

Communication

Communication is the process of generating shared meaning through the exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages.

Elements of Communication

Although individual definitions of communication vary, these definitions often include some of the same essential elements. Seven important components of the communication process include **participants, symbols, encoding, decoding, channels, feedback, and noise.**

What are some elements of the communication process that your definition includes? Unless you're thinking of intrapersonal communication (the act of talking to yourself), your definition probably includes two or more participants, the senders and/or receivers of messages. The messages these **participants** send and receive are made up of **symbols**, verbal or non-verbal signifiers that represent ideas and serve as the building blocks of communication. For example, when you say "Hello!" to your friend as a greeting, you are using a verbal symbol (a word) to convey your meaning. Alternatively, non-verbal symbols to greet someone could include a wave or a handshake.

The internal cognitive process that allows participants to send, receive, and understand messages is the encoding and decoding process. **Encoding** is the sender's process of turning thoughts into messages. **Decoding** is the receiver's process of taking and interpreting a message. Although these definitions make them sound like intentional, well thought-out processes, the level of conscious thought that goes into encoding and decoding messages varies. In everyday conversation, encoding and decoding sometimes seem instantaneous. At other times, participants carefully choose every word they use in the encoding process.

An encoded message is sent through a **channel**, a medium through which communication occurs. Think of the various channels that you use daily. You speak to your professors face-to-face, you chat with friends through Snapchat, you talk to a family member on FaceTime, you watch an influencer's videos on TikTok, or you scroll through posts on Reddit. Many of these channels allow for immediate **feedback**—any response from the receiver to the sender of a message. You might leave a comment on a YouTube video or ask a follow-up question to a teacher. Face-to-face communication is often considered the richest channel of communication, in part because of its allowance for immediate verbal and non-verbal feedback. Yet, all channels have their own strengths and limitations. For example, you can reach a large audience quickly on Twitter, but not all messages can be effectively conveyed in a text-based and character-limited tweet.

As we know, there are often barriers to effective communication. **Noise** is anything that interferes with a message being sent between participants in a communication encounter. Even if a speaker encodes a clear message, noise may interfere with a message being accurately received and decoded. **External noise** includes any physical or audible noise present in a communication encounter. Other people talking in a crowded diner could interfere with your ability to transmit a message and have it successfully decoded.

Internal noise includes stimuli in our minds or bodies that could detract from our ability to listen to and decode a message. If you were stressed about an exam or tired from a lack of sleep, you might not be able to effectively listen to a professor's lecture.

Task

Instructions: Fill in the blanks using the terms provided to complete the definitions of the key communication components.

Terms: Participants, Symbols, Encoding, Decoding, Channel, Feedback, Noise

1. The individuals involved in the communication process are called _____.
2. Verbal and non-verbal signs or actions that represent ideas and meanings in communication are known as _____.
3. The process of converting thoughts into a message is called _____.
4. The process of interpreting and understanding a message is called _____.
5. The medium through which the message is transmitted, such as face-to-face, phone, or email, is referred to as the _____.
6. Any response from the receiver that shows whether they understood the message is known as _____.
7. Distractions or barriers, whether internal (thoughts) or external (background noise), that interfere with effective communication are called _____.

Reference:

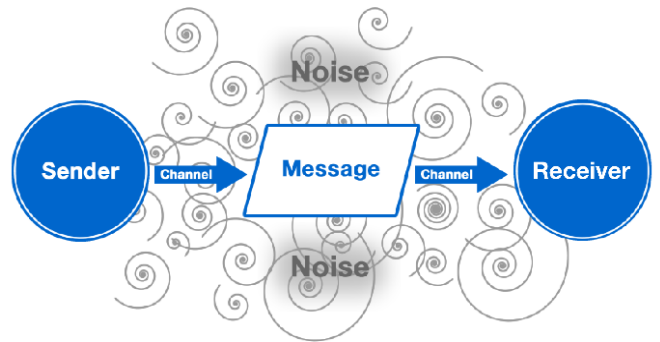
Walker, J. (Ed.). (2023). *Keys to communication: An essential guide to communication in the real world*. University of Montevallo. <https://pressbooks.pub/umcoms101/>

Models of Communication

Models of communication simplify the process by providing a visual representation of the various aspects of a communication encounter. We will discuss three models of communication: the linear model, the interaction model, and the transactional model.

The Linear Model of Communication

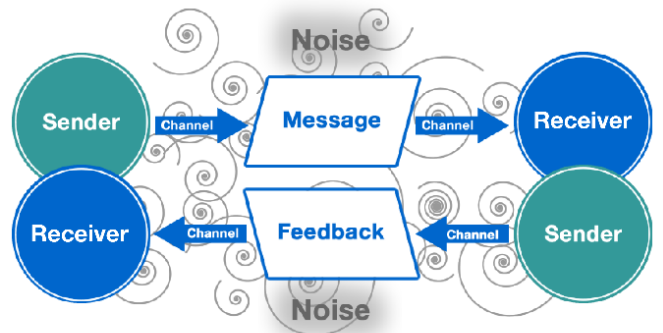
- A one-way process where the sender transmits a message to the receiver without feedback.
- Focuses on the sender and the message.
- Does not account for feedback; the receiver is viewed as a passive target.



Example: A radio broadcast where the speaker sends a message to an audience without knowing if it was received.

The Interactive Model of Communication

- A two-way process where participants alternate between sending and receiving messages.
- Incorporates feedback, making communication more dynamic.
- The model emphasizes interaction and acknowledges that not all messages may be received or understood.

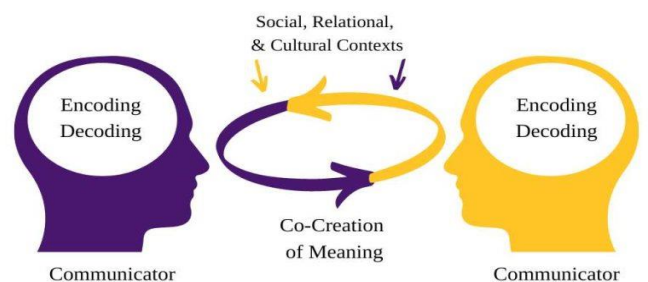


Example: A conversation where both people send and receive messages with feedback involved.

The Transactional Model of Communication

- A complex process where communicators create social realities through communication.
- Both parties are considered **communicators**, simultaneously sending and receiving messages.
- Communication shapes relationships, self-concepts, and social realities.

Transactional Model of Communication



Example: A job interview where the interviewee adapts their verbal responses and maintains eye contact, nods to show engagement, and uses confident body language to convey professionalism and enthusiasm.

- **Social context:** refers to explicit rules and implicit norms that guide communication. Rules are taught directly, while norms are learned through observation and experience.
- **Norms:** social conventions we learn by practice, often without realizing them until we deviate from them.
- **Relational context:** involves the influence of interpersonal history on communication. Familiarity with someone leads to more relaxed and informal interactions over time.
- **Cultural context:** identities like race, gender, and class shape communication. Marginalized groups tend to be more aware of how their identity impacts communication, unlike dominant groups.

Task:

Instructions: Match each communication model on the left with the correct description on the right.

Models of Communication	Descriptions
1. Linear Model	A. Communication is viewed as a continuous, interactive process where both parties send and receive messages.
2. Interactive Model	B. A one-way communication process where the sender transmits a message and the receiver may or may not receive it.
3. Transactional Model	C. A two-way process where the participants alternate roles, sending messages and providing feedback.
Contextual Factors	Descriptions
4. Social Context	D. Identities such as race, gender, and class influence how individuals communicate.
5. Relational Context	E. Past interactions and relationship history affect how people communicate with each other.
6. Cultural Context	F. Communication is guided by social rules and norms learned through observation and experience.

Reference:

Walker, J. (Ed.). (2023). *Keys to communication: An essential guide to communication in the real world*. University of Montevallo. <https://pressbooks.pub/umcoms101/>

Effective Communication

Communication Competence

Communication competence refers to the knowledge of appropriate, ethical, and effective communication patterns and the ability to use and adapt that knowledge in various contexts (Cooley & Roach, 1984). To better understand this definition, let's break apart its three key components: appropriateness, ethics, and effectiveness.

Appropriateness

A competent communicator understands that they must adapt the way they communicate to make it appropriate for different situations. For example, someone texting a friend might use emojis and informal language without paying much attention to spelling or grammar. However, when sending an email to a professor, that same person will likely use a formal greeting, write in complete sentences, and double check their email for errors. While there may not be formal rules for how we should send texts vs. emails or how we should communicate with friends vs. professors, a competent communicator adapts their message based on the unwritten norms and expectations.

Ethics

Communication ethics deals with the process of negotiating and reflecting on our actions and communication regarding what we believe to be right and wrong. The emphasis in the study of communication ethics is on practices and actions rather than thoughts and philosophies. Many people claim high ethical standards but do not live up to them in practice. A competent communicator prioritizes ethical communication practices such as truthfulness, fairness, integrity, and respect for self and others.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to an individual's ability to achieve their goals through communication. Knowledge, skills, and motivation are important factors in an individual's ability to be an effective communicator. For example, you might know strategies for being an effective speaker, but public speaking anxiety that kicks in when you get in front of the audience may prevent you from fully putting that knowledge into practice. It's not enough to know what good communication consists of; you must also have the motivation to reflect on and better your communication and the skills needed to do so.

Task: translate the texts into Arabic

Reference: Walker, J. (Ed.). (2023). *Keys to communication: An essential guide to communication in the real world*. University of Montevallo. <https://pressbooks.pub/umcoms101/>

Barriers to Communication

Communication can be obstructed by various barriers that arise from issues within any component of the communication model. Understanding these barriers provides opportunities for improvement. Here are some key barriers to communication:

- **Muddled Messages:** Clear communication requires precise messages. Confusing messages can stem from unclear thinking, vague ideas, or poor semantics, leading to misunderstandings. Feedback from the receiver can help clarify these muddled messages.
- **Stereotyping:** Oversimplified beliefs about individuals or groups can prevent open-mindedness and critical thinking, causing senders and receivers to assume they already understand the message. Both parties should challenge their stereotypes to enhance communication.
- **Wrong Channel:** Choosing an inappropriate communication channel can hinder understanding. For example, casual greetings are best conveyed verbally, while complex messages may require written communication. The channel selection should consider message complexity and potential consequences of misunderstandings.
- **Language:** Words can be interpreted differently based on individual perceptions. This can create barriers, especially when specific jargon or unfamiliar language is used. Teaching the specific language of a workplace can help overcome this barrier.
- **Lack of Feedback:** Feedback is crucial for effective communication. It allows the sender to gauge the receiver's understanding. Without feedback, communication becomes a one-way process. Effective feedback should be timely, specific, and constructive.
- **Poor Listening Skills:** Active listening is essential, as listeners can often process information faster than speakers can convey it. Listeners should focus on the speaker, avoid interruptions, and provide feedback to ensure understanding.
- **Interruptions:** Frequent interruptions in busy environments can disrupt conversations and lead to incomplete exchanges of information. This can discourage open communication and result in misunderstandings.
- **Physical Distractions:** External factors, such as noise, uncomfortable settings, or interruptions from devices, can impede effective communication. Minimizing these distractions helps maintain focus on the conversation.

Task:

Complete the sentences by filling in the missing words from the word bank.

Word Bank: muddled messages, stereotyping, wrong channel, language, lack of feedback, poor listening skills, interruptions, physical distractions

1. _____ occur when the sender's message is unclear, leading to misunderstandings.

2. Using the appropriate communication method is essential; otherwise, you might choose the _____ for your message.
3. _____ can prevent individuals from understanding each other due to oversimplified beliefs or assumptions.
4. If a message is not delivered correctly because of the medium used, it can become a barrier known as _____.
5. The absence of response from the receiver is a barrier termed _____.
6. Effective communication requires strong _____ to ensure that the message is received as intended.
7. In a busy environment, _____ can disrupt conversations and lead to incomplete exchanges of information.
8. External factors such as noise or discomfort are known as _____ that can hinder effective communication.

Reference:

Erven, B. L. (n.d.). *Overcoming barriers to communication*. Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics, Ohio State University.

<https://aede.osu.edu/sites/aede/files/imce/overcomingbarrierstocommunication.pdf>