number of people involved, the degree of formality or intimacy, the opportunities for feedback, the need for prestructuring messages, and the degree of stability of the roles of speaker and listener all vary with the communication context.

6. Communication competence is the ability to effectively exchange meaning through a common system of symbols or behavior. Within the communication discipline, the National Communication Association (NCA) has created a set of ethics guidelines.

7. Concepts and theories covered in this book are drawn from social-scientific theories, which use various research methods to form conclusions about recurring patterns of human behavior. Those observed patterns form the basis of theories.

Key Terms

Asynchronous communication	Feedback	Process
Channel	Interpersonal communication	Public speaking
Code	Intrapersonal communication	Receiver
Communication	Mass communication	Situation
Communication competence	Meaning	Small-group communication
Context	Media convergence	Source
Decoding	Message	Synchronous communication
Dialogue	Noise	Technological convergence
Dyadic communication	Nonverbal codes	Verbal codes
Encoding	Online communication	
Ethics	Polarization	

Study Questions

1. Communication is considered a process of using messages to generate meaning because it is
 - a. an activity or exchange instead of an unchanging product.
 - b. a tangible object.
 - c. something with a beginning, a middle, and an end.
 - d. static.

2. Understanding another person’s messages does not occur unless
 - a. the speaker uses nonverbal messages.
 - b. common meanings for words, phrases, and nonverbal codes are elicited.
 - c. the listener asks questions.
 - d. both parties use verbal and nonverbal symbols.

3. The process of translating an idea or a thought into a code is known as
 - a. communicating.
 - b. decoding.
 - c. encoding.
 - d. deciphering.
4. Which communication principle considers variables such as verbal, nonverbal, and behavioral aspects; the channel used; and audience characteristics?
 - a. Communication has a content and a relational dimension.
 - b. Communication begins with the self.
 - c. Communication involves others.
 - d. Communication involves choices.
5. In online communication, _____ communication has delayed responses from the other person.
 - a. antisocial
 - b. asynchronous
 - c. altruistic
 - d. synchronous
6. Which of the following statements is accurate about online communication?
 - a. The maximum number of people in online communication is five to nine.
 - b. Online communication is unstable in the roles of participants.
 - c. Online communication can reach as few as two people.
 - d. Online communication does not allow for feedback.
7. Which of the following is defined as the ability to effectively exchange meaning through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior?
 - a. dyadic communication
 - b. communication competence
 - c. message
 - d. feedback
8. Ethical standards within the communication discipline have been created by the
 - a. National Communication Association.
 - b. American Communication Association.
 - c. Communication Administration.
 - d. Public Speaking Administration.
9. Studying communication is essential because it can
 - a. allow you to find a job very easily.
 - b. enhance your chances of selling questionable products to unknowing customers.
 - c. allow you to multiply the number of friends you have on social networks.
 - d. improve the way you see yourself and the way others see you.
10. When you respond to a speaker with a verbal or nonverbal cue, you are
 - a. giving feedback.
 - b. not communicating.
 - c. providing noise.
 - d. using a metaphor.

Answers:

1. (a); 2. (b); 3. (c); 4. (d); 5. (b); 6. (c); 7. (b); 8. (a); 9. (d); 10. (a)

Critical Thinking

1. In the beginning of the chapter, seven advantages to studying communication are discussed. Explain how these benefits apply to you in your chosen area of study.
2. Think of your online communication. How do you use online communication in your daily life (that is, for school, personal use, or work)? Do you prefer one device or another (for example, tablet or smartphone) or one social media platform over another (for example, Instagram or Snapchat)? How does your choice of digital media influence how you communicate with others?

Sizing Things Up Scoring and Interpretation

Communication Skills in Context

This chapter introduces the concept of communication competence. The survey you completed measures your competence. Each question in the survey asks you to indicate how effectively you can communicate within a particular context of communication (for example, friendships or online communication); some questions also target specific purposes for communicating (for example, resolving conflict). You can use this scale either as a global Communication Competence Scale, in which case you should average your answers for all questions to

achieve an overall score, or as a way of analyzing particular communication contexts or processes. This latter approach would involve analyzing your responses to each statement. If your overall average or response to any individual question is below 3, you may be lower in self-perceived communication competence. A score near 3 is average, and a score above 3 suggests that you perceive yourself higher in communication competence.

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