

# Communicating well



## Learner guide

Ready for work

**Pre-employment skills**

# **Communicating well**

Version 1.2



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## Version control and modification history

Version	Release date	Modification
Version 1.1	May 2016	First release
Version 1.2	November 2017	Minor corrections as part of our continuous improvement program

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### Communicating well

© 2016 Aspire Training & Consulting  
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First published May 2016  
Reprinted (with amendments) November 2017

Cover design: Aspire Training & Consulting

e-ISBN 978 1 76031 870 3 (PDF version)  
ISBN 978 1 76031 869 7

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# What is communication?

Communication is when people exchange information, ideas and thoughts with each other. Communication can be by speaking face to face, on the telephone or via video chat. You can also communicate by writing, through letters, newspapers, notices, emails or text messages.

To communicate well you need:

- speaking/verbal skills
- listening skills
- writing skills
- reading skills.



## Why is communication important?

Communication skills are important for all areas of your life, including friendships and in the workplace. People communicate every day, but things can often go wrong when communicating. Misunderstandings can happen if you don't communicate well. People may get upset, angry or disappointed. This learner guide will help you learn to communicate well so things don't go wrong.

In all communication there is someone giving the message (information, ideas or thoughts). This person is the sender. There is also someone getting the message, who is the receiver.

Both people need good communication skills so the message is understood. The sender needs to speak or write clearly to help the receiver understand, and the receiver needs to listen or read carefully to make sure they understand. When they both use good skills it results in clear, constructive communication. If they don't, the communication may not be successful and the message not understood.

This learner guide will focus on:

- speaking well
- writing well.



## Activity 1

With a partner, think of a situation that shows bad communication and one that shows good communication. Then act out the two situations in front of the class.

Here are some ideas to choose from. They could turn into bad or good situations based on the way people communicate. You may also have ideas of your own.

- Parents and teenagers talking about staying out late
- Two car drivers talking after having an accident
- A customer being given the wrong change by a shop assistant
- Somebody jumping their place in a queue
- Two people wanting to buy the same item in a sale

# Speaking well

Think of the times when you have spoken to others today. This may include:

- chatting to friends or family
- asking your trainer a question
- discussing something with classmates
- making a telephone call to book an appointment
- asking a bus driver which stop you should get off at
- asking a shop assistant how much something costs.

These are just a few examples of the types of speaking you may do every day. Some of these very common examples of spoken communication may actually be quite hard. For example, someone may have got confused or annoyed if the communication was not clear, or people may not have understood you properly.

## Story

Pete is in a hurry. He calls Sara on her mobile to tell her where and when to meet up later. Sara can't quite understand because she takes the call in a noisy street. She asks Pete to repeat the details, but Pete has just bumped into another friend. 'Can't talk now!' he yells into the phone.

Later that night Sara goes to where she thinks she is supposed to be meeting Pete. He isn't there! She gets mad and calls him on his mobile. Pete is at another place and says it's too far away to bother to meet up now. Both of them blame each other for the mix-up.



# Barriers to communication

Things that stop people from understanding each other are called barriers to communication. Some barriers include:

- not looking at someone when they are speaking to you
- not speaking clearly – mumbling or speaking too softly
- talking about many things at once and getting confused
- being in a bad mood and not speaking politely
- using words someone may not understand, perhaps because they are from another country.

To communicate well there are also some norms in our society about how to speak to different people. If you don't follow these norms you may form a barrier between yourself and the person you are talking to, causing communication to break down.

Here is some more information about how to communicate with different people in different situations.

What it is	What it means
<p data-bbox="288 1151 635 1189"><b>Speaking to your friends</b></p> 	<p data-bbox="679 1151 1302 1308">You can speak in a very casual way to your friends, using slang. You may even use some words or terms only you and the friend know.</p>
<p data-bbox="304 1554 619 1592"><b>Speaking to your boss</b></p> 	<p data-bbox="679 1554 1299 1756">In formal situations like talking to your boss or someone you have just met, you should avoid using slang and definitely not swear. A formal situation is one that is more official and often quite serious.</p>

### What it is

#### Showing cultural respect



### What it means

In some cultures there are different ways to talk to young people and older people. Some cultures have special ways of talking to older people to show respect. For example, a young person must wait for the older person to speak first. If you break the expected rules of speaking, you may create a communication barrier.

## Planning to speak

Planning to speak may seem strange, but it may be necessary. There may be times when you need to speak to someone in a formal situation. Perhaps you want to:

- speak to your doctor about a worry you have
- enrol in a TAFE course
- get advice from Centrelink
- ask a real estate agent about rental properties
- find out about a job.

Before you speak to any of the people involved you should plan carefully. Think about:

- what you want to say
- what you are going to ask
- what information you want from the person.

You will speak more clearly if you plan beforehand. If people can understand you better, the communication is more likely to be successful.

## Story

Nisha is a young mother who has recently moved to Australia. Her son goes to the local primary school. Lately he has been coming home very upset because some older boys have been bullying him. Nisha thinks he has even been hit as he has some bruises on his legs. She thinks he may be being bullied because he doesn't speak English well.

Nisha decides to go to see her son's teacher. She is very nervous, as she has never been to see a teacher in Australia before. She knows she needs to think carefully about what to say before she goes.

## Activity 2

Read the story again, then answer these questions.

1. What exactly would Nisha want to say?

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2. What would Nisha want to ask?

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3. What information would Nisha want from the teacher?

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[Click to complete Activity 2](#)

## Planning a telephone call

Planning what to say before you speak is very important before you make a telephone call. Some people may get nervous when they have to make an important call.

Think of the times when you have needed to make an important call. You may need to make an appointment with a doctor or dentist, or want to call a shop to find out if they have a product you want. Perhaps you need to call a company to ask about a job you are interested in.

When you make such phone calls, write down what you want to say before you make the call. Write some notes about who you want to speak to, what information you want and any other details that may be useful.

For example, if you are calling someone to make an appointment, make sure you know when you are free. It is no use making a doctor's appointment and then finding you have a job interview at the same time!

When you are using the telephone, speak more clearly and slowly than usual. Remember, the person you are speaking to can't see you. They can't see your expression; all they have for communication is the sound of your voice.



### Activity 3

1. Work with a partner to make an imaginary telephone call. Use the following information in your call:
  - Make an appointment; for example, with a dentist, a doctor, a hairdresser or an employer.
  - Give your personal details – your name, address and contact number.
  - The first date they suggest does not suit you. You need another date.
  - After you have a date settled you need to arrange a suitable time.
  - At the end of the conversation, check that you have all the details correct.
2. Give your partner feedback on whether they sounded polite, friendly and clear. Write down the feedback you receive.

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## Writing well

You may already write more often than you realise. You probably exchange text messages, emails or online messages with your friends. All of these require writing skills.

With friends, if you make a mistake, such as spelling a word wrong, it doesn't matter. However, for other types of writing you must do the best you can to write well and avoid mistakes.

If you are at work, you may need to write business letters or emails. If you are looking for a job you may need to write a resumé and an application letter. A resumé is a list of your qualifications, experience and skills.



## Activity 4

Before you try to write a formal letter or email, let's see how clearly you can write. Try this short writing exercise.

1. Write a few sentences that tell someone how to do something, for example, how to make a cup of coffee, use an ATM or travel from your home to the city.

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2. Now give your work to a partner (or your trainer) to check. Do they think they could follow your instructions? Did you leave out any important steps?

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[Click to complete Activity 4](#)

# Planning your writing

Whatever you are going to write, you must plan ahead. Think about these questions:

- What are you writing – a letter, email, postcard, invitation, etc.? Make sure you choose the right way to write.
- Why are you writing it? Make sure you are clear about why you are writing.
- Who are you writing to? Make sure you are writing to the correct person and keep them in mind when you write.



## Writing a draft

Once you have decided what to write, why to write it and who to write to, the next step is to write a draft. A draft is a rough copy. When you have finished the draft, you should check it over.

Here are some useful tips to help you check your writing.

### The five Cs

-  **Clear**  
What you have written needs to be easily understood.
-  **Concise**  
What you have written should be straight to the point. Do not use words that don't need to be included. Be as brief as possible.
-  **Correct**  
Make sure you have spelled all the words right – especially people's names. Check any facts you have included. Check also that the full stops and capital letters are in the right place.
-  **Complete**  
Make sure you have written everything you need to. Do you need to explain any special terms you have used?
-  **Courteous**  
Courteous means polite. Have you been polite and respectful in your writing?

Once you have checked your draft for all those things, read it out loud slowly to yourself. This is a good way to pick up any mistakes you have missed. Now it is time to do a final copy.

## Activity 5

Look at the writing exercise you did in the previous activity. Check it over for the five Cs. Do you think you can improve your writing?

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[Click to complete Activity 5](#)

## The final copy

Whatever you are writing, you need to take care to make sure the final copy is correct.

When writing the final copy of an email or letter, check to make sure you use:

- short, simple words
- short sentences
- correct spelling and punctuation – if you are using a computer, then use the spellchecker
- the correct name of the person you are writing to
- the correct address (if necessary).

When writing an email, there are some more checks you should do to make sure it is correct. Check your email to make sure you have:

- the correct email address – if there is even a small mistake, the email will not get to the person you are sending it to
- put some useful words in the ‘Subject’ box – this will tell the person receiving the email what the email is about.

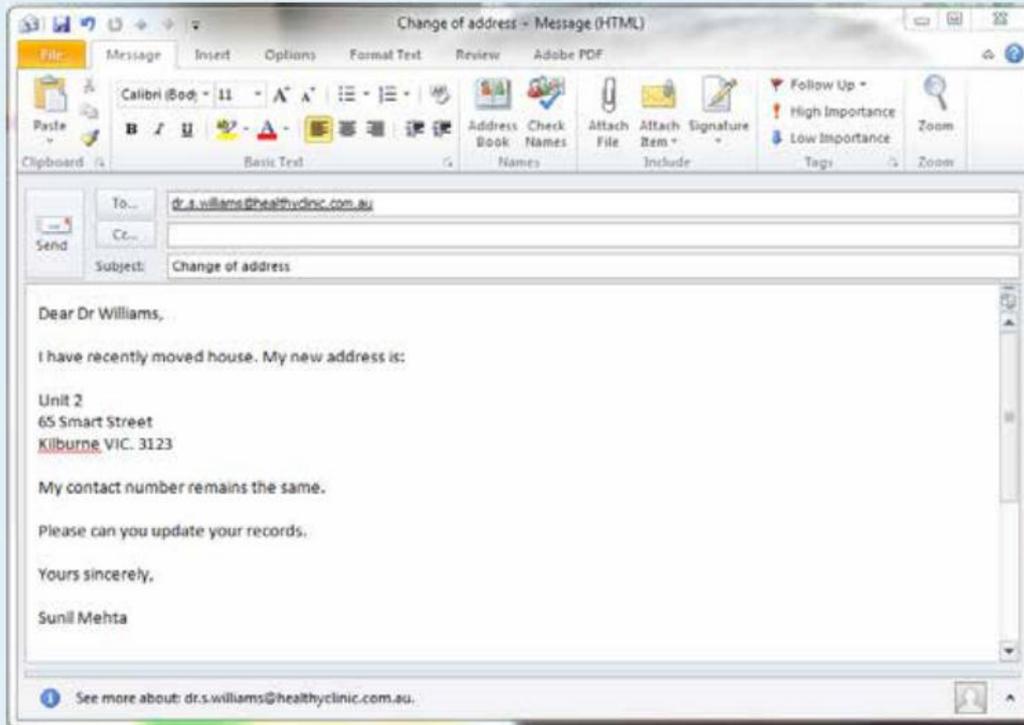
You should also check the five Cs again.

Never click ‘Send’ until you are absolutely sure everything in the email is correct.

Here is an example of how to set out a short, simple email correctly so that your message is communicated well.

## Story

Sunil has recently moved house and wants to let his doctor know his new address. He writes the following email.



## Activity 6

Practise writing an email. Look at Sunil's example for how to set it out. You can use any subject, or choose one from below.

- Write to the vet asking how often your dog needs a check-up. Also ask if she can recommend the best dog food. The vet is Karen Rubens.
- Write to the course supervisor at a TAFE asking what courses they offer in cooking. You are interested in doing a course, but are not sure which one.

**Click to complete Activity 6**

# The best way to communicate

To communicate successfully, you should choose the best way to communicate. Some examples of written communication are letters, emails, text messages or postcards. Spoken communication can occur face to face or on the phone. Think about which is best for your purpose.

Think about these questions:

- How would the receiver expect you to communicate?
- Which way would be the most polite?
- Which way would be the fastest?
- Do you need a to get reply?
- Do you need to keep a record or a copy of what you sent?

Think about the answers to these questions when you do the next activity.

## Activity 7

Read each 'purpose of communicating' in the left-hand column in the table below. Then choose what you think is the best way to communicate this information. The options are:

- letter
- email
- face to face
- telephone call
- text message.

Then write why you chose that way to communicate. The first one has been done for you.

The purpose of communicating	The best way	Why I chose this way
Answering a job advertisement	<i>Email</i>	<i>It is quick and I can attach my resumé.</i>
Finding out whether a shop has a DVD you want		
Asking your trainer a question about an assignment		
Making a complaint about your internet bill		
Making an inquiry about booking a hotel room		
Asking a friend where you will meet later		

[Click to complete Activity 7](#)

# Styles of communication

There are three main styles of communication. You should be aware of these, especially if you are in a difficult situation, for example, when people are disagreeing with each other or angry about something.

The styles are:

- Aggressive communication
- Passive communication
- Assertive communication

Here is some more information.

What it is	What it means
<p data-bbox="308 887 692 925"><b>Aggressive communication</b></p> 	<p data-bbox="756 887 1393 1211">When someone is using aggressive communication, they speak loudly and rudely. They don't listen to what the other person is saying. They only care about their own opinion and not the opinions of other people. Their facial expressions are usually unfriendly and they may stand very close to you when they are talking.</p> <p data-bbox="756 1240 1374 1317">Avoid this style of communication – it only makes a difficult situation worse.</p>
<p data-bbox="331 1357 671 1395"><b>Passive communication</b></p> 	<p data-bbox="756 1357 1409 1556">If a person is using passive communication, they don't say how they honestly feel or what they want. They keep their feelings to themselves and don't like to give their opinions. They don't stick up for themselves.</p> <p data-bbox="756 1585 1370 1744">Avoid this style of communication – you usually end up feeling annoyed that you have missed the opportunity to voice your opinion.</p>

### What it is

#### Assertive communication



### What it means

When someone uses assertive communication, they say exactly what they think, feel and want. They express these things in a polite, clear and calm way. They also listen politely to other people.

This is the best style of communication to use – it avoids conflict, gets your message across and encourages further communication.

## Activity 8

1. Write or talk about a time when you experienced aggressive communication. How did it happen? What was the result? How did this make you feel?

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2. Write or talk about a time when you behaved passively. Why did you act that way? How did you feel afterwards?

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3. Write or talk about a time when you successfully used assertive communication. How did other people react? How did you feel afterwards?

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[Click to complete Activity 8](#)

## What you have learnt

Put a ✓ in the box when you have learnt these things.

- Communication is when people exchange information, ideas and thoughts with each other.
- Communication may be verbal or in writing.
- Communication has a sender – who speaks or writes – and a receiver – who listens or reads.
- Communication may break down if the sender's speaking or writing is not clear, or the receiver does not listen or read well.
- Barriers, such as not speaking clearly, or not looking at the person speaking to you, may cause communication to break down.
- Before you speak in a formal situation, especially on the telephone, you should plan what you are going to say.
- When you are using writing to communicate you should always write a draft (rough copy) first.
- Check the draft for mistakes (such as spelling errors) before you write a final copy.
- Think about the best way to communicate; for example, face to face, by telephone, email or letter.
- Be prepared to communicate your ideas, opinions and questions in a calm and polite manner; use assertive communication, not aggressive or passive communication.

## Check your learning

Complete the following tasks.

### Task 1

With a partner, act out the following role-play. Your task is to communicate well.

**Location:** A shop

**Situation:** A customer is very upset and is complaining. She had bought a new smartphone, which did not work when she got it home. She believes it has been used before and is not new. The other person is the shop assistant. Both people must try to talk about the situation in a clear, polite and calm manner to come to an agreement.

### Task 2

You have a toothache and need to call a dentist for an appointment. Your friend gives you the phone number for his dentist, Dr Martin. Think about what time you are able to go. You don't know the dentist's address, so you'll need to ask for it. Make notes before you call. Then make the imaginary call with your trainer or a partner.

### Task 3

Write a short email to a youth hostel. You want to know how much it costs to stay for a weekend from Friday night to Sunday. You would like a single room. The email address is: brightyouthhostel@travelyoung.com.au

Write a draft first. Check it for mistakes. Write in the subject line. Then print out the final copy to provide to your trainer.

Click to complete

# Answers

## Answers to activities

### Activity 1

No written answer is required for this activity.

### Activity 2

#### Answer to Question 1

Nisha would want to tell the teacher about her son coming home upset. She should tell the teacher what her son has told her about being bullied.

#### Answer to Question 2

Nisha would want to ask how the teacher will respond to this issue and stop this from happening.

#### Answer to Question 3

Nisha would want reassurance from the teacher that the bullying will stop and that her son would be safe and happy at school.

### Activity 3

#### Answer to Question 1

No written answer is required for this activity.

#### Answer to Question 2

Answers will vary based on individual feedback. However, responses could include:

- My partner said I spoke clearly and in a friendly way.
- My partner said I mumbled too much and some information was lost.
- My partner reminded me that I forgot to check all the details at the end of the call.

## Activity 4

### Answer to Question 1

Answers will vary depending on the topic chosen.

### Answer to Question 2

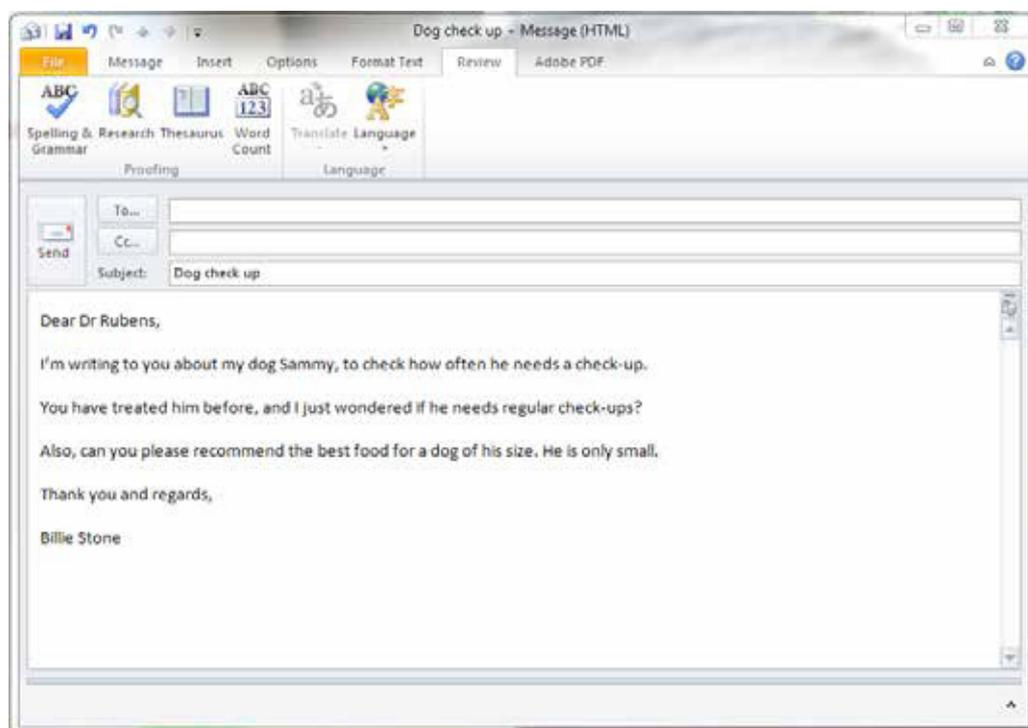
Answers will vary depending on the writing presented.

## Activity 5

Answers will depend on the writing presented in the previous activity.

## Activity 6

Answers will vary. Here is an answer for the vet example.



## Activity 7

Answers will vary. Here are example answers.

The purpose of communicating	The best way	Why I chose this way
Answering a job advertisement	Email	<i>It is quick and I can attach my resumé.</i>
Finding out whether a shop has a DVD you want	Telephone	The person can tell me right away.
Asking your trainer a question about an assignment	Email	The trainer can give me information in writing in an email reply.
Making a complaint about your internet bill	Telephone	Talking to someone would give me an immediate answer.
Making an inquiry about booking a hotel room	Telephone	The person can answer my question right away.
Asking a friend where you will meet later	Text message	It is quick and easy.

## Activity 8

### Answer to Question 1

Answers will depend on the situation, but it is likely to have upset the person, particularly if the aggression wasn't called for.

### Answer to Question 2

Answers will depend on the situation, but the person is likely to feel frustrated if they didn't communicate their opinion.

### Answer to Question 3

Answers will depend on the situation, but the person is likely to feel satisfied that they communicated their point well.

## Answers to check your learning

### Task 1

No written response is required for this task. Good assertive communication skills should have been demonstrated, and an agreement made.

### Task 2

Answers will vary. Here are some example notes.

Need to:

- have my sore tooth checked with Dr Martin
- make an appointment Wed–Fri after 3 pm
- ask for the address.

### Task 3

Here is an example response.

