Essentials of Communication

ESSENTIALS OF COMMUNICATION

MICHAEL COP

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INTRODUCTION

This textbook complements lecture and tutorial material for Essentials of Communication, an introductory paper on the fundamentals of effective speaking and writing. The paper covers models of communication, oral communication, active listening, critical reading, and formal writing, enabling students to communicate more effectively in tutorials, labs, and written assignments. The paper caters to university students in all academic disciplines and includes course material relevant to both first and second language English speakers. It is designed to ensure that students perform well in academic environments and begin to prepare for professional ones.

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CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Jason S. Wrench; Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine S. Thweatt

Tama and John have been friends since they were in preschool. They are both applying to the same university, hoping to be flat mates in their first year. Tama gets accepted, but John does not. Tama is crushed because he wanted to share his university experience with his best friend. John tells Tama to go without him, and he will try again next year after attending the local polytechnic for a semester. Tama is not as excited to go to university anymore because he is worried about John, and so he talks about different options with his whanau, and he discusses options with his online friends, too. This idea of sharing our experiences, whether it be positive or negative, mediated or face-to-face, is interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication is when we offer information to other people and they offer information towards us.

Interpersonal Communication can be informal (the checkout line in a grocery store or a conversation at a friend's flat) or formal (lecture classroom or job interview). It can be mediated (text, phone calls, social media platforms), but interpersonal communication often occurs in face-to-face contexts (unmediated). This type of interpersonal communication is often unplanned, spontaneous, and ungrammatical.

In this chapter, you will learn the concepts associated with different aspects of interpersonal communication and how certain variables can help you achieve your goals. You will learn about communication models that might influence how a message is sent and/or received. You will also learn about characteristics that influence the message and can cause others not to accept or understand the message that you were trying to send.

1.1 Purposes of Interpersonal Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Explain Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and its relationship to communication
2. Describe the relationship between self, others, and communication

Meeting Personal Needs

Communication fulfills our physical, personal, and social needs. Research has shown a powerful link between happiness and communication.[1] In this particular study that included over 200 college students, they found that the ones who reported the highest levels of happiness also had a very active social life. They noted there were no differences between the happiest people and other similar peers in terms of how much they exercised, participated in religion, or engaged in other activities. The results from the study noted that having a social life can help people connect with others. We can connect with others through effective communication. Overall, communication is essential to our emotional wellbeing and perceptions about life. Research has shown that couples who engage in effective communication report more happiness than couples who do not,[2] but communication is not an easy skill for everyone. As you read further, you will see that there are a lot of considerations and variables that can affect how a message is relayed and received.

Effective interpersonal communication is also important for our professional lives. For example, doctors, nurses, and other health professionals need to be able to listen to their patients to understand their concerns and medical issues. In turn, these health professionals have to be able to communicate the right type of treatment and procedures so that their patients will feel confident that it is the best type of outcome and they will comply with these medical orders.

As Figure 1.1 indicates, psychologist Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) believed that human needs emerge in order starting from the bottom of the pyramid. At the basic level, humans must have *physiological* needs met, such as breathing, food, water, sex, homeostasis, sleep, and excretion. Once the physiological needs have been met, humans can attempt to meet *safety* needs, which include the safety of the body, family, resources, morality, health, and employment. A higher-order need that must be met is *love and belonging,* which encompasses friendship, sexual intimacy, and family. Another higher-order need that must be met before self-actualization is *esteem*, which includes self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others, and respect by others. Maslow argued that all of the lower needs were necessary to help us achieve psychological health and eventually self-actualization.[3] Self-actualization leads to creativity, morality, spontaneity, problem-solving, lack of prejudice, and acceptance of facts.

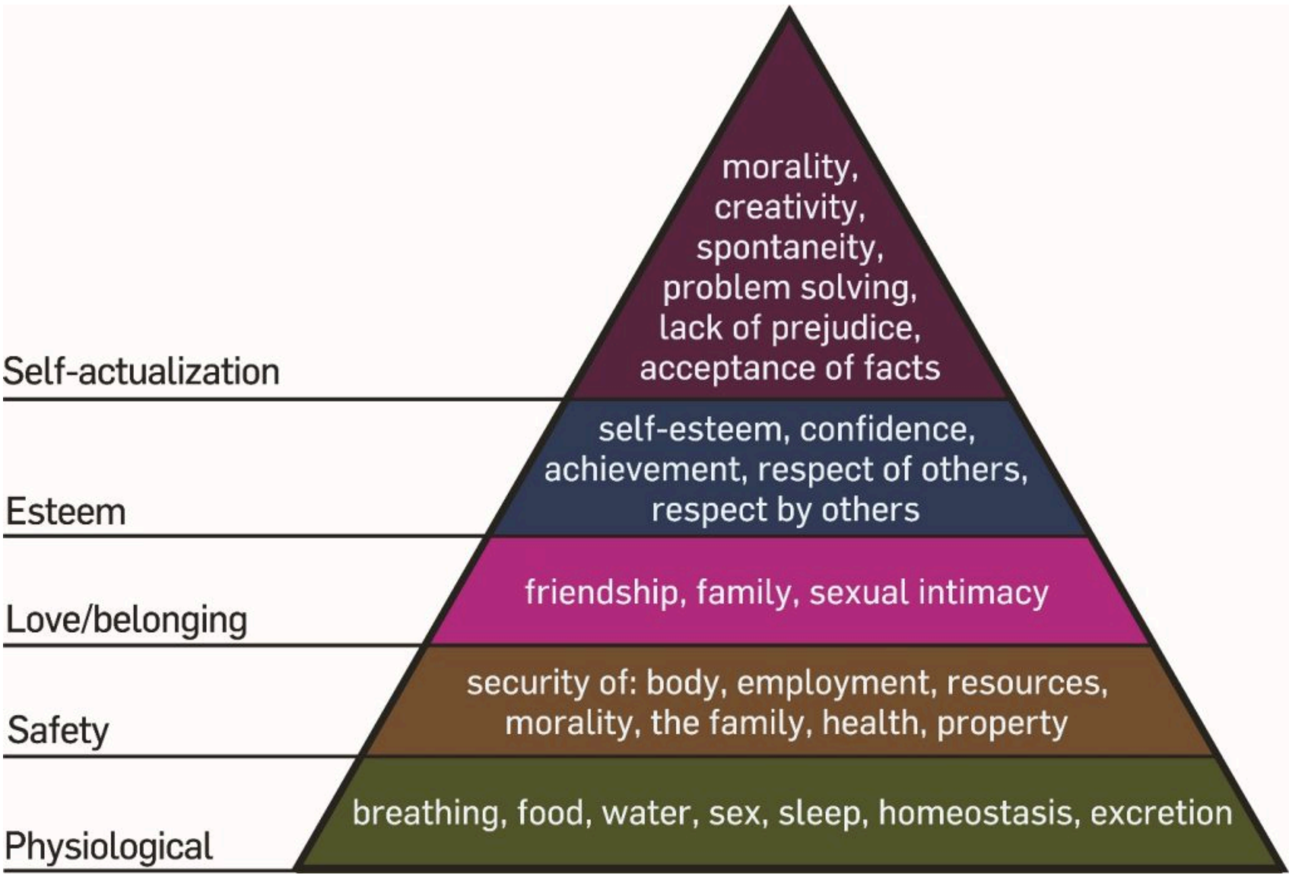

Figure 1.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Communicating and Meeting Personal Needs

It is important to understand that people communicate to satisfy their needs, but each person's need level is different. To survive, people need their physiological and safety needs to be met. Through communication, humans can work together to grow food, produce food, build shelter, create safe environments, and engage in protective behaviors. Once physiological and safety needs have been met, communication can then shift to love and belonging. Instead of focusing on survival, humans can focus on building relationships by discussing perhaps the value of a friendship or the desire for sexual intimacy. After creating a sense of love and belonging, humans can move forward to working on "esteem." Communication may involve sharing praise, working toward goals, and discussion of strengths, which may lead to positive self-esteem. When esteem has been addressed and met, humans can achieve self-actualization. Communication will be about making life better, sharing innovative ideas, contributions to society, compassion and understanding, and providing insight to others. Imagine trying to communicate creatively about a novel or express compassion for others while starving and feeling unprotected. The problem of starving must be resolved before communication can shift to areas addressed within self-actualization.

Critics of Maslow's theory argue that the hierarchy may not be absolute because it could be possible to achieve self-actualization without meeting the lower needs.[4] For example, a parent/guardian might put before the needs of the child first if food is scarce. In this case, the need for food has not been fully met, yet the parent/guardian is able to engage in self-actualized behavior. Other critics point out that Maslow's hierarchy is rather Western-centric and focused on more individualistic cultures (focus is on the individual needs and desires) and not applicable to cultures that are collectivistic (focus is on the family, group, or culture's needs and desires).[5]

Other people may have different needs from us. This difference can influence how a message is received. Imagine the following scenario. Shaun and Dee have been dating for some time. Dee wants to talk about wedding plans and the possibility of having children. However, Shaun is struggling to make ends meet. He is focused on his paycheck, where he will get money to cover his rent, and what his next meal will be. Shaun finds it difficult to talk to Dee about their future plans when he is so focused on his basic physiological needs for food and water. Dee is on a different level, love and belonging, because she doesn't have to worry about finances. In such a scenario, communication can be difficult when two people have very drastic needs that are not being met. Dee may feel like Shaun doesn't love her because he refuses to talk about their future together. Shaun is upset with Dee because she doesn't seem to understand how hard it is for him to deal with such a tight budget. If we are not able to understand to recognize that people may have different needs and identify where the other person's needs are, then we might not be able to have connective conversations. Needs may factor into the context of interpersonal communication (or in other places in communication models), which is one of the factors in interpersonal communication models, as we shall now see.

1.2 Elements of Interpersonal Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Understand that communication is a process.
2. Differentiate among the components of communication processes and communication models.
3. Describe the differences between the sender and receiver of a message.

You may think that communication is easy. However, at moments in your life, communication might be hard and difficult to understand. We can study communication similar to the way we study other systems. There are elements to the communication process that are important to understand. Each interaction that we have will typically include a sender, receiver, message, channel, feedback, and noise. Let's take a closer look at each one.

Sender

Humans encode messages naturally, and we don't often consider this part of the process. However, if you have ever thought about the exact words that you would use to get a later curfew from your parents/guardians and how you might refute any counterpoints, then you intuitively know that choosing the right words – "encoding" – weighed heavily in your ability to influence your parents/guardians successfully. The language you chose mattered.

The sender is the encoder or **source** of the message. The sender is the person who decides to communicate and the intent of the message. The source may decide to send messages to entertain, persuade, inform, include, or escape. Often, the sources will create a message based on their feelings, thoughts, perceptions, and past experiences. For instance, if you have feelings of affection towards someone but never communicate those feelings toward that person, they will never know. The sender can withhold or release information.

Receiver

The transactional model of communication teaches us that we are both the sender and receiver simultaneously. The **receiver**(s) is the individual who decodes the message and tries to understand the source of the message. Receivers have to filter messages based on their attitudes, beliefs, opinions, values, history, and prejudices. People will encode messages through their five senses. We have to pay attention to the source of the message to receive the message. If the receiver does not get the message, then communication did not occur. The receiver needs to obtain a message.

Daily, you will receive several messages. Some of these messages are intentional, and some of these messages will be unintentional. For instance, a person waving in your direction might be waving to someone behind you, but you accidentally think they are waving at you. Some messages will be easy to understand, and some messages will be hard to interpret. Every time a person sends a message, they are also receiving messages simultaneously.

Message

Messages include any type of textual, verbal, and nonverbal aspects of communication, in which individuals give meaning. People send messages intentionally (texting a friend to meet for coffee) or unintentionally (accidentally falling asleep during lectures). Messages can be verbal (saying hello to your parents/guardians), nonverbal (hugging your parents/guardians), or text (words on a computer screen). Essentially, communication is how messages create meaning. Yet, meanings differ among people. For instance, a friend of yours promises to repay you for the money they borrowed, and they say "sorry" for not having any money to give you. You might think they were insincere, but another person might think that it was a genuine apology. People can vary in their interpretations of messages.

Channel

With advances in technology, cell phones act as many different **channels** of communication at once. Consider that smartphones allow us to talk and text. Also, we can receive communication through Facebook, Twitter, Email, Instagram, Snapchat, and Reddit. All of these channels are in addition to our longer-standing channels, which were face-to-face communication, letter writing, telegram, and the telephone. The addition of these new communication channels has changed our lives forever. The channel is the medium in which we communicate our message. Think about breaking up a romantic relationship. Would you rather do it via face-to-face or via a text message? Why did you answer the way that you did?

It may seem like a silly thing to talk about channels, but a channel can make an impact on how people receive the message, and some channels themselves might contribute to the meaning of the message. The channel can affect the way that a receiver reacts and responds to your message. For instance, a handwritten love letter might seem more romantic than a typed email for a variety of reasons: the paper has been in the other's hand whereas an email is an electronic transmission; handwriting is unique to an individual whereas fonts are standardized; mailing a letter is a more effortful process (sourcing a paper, pen, envelope, and stamp, walking to find a mailbox, etc.); and so on. On the other hand, if there was some tragic news about your family, you would probably want someone to call you immediately rather than sending you a letter. The same process of letter writing may seem less mindful of the urgency of the message.

Overall, people naturally know that the message impacts which channel they might use. In a research study focused on channels, college students were asked about the best channels for delivering messages.[6] College students said that they would communicate face-to-face if the message was positive, but use mediated channels if the message was negative.

Feedback

Feedback is the response to the message. If there is no feedback, interpersonal communication would be less effective. Feedback is important because the sender needs to know if the receiver got the message. Simultaneously, the receiver usually will give the sender some sort of message that they comprehend what has been said. Negative feedback is when there is no feedback or if it seems that the receiver did not understand the message. Positive feedback is when the receiver understood the message. Positive feedback does not mean that the receiver entirely agrees with the sender of the message, but rather the message was comprehended. Sometimes feedback is not positive or negative; it can be ambiguous. Examples of ambiguous feedback might include saying "hmmm" or "interesting" (be careful, though, because these can also be examples of active listening, discussed in subsequent chapters). Based on these responses, it is not clear if the receiver of the message understood part or the entire message. It is important to note that feedback doesn't have to come from other people. Sometimes, we can be critical of our own words when we write them in a text or say them out loud. We might correct our words and change how we communicate based on our internal feedback.

Environment

The context or situation where communication occurs and affects the experience is referred to as the **environment**. We know that the way you communicate in a professional context might be different than in a personal context. In other words, you probably won't talk to your boss the same way you would talk to your best friend. (An exception might be if your best friend was also your boss.) The environment will affect how you communicate. For instance, in a library, you might talk more quietly than normal so that you don't disturb other library patrons. However, in a nightclub or bar, you might speak louder than normal due to the other people talking, music, or noise. Hence, the environment makes a difference in the way in which you communicate with others.

It is also important to note that environments can be related to fields of experience or a person's past experiences or background. For instance, a town hall meeting that plans to cut primary access to lower socioeconomic residents might be perceived differently by individuals who use these services and those who do not. Environments might overlap, but sometimes they do not. Some people in university have had many family members who attended the same school, but other people do not have any family members that ever attended university.

Noise

Anything that interferes with the message is called **noise**. Noise keeps the message from being completely understood by the receiver. If noise is absent, then the message would be accurate. However, usually, noise impacts the message in some way. Noise might be physical (e.g., television, cell phone, fan, etc.), or it might be psychological (e.g., thinking about your parents/guardians or missing someone you love). Noise is anything that hinders or distorts the message.

There are four types of noise. The first type is physical noise. This is noise that comes from a physical object. For instance, people talking, birds chirping, a jackhammer pounding concrete, a car revving by, are all different types of physical noise.

The second type of noise is psychological noise. This is the noise that no one else can see for you unless they can read your mind. It is the noise that occurs in a person's mind, such as frustration, anger, happiness, or depression. When you talk to a person, they might act and behave like nothing is wrong, but deep inside their mind, they might be dealing with a lot of other issues or problems. Hence, psychological noise is difficult to see or understand because it happens in the other person's mind.

The third type of noise is semantic noise, which deals with language. This could refer to jargon, accents, or language use. Sometimes our messages are not understood by others because of the word choice. For instance, if a person used the word "lit," it would probably depend on the other words accompanying the word "lit" and or the context. To say that "this party is lit" would mean something different compared to "he lit a cigarette." If you were coming from another country, that word might mean something different. Hence, sometimes language-related problems, where the receiver can't understand the message, are referred to as semantic noise.

The fourth and last type of noise is called physiological noise. This type of noise is because the receiver's body interferes or hinders the acceptance of a message. For instance, if the person is blind, they are unable to see any written messages that you might send. If the person is deaf, then they are unable to hear any spoken messages. If the person is very hungry, then they might pay more attention to their hunger than any other message.

Mindfulness Activity

We live in a world where there is constant noise. Practice being mindful of sound. Find a secluded spot and just close your eyes. Focus on the sounds around you. Do you notice certain sounds more than others? Why? Is it because you place more importance on those sounds compared to other sounds?

Sounds can be helpful to your application of mindfulness.[7] Some people prefer paying attention to sounds rather than their breath when meditating. The purpose of this activity is to see if you can discern some sounds more than others. Some people might find these sounds noisy and very distracting. Others might find the sounds calming and relaxing. There will be many times in life where you will be distracted because you might be overwhelmed with all the noise. It is essential to take a few minutes, just to be mindful of the noise and how you can deal with all the distractions. Once you are aware of the things that trigger these distractions or noise, then you will be able to be more focused and to be a better communicator.

Key Takeaways

- Communication is a process because senders and receivers act as senders and receivers simultaneously, with the receiver's feedback serving as a key element to continuing the process.
- The components of the communication process involve the source, sender, channel, message, environment, and noise.

Exercises

- Think of your most recent communication with another individual. Write down this conversation and, within the conversation, identify the components of the communication process.

- Think about the different types of noise that affect communication. Can you list some examples of how noise can make communication worse?
- Think about the advantages and disadvantages of different channels. Write down the pros and cons of the different channels of communication.

1.3 Perception Process

Learning Objectives

1. Describe perception and aspects of interpersonal perception.
2. List and explain the three stages of the perception process.
3. Understand the relationship between interpersonal communication and perception.

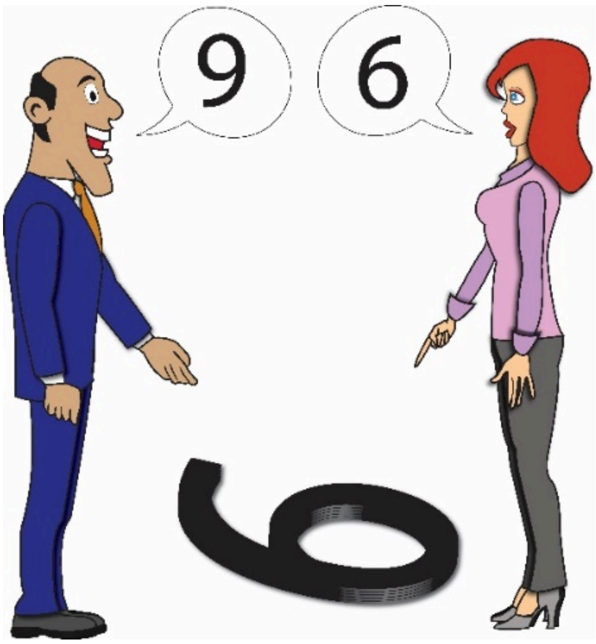

Figure 1.2 It's All About Perception

As you can see from Figure 1.2, how you view something is also how you will describe and define it. Your perception of something will determine how you feel about it and how you will communicate about it. In the figure, do you see it as a six or a nine? Why did you answer the way that you did?

Your perceptions affect who you are, and they are based on your experiences and preferences. If you have a horrible experience with a restaurant, you probably won't go to that restaurant in the future. You might even tell others not to go to that restaurant based on your personal experience. Thus, it is crucial to understand how perceptions can influence others.

Sometimes the silliest arguments occur with others because we don't understand their perceptions of things. Just like the figure shows, it is important to attempt to understand how the other person see things. In other words, put yourself in their shoes and see it from their perspective before jumping to conclusions or getting upset. That person might have a legitimate reason why they are not willing to concede with you.

Perception

Many of our problems in the world occur due to **perception**, or the process of acquiring, interpreting, and organizing information that comes in through your five senses. When we don't get all the facts, it is hard to make a concrete decision. We have to rely on our perceptions to understand the situation. In this section, you will learn tools that can help you understand perceptions and improve your communication skills. As you will see in many of the illustrations on perception, people can see different things. In some of the pictures, some might only be able to see one picture, but there might be others who can see both images, and a small amount might be able to see something completely different from the rest of the class.

Many famous artists over the years have played with people's perceptions. Figure 1.3 is an example of three artists' use of twisted perceptions. The first picture was initially created by Danish psychologist Edgar Rubin and is commonly called The Rubin Vase. Essentially, you have what appears to either be a vase (the white part) or two people looking at each other (the black part). This simple image can be both images and neither image at the same time. The second work of art is Charles Allan Gilbert's (1892) painting "All is Vanity." In this painting, you can see a woman sitting in a chair with her back to the viewer, staring at herself in a round mirror so that the viewer sees her reflection in that mirror. At the same time, the image is also a giant skull, where that round mirror forms the outline of the top of the skull and the tablecloth forms the jawline. Lastly, we have William Ely Hill (1915) "My Wife and My Mother-in-Law," which may have been loosely based on an 1888 German postcard. In Hill's painting, you have two different images, one of a young woman and one of an older woman: the young woman turns away from the viewer so that her partial profile is visible to the viewer; that same jawline forms the nose of the older woman who is much larger and in full profile. These visual images are helpful reminders that we don't always perceive things in the same way as those around us do. There are often multiple ways to view and understand the same set of events.

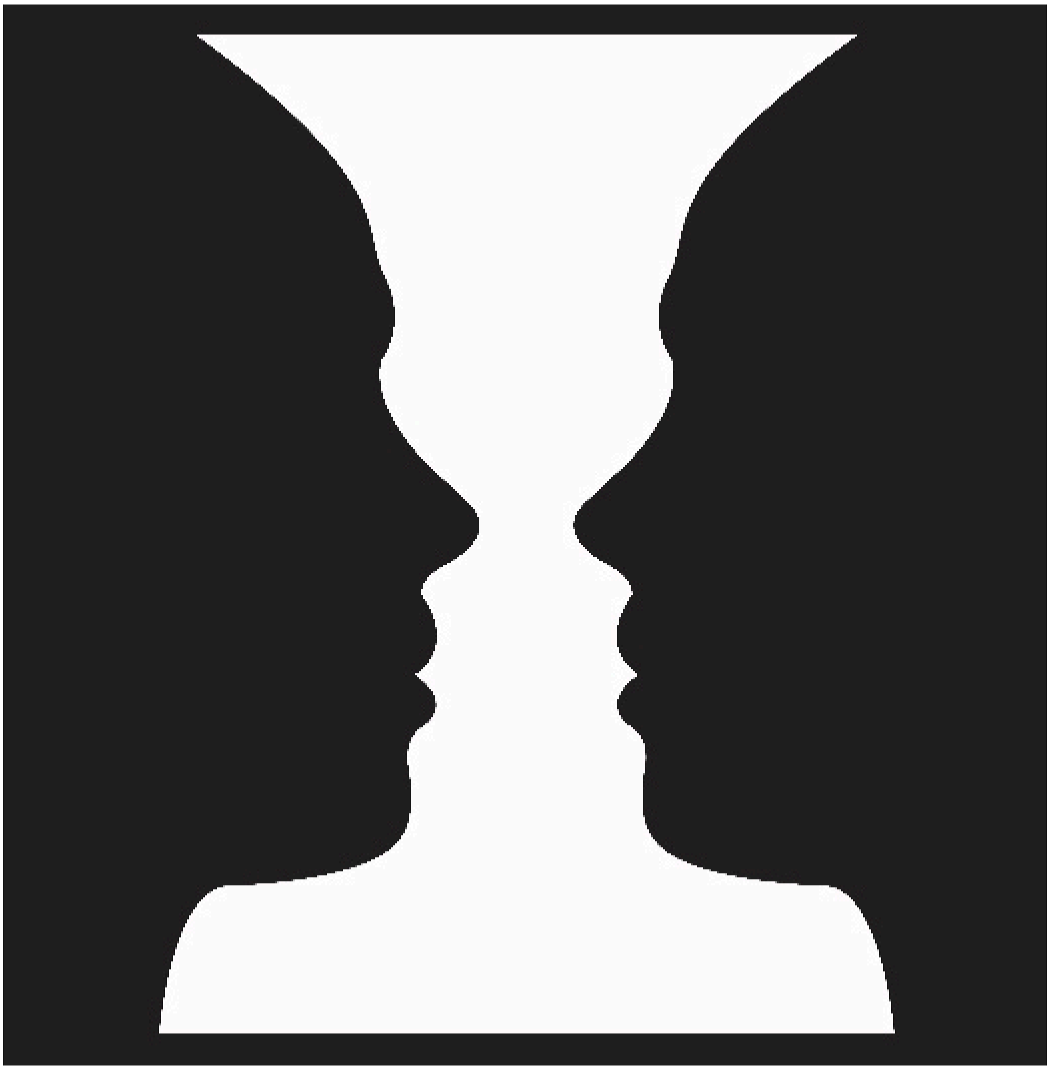

Figure 1.3a The Rubin Vase – based on Edgar John Rubin's (1915) "Vase Ambiguous Figure"

Figure 1.3b Charles Allan Gilbert (1892) “All is Vanity”

Figure 1.3c William Ely Hill (1915) "My Wife and My Mother-in-Law"

When it comes to interpersonal communication, each time you communicate to other people, you make choices. Sometimes you represent yourself more fully or accurately, and other times you may present an edited version of yourself; people may perceive those presentations in ways that we might not have anticipated. Other people can also present themselves how they want others to see them. For example, influencers might present themselves positively on social media in ways that foster strong relationships in the digital realm or have positive financial outcomes. Then, their followers or fans get shocked to learn when those presentations might not match with what happens outside of the digital realm. In this section, we will learn that the perception process has three stages: attending, organizing, and interpreting.

Attending

The first step of the perception process is to select what information you want to pay attention to or focus on, which is called **attending**. You will pay attention to things based on how they look, feel, smell, touch, and taste. At every moment, you are obtaining a large amount of information. So, how do you decide what you want to pay attention to and what you choose to ignore? People will tend to pay attention to things that matter to them. Usually, we pay attention to things that are louder, larger, different, and more complex to what we ordinarily view.

When we focus on a particular thing and ignore other elements, we call it selective perception. For instance, when you are in love, you might pay attention to only that special someone and not notice anything else. The same thing happens when we end a relationship, and we are devasted; we might see how everyone else is in a great relationship, but we aren't.

There are a couple of reasons why you pay attention to certain things more so than others.

The first reason why we pay attention to something is because it is extreme or intense. In other words, it stands out of the crowd and captures our attention, like an extremely good looking person at a party or a big neon sign in a dark, isolated town. We can't help but notice these things because they are exceptional or extraordinary in some way.

Second, we will pay attention to things that are different or contradicting. Commonly, when people enter an elevator, they face the doors. Imagine if someone entered the elevator and stood with their back to the elevator doors staring at you. You might pay attention to this person more than others because the behavior is unusual. It is something that you don't expect, and that makes it stand out more to you. "Different" could also be something that you are not used to or something that no longer exists for you. For instance, if you had someone very close to you pass away, then you might pay more attention to the loss of that person than to anything else. Some people grieve for an extended period because they were so used to having that person around, and things can be different since you don't have them to rely on or ask for input.

The third thing that we pay attention to is something that repeats over and over again. Think of a catchy song or a commercial that continually repeats itself. We might be more alert to it since it repeats, compared to something that was only said once. When we discuss effective of oral presentations, we will consider how important repetition is in solidifying concepts for an audience and in emphasizing your key points.

The fourth thing that we will pay attention to is based on our motives. If we have a motive to find a romantic partner, we might be more perceptive to other attractive people than normal, because we are looking for romantic interests. Another motive might be to lose weight, and you might pay more attention to exercise advertisements and food selection choices compared to someone who doesn't have the motive to lose weight. Our motives influence what we pay attention to and what we ignore.

The last thing that influences our selection process is our emotional state. If we are in an angry mood, then we might be more attentive to things that get us angrier. If we are in a happy mood, then we will be more likely to overlook a lot of negativity because we are already happy. Selecting doesn't involve just paying attention to certain cues. It also means that you might be overlooking other things. For instance, people in love will think their partner is amazing and will overlook a lot of their flaws. We are so focused on how wonderful they are that we often will neglect the other negative aspects of their behavior.

Organizing

Look again at the three images in Figure 1.3. What were the first things that you saw when you looked at each picture? Could you see the two different images? Which image was more prominent? When we examine a picture or image, we engage in **organizing** it in our head to make sense of it and define it. This is an example of organization. After we select the information to which we are paying attention, we have to make sense of it. This stage of the perception process is referred to as organization, and information can be organized in different ways. After we attend to something, our brains quickly want to make sense of this data–hence why you may have prioritized one image in the figures above the others.

There are four types of schemes that people use to organize perceptions.[8] First, physical constructs are used to classify people (e.g., young/old; tall/short; big/small). Second, role constructs are social positions (e.g., mother, friend, lover, doctor, teacher). Third, interaction constructs are the social behaviors displayed in the interaction (e.g., aggressive, friendly, dismissive, indifferent). Fourth, psychological constructs are the dispositions, emotions, and internal states of mind of the communicators (e.g., depressed, confident, happy, insecure). We often use these schemes to better understand and organize the information that we have received. We use these schemes to generalize others and to classify information.

Let's pretend that you came to class and noticed that one of your classmates was wildly waving their arms in the air at you. This behavior will most likely catch your attention because you find this behavior strange. Then, you will try to organize or makes sense of what is happening. Once you have organized it in your brain, you will need to interpret the behavior.

Interpreting

The final stage of the perception process is **interpreting**. In this stage of perception, you are attaching meaning to understand the data. So, after you select information and organize things in your brain, you have to interpret the situation. As previously discussed in the above example, your friend waves their hands wildly (attending), and you are trying to figure out what they are communicating to you (organizing). You will attach meaning (interpreting). Does your friend need help and is your friend trying to get your attention, or does your friend want you to watch out for something behind you?

We interpret other people's behavior daily. Walking to class, you might see an attractive stranger smiling at you. You could interpret this as a flirtatious behavior or someone just trying to be friendly. There are a variety of factors that influence our interpretations:[9]

Personal Experience

First, personal experience impacts our interpretation of events. What prior experiences have you had that affect your perceptions? Maybe you heard from your friends that a particular restaurant was really good, but when you went there, you had a horrible experience, and you decided you never wanted to go there again. Even though your friends might try to persuade you to try it again, you might be inclined not to go, because your past experience with that restaurant was not good. Another example might be a traumatic relationship break up. You might have had a relational partner that cheated on you and left you with trust issues. You might find another romantic interest, but in the back of your mind, you might be cautious and interpret loving behaviors differently, because you don't want to be hurt again.

Involvement

Second, the degree of involvement impacts your interpretation. The more involved or deeper your relationship is with another person, the more likely you will interpret their behaviors differently compared to someone you do not know well. For instance, let's pretend that you are a manager, and two of your employees come to work late. One worker just happens to be your best friend and the other person is someone who just started and you do not know them well. You are more likely to interpret your best friend's behavior more altruistically than the other worker because you have known your best friend for a longer period. Besides, since this person is your best friend, you likely interact and are more involved with them compared to other friends.

Expectations

Third, the expectations that we hold can impact the way we make sense of other people's behaviors. For instance, if you overheard some friends talking about a mean professor and how hostile they are in class, you might be expecting this characterization to be true. Let's say you meet the professor and attend their class; you might still have certain expectations about them based on what you heard. Even those expectations might be completely false, and you might still be expecting those allegations to be true.

Assumptions

Fourth, there are assumptions about human behavior. Imagine if you are a personal fitness trainer, do you believe that people like to exercise or need to exercise? Your answer to that question might be based on your assumptions. If you are a person who is inclined to exercise, then you might think that all people like to work out. However, if you do not like to exercise but know that people should be physically fit, then you would more likely agree with the statement that people need to exercise. Your assumptions about humans can shape the way that you interpret their behavior. Another example might be that if you believe that most people would donate to a worthy cause, you might be shocked to learn that not everyone thinks this way. When we assume that all humans should act a certain way, we are more likely to interpret their behavior differently if they do not respond in a certain way.

Relational Satisfaction

Fifth, relational satisfaction will make you see things very differently. Relational satisfaction is how satisfied or happy you are with your current relationship. If you are content, then you are more likely to view all your partner's behaviors as thoughtful and kind. However, if you are not satisfied in your relationship, then you are more likely to view their behavior has distrustful or insincere. Research has shown that unhappy couples are more likely to blame their partners when things go wrong compared to happy couples.[10]

Conclusion

In this section, we have discussed the three stages of perception: attending, organizing, and interpreting. Each of these stages can occur out of sequence. For example, if your parent/guardian had a bad experience at a car dealership based on their interpretation (such as "They overcharged me for the car and they added all these hidden fees."), then it can influence their future selection (looking for credible and highly rated car dealerships), and then your parent/guardian can organize the information (car dealers are just trying to make money, the assumption is that they think most customers don't know a lot about cars). Perception is a continuous process, and it is very hard to determine the start and finish of any perceptual differences.

Key Takeaways

- Perception involves attending, organizing, and interpreting.
- Perception impacts communication.
- Attending, organizing, and interpreting have specific definitions, and each is impacted by multiple variables.

Exercises

- Take a walk to a place you usually go to on campus or in your neighborhood. Before taking your walk, mentally list everything that you will see on your walk. As you walk, notice everything on your path. What new things do you notice now that you are deliberately "attending" to your environment?
- What affects your perception?
- Look back at a previous text or email that you got from a friend. After reading it, do you have a different interpretation of it now compared to when you first got it? Why? Think

about how interpretation can impact communication if you didn't know this person. How does it differ?

1.4 Models of Interpersonal Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Differentiate among and describe the various action models of interpersonal communication
2. Differentiate among and describe the various interactional models of interpersonal communication
3. Differentiate among and describe the various transactional models of interpersonal communication

We have several different models to help us understand what communication is and how it works. A **model** is a simplified representation of a system (often graphic) that highlights the crucial components and connections of concepts, which are used to help people understand an aspect of the real-world. For our purposes, the models have all been created to help us understand how real-world communication interactions occur. The goal of creating models is three-fold:

1. to facilitate understanding by eliminating unnecessary components,
2. to aid in decision making by simulating "what if" scenarios, and
3. to explain, control, and predict events on the basis of past observations.[11]

The next few paragraphs will examine three different types of models that communication scholars have proposed to help us understand interpersonal interactions: action, interactional, and transactional.

Action Models

The purpose of using models is to provide visual representations of interpersonal communication and to offer a better understanding of how various scholars have conceptualized it over time. The first type of model we'll be exploring are **action models**, or communication models that view communication as a one-directional transmission of information from a source or sender to some destination or receiver.

Shannon-Weaver Model

Shannon and Weaver were both engineers for the Bell Telephone Labs. Their job was to make sure that all the telephone cables and radio waves were operating at full capacity. They developed the Shannon-Weaver model, which is also known as the linear communication model (Weaver & Shannon, 1963).[12] As indicated by its name, the scholars believed that communication occurred in a linear fashion, where a sender encodes a message through a channel to a receiver, who will decode the message. Feedback is not immediate. Examples of linear communication were newspapers, radio, and television.

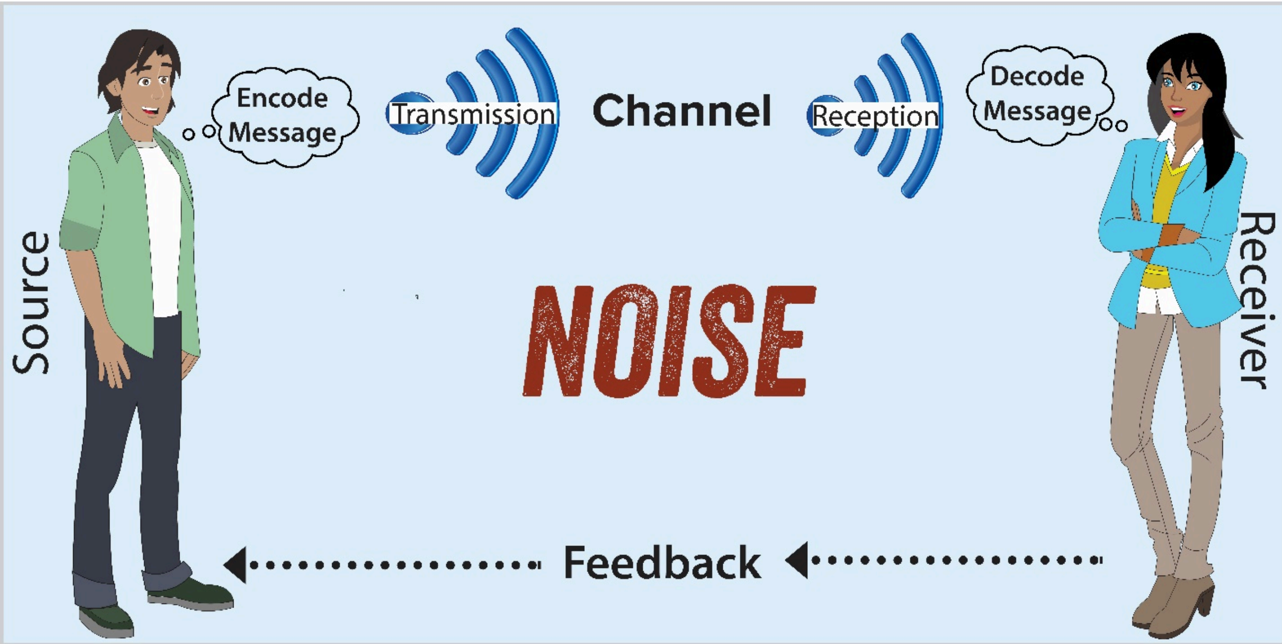

Figure 1.4 Shannon-Weaver Model

Early Schramm Model

The Shannon-Weaver model was criticized because it assumed that communication always occurred linearly. Wilbur Schram (1954) felt that it was important to notice the impact of messages.[13] Schramm's model regards communication as a process between an encoder and a decoder. Most importantly, this model accounts for how people interpret the message. Schramm argued that a person's background, experience, and knowledge are factors that impact interpretation. Besides, Schramm believed that the messages are transmitted through a medium. Also, the decoder will be able to send feedback about the message to indicate that the message has been received. He argued that communication is incomplete unless there is feedback from the receiver. According to Schramm's model, encoding and decoding are vital to effective communication. Any communication where decoding does not occur or feedback does not happen is not effective or complete.

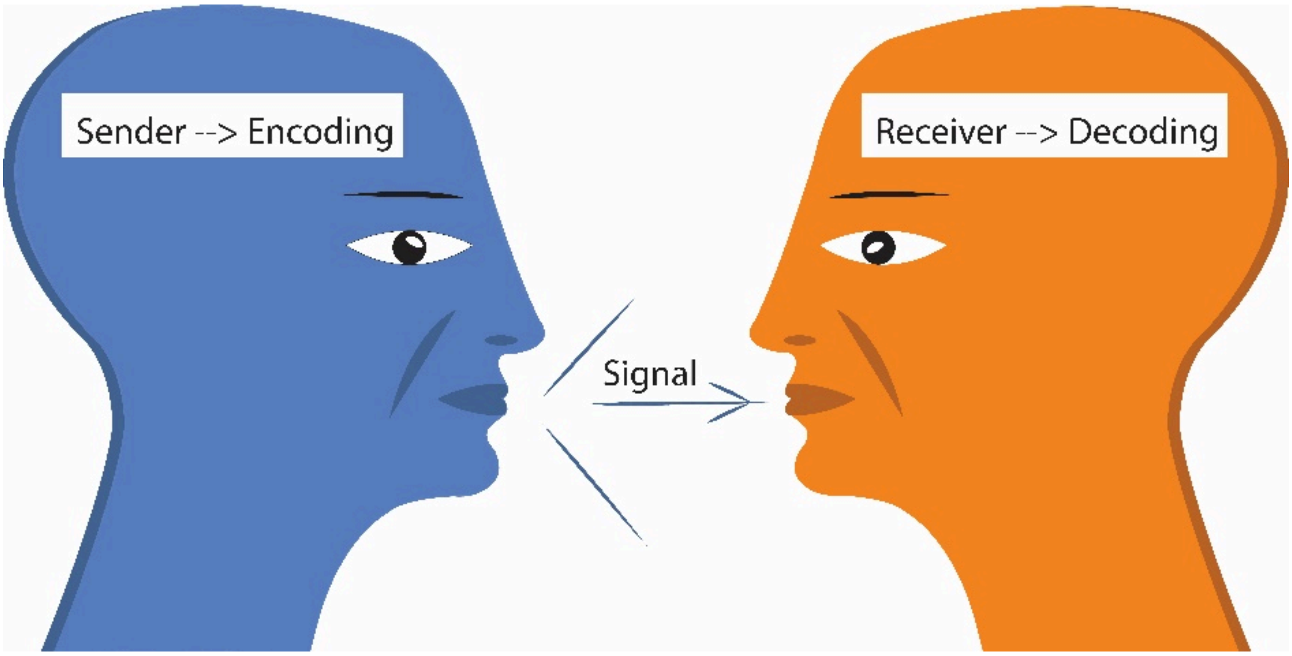

Figure 1.5 Scharmm Model

Berlo's SMCR Model

David K. Berlo (1960)[14] created the SMCR model of communication. SMCR stands for sender, message, channel, receiver. Berlo's model describes different components of the communication process. He argued that there are three main parts of all communication, which is the speaker, the subject, and the listener. He maintained that the listener determines the meaning of any message.

In regards to the source or sender of the message, Berlo identified factors that influence the source of the message. First, communication skills refer to the ability to speak or write. Second, attitude is the person's point-of-view, which may be influenced by the listener. The third is whether the source has requisite knowledge on a given topic to be effective. Fourth, social systems include the source's values, beliefs, and opinions, which may influence the message.

Next, we move onto the message portion of the model. The message can be sent in a variety of ways, such as text, video, speech. At the same time, there might be components that influence the message, such as content, which is the information being sent. Elements refer to the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of how the message is sent. Treatment refers to how the message was presented. The structure is how the message was organized. Code is the form in which the message was sent, such as text, gesture, or music.

The channel of the message relies on the basic five senses of sound, sight, touch, smell, and taste. Think of how your mother might express her love for you. She might hug you (touch) and say, "I love you" (sound), or make you your favorite dessert (taste). Each of these channels is a way to display affection.

The receiver is the person who decodes the message. Similar to the models discussed earlier, the receiver is at the end. However, Berlo argued that for the receiver to understand and comprehend the message, there must be similar factors to the sender. Hence, the source and the receiver have similar components. In the end, the receiver will have to decode the message and determine its meaning. Berlo tries to present the model of communication as simple as possible. His model accounts for variables that will obstruct the interpretation of the model.

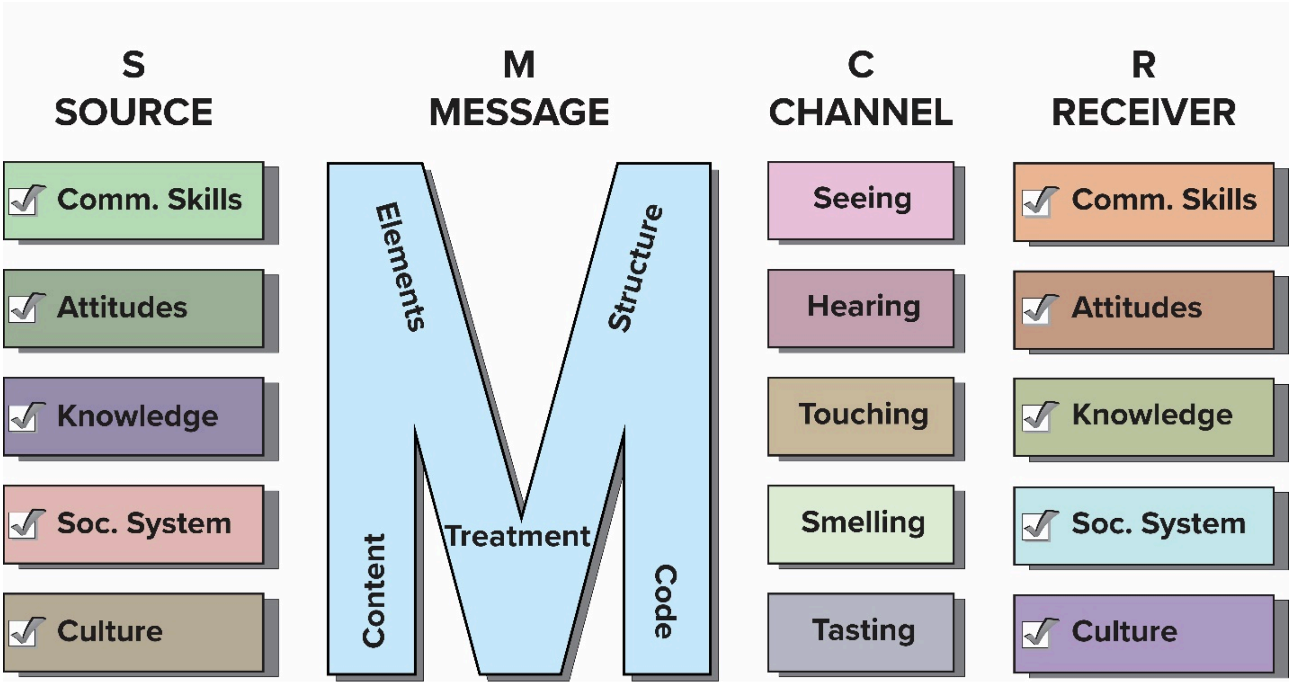

Figure 1.5 SMCR Model

Interaction Models

Interaction models view the sender and the receiver as responsible for the effectiveness of the communication. One of the biggest differences between the action and interaction models is a heightened focus on feedback.

Osgood and Schramm Model

Osgood-Schramm's model of communication is known as a circular model because it indicates that messages can go in two directions.[15] Hence, once a person decodes a message, they can encode it and send a message back to the sender. They could continue encoding and decoding into a continuous cycle. This revised model indicates that: 1) communication is not linear, but circular; 2) communication is reciprocal and equal; 3) messages are based on interpretation; 4) communication involves encoding, decoding, and interpreting. The benefit of this model is that the model illustrates that feedback is cyclical. It also shows that communication is complex because it accounts for interpretation. This model also showcases the fact that we are active communicators, and we are active in interpreting the messages that we receive.

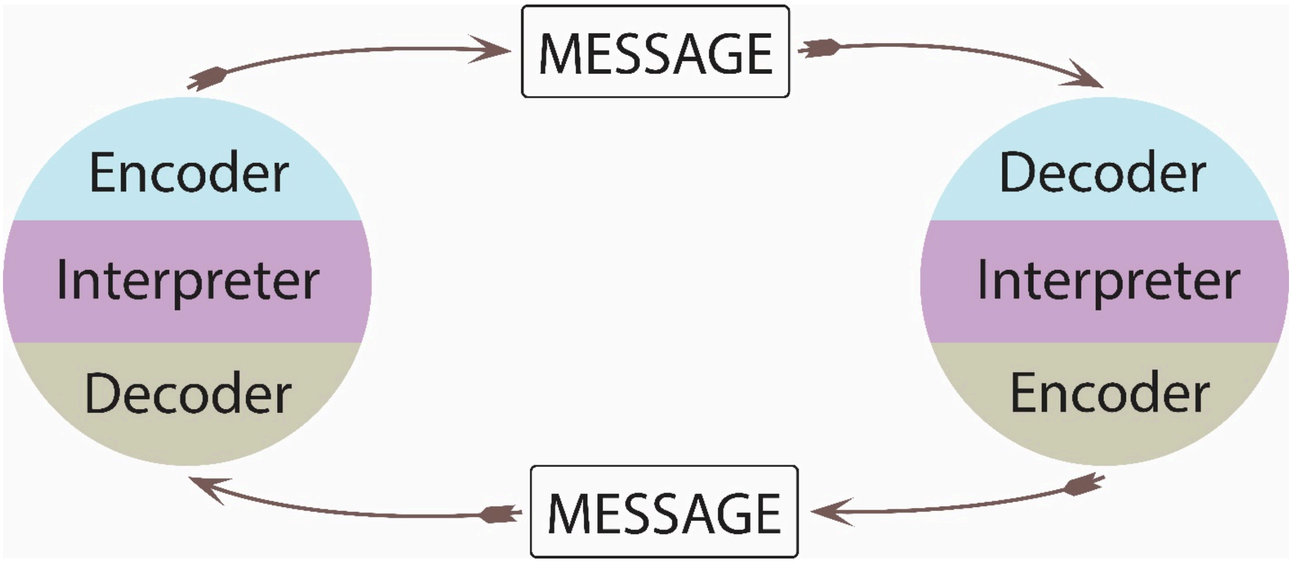

Figure 1.7 Osgood-Schramm Model

Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson Model

Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson argued that communication is continuous.[16] The researchers argued that communication happens all the time. Every time a message is sent, a message is returned, and it continues from Person A to Person B until someone stops. Feedback is provided every time that Person A sends a message. With this model, there are five axioms.

First, one cannot not communicate. This dynamic means that everything one does has communicative value. Even if people do not talk to each other, then this lack of talking still communicates the idea that both parties do not want to talk to each other. The second axiom states that every message has a content and relationship dimension. Content is the informational part of the message or the subject of discussion. The relationship dimension refers to how the two communicators feel about each other. The third axiom is how the communicators in the system punctuate their communicative sequence. The scholars observed that every communication event has a stimulus, response, and reinforcement. Each communicator can be a stimulus or a response. Fourth, communication can be analog or digital. Digital refers to what the words mean. Analogical is how the words are said or the nonverbal behavior that accompanies the message. The last axiom states that communication can be either symmetrical or complementary. This binary means that both communicators have similar power relations, or they do not. Conflict and misunderstandings can occur if the communicators have different power relations. For instance, your boss might have the right to fire you from your job if you do not professionally conduct yourself.

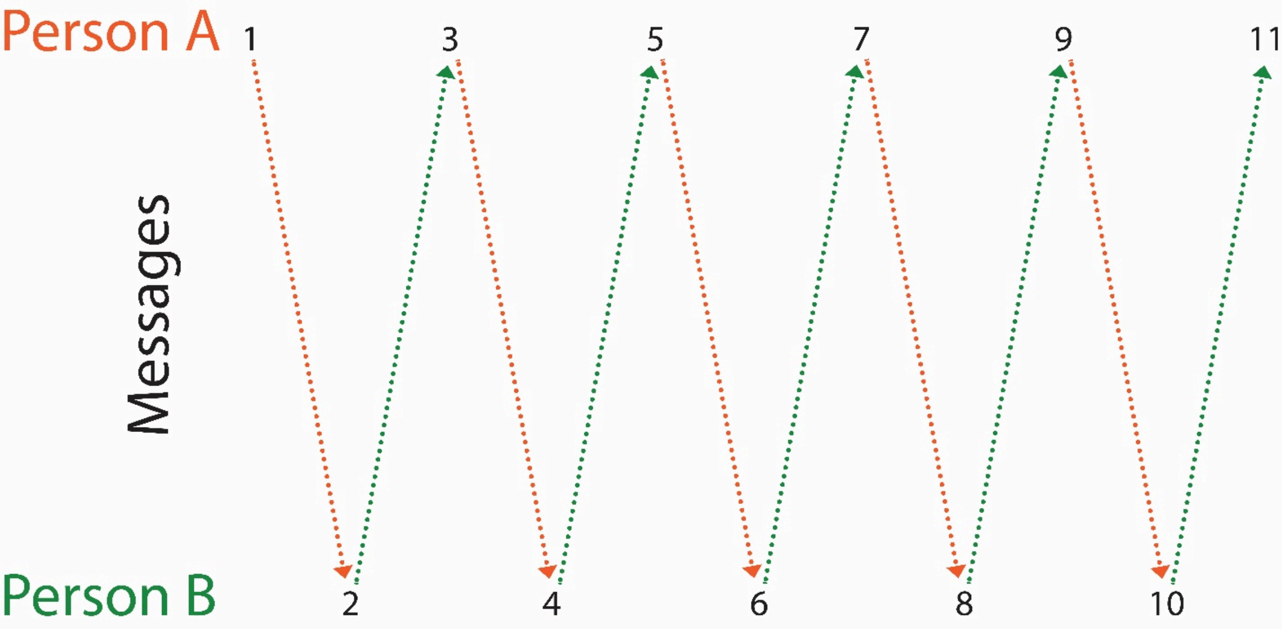

Figure 1.8 Watzlawick-Beavin-Jackson Model

Transaction Models

The transactional models differ from the interactional models in that the transactional models demonstrate that individuals are often acting as both the sender and receiver simultaneously. Sending and receiving messages happen simultaneously.

Barnlund's Transactional Model

In 1970, Dean C. Barnlund created the **transactional model** of communication to understand basic interpersonal communication.[17] Barnlund argues that one of the problems with the more linear models of communication is that they resemble mediated messages. The message gets created, the message is sent, and the message is received. For example, we write an email, we send an email, and the email is read. Instead, Barnlund argues that during interpersonal interactions, we are both sending and receiving messages simultaneously. Out of all the other communication models, this one includes a multi-layered feedback system. We can provide oral feedback, but our nonverbal communication (e.g., tone of voice, eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, etc.) is equally important to how others interpret the messages we are sending we use others' nonverbal behaviors to interpret their messages. As such, in any interpersonal interaction, a ton of messages are sent and received simultaneously between the two people.

The Importance of Cues

The main components of the model include cues. There are three types of cues: public, private, and behavioral. Public cues are anything that is physical or environmental. Private cues are referred to as the private objects of the orientation, which include the senses of a person. Behavioral cues include nonverbal and verbal cues.

The Importance of Context

Furthermore, the transactional model of communication has also gone on to represent that three contexts coexist during an interaction:

1. Social Context: the rules and norms that govern how people communicate with one another.
2. Cultural Context: the cultural and co-cultural identities people have (e.g., ability, age, biological sex, gender identity, ethnicity, nationality, race, sexual orientation, social class, etc.).
3. Relational Context: the nature of the bond or emotional attachment between two people (e.g., parent/guardian-child, sibling-sibling, teacher-student, health care worker-client, best friends, acquaintances, etc.).

Through our interpersonal interactions, we create social reality, but all of these different contexts impact this reality.

The Importance of Noise

Another important factor to consider in Barnlund's Transactional Model is the issue of noise, which includes things that disturb or interrupt the flow of communication. Like the three contexts explored above, there are another four contexts that can impact our ability to interact with people effectively:[18]

1. Physical Context: The physical space where interaction is occurring (office, school, home, doctor's office, is the space loud, is the furniture comfortable, etc.).
2. Physiological Context: The body's responses to what's happening in its environment.
   a. Internal: Physiological responses that result because of our body's internal processes (e.g., hunger, a headache, physically tired, etc.).
   b. External: Physiological responses that result because of external stimuli within the environment (e.g., are you cold, are you hot, the color of the room, are you physically comfortable, etc.).
3. Psychological Context: How the human mind responds to what's occurring within its environment (e.g., emotional state, thoughts, perceptions, intentions, mindfulness, etc.).
4. Semantic Context: The possible understanding and interpretation of different messages sent (e.g., someone's language, size of vocabulary, effective use of grammar, etc.).

In each of these contexts, it's possible to have things that disturb or interrupts the flow of communication. For example, in the physical context, hard plastic chairs can make you uncomfortable and not want to sit for very long talking to someone. Physiologically, if you have a headache (internal) or if a room is very hot, it can make it hard to concentrate and listen effectively to another person. Psychologically, if we just broke up with our significant other, we may find it difficult to sit and have a casual conversation with someone while our brains are running a thousand kilometers a minute. Semantically, if we don't understand a word that someone uses, it can prevent us from accurately interpreting someone's messages. When you think about it, with all the possible interference of noise that exists within an interpersonal interaction, it's pretty impressive that we ever get anything accomplished.

More often than not, we are completely unaware of how these different contexts create noise and impact our interactions with one another during the moment itself. For example, think about the nature of the physical environments of fast-food restaurants versus fine dining establishments. In fast-food restaurants, the décor is bright, the lighting is bright, the seats are made of hard surfaces (often plastic), they tend to be louder, etc. This noise causes people to eat faster and increase turnover rates. Conversely, fine dining establishments have tablecloths, more comfortable chairs, dimmer lighting, quieter dining, etc. The physical space in a fast-food restaurant hurries interaction and increases turnover. The physical space in the fine dining restaurant slows our interactions, causes us to stay longer, and we spend more money as a result. However, most of us don't pay that much attention to how physical space is impacting us while we're having a conversation with another person.

Although we used the external environment here as an example of how noise impacts our interpersonal interactions, we could go through all of these contexts and discuss how they impact us in ways of which we're not consciously aware.

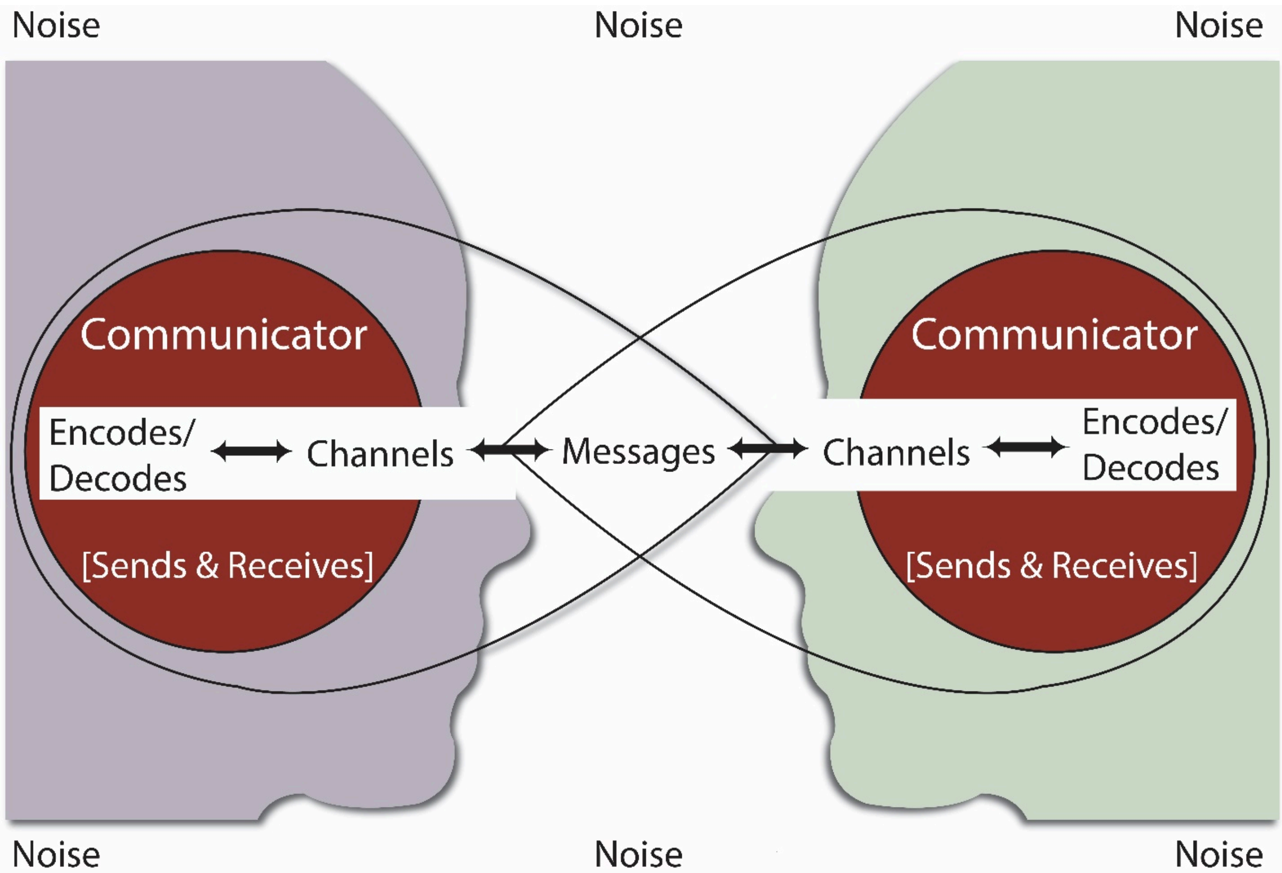

Figure 1.9 Transactional Model of Communication

Transaction Principles

As you can see, these models of communication are all very different. They have similar components, yet they are all conveyed very differently. Some have features that others do not. Nevertheless, there are transactional principles that are important to learn about interpersonal communication.

Communication is Complex

People might think that communication is easy. However, there are a lot of factors, such as power, language, and relationship differences, that can impact the conversation. Communication isn't easy because not everyone will have the same interpretation of the message. You will see advertisements that some people will love and others will be offended by. The reason is that people do not identically receive a message.

Communication is Continuous

In many of the communication models, we learned that communication never stops. Every time a source sends a message, a receiver will decode it, and it goes back-and-forth. It is an endless cycle because even if one person stops talking, they have already sent a message that the communication needs to end. As a receiver, you can keep trying to send messages, or you can stop talking as well, which sends the message to the other person that you also want to stop talking.

Communication is Dynamic

With new technology and changing times, we see that communication is constantly changing. Before social media, people interacted very differently. Some people have suggested that social media has influenced how we talk to each other. The models have changed over time because people have also changed how they communicate. People no longer use the phone only to call other people; instead, they might text message others because they find it easier or less invasive.

Final Note

The advantage of this model is it shows that there is a shared field of experience between the sender and receiver. The transactional model shows that messages happen simultaneously with noise. However, the disadvantages of the model are that it is complex, and it suggests that the sender and receiver should understand the messages that are sent to each other.

Key Takeaways

- In action models, communication was viewed as a one-directional transmission of information from a source or sender to some destination or receiver. These models include the Shannon and Weaver Model, the Schramm Model and Berlo's SMCR model.

- Interactional models viewed communication as a two-way process, in which both the sender and the receiver equally share the responsibility for communication effectiveness. Examples of the interactional model are Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson Model and Osgood and Schramm Model.
- The transactional models differ from the interactional models in that the transactional models demonstrate that individuals are often acting as both the sender and receiver simultaneously. An example of a transactional model is Barnlund's model.

Exercises

- Choose one action model, one interactional model, and Barnlund's transactional model. Use each model to explain one communication scenario that you create. What are the differences in the explanations of each model?
- Choose the communication model with which you most agree. Why is it better than the other models?

Key Terms

action model

Communication model that views communication as a one-directional transmission of information from a source or sender to some destination or receiver.

attending

The act of focusing on specific objects or stimuli in the world around you.

channel

The pathways in which messages are conveyed.

emotional intelligence

People who are aware of their emotions and are sensitive to the emotions of others are better able to handle the ups and downs of life, to rebound from adversity, and to maintain fulfilling relationships with others.

environment

The context or situation in which communication occurs.

ethics

The set of moral values each person carries throughout life—concepts of what is right and wrong, good and bad, or just and unjust.

feedback

Information shared back to the source of communication that keeps the communication moving forward and thus making communication a process.

interaction model

Communication model that views the sender and the receiver as responsible for the effectiveness of the communication.

interpreting

Interpretation is the act of assigning meaning to a stimulus and then determining the worth of the object (evaluation).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Theory of motivation proposed by Abraham Maslow comprising a five-tier, hierarchical pyramid of needs: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization.

model

A simplified representation of a system (often graphic) that highlights the important components and connections of concepts, which are used to help people understand an aspect of the real-world.

noise

Anything that can interfere with the message being sent or received.

organizing

Organizing is making sense of the stimuli or assigning meaning to it.

perception

The process of acquiring, interpreting, and organizing information that comes in through your five senses.

receiver

The receiver decodes the message in an environment that includes noise.

source

The person initiating communication and encoding the message and selecting the channel.

transactional model

Communication model that demonstrate that individuals are often acting as both the sender and receiver simultaneously.

Chapter Wrap-Up

In this chapter, we have learned about various things that can impact interpersonal communication. We learned that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs can impact how messages are received. We learned about the perception process and the three states of the perception process: attending, interpreting, and organizing. We also discussed the various communication models to understand how the process of communication looks in interpersonal situations.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/communication/?p=53#h5p-5

Notes

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CHAPTER 2: LOGOS, ETHOS, PATHOS

David McMurrey; Kalani Pattison; and Nicole Hagstrom-Schmidt

When technical writing first emerged as a subject in university engineering schools, it was defined as rigorously objective in writing style, even to the extent of using the passive voice instead of the first person singular "I." The standard model was the primary research report. Since then, however, it has become clear that technical writers must often engage in persuasive communication efforts in their primary work.

What Is Persuasion?

Persuasion is the communicative effort to convince people to think or act in a certain way—to vote for a city-wide recycling program, to oppose the building of more coal-fired electricity plants, or to purchase a new piece of technology for a classroom.

Some might argue that technical writing is supposed to be "scientific," "objective," and "neutral." However, like any human pursuit of knowledge, science is never truly objective and neutral. All data must be interpreted by someone in order for the data to be useful or meaningful. Moreover, certain types of technical and professional communication, such as proposals, progress reports, résumés, application letters, and even complaint letters, are more overtly persuasive while still conveying technical information.

Persuasive strategies for technical writing are often embedded in the structure of the document rather than in overt appeals to emotions or justice. Persuasion is an essential factor in the infrastructure of proposals and progress reports. To convince people to hire you to do a project, and to reassure them that the project is going well, you need persuasive strategies. This chapter highlights common persuasive strategies to prepare you to write those kinds of documents, as well as persuasive technical documents.

Classical Appeals

The classical approach to persuasion, established by Aristotle (384–322 BCE) in the *Art of Rhetoric*, involves three appeals to readers and listeners: **logos**, **pathos**, and **ethos**.[1] These appeals are both interconnected and directly tied to key parts of the rhetorical situation (genre/form, audience, and deliverer, respectively).

1. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Classics, n.d.) http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.html.

Logos (Logical Appeal)

When you use reason and arguments, backed up by facts and logic, to make your case, you are using logical appeals. Most writers easily understand the importance of reliable evidence in a persuasive document, but logical appeals extend to the structure of one's argument as well. *How* you explain your evidence and its relationships to other claims and evidence is just as important a logical appeal as the information itself. In academic and technical communication, logos is the preferred method of persuasion.

Pathos (Emotional Appeal)

When you attempt to rouse people's anger or sympathies in a persuasive effort, you are using emotional appeals. Such direct emotional appeals, however, are less effective in technical or business writing since these styles attempt to be more measured or objective. Effective pathos in this situation would instead appeal to common motivations, goals, and values. Arguing that a certain course of action would save the company money, for instance, would appeal to what the audience wants. For another example, picture a company that really values long-term sustainability. Arguing that a certain course of action would reduce a company's carbon footprint would appeal to the company's values, and therefore, probably to the values of their clients.

Ethos (Ethical Appeal/Credibility)

When you present qualifications, experience, expertise, and wisdom (whether yours or others') in an attempt to build readers' confidence in you and your document, you are using ethical appeals. Part of what will convince readers to "listen" to you is if they know who you are and what makes you an authority on a subject. Another aspect of ethos is the credibility and "trustworthiness" of your sources of information. Just as pathos can be used legitimately to get readers to pay attention and care about your message, the appropriate development of ethos will build readers' confidence in you.

You may also have encountered the "stylistic" appeal: the use of language and visual effects to increase the persuasive impact. For example, a glossy, fancy design for a résumé can have a positive impact just as much as the content. This is yet another facet of ethos as it is an appeal that lends to how you are perceived by your audience.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/communication/?p=854#oembed-1

Exploring a Text: Ethos, Pathos, Logos

The Denver Nuggets won the 2023 NBA championship, and its star player, Nikola Jokic, was named MVP. Have a look at the NBA's tweet and subsequent responses:

Tweet from the official NBA twitter account about Nikola Jovis winning MVP and responses by Twitter users

The responses vary noticeably in content and (intentionally or not) rhetorical strategies that might affect our perceptions of that content. Think about Chri$'s response. There are plenty of stylistic elements that do not conform standard written English:

- "jokic" is a proper noun and also the first word in the sentence, so it should have a capital.
- "jokic" should also be a possessive (i.e., Jokic's ring), but it doesn't have the apostrophe and the s.

- There are presumably two sentences in the response, the first sentence stopping between "career" and "dude".

Do these stylistic elements matter? Tweets and academic essays certainly are different genres, so their readers will have different expectations of language and content. We should also expect different linguistic conventions. But, look at the Chri$'s response in its context: the other four responses are punctuated more fully, having at least one full stop. Chri$'s stylistic choices might affect how we read his message–even among other tweets. For example, can we take the statement about Jokic's struggles at face value: is his claim sarcastic, or should we question the claim's logic based on the other stylistic elements? Perhaps the writing style reveals something about Chri$'s culture, education, or outlook towards the topic or the reader.

Look at Steph's approach, "Toooooooooo Brate!". The exclamation point suggests excitement (i.e. tone and emotion), but why choose Serbian ("To brate" is something like "That's it, bro") among other replies that are in English? The answer might be as simple as Steph speaks Serbian, but she still makes a choice here. It might help us to know that Jokic is Serbian. Steph's language choice could relate to ethos. By using the language of the person it's recognizing, Steph's response might seem more credible or genuine. It may also simply align Steph more closely with Jokic.

Bertina does not start with congratulations. Rather, her response starts by mentioning the child in the NBA's photo–perhaps trying to elicit emotions. Many people find "little ones" to be cute, vulnerable, and endearing. Why–in a thread about the MVP–would Bertina mention the child before the MVP himself? Intentionally or not, the choice suggests priorities (ethos) and potentially stirs the emotions of the reader (pathos).

Yoav Rimon's reply also works towards ethos. It mentions Novak Djokovic by name alongside Jokic, but specifies only vaguely why it does so. This choice works only if others recognize to whom Rimon refers. It establishes Rimon's ethos with a sports-minded audience: Rimon knows that both Djokovic and Jokic are Serbian sport stars (general international sport knowledge) and suggests that he knows Djokovic won tennis's French Open only a few days before Jokic won basketball's MVP (up-to-date and wide-ranging sport knowledge). The reply would also have a potentially emotional effect for Serbians (pride). Rimon is using a thread congratulating Jokic to recognize Serbian sports figures in general.

The point is that stylistic choices (such as lack of punctuation), word choices ("brate" instead of "brother"), organization (Jokic's child before Jokic), and content itself (Djokovic and Jokic in the reply) can all affect our messages will be received.

Additional Persuasive Strategies

In addition to the three classical appeals, other helpful strategies for argument, such as the Toulmin Model, include rebuttals and concessions.[2] These approaches are focused more specifically on addressing potential

2. Laurel Nesbitt, *The Toulmin Method*, Writing@CSU, (Colorado State University, 1994 - 2012) https://writing.colostate.edu/guides/

concerns or counter-arguments that your readers may have when reading your document or hearing your presentation.

Rebuttal

In a **rebuttal**, you directly address arguments that your persuasive opponents might bring up. You show how these claims are wrong or how they don't affect your overall argument. Picture yourself face to face with your persuasive opponents. What arguments are they going to use against you? How are you going to answer those arguments? In a written persuasive effort, you must simulate this back-and-forth, debate-style argumentative process. Imagine your opponents' counter-arguments (arguments they might put forth against your position), and then imagine your own rebuttals (your answers to those counter-arguments).

Concession

In a **concession**, you acknowledge (or concede) that certain opposing arguments have some validity, but you explain how they do not damage your overall argument. Concessions build credibility and make you seem more open minded.

Not all arguments need to end with one side completely winning. One strategy is to aim for synthesis, or a combination of major arguments and points. Modern rhetoricians urge us not to view the persuasive process as a win-lose situation or zero-sum game. Such rigidity prevents us from resolving issues and moving forward. Instead, the process of counter-argument, rebuttal, and concession should be sincere and continuous until all parties reach synthesis—a middle ground where they agree.

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guide.cfm?guideid=58; *Toulmin Model of Argument* (Carson-Newman University, 2018) https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Toulmin.pdf.

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CHAPTER 3: ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Patricia Williamson

Many academic courses require students to present information to their peers and teachers in a classroom setting. Such presentations are usually in the form of a short talk, often, but not always, accompanied by visual aids such as a PowerPoint. Yet, students often become nervous at the idea of speaking in front of a group. This chapter aims to help calms those nerves.

This chapter is divided under five headings to establish a quick reference guide for oral presentations.

- A beginner, who may have little or no experience, should read each section in full.
- For the intermediate learner, who has some experience with oral presentations, review the sections you feel you need work on.
- If you are an experienced presenter then you may wish to jog your memory about the basics or gain some fresh insights about technique.

The Purpose of an Oral Presentation

Generally, oral presentation is public speaking, either individually or as a group, the aim of which is to provide information, to entertain, to persuade the audience, or to educate. In an academic setting, oral presentations are often assessable tasks with a marking criteria. Therefore, students are being evaluated on two separate-but-related competencies within a set timeframe: the ability to speak and the quality of the spoken content. **An oral presentation differs from a speech in that it usually has visual aids and may involve audience interaction; ideas are both *shown and explained*.** A speech, on the other hand, is a *formal* verbal **discourse** addressing an audience, without visual aids and audience participation.

Tips for Types of Oral Presentations

Individual Presentation

- Know your content. The number one way to have a smooth presentation is to know what you want to say and how you want to say it. Write it down and rehearse it until you feel relaxed and confident and do not have to rely heavily on notes while speaking.
- Eliminate 'umms' and 'ahhs' from your oral presentation vocabulary. Speak slowly and clearly and pause when you need to. It is not a contest to see who can race through their presentation the fastest

or fit the most content within the time limit. The average person speaks at a rate of 125 words per minute. Therefore, if you are required to speak for 10 minutes, you will need to write and practice 1250 words for speaking. Ensure you time yourself and get it right.

- Ensure you meet the requirements of the marking criteria, including non-verbal communication skills. Make good eye contact with the audience; watch your posture; don't fidget.
- Know the language requirements. Check if you are permitted to use a more casual, conversational tone and first-person pronouns, or do you need to keep a more formal, academic tone?
- Breathe. You are in control. You've got this!

Group Presentation

- All of the above applies; however, you are working as part of a group. So how should you approach group work?
- Firstly, if you are not assigned to a group by your lecturer/tutor, choose people based on their availability and accessibility. If you cannot meet face-to-face you may schedule online meetings.
- Get to know each other. It's easier to work with friends than strangers.
- Consider everyone's strengths and weaknesses. Determining strengths and weaknesses will involve a discussion that will often lead to task or role allocations within the group; however, everyone should be carrying an equal level of the workload.
- Some group members may be more focused on getting the script written, with a different section for each team member to say. Others may be more experienced with the presentation software and skilled in editing and refining PowerPoint slides so they are appropriate for the presentation. Use one visual aid (one set of PowerPoint slides) for the whole group; you may consider using a shared cloud drive so that there is no need to integrate slides later on.
- Be patient and tolerant with each other's learning style and personality. Do not judge people in your group based on their personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender, age, or cultural background.
- Rehearse as a group–more than once. Keep rehearsing until you have seamless transitions between speakers. Ensure you thank the previous speaker and introduce the one following you. If you are rehearsing online, but have to present in-person, try to schedule some face-to-face time that will allow you to physically practice using the technology and classroom space of the campus.

Writing Your Presentation

Approach the oral presentation task just as you would any other assignment. Review the available topics and then do some background reading and research to ensure you can talk about the topic for the appropriate length of time and in an informed manner. Break the question down into manageable parts.

Creating a presentation differs from writing an essay in that the information in the speech must align with the visual aid. Therefore, with each idea, concept, or new information that you write, you need to think about how this might be visually displayed through minimal text and the occasional use of images.

Proceed to write your ideas in full, but consider that not all information will end up on a PowerPoint slide. Many guides, such as Marsen (2020), will suggest no more than five points per slide, with each bullet point have no more than six words (for a maximum of 30 words per slide). After all, it is you who are doing the presenting, not the PowerPoint. Your presentation skills are being evaluated, but this evaluation may include only a small percentage for the actual visual aid: check your assessment guidelines.

Using Visual Aids

To keep your audience engaged and help them to remember what you have to say, you may want to use visual aids, such as slides.

When designing slides for your presentation, make sure:

- any text is brief, grammatically correct and easy to read. Use dot points and space between lines, plus large font size (18-20 point)
- the colour theme is simple and the background colour provides enough contrast
    - Resist the temptation to use dark slides with a light-coloured font; it is hard on the eyes
- if images and graphs are used to support your main points, they should be non-intrusive on the written work

Images and Graphs

- Your audience will respond better to slides that deliver information quickly – images and graphs are a good way to do this. However, they are not always appropriate or necessary.

When choosing images, it's important to find images that:

- support your presentation and aren't just decorative
- are high quality, however, using large HD picture files can make the PowerPoint file too large overall for submission via Turnitin
- you have permission to use (Creative Commons license, royalty-free, own images, or purchased)
- suggested sites for free-to-use images: Openclipart – Clipping Culture; Beautiful Free Images & Pictures | Unsplash; Pxfuel – Royalty free stock photos free download; When we share, everyone wins – Creative Commons

The specific requirements for your papers may differ. Again, ensure that you read through any assignment requirements carefully and ask your lecturer or tutor if you're unsure how to meet them.

Using Visual Aids Effectively

Too often, students make an impressive PowerPoint though do not understand how to use it effectively to enhance their presentation.

Tips

- Rehearse with the PowerPoint.
- Keep the slides synchronized with your presentation; change them at the appropriate time.
- Refer to the information on the slides. Point out details; comment on images; note facts such as data.
- Don't let the PowerPoint just be something happening in the background while you speak.
- Write notes in your script to indicate when to change slides or which slide number the information applies to.
- Pace yourself so you are not spending a disproportionate amount of time on slides at the beginning of the presentation and racing through them at the end.
- Practice, practice, practice.

Nonverbal Communication

It is clear by the name that nonverbal communication includes the ways that we communicate without speaking. You use nonverbal communication everyday–often without thinking about it. Consider meeting a friend on the street: you may say "hello", but you may also smile, wave, offer your hand to shake, and the like. Here are a few tips that relate specifically to oral presentations.

Being confident and *looking* confident are two different things. Even if you may be nervous (which is natural), the following will help you look confident and professional:

- Avoid slouching or leaning – standing up straight instantly gives you an air of confidence, but more importantly it allows you to breathe freely. Remember that breathing well allows you to project your voice, but it also prevents your body from experiencing extra stress.
- If you have the space, move when appropriate. You can, for example, move to gesture to a more distant visual aid or to get closer to different part of the audience who might be answering a question.
- If you're someone who "speaks with their hands", resist the urge to gesticulate constantly. Use gestures purposefully to highlight, illustrate, motion, or the like.
- Be animated, but don't fidget. Ask someone to watch you rehearse and identify if you have any nervous, repetitive habits you may be unaware of, such as 'finger-combing' your hair or touching your face.
- Avoid 'verbal fidgets' such as "umm" or "ahh"; silence is ok. If you needs to cough or clear your throat, do so once then take a drink of water.

- Avoid distractions that you can control. Put your phone on "do not disturb" or turn it off completely.
- Keep your distance. Don't hover over front-row audience members.
- Have a cheerful demeaner. Remember that your audience will mirror your demeanor.
- Maintain an engaging tone in your voice, by varying tone, pace, and emphasis. Match emotion to concept; slow when concepts might be difficult; stress important words.
- Don't read your presentation–present it! Internalize your script so you can speak with confidence and only occasionally refer to your notes if needed.
- Make eye contact with your audience members so they know you are talking *with* them, not *at* them. You're having a conversation. Watch the link below for some great speaking tips, including eye contact.

Below is a video of some great tips about public speaking from Amy Wolff at TEDx Portland[1]

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1. Wolff. A. [The Oregonion]. (2016, April 9). 5 public speaking tips from TEDxPortland speaker coach [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNOXZumCXNM&ab_channel=TheOregonian

CHAPTER 4: CRITICAL READING

Elizabeth Browning; Karen Kyger; and Cate Bombick

Reading as a Conversation

What would happen if you walked by the tables in front of St David's on your first day at Otago, approached a group of strangers quietly chatting, and proceeded to announce to the group exactly what you were thinking at the moment? Most likely, the group would stop talking, look at you, laugh, and slowly move away. Let's try another approach.

This time, you walk up and quietly join the group. You listen for a few minutes to figure out the topic being discussed and to understand the group members' different perspectives before adding your own voice to the conversation. You have probably used this method many times throughout your life and have found it to work well, especially when joining a group of people you do not know very well. This method is the very same way to approach reading in your college courses.

To be a successful reader in college, you will need to move beyond simply understanding what the author is trying to say and think about the conversation in which the author is participating.

By thinking about reading and writing as a conversation, you will want to consider:

- Who else has written about this topic?
- Who are they?
- What is their perspective or argument on this topic?
- What type of evidence do they use to support their point of view?

In this chapter, we will introduce expectations for college reading, identify key strategies of skilled readers, and review the active reading process. Throughout the chapter, you will find links to samples, examples, and materials you may use.

We will also be introducing the concept of critical reading. Critical reading is moving beyond just understanding the author's meaning of a text to consider the choices the author makes to communicate their message.

By learning to read critically, you will not only improve your comprehension of college-level texts, but also improve your writing by learning about the choices other writers have make to communicate their ideas. Honing your writing, reading, and critical thinking skills will give you a more solid foundation for success, both academically and professionally.

Understanding and using the strategies outlined in this chapter is an important part of your success in your ENGL 126 Essentials of Communication course. You will need strong reading skills in order to understand assignments, write papers and participate in class discussion.

1. Expectations for Reading in College

How does reading in college differ from reading in high school?

In college, academic expectations change from what you may have experienced in high school. As the quantity of work expected of you increases, the quality of the work also changes. You must do more than just understand course material and summarize it on an exam. You will be expected to engage seriously with new ideas by reflecting on them, analyzing them, critiquing them, making connections, drawing conclusions, or finding new ways of thinking about them. Educationally, you are moving into deeper waters. Learning how to read and write strategically and critically will help you swim.

Table 4.1 **"High School versus College Assignments" summarizes other major differences between high school and college assignments (Adapted by Cate Bombick, Howard Community College, from "High School Versus College Assignments,"** ***Writing for Success*****, CC-BY-NC-SA 3.0)**

High School Reading	College Reading
Primary Types: Textbook, literature	**Primary Types**: Textbook, literature, persuasive analysis, research, multimedia sources, self-selected material
Student Expectations: Read to find the main idea, share opinions, and make personal connections	**Student Expectations**: Read to form new conclusions about the author or text, generate examples that support/refute a text and compare/contrast texts. Use texts to develop questions for further inquiry.
Student Goals: Understand text and share reactions to the text, be able to answer questions posed by the teacher, and ask questions to clarify understanding.	**Student Goals**: Analyze the text and synthesize to enter academic conversations on a topic, be able to ask questions, and share insights with peers and professors in order to further the conversation.
Teacher Expectations: Complete reading/ assignment, answer who, what, when, where, and how questions, and share connections to the text.	**Professor Expectations:** Develop thoughtful reactions to assignments, enter into a conversation on the topics, *why* questions are the focus, share questions and answers about a topic.
Teacher Goals: Check student understanding of the material through assignments (test, quizzes, papers, etc).	**Professor Goals**: To guide and respond to student's analysis and synthesis of information. Comprehension is assumed.
If Problems Arise: Teachers may go out of their way to help students who are performing poorly on exams, missing classes, not turning in assignments, or struggling with the course. Students are often given "second chances" to complete and submit assignments.	**If Problems Arise**: Professors may notice students performing poorly, but often expect students to be proactive and take steps to help themselves (i.e. attending office hours, emailing professors, etc.). "Second chances" are less common.

2. What is critical reading?

Reading critically does not simply mean being moved, affected, informed, influenced, and persuaded by a piece of writing. It refers to analyzing and understanding the overall composition of the writing as well as how the writing has achieved its effect on the audience.

This level of understanding begins with thinking critically about the texts you are reading. In this case, "critically" does not mean that you are looking for what is wrong with a work (although during your critical process, you may well do that). Instead, thinking critically means approaching a work as if you were a critic or commentator whose job it is to analyze a text beyond its surface.

Tip:
A text is simply a piece of writing, or as *Merriam-Webster* defines it, "the main body of printed or written matter on a page." In English classes, the term "text" is often used interchangeably with the words "reading" or "work."

This step is essential in analyzing a text, and it requires you to consider many different aspects of a writer's work. Do not just consider what the text says; think about what effect the author intends to produce in a reader or what effect the text has had on *you* as the reader. For example, does the author want to persuade, inspire, provoke humor, or simply inform the audience? Look at the process through which the writer achieves (or does not achieve) the desired effect and which rhetorical strategies are used.

These rhetorical strategies are covered in the **next chapter**. If you disagree with a text, what is the point of contention? If you agree with it, how do you think you can expand or build upon the argument put forth?

Consider the example below. Which of the following tweets below are critical and which are uncritical?

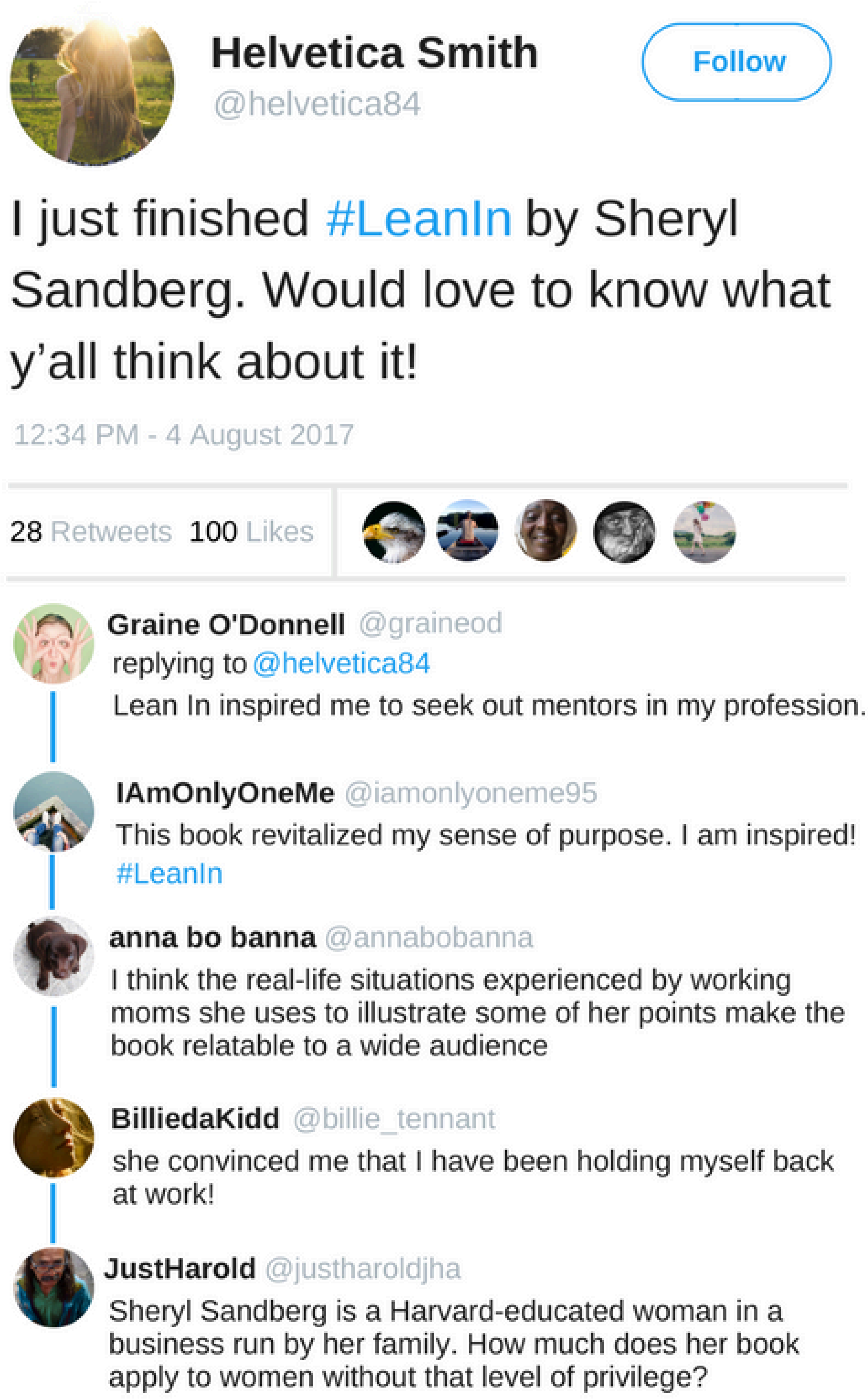


Figure 4.1 "Lean in" tweets

3. Why do we read critically?

Critical reading has many uses. If applied to a work of literature, for example, it can become the foundation for a detailed textual analysis. With scholarly articles, critical reading can help you evaluate their potential reliability as future sources.

Finding an error in someone else's argument can be the point of destabilization you need to make a worthy argument of your own, illustrated in the final tweet from the previous image, for example. Critical reading can help you hone your own argumentation skills because it requires you to think carefully about which strategies are effective for making arguments, and in this age of social media and instant publication, thinking carefully about what we say is a necessity.

4. How to read critically

Reading does not come naturally. It is not an instinct that you were born with — rather, it is a cultural development that began 6,000 years ago when humans began to use symbols to represent ideas. The process of reading is learned through instruction and recruits brain mechanisms that evolved for other purposes.

In other words, you weren't born to read. Reading is a learned skill that relies on interaction nature, nurture, and culture. It is a cognitive tool that is developed through learning and practice. So what reading strategies are already in your toolbox? What strategies can you add to your toolbox to become a more efficient and effective college reader?

4.1 Start with Questions

Questions to Ask a Text

Inquiry-based learning methods, or question-based investigations, are often the basis for writing and research at the university level. Specific questions generated about the text can guide your critical reading process and help you when writing a formal analysis.

When reading critically, you should begin with broad questions and then work towards more specific questions; after all, the ultimate purpose of engaging in critical reading is to turn you into an analyzer who asks questions that work to develop the purpose of the text

In order to develop good questions before reading a text, you will want to think about your purpose for reading. As a college student, you'll want to think about why your professor assigned this particular text? How does this text connect to topics you have been discussing in class or to other assigned readings?

For example, if you have been assigned to read UMBC President, Freeman Hrabowski's essay entitled, "Colleges Prepare People for Life," ask yourself why your professor assigned that particular text. Perhaps your professor wants you to read a variety of perspectives on the purpose of college. In that case, you'll want to ask a question such as, What is Hrabowski's view on the purpose of college? Perhaps, your professor is preparing you to write an argument essay and would like students to see how other authors have crafted their arguments. In that case, a good question might be, How does Hrabowski introduce other people's views on this topic and how can that help me in my own writing?

Another effective questioning strategy is to turn the title or a sub-heading into a question by adding *what, how,* or *why* to the title or heading. You can turn the title into a question by adding *how.* The question becomes "How do colleges prepare people for life?" Once you have finished reading the essay, return to that question to see how well you can answer it using the information you learned from the text.

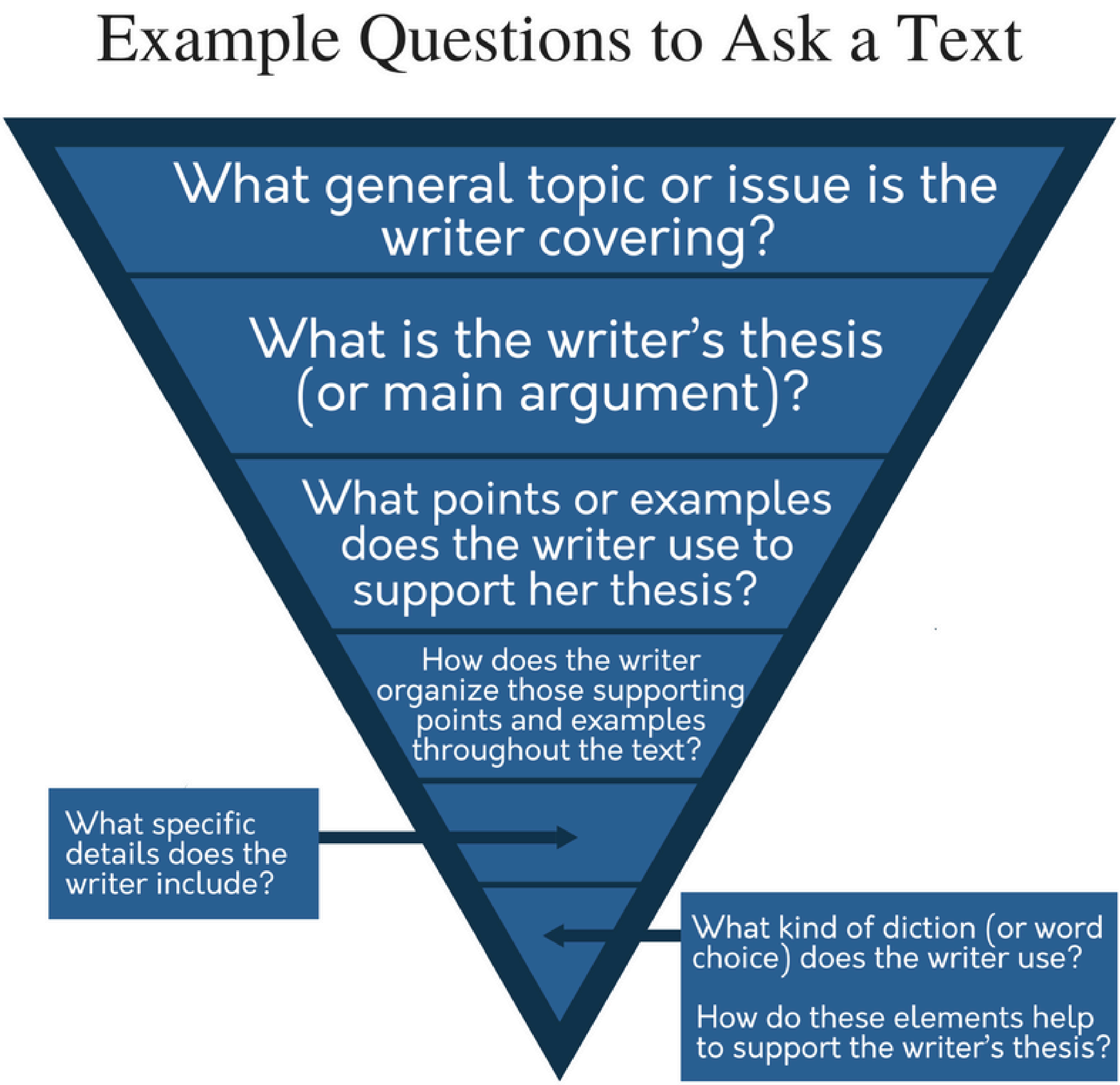


Figure 4.2 Example questions to ask a text

Questions For Further Inquiry

In addition to asking questions of the text and author, you will want to use a text to develop additional questions about the topic. This is a crucial step in the process of entering into an academic conversation. To develop questions for further inquiry, you should focus on open-ended questions that cannot be easily answered by a quick Internet search.

For example, if you are reading a text about changing the name of Washington's NFL team, a question for future inquiry could be "What are the effects of media stereotypes?" A closed-ended question such as "What other NFL teams use Native Americans as a mascot?" would close the door to inquiry. The answer to the second question can be easily found using a quick search that ends your line of inquiry. Conversely, the first question can lead to a much deeper level of critical thinking about the topic.

As you read and learn more about the topic, you may want to develop additional questions even if this line of inquiry goes in a completely different direction from where you started. To develop questions for inquiry consider asking these types of questions:

- Where are there holes or gaps in the logic or evidence in this text?
- What else would you like to know about this topic beyond this text?
- How are other authors writing about this topic?
- Where are the disagreements between texts?

More on Starting with a Question

1. Asking Questions as a Reading Comprehension Strategy

4.2 Identify the Main Idea and Supporting Details

Your university professors will expect you to be able to read independently to understand all the information you are expected to process in your university texts. Some of your reading assignments will be fairly straightforward. Others will be longer and more complex, so you will need a plan for how to handle them.

For any expository writing—that is, nonfiction, informational writing—your first comprehension goal is to identify the main points and relate any details to those main points. Regardless of what type of expository text you are assigned to read, the primary comprehension goal is to identify the main point: the most important idea that the writer wants to communicate. This idea is often stated early on in the introduction and re-emphasized in the conclusion.

Finding the main point gives you a framework to organize the details presented in the reading and to relate the reading to concepts you learned in class or through other reading assignments. After identifying the main point, find the supporting points: the details, facts, and explanations that develop and clarify the main point.

Tip:
Your instructor may use the term "main point" interchangeably with other terms, such as thesis, main argument, the main focus, or core concept.

More on Identifying the Main Idea and Supporting Details

1. [Finding the Main Idea]
2. [Implied Main Idea]
3. [Supporting Details and Patterns in Reading]

4.3 Decode Vocabulary

Understanding the vocabulary used in your university texts is a critical component of reading comprehension. Having strategies to use when you come across unfamiliar words will help you build and improve your vocabulary. You can sometimes determine the meaning of a word by looking within the word (at its root, prefix, or suffix) or around the word (at the clues given in the sentence or paragraph in which the word appears). If you are unable to determine the meaning of word in context, you may look up the definition.

Each academic discipline has its own terminology, and part of your success in all of your university papers will require you to move beyond simple memorization of word meanings to using these terms appropriately within the context of the situation. This dynamic means being aware that words have different meanings and connotations associated with them, and these meanings and connotations can change depending upon the situation in which they are being used.

Context Determines Meaning

Match the correct meaning of the word synthesis to the context in which it is being used:

Definition #1: the combination of ideas to form a theory or system.

Definition #2: the production of chemical compounds by reaction from simpler materials.

Context: Your English professor would like to see you use more synthesis within the body of your essay.

Answer: You may get a failing grade on your essay if you combine chemicals to form an explosion, so you better go with definition #1!

More on Decoding Vocabulary

1. Using Context Clues
2. Context Clues and Practice
3. Denote or Connote?

4.4 Utilize Metacognitive Strategies

Because university-level texts can be challenging, you will also need to monitor your reading comprehension. That is, you will need to stop periodically and assess how well you understand what you are reading. You can improve comprehension by taking time to determine which strategies work best for you and putting those strategies into practice.

Finding the main idea and paying attention to text features as you read helps you figure out what you should know. Just as important, however, is being able to figure out what you do not know and developing a strategy to deal with it.

Textbooks often include comprehension questions in the margins or at the end of a section or chapter. As you read, stop occasionally to answer these questions on paper or in your head. Use them to identify sections you may need to reread, read more carefully, or ask your instructor about later. Even when a text does not have built-in comprehension features, you can actively monitor your own comprehension.

Try these strategies, adapting them as needed to suit different kinds of texts:

- **Summarize.** At the end of each section, pause to summarize the main points in a few sentences. If you have trouble doing so, revisit that section.
- **Ask and answer questions.** When you begin reading a section, try to identify two to three questions you should be able to answer after you finish it. Write down your questions and use them to test yourself on the reading. If you cannot answer a question, try to determine why.
- **Don't read in a vacuum.** Look for opportunities to discuss the reading with your classmates. Many

instructors set up online discussion forums or blogs specifically for that purpose. Participating in these discussions can help you determine whether your understanding of the main points is the same as that of your peers.

More on Metacognitive Strategies

1. What is Metacognition?

4.5 Read Recursively

Reading is a recursive, rather than linear, activity. It is rare that you will read a text in university once, straight through from beginning to end. You may need to read a sentence or paragraph several times to understand it. Your reading will slow down or speed up as you encounter novel or familiar information. You may get "lost" in an example and need to double back or skip ahead to understand the point the author is trying to make.

You should plan on reading a text more than once: first for general understanding, and then to analyze and synthesize the material. Reading actively and recursively is the secret to becoming an effective reader.

- **First Reading** – Focus on the literal meaning of the text. What is the author "saying"? Annotate the text or take notes to keep track of the thesis and key points. Use strategies for unfamiliar vocabulary.
- **Second Reading** – Focus on "how" the author is communicating. What literary or rhetorical techniques does the author use? Pretend you are having a conversation with the author. What questions do you have? Are there any gaps in the narrative, evidence, or conclusions?
- **Further Readings** – Are you ready to join in the academic conversation? What additional questions do you have to further guide you inquiry into this topic? How does the text relate to other readings, class discussions, or "real world" situations? Here are a few questions to consider:
    - What ideas/passages did you find most/least interesting?
    - What did you learn from the reading that you did not know before?
    - Did the author succeed in changing your view on the topic? Why or why not?
    - What elements of the text did you connect with the most?
    - What problems do you have with the text?

More on Reading Recursively

1. Active Reading
2. Active Reading In Action

5. The Active Reading Process

What strategies do I use when I read? What strategies do I need to add?

How many times have you read a page in a book, or even just a paragraph, and by the end of it thought to yourself, "I have no idea what I just read; I can't remember any of it?" Almost everyone has done it, and it's particularly easy to do when you don't care about the material, when you are not interested in the material, or if the material is full of difficult or new concepts. If you don't feel engaged with a text, then you will passively read it, failing to pay attention to substance and structure. Passive reading results in zero gains; you will get nothing from what you have just read.

On the other hand, critical reading is based on active reading because you actively engage with the text, which means thinking about the text before you begin to read it, asking yourself questions as you read it as well as after you have read it, taking notes or annotating the text, summarizing what you have read, and, finally, evaluating the text.

Completing these steps will help you to engage with a text, even if you don't find it particularly interesting, which may be the case when it comes to assigned readings for some of your classes. In fact, active reading may even help you to develop an interest in the text even when you thought that you initially had none.

By taking an actively critical approach to reading, you will be able to do the following:

- Stay focused while you read the text
- Understand the main idea of the text
- Understand the overall structure or organization of the text
- Retain what you have read
- Pose informed and thoughtful questions about the text
- Evaluate the effectiveness of ideas in the text

5.1 Before you read

Establish Your Purpose

Establishing *why* you read something helps you decide *how* to read it, which saves time and improves comprehension. Before you start to read, remind yourself what questions you want to keep in mind. (Review Start with a Question section in this chapter). Then establish your purpose for reading.

In university and in your profession, you will read a variety of texts to gain and use information (e.g., scholarly articles, textbooks, reviews). Some purposes for reading might include the following:

- to scan for specific information
- to skim to get an overview of the text
- to relate new content to existing knowledge
- to write something (often depends on a prompt)
- to discuss in class
- to critique an argument
- to learn something
- for general comprehension

Strategies differ from reader to reader. The same reader may use different strategies for different contexts because his, her, or their purpose for reading changes. Ask yourself "why am I reading?" and "what am I reading?" when deciding which strategies work best.

Preview the Text

Once you have established your purpose for reading, the next step is to preview the text. Previewing a text involves skimming over it and noticing what stands out so that you not only get an overall sense of the text, but you also learn the author's main ideas before reading for details. Thus, because previewing a text helps you better understand it, you will have better success analyzing it.

Questions to ask when previewing may include the following:

- What is the title of the text? Does it give a clear indication of the text's subject?
- Who is the author? Is the author familiar to you? Is any biographical information about the author included?
- If previewing a book, is there a summary on the back or inside the front of the book?
- What main idea emerges from the introductory paragraph? From the concluding paragraph?
- Are there any organizational elements that stand out, such as section headings, numbering, bullet points, or other types of lists?
- Are there any editorial elements that stand out, such as words in italics, bold print, or in a large font size?

- Are there any visual elements that give a sense of the subject, such as photos or illustrations?

Once you have formed a general idea about the text by previewing it, the next preparatory step for critical reading is to speculate about the author's purpose for writing.

- What do you think the author's aim might be in writing this text?
- What sort of questions do you think the author might raise?

Tip:
To skim a text means to look over a text briefly in order to get the gist or overall idea of it. When skimming, pay attention to these key parts:

- Title
- Introduction (which give context, background, and introduces the writer's main idea)
- Topic sentences of body paragraphs
- Conclusion (which often completes or clarifies the writer's thesis or solution)
- Bold or italicized terms

Activate Your Background Knowledge on the Topic

All of us have a library of life experiences and previous reading knowledge stored in our brains, but this stored knowledge will sit unused unless we consciously take steps to connect to it or "activate" this knowledge.

After previewing a text, ask yourself, "What do I already know about this topic?" If you realize that you know very little about the topic or have some gaps, you may want to pause and do some quick Internet searches to fill in those gaps.

Although Wikipedia is usually not considered a credible source for an academic essay, it can be a helpful tool to discover what other people are saying about the topic, author, or publisher of a text. Internet searches, online encyclopedias, and news websites may all be used to help you quickly learn some of the key issues related to the topic.

As you read, you should consider what new information you have learned and how it connects to what you already know. Making connections between prior knowledge and new information is a critical step in reading, thinking, and learning.

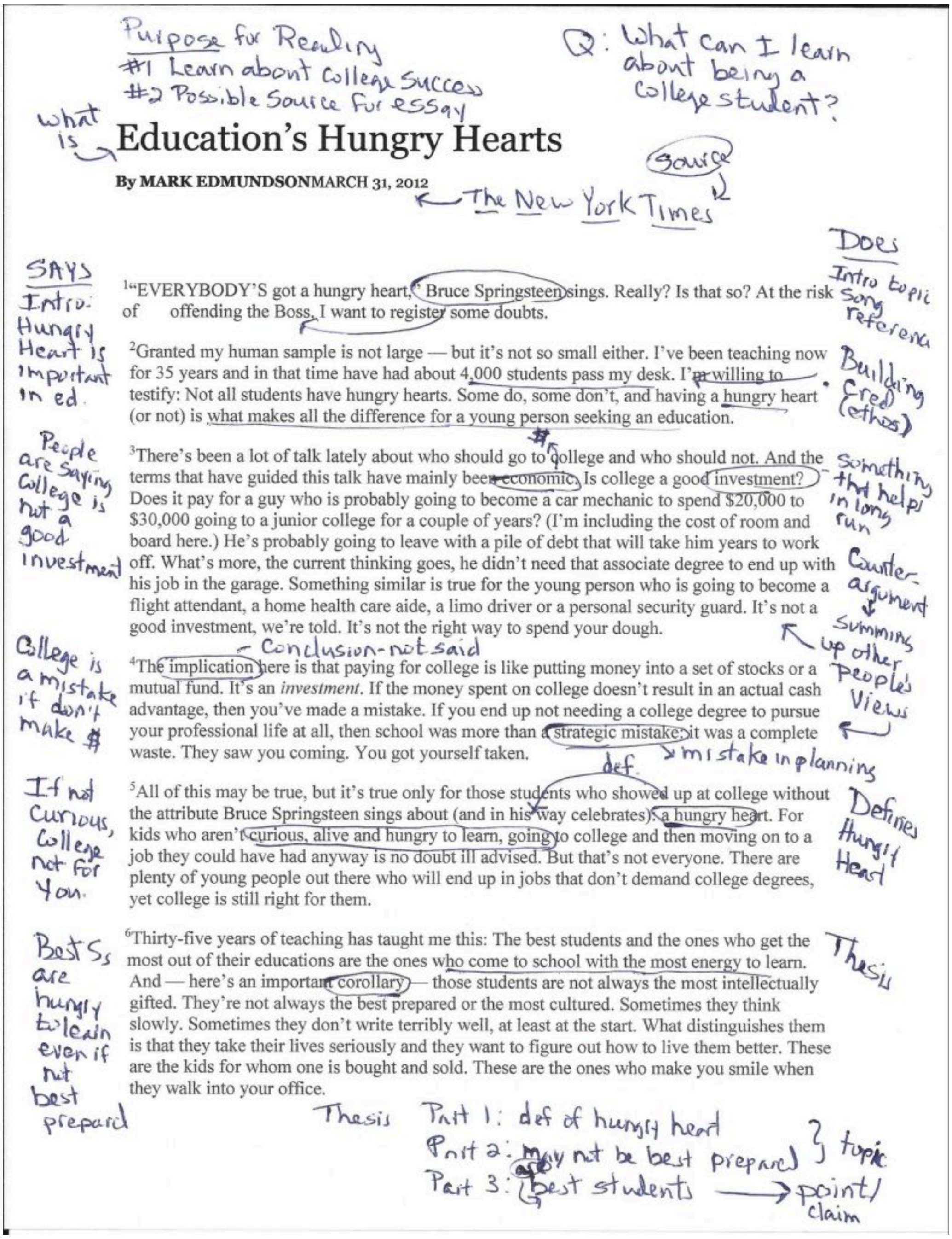
5.2 While you read

Improve Comprehension through Annotation

Annotating a text means that you actively engage with it by taking notes as you read, usually by marking the text in some way (underlining, highlighting, using symbols such as asterisks) as well as by writing down brief summaries, thoughts, or questions in the margins of the page. If you are working with a textbook and prefer not to write in it, annotations can be made on sticky notes or on a separate sheet of paper.

Regardless of what method you choose, annotating not only directs your focus, but it also helps you retain that information. Furthermore, annotating helps you to recall where important points are in the text if you must return to it for a writing assignment or class discussion.

Tip:
Annotations should not consist of JUST symbols, highlighting, or underlining. Successful and thorough annotations should combine those visual elements with notes in the margin and written summaries; otherwise, you may not remember why you highlighted that word or sentence in the first place.



Purpose for Reading
#1 Learn about College Success
#2 Possible Source for essay

Q: What can I learn about being a college student?

what is

Education's Hungry Hearts

Source

By MARK EDMUNDSONMARCH 31, 2012 ← The New York Times

SAYS / Does

Intro: Hungry Heart is important in ed.

[1]"EVERYBODY'S got a hungry heart," Bruce Springsteen sings. Really? Is that so? At the risk of offending the Boss, I want to register some doubts.

Intro topic Song reference

[2]Granted my human sample is not large — but it's not so small either. I've been teaching now for 35 years and in that time have had about 4,000 students pass my desk. I'm willing to testify: Not all students have hungry hearts. Some do, some don't, and having a hungry heart (or not) is what makes all the difference for a young person seeking an education.

Building Cred (ethos)

People are saying college is not a good investment

[3]There's been a lot of talk lately about who should go to college and who should not. And the terms that have guided this talk have mainly been economic. Is college a good investment? Does it pay for a guy who is probably going to become a car mechanic to spend $20,000 to $30,000 going to a junior college for a couple of years? (I'm including the cost of room and board here.) He's probably going to leave with a pile of debt that will take him years to work off. What's more, the current thinking goes, he didn't need that associate degree to end up with his job in the garage. Something similar is true for the young person who is going to become a flight attendant, a home health care aide, a limo driver or a personal security guard. It's not a good investment, we're told. It's not the right way to spend your dough.

Something that helps in long run

Counter-argument

Summing up other People's Views

College is a mistake if don't make $

← Conclusion - not said

[4]The implication here is that paying for college is like putting money into a set of stocks or a mutual fund. It's an *investment*. If the money spent on college doesn't result in an actual cash advantage, then you've made a mistake. If you end up not needing a college degree to pursue your professional life at all, then school was more than a strategic mistake; it was a complete waste. They saw you coming. You got yourself taken.

def. → mistake in planning

If not curious, college not for you.

[5]All of this may be true, but it's true only for those students who showed up at college without the attribute Bruce Springsteen sings about (and in his way celebrates): a hungry heart. For kids who aren't curious, alive and hungry to learn, going to college and then moving on to a job they could have had anyway is no doubt ill advised. But that's not everyone. There are plenty of young people out there who will end up in jobs that don't demand college degrees, yet college is still right for them.

Defines Hungry Heart

Best Ss are hungry to learn even if not best prepared

[6]Thirty-five years of teaching has taught me this: The best students and the ones who get the most out of their educations are the ones who come to school with the most energy to learn. And — here's an important corollary — those students are not always the most intellectually gifted. They're not always the best prepared or the most cultured. Sometimes they think slowly. Sometimes they don't write terribly well, at least at the start. What distinguishes them is that they take their lives seriously and they want to figure out how to live them better. These are the kids for whom one is bought and sold. These are the ones who make you smile when they walk into your office.

Thesis

Thesis Part 1: def of hungry heart
Part 2: may not be best prepared } topic
Part 3: best students → point/claim

Figure 4.3 Sample of Says/Does Annotations

More on Active Reading Strategies

1. Be an Active Reader
2. 10 Active Reading Strategies

Consider the Unique Qualities of the Text

The way you approach a text should vary based on the type of text you encounter. Reading a poem is very different from reading a chapter in a textbook. There are unique structures, elements, and purposes to the various texts you will encounter in college.

Below are some examples of active reading strategies employed with a variety of “texts” you might encounter in college including textbooks, scientific research, online media, artwork, and more. Notice how the readers approach the text differently based on the length, format, subject matter, and the reader’s own purpose for reading.

Textbook	Scholarly Research	Online Media
• Reading a Textbook • Active Reading	• Database • Skimming and Scanning	• Online Sources • Judging Online Materials • Evaluating Online
Persuasive Text	**Literature**	**Visual Media**
• Analyzing the Argument • Analyzing the Evidence	• Annotating	• Visual Rhetoric

5.3 After you read

Once you've finished reading, take time to review your initial reactions from your first preview of the text. Were any of your earlier questions answered within the text? Was the author's purpose similar to what you had speculated it would be?

The following steps will help you process what you have read so that you can move onto the next step of analyzing the text.

- Summarize the text in your own words (note your impressions, reactions, and what you learned)
- Talk to someone about the author's ideas to check your comprehension
- Identify and reread difficult parts of the text
- Review your annotations
- Try to answer some of your own questions from your annotations
- Connect the text to others you have read or researched on the topic

Once you understand the text, the next steps will be to analyze and synthesize the information with other sources and with your own knowledge. You will be ready to add your perspective, especially if you can provide evidence to support your viewpoint.

Just like with any new skill, developing your ability to read critically will require focus and dedication. With practice, you will gain confidence and fluency in your ability to read critically. You will be ready to join the academic conversations that surround you at Otago and beyond.

6. Now What?

After you have taken the time to read a text critically, the next step, is to analyze the text rhetorically to establish a clear idea of what the author wrote and how the author wrote it, as well as how *effectively* the author communicated the overall message of the text.

Tip:
Students are often reluctant to seek help. The truth is, every learner occasionally struggles. If you are sincerely trying to keep up with the course reading but feel like you are in over your head, seek out help. Speak up in class, schedule a meeting with your instructor, or visit your university learning center for assistance. Deal with the problem as early in the semester as you can. Instructors respect students who are proactive about their own learning. Most instructors will work hard to help students who make the effort to help themselves.

Key Takeaways

- University-level reading and writing assignments differ from high school assignments in quantity, quality, and purpose.
- Managing university reading assignments successfully requires you to plan and manage your time, set a purpose for reading, implement effective comprehension skills, and use active reading strategies to deepen your understanding of the text.
- Finding the main idea and paying attention to textual features as you read helps you figure out what you should know. Just as important, however, is being able to figure out what you do not know and developing a strategy to deal with it.
- Ask and answer questions. When you begin reading a section, try to identify two to three questions you should be able to answer after you finish it. If you cannot answer a question, try to determine why. Active engagement in the inquiry process is critical to success in university.
- University writing assignments place greater emphasis on learning to think critically about a particular discipline and less emphasis on personal and creative writing. Your focus becomes analyzing and synthesizing information to enter into academic conversations.
- Do not read in a vacuum. Simply put, don't rely solely on your own interpretation. Look for opportunities to discuss the reading in and out of class to help clarify and deepen your understanding.

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Originally Composed by Elizabeth Browning; revised by Karen Kyger and Cate Bombick, Howard Community College Faculty

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CHAPTER 5: WHY AREN'T THEY LISTENING TO ME? LISTENING AS A SUPERPOWER AND OTHER IMPORTANT SKILLS

Ashley Orme Nichols

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING

In terms of academics, poor listening skills were shown to contribute significantly to failure in a person's first year of college (Zabava & Wolvin, 1993).[1]In general, students with high scores for listening ability have greater academic achievement. Interpersonal communication skills including listening are also highly sought after by potential employers, consistently ranking in the top ten in national surveys ([2]

Poor listening skills, lack of conciseness, and inability to give constructive feedback have been identified as potential communication challenges in professional contexts. Even though listening education is lacking in our society, research has shown that introductory communication courses provide important skills necessary for functioning in entry-level jobs, including listening, writing, motivating/persuading, interpersonal skills, informational interviewing, and small-group problem solving (DiSalvo, 1980). Training and improvements in listening will continue to pay off, as employers desire employees with good communication skills, and employees who have good listening skills are more likely to get promoted.

Listening also has implications for our personal lives and relationships. We shouldn't underestimate the power of listening to make someone else feel better and to open our perceptual field to new sources of information. Listening can help us expand our self and social awareness by learning from other people's experiences and by helping us take on different perspectives. Emotional support in the form of listening and validation during times of conflict can help relational partners manage common stressors of relationships that may otherwise lead a partnership to deteriorate (Milardo & Helms-Erikson, 2000). The following list reviews some of the main functions of listening that are relevant in multiple contexts.

The main purposes of listening are (Hargie, 2011)

1.
2. National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2010).

- to focus on messages sent by other people or noises coming from our surroundings;
- to better our understanding of other people's communication;
- to critically evaluate other people's messages;
- to monitor nonverbal signals;
- to indicate that we are interested or paying attention;
- to empathize with others and show we care for them (relational maintenance); and
- to engage in negotiation, dialogue, or other exchanges that result in shared understanding of or agreement on an issue.

"One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say." Byrant McHill

5.1 The Listening Process

We begin to engage with the listening process long before we engage in any recognizable verbal or nonverbal communication. It is only after listening for months as infants that we begin to consciously practice our own forms of expression. In this section we will learn more about each stage of the listening process, the main types of listening, and the main listening styles.

Listening is a process and as such doesn't have a defined start and finish. Like the communication process, listening has cognitive, behavioral, and relational elements and doesn't unfold in a linear, step-by-step fashion. Models of processes are informative in that they help us visualize specific components, but keep in mind that they do not capture the speed, overlapping nature, or overall complexity of the actual process in action. The stages of the listening process are receiving, interpreting, recalling, evaluating, and responding.

Receiving

Before we can engage other steps in the listening process, we must take in stimuli through our senses. In any given communication encounter, it is likely that we will return to the receiving stage many times as we process incoming feedback and new messages. This part of the listening process is more physiological than other parts, which include cognitive and relational elements. We primarily take in information needed for listening through auditory and visual channels. Although we don't often think about visual cues as a part of listening, they influence how we interpret messages. For example, seeing a person's face when we hear their voice allows us to take in nonverbal cues from facial expressions and eye contact. The fact that these visual cues are missing in e-mail, text, and phone interactions presents some difficulties for reading contextual clues into meaning received through only auditory channels.

It is important to consider noise as a factor that influences how we receive messages. Some noise interferes primarily with hearing, which is the physical process of receiving stimuli through internal and external components of the ears and eyes, and some interferes with listening, which is the cognitive process of processing the stimuli taken in during hearing. While hearing leads to listening, they are not the same thing. Environmental noise such as other people talking, the sounds of traffic, and music interfere with the physiological aspects of hearing. Psychological noise like stress and anger interfere primarily with the cognitive processes of listening. We can enhance our ability to receive, and in turn listen, by trying to minimize noise.

Julian Treasure gives us 5 Ways to Listen Better in his TedTalk below.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/communication/?p=957#oembed-1

Interpreting

During the interpreting stage of listening, we combine the visual and auditory information we receive and try to make meaning out of that information. The interpreting stage engages cognitive and relational processing as we take in informational, contextual, and relational cues and try to connect them in meaningful ways to previous experiences. It is through the interpreting stage that we may begin to understand the stimuli we have received. When we understand something, we are able to attach meaning by connecting information to previous experiences. If we have difficulty interpreting information, meaning we don't have previous experiences or information to make sense of it, then it is difficult to transfer the information into our long-term memory for later recall. In situations where understanding the information we receive isn't important or isn't a goal, this stage may be fairly short or even skipped. After all, we can move something to our long-term memory by repetition and then later recall it without ever having understood it. I remember earning perfect scores on exams in my anatomy class in college because I was able to memorize and recall, for example, all the organs in the digestive system. In fact, I might still be able to do that now over a decade later. But neither then nor now could I tell you the significance or function of most of those organs, meaning I didn't really get to a level of understanding but simply stored the information for later recall.

Recalling

Our ability to recall information is dependent on some of the physiological limits of how memory works. Overall, our memories are known to be fallible. We forget about half of what we hear immediately after hearing it, recall 35 percent after eight hours, and recall 20 percent after a day. Our memory consists of multiple "storage units," including sensory storage, short-term memory, working memory, and long-term memory (Hargie, 2011).

Our sensory storage is very large in terms of capacity but limited in terms of length of storage. We can hold large amounts of unsorted visual information but only for about a tenth of a second. By comparison, we can hold large amounts of unsorted auditory information for longer—up to four seconds. This initial memory storage unit doesn't provide much use for our study of communication, as these large but quickly expiring chunks of sensory data are primarily used in reactionary and instinctual ways.

As stimuli are organized and interpreted, they make their way to short-term memory where they either expire and are forgotten or are transferred to long-term memory. Short-term memory is a mental storage capability that can retain stimuli for twenty seconds to one minute. Long-term memory is a mental storage capability to which stimuli in short-term memory can be transferred if they are connected to existing information. Once there, they can be stored indefinitely (Hargie, 2011). Working memory is a temporarily accessed memory storage space that is activated during times of high cognitive demand. When using working memory, we can temporarily store information and process and use it at the same time. This dynamic is different from our typical memory function in that information usually has to make it to long-term memory before we can call it back up to apply to a current situation. People with good working memories are able to keep recent information in mind and process it and apply it to other incoming information. This ability can be very useful during high-stress situations. A person in control of a command center like the White House Situation Room should have a good working memory in order to take in, organize, evaluate, and then immediately use new information instead of having to wait for that information to make it to long-term memory and then be retrieved and used.

Although recall is an important part of the listening process, there isn't a direct correlation between being good at recalling information and being a good listener. Some people have excellent memories and recall abilities and can tell you a very accurate story from many years earlier during a situation in which they should actually be listening and not showing off their recall abilities. Recall is an important part of the listening process because it is most often used to assess listening abilities and effectiveness. Many quizzes and tests in school are based on recall and are often used to assess how well students comprehended information presented in class, which is seen as an indication of how well they listened. When recall is our only goal, we excel at it. Experiments have found that people can memorize and later recall a set of faces and names with near 100 percent recall when sitting in a quiet lab and asked to do so. But throw in external noise, more visual stimuli, and multiple contextual influences, and we can't remember the name of the person we were just introduced to one minute earlier. Even in interpersonal encounters, we rely on recall to test whether or not someone was listening. Imagine that Azam is talking to his friend Belle, who is sitting across from him in a restaurant booth. Azam, annoyed that Belle keeps checking her phone, stops and asks, "Are you listening?" Belle inevitably replies, "Yes," since we rarely fess up to our poor listening habits, and Azam replies, "Well, what did I just say?"

Evaluating

When we evaluate something, we make judgments about its credibility, completeness, and worth. In terms of credibility, we try to determine the degree to which we believe a speaker's statements are correct and/or true. In terms of completeness, we try to "read between the lines" and evaluate the message in relation to what we know about the topic or situation being discussed. We evaluate the worth of a message by making a value judgment about whether we think the message or idea is good/bad, right/wrong, or desirable/undesirable. All these aspects of evaluating require critical thinking skills, which we aren't born with but must develop over time through our own personal and intellectual development.

Studying communication is a great way to build your critical thinking skills because you learn much more about the taken-for-granted aspects of how communication works, which gives you tools to analyze and critique messages, senders, and contexts. Critical thinking and listening skills also help you take a more proactive role in the communication process rather than being a passive receiver of messages that may not be credible, complete, or worthwhile. One danger within the evaluation stage of listening is to focus your evaluative lenses more on the speaker than the message. This focus can quickly become a barrier to effective listening if we begin to prejudge a speaker based on his or her identity or characteristics rather than on the content of his or her message.

Responding

Responding entails sending verbal and nonverbal messages that indicate attentiveness and understanding or a lack thereof. From our earlier discussion of the communication model, you may be able to connect this part of the listening process to feedback. Later, we will learn more specifics about how to encode and decode the verbal and nonverbal cues sent during the responding stage, but we all know from experience some signs that indicate whether a person is paying attention and understanding a message or not.

We send verbal and nonverbal feedback while another person is talking and after they are done. Verbal and nonverbal signals we send while someone is talking, which can consist of verbal cues like "uh-huh," "oh," and "right," and/or nonverbal cues like direct eye contact, head nods, and leaning forward. Back-channel cues are generally a form of positive feedback that indicates others are actively listening. People also send cues intentionally and unintentionally that indicate they aren't listening. If another person is looking away, fidgeting, texting, or turned away, we will likely interpret those responses negatively.

Reflection is a responding behavior that can also show that you understand what was communicated. When you reflect a message, you state back what you heard the speakers say in your own words. For example, you might say the following to start off a reflective response: "What I heard you say was…" or "It seems like you're saying…" You can also ask clarifying questions to get more information. It is often a good idea to pair a paraphrase with a question to keep a conversation flowing. For example, you might pose the following reflection and question pair: "It seems like you believe you were treated unfairly. Is that right?" Or you might ask a standalone question like "What did your boss do that made you think he was 'playing favorites?'" Make sure to reflect and/or ask questions once a person's turn is over because interrupting can also be interpreted as a sign of not listening. Reflection is also a good tool to use in computer-mediated communication, especially since miscommunication can occur due to a lack of nonverbal and other contextual cues.

"When you are listening to somebody, completely, attentively, then you are listening not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed, to the whole of it, not part of it." Jiddu Krishnamurti

5.2 Listening Types

Listening serves many purposes, and different situations require different types of listening. The type of listening we engage in affects our communication and how others respond to us. For example, when we listen to empathize with others, our communication will likely be supportive and open, which will then lead the other person to feel "heard" and supported and hopefully view the interaction positively (Bodie & Villaume, 2003). The main types of listening we will discuss are discriminative, informational, critical, and empathetic (Watson, Barker & Weaver, 1995).

Discriminative Listening

Discriminative listening is a focused and usually instrumental type of listening that is primarily physiological and occurs mostly at the receiving stage of the listening process. Here we engage in listening to scan and monitor our surroundings in order to isolate particular auditory or visual stimuli. For example, we may focus our listening on a dark part of the yard while walking the dog at night to determine if the noise we just heard presents us with any danger. Or, we may look for a particular nonverbal cue to let us know our conversational partner received our message (Hargie, 2011). In the absence of a hearing impairment, we have an innate and physiological ability to engage in discriminative listening. Although discriminative listening is the most basic form of listening, it provides the foundation on which more intentional listening skills are built. This type of listening can be refined and honed. Think of how musicians, singers, and mechanics exercise specialized discriminative listening to isolate specific aural stimuli and how actors, detectives, and sculptors discriminate visual cues that allow them to analyze, make meaning from, or recreate nuanced behavior (Wolvin & Coakley, 1993).

Informational Listening

Informational listening is listening with the goal of comprehending and retaining information. This type of listening is not evaluative and is common in teaching and learning contexts ranging from a student listening to an informative speech to an out-of-towner listening to directions to the nearest gas station. We also use informational listening when we listen to news reports, voice mail, and briefings at work. Since retention and recall are important components of informational listening, good concentration and memory skills are key. These also happen to be skills that many university students struggle with, at least in the first years of college, but will be expected to have mastered once they get into professional contexts. In many professional contexts, informational listening is important, especially when receiving instructions. I caution my students that they will be expected to process verbal instructions more frequently in their profession than they are in university. Most university professors provide detailed instructions and handouts with assignments so students can review them as needed, but many supervisors and managers will expect you to take the initiative to remember or record vital information. Additionally, many bosses are not as open to questions or requests to repeat themselves as professors are.

Critical Listening

Critical listening entails listening with the goal of analyzing or evaluating a message based on information presented verbally and information that can be inferred from context. A critical listener evaluates a message and accepts it, rejects it, or decides to withhold judgment and seek more information. As constant consumers of messages, we need to be able to assess the credibility of speakers and their messages and identify various persuasive appeals and faulty logic. Critical listening is important during persuasive exchanges, but I recommend always employing some degree of critical listening because you may find yourself in a persuasive interaction that you thought was informative. Critical-listening skills are useful when listening to a persuasive speech and when processing any of the persuasive media messages we receive daily. You can see judges employ critical listening, with varying degrees of competence, on talent competition shows like *Rupaul's Drag Race*, *America's Got Talent*, and *The Voice*. While the exchanges between judge and contestant on these shows is expected to be subjective and critical, critical listening is also important when listening to speakers that have stated or implied objectivity, such as parents, teachers, political leaders, doctors, and religious leaders.

Empathetic Listening

Empathetic listening is the most challenging form of listening and occurs when we try to understand or experience what a speaker is thinking or feeling. Empathetic listening is distinct from sympathetic listening. While the word *empathy* means to "feel into" or "feel with" another person, *sympathy* means to "feel for" someone. Sympathy is generally more self-oriented and distant than empathy (Bruneau, Wolvin & Coakley, 1993). Empathetic listening is other oriented and should be genuine. Because of our own centrality in our perceptual world, empathetic listening can be difficult. It's often much easier for us to tell our own story or to give advice than it is to really listen to and empathize with someone else. We should keep in mind that sometimes others just need to be heard and our feedback isn't actually desired.

Dylan Marron discusses key components of empathy in his Ted Talk Empathy is Not Endorsement.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/communication/?p=957#oembed-2

"We have two ears and one mouth so we can listen twice as much as we speak." Epictetus

5.3 Listening Styles

Just as there are different types of listening, there are also different styles of listening. People may be categorized as one or more of the following listeners: people-oriented, action-oriented, content-oriented, and time-oriented listeners. Research finds that 40 percent of people have more than one preferred listening style, and that they choose a style based on the listening situation (Bodie & Villaume, 2003). Other research finds that people often still revert back to a single preferred style in times of emotional or cognitive stress, even if they know a different style of listening would be better (Worthington, 2003). Following a brief overview of each listening style, we will explore some of their applications, strengths, and weaknesses.

- **People-oriented listeners** are concerned about the needs and feelings of others and may get distracted from a specific task or the content of a message in order to address feelings.
- **Action-oriented listeners** prefer well-organized, precise, and accurate information. They can become frustrated when they perceive communication to be unorganized or inconsistent, or a speaker to be “long-winded.”
- **Content-oriented listeners** are analytic and enjoy processing complex messages. They like in-depth information and like to learn about multiple sides of a topic or hear multiple perspectives on an issue. Their thoroughness can be difficult to manage if there are time constraints.
- **Time-oriented listeners** are concerned with completing tasks and achieving goals. They do not like information perceived as irrelevant and like to stick to a timeline. They may cut people off and make quick decisions (taking short cuts or cutting corners) when they think they have enough information.

People-oriented Listeners

People-oriented listeners are concerned about the emotional states of others and listen with the purpose of offering support in interpersonal relationships. People-oriented listeners can be characterized as "supporters" who are caring and understanding. These listeners are sought out because they are known as people who will "lend an ear." They may or may not be valued for the advice they give, but all people often want is a good listener. This type of listening may be especially valuable in interpersonal communication involving emotional exchanges, as a person-oriented listener can create a space where people can make themselves vulnerable without fear of being cut off or judged. People-oriented listeners are likely skilled empathetic listeners and may find success in supportive fields like counseling, social work, or nursing.

Action-oriented Listeners

Action-oriented listeners focus on what action needs to take place in regards to a received message and try to formulate an organized way to initiate that action. These listeners are frustrated by disorganization because it detracts from the possibility of actually doing something. Action-oriented listeners can be thought of as "builders"—like an engineer, a construction site foreperson, or a skilled project manager. This style of listening can be very effective when a task needs to be completed under time, budgetary, or other logistical constraints. One research study found that people prefer an action-oriented style of listening in instructional contexts (Imhof, 2004). In other situations, such as interpersonal communication, action-oriented listeners may not actually be very interested in listening, instead taking a "What do you want me to do?" approach. A friend and colleague of mine who exhibits some qualities of an action-oriented listener once told me about an encounter she had with a close friend who had a stillborn baby. My friend said she immediately went into "action mode." Although it was difficult for her to connect with her friend at an emotional/empathetic level, she was able to use her action-oriented approach to help out in other ways as she helped make funeral arrangements, coordinated with other family and friends, and handled the details that accompanied this tragic emotional experience. As you can see from this example, the action-oriented listening style often contrasts with the people-oriented listening style.

Content-oriented Listeners

Content-oriented listeners like to listen to complex information and evaluate the content of a message, often from multiple perspectives, before drawing conclusions. These listeners can be thought of as "learners," and they also ask questions to solicit more information to fill out their understanding of an issue. Content-oriented listeners often enjoy high perceived credibility because of their thorough, balanced, and objective approach to engaging with information. Content-oriented listeners are likely skilled informational and critical listeners and may find success in academic careers in the humanities, social sciences, or sciences. Ideally, judges and politicians would also possess these characteristics.

Time-oriented Listeners

Time-oriented listeners are more concerned about time limits and timelines than they are with the content or senders of a message. These listeners can be thought of as "executives," and they tend to actually verbalize the time constraints under which they are operating.

For example, a time-oriented supervisor may say the following to an employee who has just entered his office and asked to talk: "Sure, I can talk, but I only have about five minutes." These listeners may also exhibit nonverbal cues that indicate time and/or attention shortages, such as looking at a clock, avoiding eye contact, or nonverbally trying to close down an interaction. Time-oriented listeners are also more likely to interrupt others, which may make them seem insensitive to emotional/personal needs. People often get action-oriented and time-oriented listeners confused. Action-oriented listeners would be happy to get to a conclusion or decision quickly if they perceive that they are acting on well-organized and accurate information. They would, however, not mind taking longer to reach a conclusion when dealing with a complex topic, and they would delay making a decision if the information presented to them didn't meet their standards of organization. Unlike time-oriented listeners, action-oriented listeners are not as likely to cut people off (especially if people are presenting relevant information) and are not as likely to take short cuts.

"When people respond too quickly, they often respond to the wrong issue. Listening helps us focus on the the heart of the conflict. When we listen, understand, and respect each others ideas, we can then find a solution in which both of us are winners." Gary Chapman

5.4 Barriers to Effective Listening

Barriers to effective listening are present at every stage of the listening process (Hargie, 2011).

At the receiving stage, noise can block or distort incoming stimuli. At the interpreting stage, complex or abstract information may be difficult to relate to previous experiences, making it difficult to reach understanding. At the recalling stage, natural limits to our memory and challenges to concentration can interfere with remembering. At the evaluating stage, personal biases and prejudices can lead us to block people out or assume we know what they are going to say. At the responding stage, a lack of paraphrasing and questioning skills can lead to misunderstanding. In the following section, we will explore how environmental and physical factors, cognitive and personal factors, and bad listening practices present barriers to effective listening.

Environmental, Physical, and Psychological Barriers to Listening

Environmental noise, such as lighting, temperature, and furniture affect our ability to listen. A room that is too dark can make us sleepy, just as a room that is too warm or cool can raise awareness of our physical discomfort to a point that it is distracting. Some seating arrangements facilitate listening, while others separate people. In general, listening is easier when listeners can make direct eye contact with and are in close physical proximity to a speaker. The ability to effectively see and hear a person increases people's confidence in their abilities to receive and process information. Eye contact and physical proximity can still be affected by noise. Environmental noises such as a whirring air conditioner, barking dogs, or a ringing fire alarm can obviously interfere with listening despite direct lines of sight and well-placed furniture.

Physiological noise, like environmental noise, can interfere with our ability to process incoming information. Physiological noise is considered a physical barrier to effective listening because it emanates from our physical body. Physiological noise is noise stemming from a physical illness, injury, or bodily stress. Ailments such as a cold, a broken leg, a headache, or a poison ivy outbreak can range from annoying to unbearably painful and impact our listening relative to their intensity.

Psychological noise, bridges physical and cognitive barriers to effective listening. Psychological noise, or noise stemming from our psychological states including moods and level of arousal, can facilitate or impede listening. Any mood or state of arousal, positive or negative, that is too far above or below our regular baseline creates a barrier to message reception and processing. The generally positive emotional state of being in love can be just as much of a barrier as feeling hatred. Excited arousal can also distract as much as anxious arousal. Stress about an upcoming events ranging from losing a job, to having surgery, to wondering about what to eat for lunch can overshadow incoming messages. Cognitive limits, a lack of listening preparation, difficult or disorganized messages, and prejudices can also interfere with listening. Whether you call it multitasking, daydreaming, glazing over, or drifting off, we all cognitively process other things while receiving messages.

Difference between Speech and Thought Rate

Our ability to process more information than what comes from one speaker or source creates a barrier to effective listening. While people speak at a rate of 125 to 175 words per minute, we can process between 400 and 800 words per minute (Hargie, 2011).[3]This gap between speech rate and thought rate gives us an opportunity to side-process any number of thoughts that can be distracting from a more important message. Because of this gap, it is impossible to give one message our "undivided attention," but we can occupy other channels in our minds with thoughts related to the central message. For example, using some of your extra cognitive processing abilities to repeat, rephrase, or reorganize messages coming from one source allows you to use that extra capacity in a way that reinforces the primary message.

The difference between speech and thought rate connects to personal barriers to listening, as personal concerns are often the focus of competing thoughts that can take us away from listening and challenge our ability to concentrate on others' messages. Two common barriers to concentration are self-centeredness and lack of motivation (Brownell, Wolvin & Coakley, 1993). For example, when our self-consciousness is raised, we may be too busy thinking about how we look, how we're sitting, or what others think of us to be attentive to an incoming message. Additionally, we are often challenged when presented with messages that we do not find personally relevant. In general, we employ selective attention, which refers to our tendency to pay attention to the messages that benefit us in some way and filter others out. So students who are checking their Twitter feed during class may suddenly switch their attention back to the previously ignored professor when the following words are spoken: "This will be important for the exam."

Another common barrier to effective listening that stems from the speech and thought rate divide is response preparation. Response preparation refers to our tendency to rehearse what we are going to say next while a speaker is still talking. Rehearsal of what we will say once a speaker's turn is over is an important part of the listening process that takes place between the recalling and evaluation and/or the evaluation and responding stage. Rehearsal becomes problematic when response preparation begins as someone is receiving a message and hasn't had time to engage in interpretation or recall. In this sense, we

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3.

are listening with the goal of responding instead of with the goal of understanding, which can lead us to miss important information that could influence our response.

More Barriers

Another barrier to effective listening is a general lack of listening preparation. Unfortunately, most people have never received any formal training or instruction related to listening. Although some people think listening skills just develop over time, competent listening is difficult, and enhancing listening skills takes concerted effort. Even when listening education is available, people do not embrace it as readily as they do opportunities to enhance their speaking skills. Listening is often viewed as an annoyance or a chore, or just ignored or minimized as part of the communication process. In addition, our individualistic society values speaking more than listening, as it's the speakers who are sometimes literally in the spotlight. Although listening competence is a crucial part of social interaction and many of us value others we perceive to be "good listeners," listening just doesn't get the same kind of praise, attention, instruction, or credibility as speaking. Teachers, parents, and relational partners explicitly convey the importance of listening through statements like "You better listen to me," "Listen closely," and "Listen up," but these demands are rarely paired with concrete instruction. So unless you plan on taking more communication courses in the future (and I hope you do), this chapter may be the only instruction you receive on the basics of the listening process, some barriers to effective listening, and how we can increase our listening competence.

Bad messages and/or speakers also present a barrier to effective listening. Sometimes our trouble listening originates in the sender. In terms of message construction, poorly structured messages or messages that are too vague, too jargon filled, or too simple can present listening difficulties. In terms of speakers' delivery, verbal fillers, monotone voices, distracting movements, or a disheveled appearance can inhibit our ability to cognitively process a message (Hargie, 2011). Listening also becomes difficult when a speaker tries to present too much information. Information overload is a common barrier to effective listening that good speakers can help mitigate by building redundancy into their speeches and providing concrete examples of new information to help audience members interpret and understand the key ideas.

Prejudice as a Barrier to Listening

Oscar Wilde said, "Listening is a very dangerous thing. If one listens one may be convinced." Unfortunately, some of our default ways of processing information and perceiving others lead us to rigid ways of thinking. When we engage in prejudiced listening, we are usually trying to preserve our ways of thinking and avoid being convinced of something different. This type of prejudice is a barrier to effective listening because when we prejudge a person based on his or her identity or ideas, we usually stop listening in an active and/or ethical way.

We exhibit prejudice in our listening in several ways, some of which are more obvious than others. For example, we may claim to be in a hurry and only selectively address the parts of a message that we agree with or that aren't controversial. We can also operate from a state of denial where we avoid a subject or person altogether so that our views are not challenged. Prejudices that are based on a person's identity, such as race, age, occupation, or appearance, may lead us to assume that we know what he, she, or they will say, essentially closing down the listening process. Keeping an open mind and engaging in perception checking can help us identify prejudiced listening and hopefully shift into more competent listening practices.

Inattentional Blindness as a Barrier to Listening

Do you regularly spot editing errors in movies? Can you multitask effectively, texting while talking with your friends or watching television? Are you fully aware of your surroundings? If you answered yes to any of those questions, you're not alone. And, you're most likely wrong.

More than 50 years ago, experimental psychologists began documenting the many ways that our perception of the world is limited, not by our eyes and ears, but by our minds. We appear able to process only one stream of information at a time, effectively filtering other information from awareness. To a large extent, we perceive only that which receives the focus of our cognitive efforts: our attention.

Imagine the following task, known as dichotic listening (e.g., Cherry, 1953; Moray, 1959; Treisman, 1960): you put on a set of headphones that plays two completely different speech streams, one to your left ear and one to your right ear. Your task is to repeat each syllable spoken into your left ear as quickly and accurately as possible, mimicking each sound as you hear it. When performing this attention-demanding task, you won't notice if the speaker in your right ear switches to a different language or is replaced by a different speaker with a similar voice. You won't notice if the content of their speech becomes nonsensical. In effect, you are deaf to the substance of the ignored speech. But, that is not because of the limits of your auditory senses. It is a form of cognitive deafness, due to the nature of focused, selective attention. Even if the speaker on your right headphone says your name, you will notice it only about one-third of the time (Conway, Cowan, Bunting, 2001). And, at least by some accounts, you only notice it that often because you still devote some of your limited attention to the ignored speech stream (Cherry, 1953). In this task, you will tend to notice only large physical changes (e.g., a switch from a male to a female speaker), but not substantive ones, except in rare cases.

This selective listing task highlights the power of attention to filter extraneous information from awareness while letting in only those elements of our world that we want to hear. Focused attention is crucial to our powers of observation, making it possible for us to zero in on what we want to see or hear while filtering out irrelevant distractions. But, it has consequences as well: We can miss what would otherwise be obvious and important signals.

The same pattern holds for vision. In a groundbreaking series of studies in the 1970s and early 1980s, Neisser and his colleagues devised a visual analogue of the dichotic listening task (Neisser & Becklen, 1975). Their subjects viewed a video of two distinct, but partially transparent and overlapping, events. For example, one event might involve two people playing a hand-clapping game and the other might show people passing a ball. Because the two events were partially transparent and overlapping, both produced sensory signals on the retina regardless of which event received the participant's attention. When participants were asked to monitor one of the events by counting the number of times the actors performed an action (e.g., hand clapping or completed passes), they often failed to notice unexpected events in the ignored video stream (e.g., the hand-clapping players stopping their game and shaking hands). As for dichotic listening, the participants were unaware of events happening outside the focus of their attention, even when looking right at them. They could tell that other "stuff" was happening on the screen, but many were unaware of the meaning or substance of that stuff.

Have you ever been paying attention to something so closely you missed another event in the background? Or have you ever been so used to seeing something a certain way that when it changed, you didn't even notice it had?

To test the power of selective attention to induce failures of awareness, Neisser and colleagues (Neisser, 1979) designed a variant of this task in which participants watched a video of two teams of players, one wearing white shirts and one wearing black shirts. Subjects were asked to press a key whenever the players in white successfully passed a ball, but to ignore the players in black. As for the other videos, the teams were filmed separately and then superimposed so that they literally occupied the same space (they were partially transparent). Partway through the video, a person wearing a raincoat and carrying an umbrella strolled through the scene. People were so intently focused on spotting passes that they often missed the "umbrella woman." (Pro tip: If you look closely at the video, you'll see that Ulric Neisser plays on both the black and white teams.)

These surprising findings were well known in the field, but for decades, researchers dismissed their implications because the displays had such an odd, ghostly appearance. Of course, we would notice if the displays were fully opaque and vivid rather than partly transparent and grainy. Surprisingly, no studies were built on Neisser's method for nearly 20 years. Inspired by these counterintuitive findings and after discussing them with Neisser himself, Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons revisited them in the late 1990s (Simons & Chabris, 1999). They replicated Neisser's work, again finding that many people missed the umbrella woman when all of the actors in the video were partially transparent and occupying the same space. But, we added another wrinkle: a version of the video in which all of the actions of both teams of players were choreographed and filmed with a single camera. The players moved in and around each other and were fully visible. In the most dramatic version, we had a woman in a gorilla suit walk into the scene, stop to face the camera, thump her chest, and then walk off the other side after nine seconds on screen. Fully half the observers missed the gorilla when counting passes by the team in white.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/communication/?p=957#oembed-3

This phenomenon is now known as inattentional blindness, the surprising failure to notice an unexpected object or event when attention is focused on something else (Mack & Rock, 1998). The past 15 years has seen a surge of interest in such failures of awareness, and we now have a better handle on the factors that cause people to miss unexpected events as well as the range of situations in which inattentional blindness occurs. People are much more likely to notice unexpected objects that share features with the attended items in a display (Most, Simons, Scholl, Jimenez, Clifford, & Chabris, 2001). For example, if you count passes by the players wearing black, you are more likely to notice the gorilla than if you count passes by the players wearing white because the color of the gorilla more closely matches that of the black-shirted players (Simons & Chabris, 1999). However, even unique items can go unnoticed. In one task, people monitored black shapes and ignored white shapes that moved around a computer window ((Most, Simons, Scholl, Jimenez, Clifford, & Chabris, 2001). Approximately 30 percent of them failed to detect the bright red cross traversing the display, even though it was the only colored item and was visible for five seconds. The more effort a cognitive task requires the more likely it becomes that you'll miss noticing something significant.

Inattentional blindness is not just a laboratory curiosity—it also occurs in the real world and under more natural conditions. In a dramatic illustration of cell phone–induced inattentional blindness, Ira Hymen observed that people talking on a cell phone as they walked across a college campus were less likely than other pedestrians to notice a unicycling clown who rode across their path.

Recently, the study of this sort of awareness failure has returned to its roots in studies of listening, with studies documenting inattentional deafness: when listening to a set of spatially localized conversations over headphones, people often fail to notice the voice of a person walking through the scene repeatedly stating "I am a gorilla" (Dalton & Fraenkel, 2012). Under conditions of focused attention, we see and hear far less of the unattended information than we might expect (Macdonald & Lavie, 2011; Wayand, Levin, & Varakin, 2005).

What makes these findings interesting and important is that they run counter to our intuitions. Most people are confident they would notice the chest-thumping gorilla. In fact, nearly 90% believe they would spot the gorilla (Levin & Angelone, 2008), and in a national survey, 78% agreed with the statement, "People generally notice when something unexpected enters their field of view, even when they're paying attention to something else" (Simons & Chabris, 2010). Similarly, people are convinced that they would spot errors in movies or changes to a conversation partner (Levin & Angelone, 2008). We think we see and remember far more of our surroundings than we actually do. Most of the time, we are happily unaware of what we have missed, but we are fully aware of those elements of a scene that we have noticed. Consequently, if we assume our experiences are representative of the state of the world, we will conclude that we notice unexpected events. We don't easily think about what we're missing.

> **“It’s a common delusion that you can make things better by talking about them.” Rose MacAulay**

5.5 Listening Competence at Each Stage of the Listening Process

Many people admit that they could stand to improve their listening skills. This section will help us do that. In this section, we will learn strategies for developing and improving competence at each stage of the listening process.

We can develop competence within each stage of the listening process, as the following list indicates (Ridge, 1993):

- To improve listening at the receiving stage,
  - prepare yourself to listen;
  - discern between intentional messages and noise;

  - concentrate on stimuli most relevant to your listening purpose(s) or goal(s);
  - be mindful of the selection and attention process as much as possible;
  - avoid interrupting someone while they are speaking in order to maintain your ability to receive stimuli and listen; and
  - pay attention so you can follow the conversational flow.
    - For more on the importance of paying attention and being present check out this HBR article, [If you aspire to be a great leader, be present]

- To improve listening at the interpreting stage:

  - identify main points and supporting points;
  - use contextual clues from the person or environment to discern additional meaning;
  - be aware of how a relational, cultural, or situational context can influence meaning;
  - be aware of the different meanings of silence; and
  - note differences in tone of voice and other paralinguistic cues that influence meaning.

- To improve listening at the recalling stage:
  - use multiple sensory channels to decode messages and make more complete memories;
  - repeat, rephrase, and reorganize information to fit your cognitive preferences; and
  - use mnemonic devices as a gimmick to help with recall.

- To improve listening at the evaluating stage:
  - separate facts, inferences, and judgments;
  - be familiar with and able to identify persuasive strategies and fallacies of reasoning;
  - assess the credibility of the speaker and the message; and
  - be aware of your own biases and how your perceptual filters can create barriers to effective listening.

- To improve listening at the responding stage:
  - reflect information to check understanding;
  - ask appropriate clarifying and follow-up questions;
  - give feedback that is relevant to the speaker's purpose/motivation for speaking;
  - adapt your response to the speaker and the context; and
  - do not let the preparation and rehearsal of your response diminish earlier stages of listening.

"When someone really hears from you, without passing judgement on you, without trying to take responsibility for you, without trying to mold you, it feels damn good…

When I have been listened to and why I have been heard, I am able to reperceive my world in a new way and go on." Carl Rodgers

5.6 Active Listening

Active listening refers to the process of pairing outwardly visible positive listening behaviors with positive cognitive listening practices. Active listening can help address many of the environmental, physical, cognitive, and personal barriers to effective listening that we discussed earlier. The behaviors associated with active listening can also enhance informational, critical, and empathetic listening.

Active Listening Can Help Overcome Barriers to Effective Listening

Being an active listener starts before you actually start receiving a message. Active listeners make strategic choices and take action in order to set up ideal listening conditions. Physical and environmental noises can often be managed by moving locations or by manipulating the lighting, temperature, or furniture. When possible, avoid important listening activities during times of distracting psychological or physiological noise. For example, we often know when we're going to be hungry, full, more awake, less awake, more anxious, or less anxious, and advance planning can alleviate the presence of these barriers. For university students, who often have some flexibility in their class schedules, knowing when you best listen can help you make strategic choices regarding what class to take when. Student options are increasing, as some universities are offering classes in the overnight hours to accommodate working students and students who are just "night owls" (Toppo, 2011). Of course, we don't always have control over our schedule, in which case we will need to utilize other effective listening strategies that we will learn more about later in this chapter.

In terms of cognitive barriers to effective listening, we can prime ourselves to listen by analyzing a listening situation before it begins. For example, you could ask yourself the following questions:

1. "What are my goals for listening to this message?"
2. "How does this message relate to me / affect my life?"
3. "What listening type and style are most appropriate for this message?"

As we learned earlier, the difference between speech and thought processing rate means listeners' level of attention varies while receiving a message. Effective listeners must work to maintain focus as much as possible and refocus when attention shifts or fades (Wolvin & Coakley, 1993). One way to do this is to find the motivation to listen. If you can identify intrinsic and or extrinsic motivations for listening to a particular message, you will be more likely to remember the information presented. Ask yourself how a message could impact your life, your career, your intellect, or your relationships. This motivation can help overcome our tendency toward selective attention. As senders of messages, we can help listeners by making the relevance of what we're saying clear and offering well-organized messages that are tailored for our listeners.

Active Listening Behaviors

From the suggestions discussed previously, you can see that we can prepare for active listening in advance and engage in certain cognitive strategies to help us listen better. We also engage in active listening behaviors as we receive and process messages.

Paying attention is a key sign of active listening. Speakers usually interpret a listener's eye contact and body language as a signal of attentiveness. While a lack of eye contact may indicate inattentiveness, it can also signal cognitive processing.

When we look away to process new information, we usually do it unconsciously. Be aware, however, that your conversational partner may interpret this as not listening. If you really do need to take a moment to think about something, you could indicate that to the other person by saying, "That's new information to me. Give me just a second to think through it." We already learned the role that back-channel cues play in listening. An occasional head nod and "uh-huh" signal that you are paying attention. However, when we give these cues as a form of "autopilot" listening, others can usually tell that we are pseudo-listening, and whether they call us on it or not, that impression could lead to negative judgments.

A more direct way to indicate active listening is to reflect previous statements made by the speaker. Norms of politeness usually call on us to reflect a past statement or connect to the speaker's current thought before starting a conversational turn. Being able to summarize what someone said to ensure that the topic has been satisfactorily covered and understood or being able to segue in such a way that validates what the previous speaker said helps regulate conversational flow. Asking probing questions is another way to directly indicate listening and to keep a conversation going, since they encourage and invite a person to speak more. You can also ask questions that seek clarification and not just elaboration. Speakers should present complex information at a slower speaking rate than familiar information, but many will not. Remember that your nonverbal feedback can be useful for a speaker, as it signals that you are listening but also whether or not you understand. If a speaker fails to read your nonverbal feedback, you may need to follow up with verbal communication in the form of paraphrased messages and clarifying questions.

As active listeners, we want to be excited and engaged, but don't let excitement manifest itself in interruptions. Being an active listener means knowing when to maintain our role as listener and resist the urge to take a conversational turn. Research shows that people with higher social status are more likely to interrupt others, so keep this paradigm in mind and be prepared for it if you are speaking to a high-status person, or try to resist it if you are the high-status person in an interaction (Hargie, 2001).

Note-taking can also indicate active listening. Translating information through writing into our own cognitive structures and schemata allows us to better interpret and assimilate information. Of course, note-taking isn't always a viable option. It would be fairly awkward to take notes during a first date or a casual exchange between new coworkers. But, in some situations where we wouldn't normally consider taking notes, a little awkwardness might be worth it for the sake of understanding and recalling the information. For example, many people don't think about taking notes when getting information from their doctor or banker. I actually invite students to take notes during informal meetings because I think they sometimes don't think about it or don't think it's appropriate. But many people would rather someone jot down notes instead of having to respond to follow-up questions on information that was already clearly conveyed. To help facilitate your note-taking, you might say something like "Do you mind if I jot down some notes? This information seems important."

In summary, active listening is exhibited through verbal and nonverbal cues, including steady eye contact with the speaker; smiling; slightly raised eyebrows; upright posture; body position that is leaned in toward the speaker; nonverbal back-channel cues such as head nods; verbal back-channel cues such as "OK," "mmhum," or "oh"; and a lack of distracting mannerisms like doodling or fidgeting (Hargie, 2011).

Active Listening and Conflict

Active listening is challenging in calm everyday setting as we have seen. And, I'm sad to report, it's even harder in times of conflict. When your brain is under the stress of conflict, it is extremely challenging to actively listen to what someone else is saying because in a conflict situation, you may very well already disagree with many things that the other person is saying. Conflict is where most barriers to listening occur.

Think back to the idea of inattentional blindness. How do you think that impacts you in a conflict? Have you ever thought back to a high conflict situation and realized that you *missed* a key piece of information that was shared? This inattention is likely because in the heat of the moment you were too focused on either getting your point across, making your case, or figuring out how to make this conflict end. Inattentional blindness in conflict means that we are likely to miss key pieces of information, verbal or nonverbal. The more effort a cognitive task requires, the more likely that you'll miss noticing something significant. This cycle of missing information in and of itself can lead to more conflict.

Or, what about the difference between the speech and thought rate? You can process information at significantly higher rate than someone can share with you. In a conflict situation, you can process *every* previous conversation or conflict you have had with this person and still "hear" what they said. However, you aren't really listening when that is happening.

So what can you do about these challenges in a conflict situation? First, recognize that we are all wired to be distracted *and* that you will likely miss something. Second, maximize the attention you do have available by avoiding distractions. The ring of a new call or the ding of a new text are hard to resist, so make it impossible to succumb to the temptation by turning your phone off or putting it somewhere out of reach when you are driving. If you know that you will be tempted and you know that using your phone will increase inattentional blindness, you must be proactive. Third, don't be afraid to slow down and pause a conversation because you were *actively listening* to someone. You build stronger relationships by showing people that you are truly listening to them and will give the hard conversations they time they deserve.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/communication/?p=957#oembed-4

"Daring leaders who live into their values are never silent about hard things." Brene Brown

5.7 I-Statements – Owning Your Story

One way to effectively manage conflict is to own your story and your voice by using **I-statements**–statements that directly express your thoughts, needs, feelings, and experiences to the people around you. I-statements allow us to take responsibilities for our experiences and places the power of our lives in our hands. I-statements look like this:

- I feel...
- I think...
- I experienced it like this...
- I want...
- I need...

I-statements are contrasted with **You-statements**–statements that imply the other person is responsible for something. You-statements typically blame on the other person. You statements look like this:

- You made me feel...
- You don't care about me.
- You never think about how that would impact us.
- You didn't...

I-Statements vs You-Statements	
I felt unappreciated.	You don't care about me.
I need some help.	You could help out, you know.
I felt...	You made me feel....
It makes me sad to be left out.	It'd be nice if you invited me out with your friends.

Watch out for those *fake* I-Statements that so regularly sneak into our conversations. "I feel you...", "I think you", "I want you to..." are hidden You-Statements.

> **"The ability to ask questions is the greatest resource in learning the truth." Carl Jung**

5.8 Questions – The Key to Learning

The key to asking really great questions is being a really great listener. If you are listening actively, you will recognize what information you are missing or what you need clarification on. Below is a look at some basic types of questions to understand and master.

There is a general distinction made between **open-ended questions**, questions that likely require some thought and/or more than a yes/no answer, and **close-ended questions,** questions that only require a specific answer and/or a yes/no answer. This distinction is important to understand and remember. In the context of managing conflict, open ended questions are utilized for Information gathering, and close ended questions are used for Clarifying concepts or ideas you have heard. Here are examples of these types of questions.

Clarifying Questions (Close Ended Question)

- Is this what you said...?
- Did I hear you say...?
- Did I understand you when you said...?
- Did I hear you correctly when you said...?
- Did I paraphrase what you said correctly?
- So this took place on....?
- So you would like to see...?

Information Gathering Questions (Open Ended Questions)

- If there was one small way that things could be better starting today, what would that be?
- How did you feel when...?
- How could you have handled it differently?
- When did it began?
- When did you first notice...?
- When did that happen?
- Where did it happen?
- What happened then?
- What would you like to do about it?
- I want to understand from your perspective, would you please tell me again?
- What do you think would make this better going forward?
- What criteria did you use to...?
- What's another way you might...?
- What resources were used for the project?
- Tell me more about... (not a question, but an open ended prompt)

A type of question to watch out for is **leading questions**, which provides a direction or answer for someone to agree or disagree with. An example would be, "So you are going to vote for____ for Prime Minister, aren't you?" or "What they did is unbelievable, don't you agree?" These questions can easily be turned into information gathering questions, "Who are you going to vote for this year?" or "What do you this about their behavior?"

"Our key to transforming anything lies in our ability to reframe it." Marianne Williamson

5.9 Framing and Reframing

Framing, in communication, is essentially the act of intentionally setting the stage for the conversation you want to have. In framing a conversation, you express why you want to engage in this topic, what your intent is, and what you hope the outcome can be for resolving the conflict, as well as the impact/importance of your relationship. When you frame a conversation, you take out the need for the other person to assume what your intentions and motives are or why you are bringing this topic up right now.

There are many ways to frame a conversations; here are a few ideas for how to frame a conversation effectively.

Ask if This is a Good Time to Talk

"I have been wanting to connect with you to discuss___. Would now be a good time?" (If the answer is no, take a minute to schedule a good time)

Consider Sharing your "Why", Concerns, and Intentions

"This is important to me because….."

"I'm only bringing this up because I want us and this project to be successful and I'm worried that we are missing something."

"My intention is…."

"My intention is to share my thoughts with you, but I don't have any expectations that you do anything with them."

"I care about our relationships and want to make sure we are addressing challenges as they come up." "I'm not sure how this will go."

"I'm pretty stressed about this because I'm not sure how this conversation is going to go."

"I have been thinking about this a lot and figured it was time to ask for help."

Assertive Framing – Framing a Boundary

"I know this is important to you and I'm just too busy to go to that concert right now. "

"I can see this isn't a good time to talk, so I'd like to set up a time that works better."

"I'm sorry, I already have too much on my plate."

"I appreciate you thinking of me for this project. I'm currently working on X, which means unfortunately, I can't do both and have to say no to your request."

Framing sets the stage for the rest of the conversation to unfold. A little bit of framing goes a long way in helping conversations be more productive, and help manage some of the conflict that can happen when people have to make assumptions about "why" and conversation or conflict is happening.

For more ideas around framing, The Gottman institute has a really great infographic that shares their version of framing, Harsh Start Ups vs Soft Start Ups.

Reframing

Framing happens at the beginning of a conversation; **Reframing** happens when things get off track and you need to bring a conversation back on topic. Consider this picture.

In the center of the picture is a Frame, that is only covering part of the ocean and cliff. If we expanded that frame to surround the entire picture, that would be reframing. Reframing, in a conversation, helps us see more of what is going on, helps us focus on the larger picture or our end goals, and helps defuse tense situations. Reframing can be used for many things when managing conflict.

- Defusing inflammatory language
- Recasting negatives into neutral or positive statements

- Refocusing attention
- Acknowledging strong emotions in a productive manner
- Translating communication so that it is more likely to be heard and acknowledged by other parties
- Re-contextualizing the dispute, providing a broader perspective

Reframing Examples	
Original Statement	Reframed Statement
"You misinterpret everything."	"We must be misunderstanding each other. Can you help me understand what you meant"
"I am fed up with your negative response to everything that is proposed."	"I agree. Let's focus on finding a solution and move away from negativity."
"Can we just keep talking about this one detail?"	"If you are okay with it, can we make sure we have the big picture figured out before focusing on details? Maybe the details will become more clear then."
"That seems really petty! Can you believe that keeps happening?"	"What do you need to move past this moment and look for a solution."

"Nonverbal communication forms a social language that in many ways is richer and more fundamental than our words." Leonard Mlodinow

5.10 Non-Verbal Communication

How do you know when your friends, family, bosses, or instructors are pleased with your progress (or not)? You might know from the smiles on their faces; from the time and attention they give you; or perhaps in other nonverbal ways, like a raise, a bonus, or a good grade. Whether the interaction takes place face-to-face or at a distance, you can still experience and interpret nonverbal responses.

Chances are you have had many experiences where words were misunderstood or where the meaning of words was unclear. When it comes to nonverbal communication, meaning is even harder to discern. We can sometimes tell what people are communicating through their nonverbal communication, but there is no foolproof "dictionary" of how to interpret nonverbal messages. **Nonverbal communication** is the process of conveying a message without the use of words. It can include gestures and facial expressions, tone of voice, timing, posture, and where you stand as you communicate. It can help or hinder the clear understanding of your message, but it doesn't reveal (and can even mask) what you are really thinking. Nonverbal communication is far from simple, and its complexity makes our study and our understanding a worthy but challenging goal.

Nonverbal communication involves the entire body, the space it occupies and dominates, the time it interacts, and not only what is not said, but how it is not said. Try to focus on just one element of nonverbal communication and it will soon get lost among all the other stimuli. Let's consider eye contact. What does it mean by itself without context, chin position, or eyebrows to flag interest or signal a threat? Nonverbal action flows almost seamlessly from one to the next, making it a challenge to interpret one element or even a series of elements.

Nonverbal communication is irreversible. In written communication, you can write a clarification, correction, or retraction. While it never makes the original statement go completely away, it does allow for correction. Unlike written communication, oral communication may allow "do-overs" on the spot: you can explain and restate, hoping to clarify your point. Oral communication, like written communication, allows for some correction, but it still doesn't erase the original message or its impact. Nonverbal communication takes it one step further. You can't separate one nonverbal action from the context of all the other acts of verbal and nonverbal communication.

Carlos Budding provides insights into non-verbal communication in his Ted Talk "Eye" Understand: The power of non-verbal communication.

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Nonverbal Communication Is Fast

Let's pretend you are at your computer at work. You see that an e-mail has arrived, but you are right in the middle of a complex task. The e-mail is from a coworker and you click on it. The subject line reads "let go." You could interpret this to mean a suggestion there is a joke about Disney's Frozen in the email or a challenge to release some stress but letting go, but in the context of the workplace you may assume it means getting fired. Your emotional response is immediate. If the author of the e-mail could see your face, they would know that your response was one of disbelief and frustration, even anger, all via your nonverbal communication.

Your nonverbal communication happens like this all the time without much conscious thought at all. You may think about how to share the news with your partner and try to display a smile and a sense of calm when you feel like anything but smiling. Nonverbal communication gives our thoughts and feelings away before we are even aware of what we are thinking or how we feel. People may see and hear more than you ever anticipated. Your nonverbal communication includes both intentional and unintentional messages, but since it all happens so fast, the unintentional ones can contradict what you know you are supposed to say or how you are supposed to react.

For example, suppose you are working as a salesclerk in a retail store, and a customer just communicated their frustration to you, about something you don't think is a big deal. Would the nonverbal aspects of your response be intentional or unintentional? Your job is to be pleasant and courteous at all times, yet your wrinkled eyebrows or wide eyes may have been unintentional. Your nonverbals clearly communicate your negative feelings at that moment. Restating your wish to be helpful and displaying nonverbal gestures may communicate "no big deal," but the stress of the moment is still "written" on your face.

Can we tell when people are intentionally or unintentionally communicating nonverbally? Ask ten people this question and compare their responses. You may be surprised. It is clearly a challenge to understand nonverbal communication in action. We often assign intentional motives to nonverbal communication when in fact their display is unintentional and often hard to interpret.

As you can see, nonverbal communication can be confusing. We need contextual clues to help us understand, or begin to understand, what a movement, gesture, or lack of display means. Then we have to figure it all out based on our prior knowledge (or lack thereof) of the person and hope to get it right. Talk about a challenge. Nonverbal communication is everywhere, and we all use it, but that doesn't make it simple or independent of when, where, why, or how we communicate.

Nonverbal Messages Communicate Feelings and

Attitudes

Steven Beebe, Susan Beebe, and Mark Redmond (2002) offer us three additional principals of interpersonal nonverbal communication that serve our discussion.

1. You often react faster than you think
2. Your nonverbal responses communicate your initial reaction before you can process it through language or formulate an appropriate response
3. If your appropriate, spoken response doesn't match your nonverbal reaction, you may give away your true feelings and attitudes

Albert Mehrabian asserts that we rarely communicate emotional messages through the spoken word. According to Mehrabian, 93 percent of the time we communicate our emotions nonverbally, with at least 55 percent associated with facial gestures. Vocal cues, body position and movement, and normative space between speaker and receiver can also be clues to feelings and attitudes (Mehrabain, 1972).

Is your first emotional response always an accurate and true representation of your feelings and attitudes, or does your emotional response change across time? We are all changing all the time, and sometimes a moment of frustration or a flash of anger can signal to the receiver a feeling or emotion that existed for a moment but has since passed. Their response to your communication will be based on that perception, even though you might already be over the issue. According to William Seiler and Melissa Beall, most people tend to believe the nonverbal message over the verbal message. People will often answer that "actions speak louder than words" and place a disproportionate emphasis on the nonverbal response (Seiler & Beall, 2000). This emphasis is why it is important for us to be aware of our own nonverbal communication and ensure we are communicating what we mean. Some common ways we communicate our emotions through nonverbal communication that we may or may not recognize include:

- Reduction in eye contact while engaged in a conversation
- Awkward pauses in conversation
- Higher pitch in voice
- Deliberate pronunciation and articulation of words
- Increased delay in response time to a question
- Increased body movements like changes in posture
- Decreased smiling
- Decreased rate of speech

Such non-verbal cues are where the spoken word serves us well. You may need to articulate clearly that you were frustrated, but not anymore. The words spoken out loud can serve to clarify and invite additional discussion.

For more information on non-verbal communication check out the Ted Talk from Lynne Franklin, Reading Minds Though Body Language, and article by Abhimanyu Das, [7 ways to be a better communicator – tweak your body language] e.g. [new tab]

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"Communication is a skill that you can learn. It's like learning to ride a bicycle or typing. If you're willing to work at it, you can rapidly improve the quality of every part of your life." Brian Tracy

5.11 Using the Tools

Using These Tools for Self-Awareness Building

One of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves is reflecting upon our strengths and weaknesses when it comes to how our communication and conflict management skills and how they impact the relationships in our lives. Understanding our capability to actively listen, how we express ourselves and our ideas, how we frame our intent and purposes, and how we present ourselves non-verbally can provide insight into the success and failure of friendships or romantic relationships, as well as the depth of connection we have with our family or coworkers.

The frameworks and tools in this chapter allow for us to consider and understand:

- what type of listener you are
- what style of listening do you use most regularly
- what barriers to listening do you experience
- how you express yourself and your story (i-statements or you-statements)
- how effective you are at asking questions
- how you frame your conversations and your ability to reframe a conversation when necessary
- how you communicate nonverbally and its impact on your relationships

Once we understand ourselves in these ways we can ask ourselves the hard questions: where am I successful in utilizing these tools, and where can I improve? Taking an honest inventory of our communication and conflict management skills allows us to accurately identify what we should keep doing and what we should stop doing. Things to consider in this reflection process:

- ask for feedback about your skills from someone you trust
- think about successful relationships you have and consider what makes them so great–do more of that
- think about unsuccessful relationships you have and consider what makes them not so great–do less of that
- consider your role models, or people that have positively impacted you in your life, how do they communicate and manage conflict; these role models and their behaviors could provide interesting insight into areas to improve yourself

From these reflections, pick 1 or 2 small things that you want to work on to either continue doing, potentially with more frequency or that you want to improve. As the saying goes, you can't boil the ocean. You also can't change everything about your communication and conflict management styles at one time. Often 1 or 2 changes is plenty for the brain to work on. Commit to yourself when and where you will try to improve and set a time to check back in with yourself to reflect on how the change is going.

Using These Tools for Other Awareness Building

Once we understand ourselves, we can move into the utilization of these skills to understand others. You can consider:

- what type of listener are they
- what style of listening do you think they have
- what barriers to listening do you see or experience when talking to them
- how you they express themselves and their story (i-statements or you-statements)
- do they ask you questions and are they effective
- do they frame or reframe a conversation when necessary
- what they communicate nonverbally and its impact on you

You can combine your question asking and your listening skills to really dig into understanding others and their skills. You can watch for nonverbal cues and work towards utilizing the empathetic listening style to understand the perspective of another person.

Using These tools for Relationship Building

After you understand yourself and others in these frameworks, you can start analyzing where some of these ideas can cause conflict and move towards managing these differences in a productive manner. For example –

> You are a time-oriented listener, and your best friend is a people-oriented listener. Your friend wants to focus on your feelings and needs, and you are just looking to get to the point as quickly as possible. This difference is very common.

The strange and interesting thing here is that in this dynamic, you could have a *primary conflict* (lets say you and your best friend are in a conflict about how to spend the up coming weekend) and now you also have a *secondary conflict* that comes from the difference in the way you want to address the primary conflict. Often times the primary conflict and secondary conflict become inseparable. Listening for these kinds of differences helps us disentangle the primary conflict from the secondary conflicts. Once we recognize them, we can use our framing and reframing skills to manage these differences directly. For example:

> Reframe – "I think we are approaching this conversation differently. (*I-statement*) It sounds like focusing on the task and solving this problem quickly is important to you (*Reflection*) and for me I want to make sure we address our feelings and the impact of this situation on our friendship (*Frame*). Are you okay with addressing both side of this situation knowing we both want a positive solution in this situation?" (*Clarifying question)*

We build relationships by putting these tools together. Listening is the foundation, expressing ourselves through I-statements, asking questions to understand and clarify, and framing and reframing the conflict and why it is important allows us to really connect with the people around us, through empathy and understanding, and build relationships with mutual respect and purpose.

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CHAPTER 6: THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF A SENTENCE

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Recognize the difference between a clause and phrase
- Distinguish between an independent clause and a dependent clause
- Identify and explain the four different sentence structures (simple, compound, complex, compound-complex)

Key Terms and Concepts

- phrase
- clause
- independent clause
- dependent clause
- coordinating conjunction
- subordinate conjunction

Unsurprisingly, you are required to submit written assignments for this paper and other papers at university. Your own level of comfort in this area will be different from that of other students, but like all skills, writing is improved through practice. All of us have strengths when it comes to writing, and all of us have areas we can improve.

We're going to start with the basic elements of sentences right now, focusing on sentence level issues that can harm your writing. This way, we have a common language as we discuss this topic. This chapter works best with the videos available to you on xOtago.

Let's start by going over basic grammatical terms that you will need to know for this section.

Exercise #1: Grammar Vocabulary Self-Assessment

Below you will see some flash cards with grammatical terms. These are all terms that we will mention throughout this technical writing section. Try to predict what you think these words mean. If you can't define the word, can you come up with an example? If the definitions don't make sense yet, that's okay: we'll revisit these terms later. This assessment is just for your to test your own knowledge.

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Clauses and Phrases

When we build anything, be it a car, a house, or even a sentence, it is important to be familiar with the tools we are using. Grammatical elements are the main "tools" we use when when building sentences and longer written works such as reports. Thus, some understanding of grammatical terminology will help us to construct effective sentences. If you would like to review some basic parts of speech (nouns, pronouns, articles, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, etc), see the **Parts of Speech Overview** at the Purdue OWL website. When I was young, I learned about the parts of speech from the television infomercials School House Rocks. (I've included these videos here out of nostalgia, but the are definitely optional viewing for you.):

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The two essential parts of a sentence are the **subject** and the **verb**. While we may be familiar with the word "subject" being synonymous with "topic", the subject of a sentence is a grammatical constituent of a sentence that often (but not always) is the topic. The subject is usually and noun or noun phrase, and the rest of the sentence tells us what that noun does or how it exists. In this way, the subject relates to the verb. The **verb** (or verb phrase) is a word or group of words that convey the action (such as *run*, *eat*, *grow*, *learn*, etc.) or state of being (such as *be* or *seem*). The subject expresses who or what does the action or is in a state of being. When you combine these two elements, you get a **clause**. All independent **clauses** must contain both a **subject** and a **verb**.

Here are two simple examples of a **clause**.

(1) I walk.
(2) Tama is running.

Both sentences have a **subject** ("I" and "Tama") and a **verb** or **verb group** ("walk" and "is running"), so they are **clauses**. There are two types of clauses in writing: an **independent clause** and a **dependent clause**.

There are also **phrases**, which lack either a subject or a verb, or both, so they need to relate to or modify other parts of the sentence. Don't worry too much about **phrases**, though. We are going to focus on **clauses** here.

Independent clauses, also called main clauses, can stand on their own and convey an idea. Let's look at some examples.

Here is a sentence:

> The engineers stood around the table looking at schematics for the machine.

Can you identify the **subject**, **verb**, **clause**, and **phrase** in that sentence? If not, that's okay.

Here's a break down of the difference parts of the sentence.

Independent Clause	**Phrases**
1. The **engineers** stood around the table	looking at the schematics for the machine.
(subject) (verb) (phrase)	(phrase) (phrase)

Notice the **independent clause** ("The engineers stood around the table") is a complete idea. If we removed the phrase "looking at the schematics for the machine", the independent clause would still work as a complete sentence. The **phrase** ("looking at schematics for the machine") would not be a complete sentence by itself. Its verb ("looking") is not complete ("looking" rather than "look" or "are looking"), and it does not have a subject for that verb, which is why it isn't a **clause**. It could not be a complete sentence on its own.

Dependent clauses rely on another part of the sentence for meaning and can't stand on their own.

Here's an example:

> After they discussed different options, they decided to re-design the the components.

Can you identify the different parts we have discussed so far? Below is a break down of the sentence.

Dependent Clause	**Independent Clause**
2. After **they** discussed different options,	**they** decided to re-design the components.
Sub. Conj. **(subject)** (verb) (object)	**(subject)** (verb) (phrase)

Sentence 2 has one **dependent clause** and one **independent clause**, each with its own subject-verb combination ("they discussed" and "they decided"). The two clauses are joined by the **subordinate conjunction**, "after," which makes the first clause ("After they discussed different options") subordinate to or dependent upon the second one ("they decided to re-design the components).

Note also that the subordinate clause can come before ("**After they discussed different options**, they decided to re-design the components") or after ("They decided to re-design the components **after**

they discussed different options") the independent clause. Position does not determine subordination; the grammar of the clause determines subordination. Subordinate clauses will begin with a subordinate conjunction (e.g., *when*, *if*, *because*, etc.), lack a complete verb or verb group (*looking* instead of *look*, *will look*, *have looked*, *is looking*, etc.), or lack a subject (if the sentence is not a command: "Sit down", for example, is a complete sentence, even though its subject ("you") is implied only).

Being able to identify the critical parts of the sentence will help you design sentences that have a clear and effective subject-verb relationship.

If you need some more guidance on **sentences**, please watch the sentence construction videos on xOtago, or you can watch this video from Purdue OWL, which will segue for you into the next section of this chapter.

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Exercise #2: Identify the Clause

In this activity, you will identify all the words in either the **independent clause** or **dependent clause** in a sentence. You must click on all the words that are part of that **clause** to get the points.

For example, if you are supposed to identify an **independent clause**, and your sentence is

I will go to work after I eat breakfast.

you would click on "I" "will" "go" "to" and "work"

If you are supposed to identify a **dependent clause** for the same sentence, you would click on "after" "I" "eat" and "breakfast".

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Sentence Structures

There are four common ways to combine **independent** and **dependent clauses,** creating the following four sentences structures: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. In the examples above, Sentence 1 is a simple sentence, while Sentence 2 is complex.

We will go over each sentence structure now.

SIMPLE SENTENCES have one main **clause** and any number of phrases. Below is the formula for a simple sentence.

subject + verb

The following are all examples of simple sentences:

- A simple sentence can be very effective.
- It makes one direct point.
- It is good for creating emphasis and clarity.
- Too many in a row can sound repetitive and choppy.
- Varied sentence structure sounds more natural.

Can you identify the **subject**, **verb**, and **phrases** (if any) in the above sentences?

COMPOUND SENTENCES have two or more independent **clauses** joined by **coordinating conjunctions** (CC) such as *and, but, for, yet, nor, or, so.* A common acronym for remembering all of the conjunctions is FANBOYS. You can also connect them using punctuation such as a semi-colon or a colon. By **coordinating** the ideas, you are giving them roughly equal weight and importance.

Please note that these **coordinating conjunctions** are different from **subordinate conjunctions**, which show a generally unequal relationship between the clauses.

Below is the formula for a compound sentence:

subject + verb, CC subject + verb

The following sentences are all compound. The **coordinating conjunctions** are all in bold:

- A compound sentence coordinates two ideas**, and** each idea is given roughly equal weight.
- The two ideas are closely related**, so** you don't want to separate them with a period.
- The two clauses make up part of the same idea, **so** they should be part of the same sentence.
- The two clauses may express a parallel idea, **and** they might also have a parallel structure.
- You must remember to include the coordinating conjunction, **or** you may commit a comma splice.

In formal writing, avoid beginning a sentence with a **coordinating conjunction**.

COMPLEX SENTENCES express complex and usually unequal relationships between ideas. One idea is "**subordinated**" to the main idea by using a **subordinate conjunction** (like "while" or "although"). One idea is "dependent" upon the other one for logic and completeness. **Complex sentences** include one main clause and at least one dependent clause (see Example 2 above). Often, it is stylistically effective to begin your sentence with the dependent clause, and place the main clause at the end for emphasis.

subord. conjunction + subject + verb (*this is the dependent clause*), subject + verb (*this is the independent clause*)

The following are all examples of complex sentences. **Subordinate conjunctions** are in bold.

- **When** you make a complex sentence, you subordinate one idea to another.
- **If** you place the subordinate clause first, you give added emphasis to the main clause at the end.
- **Despite the fact that many students try to use them that way**.
    - **x** NOTE: this last bullet is a sentence fragment, and not a subordinate clause. Subordinate clauses cannot stand on their own.

Check out [this link] for a list of **subordinate conjunctions** if you would like to see more examples.

COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCES have at least two **independent clauses** and at least one

dependent clause. Because a **compound-complex** sentence is usually quite long, you must be careful that it makes sense; it is easy for the reader to get lost in a long sentence.

Given the complex nature of the structure, let's look at a few examples and break them down into their parts:

> Alphonse doesn't like action movies because they are so loud, so he doesn't watch them.

Independent Clause #1: Alphonse doesn't like action movies.
Dependent Clause: because they are so loud
Independent Clause #2: he doesn't watch them.

> Although it will be close, I think we will meet the deadline, and we will complete the project.

Dependent Clause: Although it will be close
Independent Clause #1: I think we will meet the deadline
Independent Clause #2: we will complete the project.

> While our supervisor can be a bit of a pain at times, he genuinely cares about the work, and he wants to see us succeed.

Dependent Clause: While our supervisor can be a bit of a pain at times
Independent Clause #1: he genuinely cares about the work
Independent Clause #2: he wants to see us succeed

EXERCISE #3 Identifying Sentence Types

Read the sentences below and identify which sentence structure is being used.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/communication/?p=892#h5p-3

EXERCISE #4: Combining sentences

Below are two sentences separated by a line (|). Combine the pair of sentences to make one idea subordinate to the other. You can do this by either writing them down, or thinking it in your brain. When you have an answer, click on the sentences to see possible answers.

Notice the impression you convey by how you subordinate one idea to another. If your combined sentence was a topic sentence for a paragraph, what idea would the reader expect that paragraph to emphasize?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/communication/?p=892#h5p-4

Key Takeaways

- A sentence must have a subject and verb to form a complete idea.
- A clause has both a subject and verb. There are two types of clauses: an independent

clause (which can stand alone) and a dependent clause (which can not stand alone).

- Using a variety of sentence types as well as using these types strategically to convey your ideas will strengthen your style. Keep the following in mind:
    - **Simple sentences** are great for emphasis. They make great topic sentences.
    - **Compound sentences** balance ideas; they are great for conveying the equal importance of related ideas.
    - **Complex sentences**–when you use them effectively–show complicated relationships between ideas by subordinating one idea to another.
    - **Compound-complex sentences** can add complexity to your writing, but you need be make sure it the writing doesn't lose the reader.
- Ultimately, using a combination of these structures will make your writing stronger.

References

Purdue Writing Lab. (n.d.). *Parts of speech overview*. https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/mechanics/parts_of_speech_overview.html

Material in this chapter is adapted from "Technical Writing Essentials" by Suzan Last (on BCcampus). It is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

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CHAPTER 7: SKIMMING AND SCANNING

Patricia Williamson

Skimming

Skimming is when we sample parts of the text in order to gain a general understanding or a quick sense of a text's value. Skimming enables us to get a quick overview of a text, without reading it in full or in depth.

Meaning or focus can be found in a variety of places. To skim effectively for overall sense of a text, run your eyes over the text looking at:

- titles
- headings
- sub-headings
- emphasized text (**bold**, *italics*, <u>underlines</u>, ALL CAPS)
- figures
- tables
- images
- bullet points
- key words

Introductions and conclusions often explicitly state the overall argument of a text or its findings. Similarly, you might read the first sentence of each paragraph: good topic sentences will tell you the key idea of each paragraph.

To establish a text's value in an academic context, you can quickly look at:

1. The authors and their affiliations: if you know the key names and research centers in an area of study, you may be able to determine quickly if the paper is by an influential scholar or institution (and may have more currency in a field of study).
2. The date: more-recent articles will often review previous research, helping you to locate other important work that preceded them. Dates can also tell you roughly the relevance of the article to today's academic community.
3. The publisher: some journals are more well-known or read or they have a higher impact factor in a field of study.

[PMLA

the changing profession

What Is New Formalism?

MARJORIE LEVINSON

THIS REVIEW OF NEW FORMALISM POSES CHALLENGES VERY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE OF THE FAMILIAR COMPENDIUM-REVIEW GENRE (e.g., "The Year's Work in Victorian Studies"). While all review essays face questions of inclusion, in an assignment of this kind, where the defining category is neither an established period nor topic but a developing theory or method emerging from the entire repertoire of literary and cultural studies, identifying the scholarly literature is a critical task in its own right. Moreover, because new formalism is better described as a movement than a theory or method, the work of selection is especially vexed and consequential. It is vexed because the practitioners' modes and degrees of identification with the movement are so various, and consequential because the reviewer's bibliographic decisions cannot help but construct the phenomenon being described.

My original version of this essay, which far exceeds the five thousand words alloted by *PMLA*, does a reasonable job of representing post-2000 scholarship that lays claim to a resurgent formalism while offering some commentary on pre-2000 studies that are clearly inaugural documents, often cited as such by later new formalism. That version also includes three informational appendixes referencing topically related bodies of scholarship and a brief publication chronology of new formalism.[1] I urge the reader to consult that longer text (available online at sitemaker.umich.edu/pmla_article) for its attention to the two monographs that, in my view, make the most powerful historical and theoretical interventions—Jonathan Loesberg's *A Return to the Aesthetic* and Isobel Armstrong's *The Radical Aesthetic*—and for its discussion of an article that I find exemplary of a genuinely new formalism in action, Robert Kaufman's "Everybody Hates Kant: Blakean Formalism and the Symmetries of Laura Moriarty." My selection of texts for this unavoidably truncated print version is guided by my sense of what is likely to be most useful to graduate students whose knowledge of formalism is limited not only to hearsay but to highly partisan hearsay, pro and con.

MARJORIE LEVINSON is F. L. Huetwell Professor in the Department of English at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. The author of several books on Romantic-period poets and topics, she has published essays most recently on Elizabeth Bishop and Thomas Hardy. Her new work, on Spinoza, cognitive studies and postclassical scientific thought, and Romantic poetry, is forthcoming this year in *Studies in Romanticism*. This summer, she serves as faculty member at the School of Criticism and Theory, offering a course titled Spinoza's Enlightenment: Rethinking the Romantic Turn.

558 [© 2007 BY THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA]

Skimming is a time-saving beginning to reading, but it should not replace in-depth reading. Rather, skimming allows you to determine if a text is worth reading in-depth. Through skimming, you will quickly build an overview of the main ideas in the text, which is particularly important if you are unsure of the applicability of the text and you have a lot of reading to do. Skimming will help you to determine whether a text is useful for a research assignment or worth further in-depth reading. In-depth reading and research will take up a great deal of your time as a university student; ensure that you spend your time on worthwhile pursuits.

You may find the exercise in the University of Melbourne video below helpful to solidify these concepts.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/communication/?p=874#oembed-1

Scanning

When you scan a text, you are looking for specific words or representative phrases. This technique helps you discover specific information in a text (**source**) quickly.

Perhaps you're thinking "I can just use the 'ctrl F' shortcut on my computer keyboard and type in the key word or phrase I'm searching for". While this is true, many exams are *paper only* and you will require the capacity to identify answers within the text quickly.

Firstly, determine the key words you are searching for, so you know what to focus on.

Then, quickly and systematically scan across and down the page from left to right, top to bottom. If you are searching for data, scan the page for numbers and percentages and look at tables and graphs also. If you are searching for a key word, think of it as a whole word, don't just look for the first letter of the word (like a word search puzzle).

You may need to complete a second or third pass over the material to identify what you are looking for. Therefore, it makes sense to use the skimming technique first to identify key sections of the text where you may find the relevant information you are seeking.

Again, you may find the exercise in the University of Melbourne video below helpful to solidify these concepts.

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CHAPTER 8: SUMMARISING SKILLS

Patricia Williamson

As with paraphrasing, summarising is an everyday skill used to **condense** information so that it may be relayed to others. For example, if you have watched a two hour movie at the cinema and you want to give a **synopsis** of the overall plot to your friends, you may tell them in ten minutes or less what it took you two hours to watch. This is summarising in action.

In academic writing we can use summarising techniques to condense the ideas of others to support the main points of our own discussions or arguments. This chapter will help to formalize your understanding of the process.

Step-by-step Instructions

1. Skim and scan the text for the key ideas and concepts
    - look at headings, sub-headings, images and graphics, and dot-points
    - go a little deeper and read the abstract, the findings/outcomes (research), and the conclusion to better understand the aims and answers contained in the text
2. Annotate the reading to identify the key ideas/arguments/claims/concepts
3. Make notes from your annotated reading and begin to convert sections into your own words as you do so
4. Identify the author/s, year, and page range needed for the in-text citation
5. Paraphrase the main ideas from your notes and the text in your own words

Tips

- Avoid using quotes from the original author/text. The main purposes of a summary are to reduce the text in length and to write it in your own words.
- Do not add any additional material or your own thoughts and opinions to the summary. If you wish to interject your own points within the summary, split the summary and provide an in-text citation for each section.
- You do not need to provide proof for the author's ideas or claims. By eliminating supporting evidence such as data, examples and explanations, this will naturally reduce the word count.
- How much you need to reduce the word count will largely depend on the needs of the assignment you are using it for. Summaries can range in length from only a sentence or two to several

paragraphs. For a larger text, the summary should be no more than 1/5 of the original text. In your own academic writing however, you are more likely to only need a few sentences. Always ask your lecturer/tutor if you are unsure.

- Summaries, as with paraphrases, are included in the overall word count for your assessments.
- All summarised information MUST include an in-text citation to avoid plagiarism.

Lastly

Do not fall into the trap of analysing the text instead of summarising it. You are not critiquing the text, only **encapsulating** its key ideas.

The following video from BYU discusses how quotations, paraphrases, and summaries differ. While it does not detail how to write a summary, it usefully shows how to integrate summarized material into your work.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/communication/?p=876#oembed-1

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CHAPTER 9: EMAILS AND TEXTS

Katrina Peterson

Chapter Synopsis

This chapter introduces the basics of email writing and etiquette, also providing information on texting. It offers suggestions about when (and when not to!) use email in business communication. It details the basic conventions of structure: the header/address information, greeting, message body, and closing. It gives an overview of Netiquette, the expectations of online etiquette, which has application for other genres of online communication as well.

9.1 Email Introduction

Electronic mail, or email, is among the most versatile genres of business writing. It is used to communicate issues ranging from serious to trivial, and its formality level varies greatly based on context and rhetorical situation. It may be used like text, or synchronous chat, and recipients often choose to access email messages on a cell phone. When composing an email, a sender must account for the time constraints readers may face due to high email volume. Recipients, on the other hand, should plan to answer a business email within 24 hours, or the general time frame that they would respond to a text. Strong subject lines, clear formatting, and concise writing are all characteristics of a well-written email. Emails may also present ethical challenges as the forwarding and carbon copy functions enable communications to be shared with additional recipients.

Email, texting, and microblogs are all workplace tools that are used both internally and externally. Prior to email, genres of business writing were more clearly differentiated based on function: hard copy letters were sent outside the company, and memos were directed to those inside the company. This distinction still exists in some business contexts, but email has largely replaced hard copy letters in external and internal correspondence. Email can be very useful for messages that have more content than a text message, but conciseness remains one of its major features. A clear structure with a greeting, message body, and closing is also expected of this genre.

Many businesses use automated emails to acknowledge communications from the public, or to remind associates that periodic reports or payments are due. The form email is also common; in this case, a recipient chooses from a menu of sentences to make the wording suitable for a specific transaction. Email may be informal in personal contexts, but business communication requires attention to detail, awareness that an email reflects both you and your company, and a professional tone. Although email may have an informal feel, remember that it needs to convey professionalism and respect. Never write or send anything that you would not want to share publicly, or in front of your company president.

9.2 When (and When Not!) to Email

Email is a good way to communicate when:

- You need to contact a person who is difficult to reach via telephone, does not come to campus regularly, or is located in another part of the country or world (for instance, someone who lives in a different time zone).
- The information you want to share is not time-sensitive. Email is instantaneous, but it does not guarantee an instantaneous response. For many people, keeping up with their email correspondence is a part of their job, and they only do it during regular business hours. Unless readers have promised otherwise, assume that it may take a few days for them to respond.
- You need to send someone an electronic file, such as a document for a course, a spreadsheet full of data, or a rough draft of your paper.
- You need to distribute information quickly to many people (for example, a memo that needs to be sent to the entire office staff).
- You need a record of the communication. Saving important emails can be helpful if you need to recall what someone said in an earlier message, provide proof (for example, as receipt for a service or product), or review the content of an important meeting or deadline.
- You are unable to ask a direct question or make a request in person. In this case, frame your question/request politely, being careful to avoid a demanding tone or the underlying assumption that your request will be granted.

Email is not an effective means of communication when:

- Your message is long (i.e. could not be read in 20 minutes or less), complicated, or requires additional face-to-face discussion. For example, if you want feedback from your supervisor, or if you are asking your professor a question that requires more than a yes/no answer, you should schedule a meeting instead.
- Information is highly confidential. Email is NEVER private! Keep in mind that your message could be forwarded to other people without your knowledge. A backup copy of your email is always stored on a server where it can be retrieved, even when you have deleted the message and think it is gone forever.
- The tone of the message could be misconstrued. If you would hesitate to say something to someone’s face, do not write it in an email.
- The information itself is emotionally charged. For example, if you must communicate bad news to someone, it is better to deliver it in person.

9.3 Email Structure

Professional communication requires careful attention to the specific writing context. In addition to its language and content, the structure of a email should also reflect a writer's understanding of audience and purpose; a well-crafted email helps to establish credibility with an audience by showing awareness of the genre's conventions or its standard moves and expectations. The principles explained here apply to the educational context as well as business writing, so be sure to use them when communicating with your instructors and classroom peers. Four elements of structure should be considered when composing an email: the header/address information, greeting, message body, and closing.

Header/Address Information

As used here, *header/address information* refers to the subject line and the recipient lines: To, Cc, and Bcc.

Ensure that you include a clear, brief, specific, and (if appropriate) action-oriented subject line. This clarity will help recipients to quickly grasp the essence of your message and the task that the reader needs to complete; it will also help focus you in composing your email and request. To get this clarity, you may wish to think of email subject lines as newspaper headlines. They should convey the main point of your email or the idea that you want readers to take away from it: use key words and phrases rather than complete sentences. One-word subject lines, however, such as *Hi, Question,* or *FYI,* are seldom they informative enough and may undercut the message's importance. by contrast, overly long or rambling subjects may result in a similar problem. Instead, consider using a subject line like *Economics Proposal Attached* or *Your English 110 Question*. If the message is time sensitive, it may be helpful to include a date: Meeting on Thurs, Dec 2. You can signal an action that needs to be complete with the phrase "Action Required", followed by a colon, and then the action. For example, if you need a signature on a paper-change form, you could write have the subject line "Action Required: Signature to Change from HUMS 100 to ENGL 128".

Just as an email's subject line can communicate either professionalism or a lack of it, so also might your own email address. Consider two brief examples: jackjohnson@yahoo.com and bigdaddy2000@gmail.com. The former address may appear more professional because it includes the sender's name (which also helps to identify the individual); the latter may appear less professional because it suggests characteristics irrelevant to the communication, perhaps coming across as overly casual and informal. If you are emailing within a professional context (such as asking your lecturer for an extension), use your institutional email address. For one, that email address may easily provide more information to the recipient, such as the name by which you are known or the position that you hold at that institution (making you easier to identify and therefore easier to help). For another, your email may be less likely to be diverted to a secondary inbox or junk folder (making your request more likely to receive a response in a timely manner).

The email's recipient lines should be given careful thought as well. In general, copying individuals on an email is a good way to deliver your message simultaneously to several people. In professional settings, copying someone else on an email can help get things done, especially if the person receiving the copy is in a supervisory role. For example, copying your boss on an email to a nonresponsive co-worker might prompt the co-worker to respond. Be aware, however, that when you send a message to more than one address using the Cc: (or carbon copy) field, both the original recipient and all the recipients of the carbon copy can see all the email addresses in the To: and Cc: fields. Each person receiving the message will be able to see the addresses of everyone else. Also, while carbon copying supervisors on an email may prompt immediate action from the original recipient, this option may raise important ethical and/or rhetorical considerations. If injudiciously used, it may have the appearance of manipulating recipient(s).

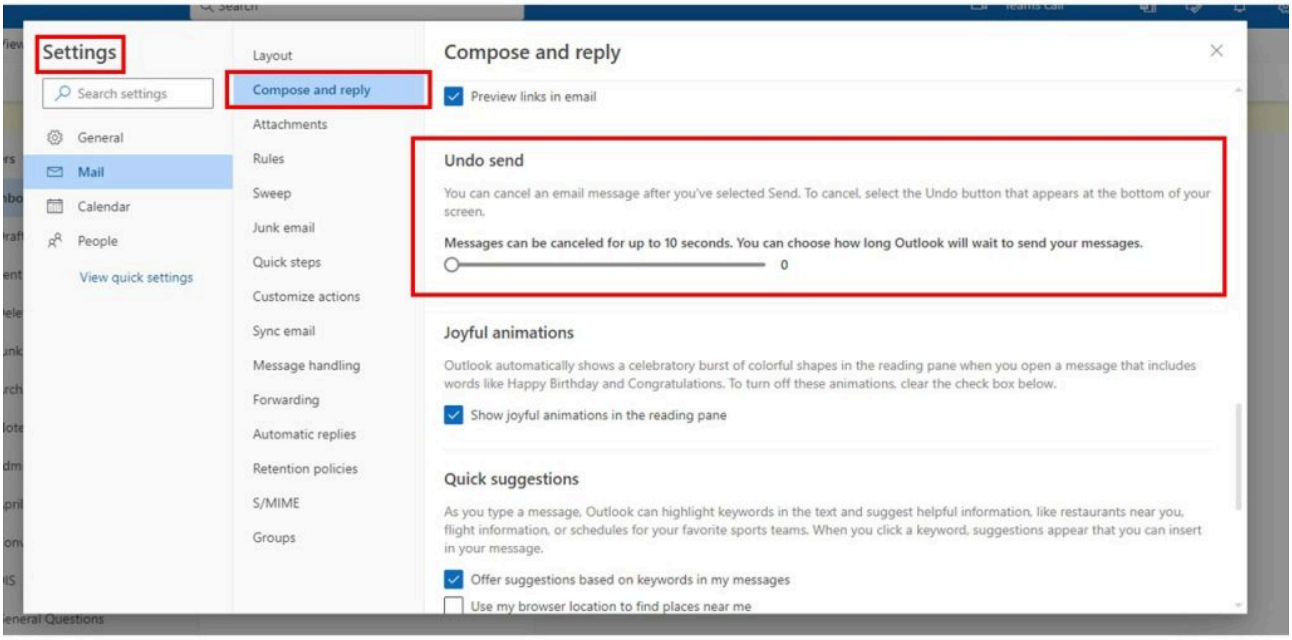
Blind carbon copying (Bcc-ing) emails to a group of people can be useful when you do not want everyone on the list to see each other's email addresses. The only address that will be visible to all recipients is the one in the To: field. If you prefer not to show any of the listed email addresses, you can put your own address in the To: field and use Bcc: for recipients' addresses.

Based on previous discussion, you may be wondering, "In what situations would the Cc: and Bcc: functions be helpful and appropriate to use?" As a student and a professional you will work collaboratively at some point—for example, on a class project—and need to ask a question of a supervisor or professor, perhaps at the request of group members. You would of course have the option to email the inquiry directly, later sending the response you receive to your group. However, you might also choose to include classmates in the Cc: line of the original email: 1) to keep them in the loop and confirm that you have followed through on their request, 2) to provide the professor with the option of hitting Reply All in order to inform the group directly, and 3) to preclude the need for a separate email if/when the professor responds to the group as a whole. If you do include others in the Cc:, however, you will may want to draw attention to that fact in your email, so that the respondent does not overlook the carbon copied individuals due to high email volume.

The previous information gives a sense of just how useful carbon copying can be—it may offer a means of cutting out an extra step in the communication process while keeping others informed. However, the Bcc: may be trickier to determine when to use due to the blind aspect of its communication. As noted, it may be a good option if you wish to deliver information to additional recipients while obscuring their email addresses. Perhaps you did not obtain permission to share their email information with others, but you had offered to send them the information as well. In such an instance, the Bcc: will enable you to be respectful of their privacy, while avoiding sending a separate email.

In other instances, you may be called upon to make a more difficult decision, for example, when working with a challenging co-worker. Perhaps this co-worker has a history of unwise decision-making, like violating company policy or not following through on required procedures. If your supervisors are aware of the situation, they may ask that you keep them updated on developments as a form of documentation. As part of your job, you might have to remind the individual of a company procedure that has not been followed. Your supervisor may want to know that the individual has been informed of the policy, and you may simultaneously wish to avoid fallout with a co-worker who could misunderstand the supervisors' request for information. Including your supervisors in the Bcc: would be one way to make them aware of the steps you have taken to address a situation or fulfill the duties of your job position.

When drafting a message with sensitive content, you might consider waiting to enter recipients' email addresses to ensure that the email is not sent until after you have edited the document; after all, send is only one click away. The same holds true for the Cc: and Bcc: lines, which raises another important consideration. The instantaneous aspect of email communication can be both blessing and curse. No writer wants to send an email inadvertently, and yet many senders make the mistake of emailing a quick reply when strong emotions have the upper hand. Especially when an individual is on the receiving end of an angry email, anger may seem like the appropriate response. However, such a step is unprofessional and may have serious ramifications. Avoid flame wars. When tempted to send an emotional response, always wait; instead, consider holding off until the message can be phrased in a more objective, professional manner. You may also wish to check your email "delay" or "undo send" settings: email platforms such as Gmail and Outlook allow you to set the time that you have to "undo" a message that you may have sent inadvertently. In Outlook, you will find this feature in your "Settings" under "Compose and reply".



Screen shot of Microsoft Outlook settings for undo send

Greeting

When first initiating contact by email, open with an appropriate greeting or salutation. Avoid simply starting with the message body and be sure to include a polite signature. Proper greetings and closings demonstrate respect, also they also help to avoid mix-ups in case a message is sent to the wrong recipient. For example, you might consider using a greeting like *Dear Ms. X* (formal, for someone external to the company) or *Hi Barry* (informal, for someone you know well). Unless someone has expressed an individual preference, never use the title Mrs. as you cannot assume a woman is married.

If the gender of a person is not evident, use the entire name, like this: Dear Sam Jones. If you do not know the person well, it may be confusing to identify an appropriate greeting (What do I call my TA/professor?) or closing (From? Sincerely?). When in doubt, address recipients more formally to avoid offending them. Some common ways to address readers are: Dear Professor Smith, Hello Ms. McMahon, or Hi Mary Jane. If a person's name is not available, or if the email addresses a diverse group, try something both generic and polite: Dear Members of the Selection Committee or Hello everyone. Remember that in New Zealand, you can use Tēnā koe ("Dear Sir/Madam") or Kia ora ("Hi") to one person or Tēnā koutou ("Dear everyone") or Kia ora koutou ("Hi everyone") for three or more people.

Message Body

Here are some tips to ensure that the message of your email is clear and accessible. In general, avoid using all caps since it may have the appearance of yelling. Emojis, though helpful in informal communications like texting/emailing with friends, may also be perceived as unprofessional in business contexts, particularly at first contact when you may not know the receiver. Use bolding, underlining, and italics as needed to increase clarity, but be careful not to overload readers with too much at once (if everything is emphasized, nothing is emphasized). Bullet points may be helpful for sharing listed information, and hyperlinks may permit recipients to access information quickly. Double-check these links before sending, however, to ensure that they work.

State your purpose for writing directly at the email's introduction. Expand that purpose (if necessary) in subsequent paragraphs. Reference any included attachments up front as well, so that readers are aware of the additional content and its purpose; in your email state the name of the file, along with the type of document and program needed to open it, for example: "Please see the attached Word document of my essay, *The Many Facets of Richard III.*" In the case of an included question, cut and paste any relevant text (for example, computer error messages, assignment prompts, segments of a previous message, etc.) into the email so that the reader has a frame of reference from which to answer. When replying to someone else's email, it may be helpful to either include or restate the sender's message. Conversely, if you are emailing back and forth with the same person, you might delete the previous messages to avoid clutter and make communication more direct.

Use paragraphs to separate thoughts (or consider writing separate emails if you have many unrelated points or questions), and re-state the desired action at the end of your message. When requesting a response, let the reader know what type of response you require (for example, an email reply, possible meeting times, a recommendation letter, etc.). If you request something that has a due date, be sure to place the due date in a prominent position in your email. Ending your email with the next step may be helpful in work settings (for example, you might write "I will follow this email up with a phone call on Wednesday, 26 May" or "Let's discuss this further at the OUSA meeting on Thursday at 12 p.m.").

Closing

An email's closing is extremely important because it identifies the sender. Always include your full name at the end of your email. In an educational context, keep in mind that your professor may be teaching multiple students with the same name, or multiple sections of many students, so including your class/

section number along with first and last name (and student number) is a good idea. When closing, end with something brief but friendly: Thank you, Best wishes, See you tomorrow, or Regards. For a very formal message, such as a job application, use the kind of closing that you might see in a business letter: Sincerely, or Respectfully yours. If you do not know the reader well, you might also consider including your title and the organization you belong to, for example:

Mary Watkins
Senior Research Associate
Bain and Company

or

Joseph Smith
8601153
ENGL 128, Tutorial 3

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/communication/?p=989#oembed-1

9.4 Netiquette

Netiquette refers to etiquette on the net, or protocols and norms for online communication. These general guidelines apply to most forms of electronic communication, including email. We may send or post messages, create personal pages, and interact via online technologies as a normal part of our careers, but how we conduct ourselves will leave a lasting image. The photograph you posted on your Facebook page or Twitter feed may be seen by a potential employer, or a nasty remark in a post may come back to haunt you later. Since the days when the Internet was a new phenomenon, Virginia Shea and others have sought to establish ground rules like the following for online contexts:

- Remember the human on the other side.
- Make an effort to forgive mistakes.
- Avoid assumptions about your readers.
- Ask for clarification and delay judgment.
- Consider possible cultural differences.
- Check your tone before you publish.
- Think of the text as permanent.
- Be aware that jokes and sarcasm may be misunderstood.
- Establish ground rules when working collaboratively.
- Respect original ideas by quoting correctly and asking permission.

- Research your organization's Acceptable Use Policy.
- Respect people's privacy.
- Do not abuse your power.
- Keep flame wars under control.
- Know where you are in cyberspace.
- Respect others' time and bandwidth.
- Create a positive online image.
- Share expert knowledge.

Basically, you should adhere to the same polite standards of behavior online that you follow in real life. Because basic social conventions for writing and responding to email are continually in flux, miscommunication can easily occur when people have different expectations about the communications that they send and receive.

9.5 Takeaways and Tips

- Electronic mail, or email, is among the most versatile genres of business writing.
- Email has largely replaced hard copy letters in external and internal correspondence.
- Context and the conventions of genre help to determine when/when not to use email.
- A clear structure (header/address information, greeting, body, and closing) is expected.
- Netiquette matters.
- Always proofread for tone, spelling, grammar, and content before hitting send.
- When possible, respond to an email within 24 hours, but account for possible delays in response from others.
- Be aware of the uses and ethics associated with Reply All and Carbon Copy functions.
- Avoid using all caps; use formatting like underlining and bolding to make reading easier.
- Test links before sending, to ensure they work properly.
- Follow up politely when necessary to ensure that the information was received.
- Always remember that electronic communications are not private.

9.6 Sample Activities

Use what you have just learned to explain why Student 2's email to Professor Jones is more effective than the email written by Student 1. How does the tone of the messages differ? What makes Student 2's email look and sound more appropriate? What are the elements that contribute its clarity? If you were Professor Jones and you received both emails, how would you respond to each one? What improvements might you make to each email?

Email from Student 1:

hey,

i need help on my paper can i come by your office tomorrow

thx

Email from Student 2:

Hi Dr. Jones

I am in your ENGL 101 class on Thursdays, and I have a question about the paper that is due next Tuesday. I'm not sure that I understand what is meant by the following sentence in the prompt: "Write a 10 page paper arguing for or against requiring ENGL 101 for all UNC freshmen and provide adequate support for your point of view." I am not sure what you would consider *adequate* support. Would using 3 sources be o.k.? Can I come by your office tomorrow at 2:00 pm to talk to you about my questions? Please let me know if that fits your schedule. If not, I could also come by on Friday after 1:00.

Thank you,

Tim Smith

Here are two versions of an email from a supervisor, Jane Doe, to a group of her employees. Which version do you think is most effective? Why? What improvements could you make to each email?

Version 1 of Jane Doe's Email:

Subject: tomorrow
As you know, tomorrow afternoon we'll be meeting to discuss the status of all of our current projects. Donuts will be provided. Be sure to arrive on time and bring along the materials you have been working on this week—bring enough copies for everyone. Some of these material might include your calendars, reports, and any important emails you have

sent. Also, I wanted to remind you that your parking permit requests are due later this week; you should turn those in to Ms. Jones, and if she is not at her desk when you stop by, you can email them to her.

Version 2 of Jane Doe's Email:

Subject: Action Required: Bring Materials for Wed. Staff Meeting

Hi everyone,

For tomorrow's 3 p.m. staff meeting in Conference Room 1, please bring 15 copies of the following materials:

- Your project calendar
- A one-page report describing your progress so far
- A list of goals for the next month
- Copies of any progress report messages you have sent to clients this past month

Jane

9.7 Business Texting

Whatever digital device you use, written communication in the form of brief messages, or texts, is becoming a common way to connect in the business world. Texts are useful for short exchanges–particularly when talking on the phone would be cumbersome–and they do provide written evidence of correspondence. However, texting is not appropriate for long or complicated messages, and careful consideration should be given to the audience. Text messages can be a great tool for connecting while on the go, but consider your company, and choose words, terms, or abbreviations that will deliver your message clearly. Here are some useful tips for texting within a business context:

- Know your recipient: "? % dsct" may be a clear way to ask a close associate what discount to offer a certain customer, but if you are writing a text to your boss, it might be wiser to write, "What % discount does Murray get on $1K order?"

- Anticipate unintentional misinterpretation. Texting often uses symbols and codes to represent thoughts, ideas, and emotions. Given the complexity of communication, and the useful but limited tool of texting, keep in mind its limitations. Also be wary of using text speak like *lol* and *fyi* that might be considered overly informal.
- Be aware that contacting someone too frequently can border on harassment–particularly if you are texting a personal (rather than work) phone. Texting is a tool. Use it when appropriate.
- Unplug yourself occasionally. If you use *your* personal phone for work texts, you may end up taking work with you everywhere. Consider using "do not disturb" functions or turning off notifications when you can leave work correspondence to regular business hours. Having a dedicated work phone avoids the possibility of inadvertently sending a personal message to a business contact.
- Never text and drive. Research shows that the likelihood of an accident increases dramatically if the driver is texting behind the wheel. Being in an accident while conducting company business would not only endanger your own health, but it would also reflect poorly on your employer and on your own judgment.

Material in this chapter was adapted from the works listed below. The material was edited for tone, content, and localization.

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CHAPTER 10: LETTER WRITING

Will Fleming

This chapter will examine formal letters, focusing on cover letters. In the following video, "**Writing in the Workplace, Pt. 1**," University of California alumni talk about how writing skills learned in college apply to their everyday work and career development:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/communication/?p=999#oembed-2

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McGraw, Darrin and Knight, Tara, directors. "Writing in the Workplace
Uploaded by SixthCATatUCSD, 5 June 2009, Youtube.com.
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10.1 Business Letters (General)

Writing business letters may be quite different from writing that you may have done in the humanities, social sciences, or other academic disciplines. Technical writing often strives to be clear and concise rather than evocative or creative; it stresses specificity, accuracy, and audience awareness. Nevertheless, business letters still need to persuade readers to take action or to agree to a proposition. In Chapter 2, we looked at how stylistic elements and choices affect the message of a tweet; here we examine the stylistic choices (layout, word choice, grammar, etc.) that might affect the message of a letter.

When you write a business letter, you can assume that your readers have limited time to read it and are likely to skim the document in search of its main points. They want to know why you're writing and what they need to do in response. The sections below provide guidelines for effectively formatting and structuring the standard block-style business letter.

Common Components of Business Letters

Heading: The heading contains the writer's address and the date of the letter. The writer's name is not included. If you are using a letterhead that includes your address, only a date is needed.

Inside address: The inside address shows the name and address of the recipient of the letter. This information can help prevent confusion at the recipient's offices. Also, if the recipient has moved, the inside address helps to determine what to do with the letter. In the inside address, include the highest honorific for the recipient (particularly for first contact) and copy the name of the company exactly as that company writes it:

- Ms. (any woman regardless of marital status)
- Mr. (any man regardless of marital status)
- Dr. (a PhD or MD)
- Prof. (a higher rank bestowed on some academics)
- Rev. (some Christian clergy)
- Hon. (judges of the High Court of New Zealand)
- Rt. Hon. (The Governor General, The Chief Justice, etc.)

If you are not sure what is correct for an individual, try to find out how that individual signs letters or consult the forms-of-address section in a dictionary.

Salutation: The salutation directly addresses the recipient of the letter and is followed by a colon or a comma. If you don't know whether the recipient is a man or a woman, the traditional practice has been to write "Dear Sir" or "Dear Sirs"–but that's exclusionary. To avoid this problem, salutations such as "Dear Sir or Madame," "Dear Ladies and Gentlemen," "Dear Friends," or "Dear People" have been tried–but without much general acceptance. Deleting the salutation line altogether or inserting "To Whom It May Concern" in its place, is not ordinarily a good solution either–it's impersonal.

The best solution is to call to the organization and ask for a name or to do a web search for the individual in the role. Less effectively, you couldor address the salutation to a department name, committee name, or a position name: "Dear Personnel Department," "Dear Recruitment Committee," "Dear Chairperson," or "Dear Director of Financial Aid," for example.

Subject or reference line: The subject line announces the main business of the letter.

Body of the letter: The actual message, of course, is contained in the body of the letter–the paragraphs between the salutation and the complimentary close.

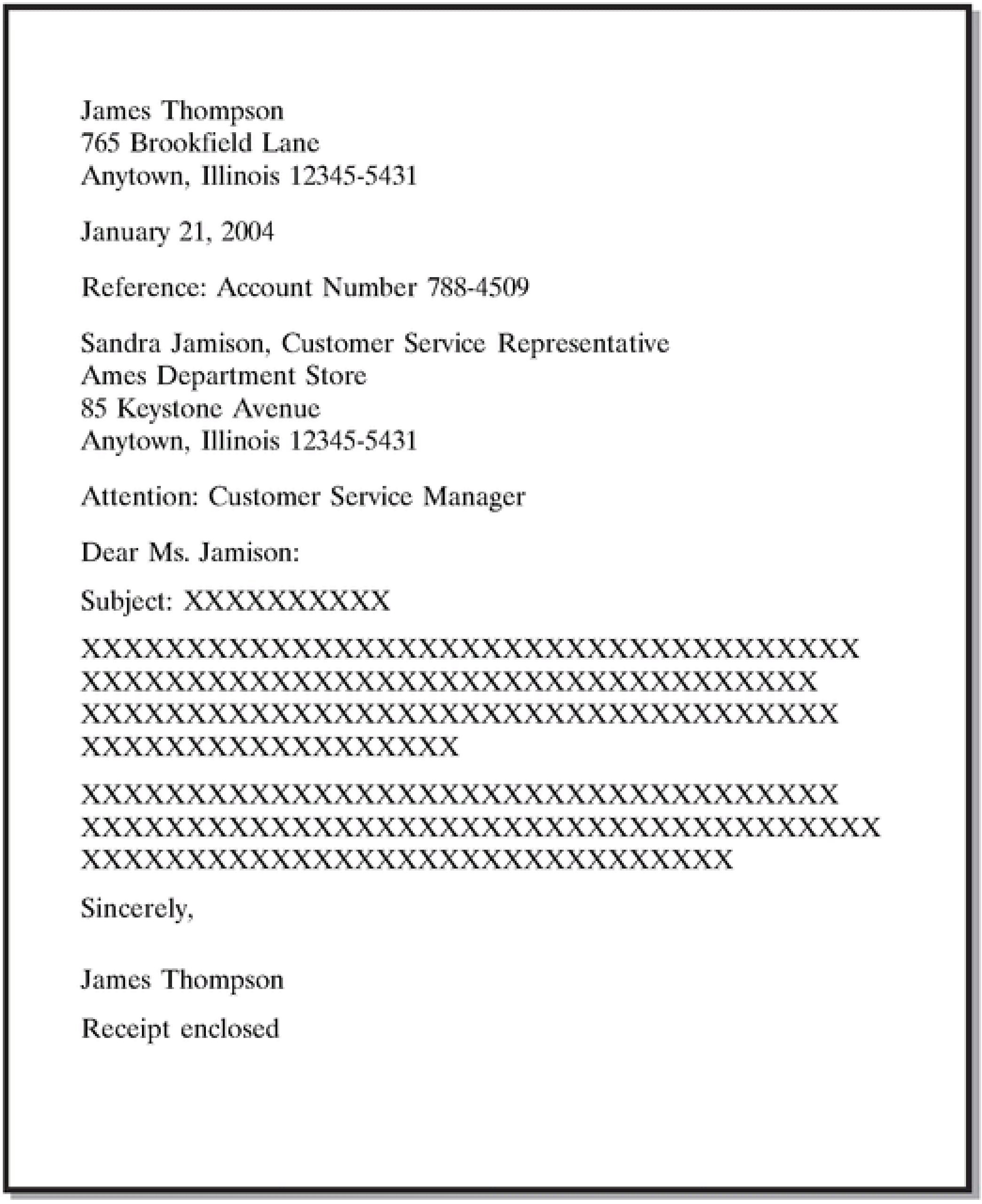
Complimentary close: The "Sincerely yours" element of the business letter is called the complimentary close. Other common ones are "Sincerely yours," "Sincerely," "Cordially," "Respectfully," or "Respectfully yours." Notice that only the first letter of the complimentary close is capitalized, and it is always followed by a comma.

Signature block: Usually, you type your name four lines below the complimentary close and sign your name in between. If you identify as female and want to make your marital status clear (which is becoming increasingly rare unless there is a reason to do so), use Miss (unmarried) or Mrs. (married) before the typed version of your first name. Whenever possible, include your title or the name of the position you hold just below your name. For example, "Technical writing student," "Sophomore data processing major," or "Tarrant County Community College Student" are perfectly acceptable.

End notations: Just below the signature block are often several abbreviations or phrases that have important functions.

- ***Initials***: The initials in all capital letters in the preceding figures are those of the writer of composer of the letter, and the ones in lower case letters just after the colon are those of the typist.
- ***Enclosures***: To make sure that the recipient knows that items accompany the letter in the same envelope, use such indications as "Enclosure," "Encl.," "Enclosures (2)." For example, if you send a resume and writing sample with your application letter, you'd write this: "Encl.: Resume and Writing Sample." If the enclosures are lost, the recipient will know.
- ***Copies***: If you send copies of a letter to others, indicate this fact among the end notations also. If, for example, you were upset by a local merchant's handling of your repair problems and were sending a copy of your letter to the Better Business Bureau, you'd write something like this: "cc: Mr. Raymond Mason, Attorney."

Note the example of a properly formatted block style business letter:


James Thompson
765 Brookfield Lane
Anytown, Illinois 12345-5431

January 21, 2004

Reference: Account Number 788-4509

Sandra Jamison, Customer Service Representative
Ames Department Store
85 Keystone Avenue
Anytown, Illinois 12345-5431

Attention: Customer Service Manager

Dear Ms. Jamison:

Subject: XXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Sincerely,

James Thompson

Receipt enclosed

Figure 10.1 Formatted block letter sample

The following is another example of a properly formatted business letter: **Block Style Letter Sample**

For more information, watch the following video, "Writing the Basic Business Letter," from Upwrite Press:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/communication/?p=999#oembed-3

Formatting Tips for Business Letters

- **Use white space** to draw attention to headings. White space helps show what elements on your page are the most important. It's also easier on readers' eyes.
- **Add white space between paragraphs**. Adding white space between paragraphs and around blocks of text and images makes documents easier to read and navigate; it also helps people understand what they're reading.
- **Widen the margins**. Generally speaking, widening the margins can help readability—sometimes putting less information on the page is less daunting to the reader.
- **Use bullet points** when appropriate. Bullet points aren't appropriate for all information, but they are generally helpful to readers by helping to identify important points in the document.

In this figure note the use of the visual elements described above:

Your Company Name/Logo

123 Main St. Kent, OH 44240
(330) 555-1234
Email and website optional

January 11, 2011

Ms. Jane Smith
Chief Executive Officer
ABC Financial Firm
123 Artificial Street
Burbank, CA 91521

Dear Ms. Smith

This template is intended as a loose guideline for building a business letter. The contact information centered at the top is important but if this is from an individual rather than a company, do not include a name. The sender's name will only appear at the bottom. Try to always have a specific person that the document is being sent to.

The format of a business letter is boring and simple, but it is also flexible based on what is being communicated. The actual format and content of a business letter will vary based on what is being communicated. Adding diagrams, charts, bullet points, or other visuals can make the document easier to read. You can also use emphasis techniques like headings and subheadings.

The key to business writing is to be:

- Accurate
- Complete
- Concise
- Clear
- Empathetic

Effective decisions can only be made if they are based on accurate information. Part of accuracy is being complete. Incomplete messages that omit essential data are likely to be inaccurate. However, do not include more information than is necessary. Be concise and only include what is necessary in as few words as possible. Be clear and unambiguous and avoid flowery language.

Figure 10.2 Formatted business letter sample

General Tips for Writing and Revising Business Correspondence

Keep the following points in mind when you write and revise your business letters or memos.

State the main business, purpose, or subject matter right away. Let the reader know from the very first sentence what your letter is about. Remember that when business people open a letter, their first concern is to know what the letter is about, what its purpose is, and why they must spend their time reading it. Therefore, avoid round-about beginnings. If you are writing to apply for a job, begin with something like this: "I am writing to apply for the Sales Manager position (Job #84491) as advertised on *Student Job Search*." If you have bad news for someone, you should need not spill all of it in the first sentence. Here is an example of how to avoid negative phrasing: "I am writing in response to your letter of July 24 in which you discuss problems you have had with an electronic spreadsheet purchased from our company." We will discuss buffers further in lectures.

If you are responding to a letter, identify that letter by its subject and date in the first paragraph or sentence. Busy recipients who write many letters themselves may not remember their letters to you. To avoid problems, identify the date and subject of the letter to which you respond: "I am writing in response to your 1 September 2019 letter in which you describe problems you've had with one of our products."

Keep the paragraphs of most business letters short. The paragraphs of business letters tend to be short, some only a sentence long. Business letters are not read the same way as articles, reports, or books. Usually, they are read rapidly. Big, thick, dense paragraphs over ten lines, which require much concentration, may not be read carefully—or read at all.

To enable the recipient to read your letters more rapidly and to comprehend and remember the important facts or ideas, create relatively short paragraphs of between three and eight lines long. In business letters, paragraphs that are made up of only a single sentence are common and perfectly acceptable.

Compartmentalize the contents of your letter. When you compartmentalize the contents of a business letter, you place each different segment of the discussion—each different topic of the letter—in its own paragraph. If you were writing a complaint letter concerning problems with the system unit of your personal computer, you might have the following paragraphs:

- A description of the problems you've had with it
- The ineffective repair jobs you've had
- The compensation you think you deserve and why

Study each paragraph of your letters for its purpose, content, or function. When you locate a paragraph that does more than one thing, consider splitting it into two paragraphs. If you discover two short separate paragraphs that do the same thing, consider joining them into one.

Provide topic indicators at the beginning of paragraphs. Analyze some of the letters you see in this chapter in terms of the contents or purpose of their individual paragraphs. In the first sentence of anybody paragraph of a business letter, try to locate a word or phrase that indicates the topic of that paragraph. If a paragraph discusses your problems with a personal computer, work the word "problems" or the phrase "problems with my personal computer" into the first sentence. Doing this gives recipients a clear sense of the content and purpose of each paragraph. Here is an excerpt before and after topic indicators have been incorporated:

> **Problem**: I have worked as an electrician in the Decatur, Illinois, area for about six years. Since 2005 I have been licensed by the city of Decatur as an electrical contractor qualified to undertake commercial and industrial work as well as residential work.
>
> **Revision**: ***As for my work experience***, I have worked as an electrician in the Decatur, Illinois,

> area for about six years. Since 2005 I have been licensed by the city of Decatur as an electrical contractor qualified to undertake commercial and industrial work as well as residential work.

List or itemize whenever possible in a business letter. Listing spreads out the text of the letter, making it easier to pick up the important points rapidly.

Place important information strategically in business letters. Information in the first and last lines of paragraphs tends to be read and remembered more readily. These are high-visibility points. Information buried in the middle of long paragraphs is easily overlooked or forgotten. For example, in application letters which must convince potential employers that you are right for a job, place information on your appealing qualities at the beginning or end of paragraphs for greater emphasis. Place less positive information in less highly visible points. If you have some difficult things to say, a good (and honest) strategy is to de-emphasize by placing them in areas of less emphasis (such as by placing them in a subordinate clause). If a job requires three years of experience and you only have one, for example, you could bury this fact in the middle or the lower half of a body paragraph of the cover letter (the following sections of this chapter will discuss job application/cover letters in more detail).

Focus on the recipient's needs, purposes, or interests instead of your own. Avoid a self-centered focus on your own concerns rather than those of the recipient. Even if you must talk about yourself in a business letter a great deal, do so in a way that relates your concerns to those of the recipient. This recipient-oriented style is often called the "you-attitude," which does not mean using more "you" but making the recipient the main focus of the letter.

Avoid pompous, inflated, legal-sounding phrasing. Watch out for puffed-up, important-sounding language unless you are using technical terms expected by the reader's discourse community. For example, some phrasing may be expected in legal documents; but why use it in other writing situations? When you write a business letter, you should to strive for confidence while avoiding arrogance.

> ***A note on style**: Technical writing can vary from a less formal, more conversational style to a more formal, or even legalistic, style found in documents such as contracts and business plans. Writing that is too formal can alienate readers while overly casual writing can come across as insincere or unprofessional. When writing business letters, as with all writing, you should know your audience. Adopting a style somewhere between formal and conversational will work well for the majority of your memos, emails, and business letters.

Give your business letter an "action ending" whenever appropriate. An "action-ending" makes clear what the writer of the letter expects the recipient to do and when. Ineffective conclusions to business letters often end with noncommittal statements, such as "Hope to hear from you soon" or "Let me know if I can be of any further assistance." Instead, specify the action the recipient should take and the schedule for that action.

> As soon as you approve this plan, I'll begin contacting sales representatives at once to arrange for purchase and delivery of the notebook computers. May I expect to hear from you by Friday, 1 June?

Additional Resources

- "**Writing the Basic Business Letter**," a website resource from Purdue OWL
- "**Types of Business Letters**," a video from Gregg Learning

CHAPTER ATTRIBUTION INFORMATION

"2.1 Business Correspondence." *Open Technical Writing*. [License: CC BY
"The Key Forms of Business Writing." Uploaded by UpWritePress, 6 Mar.

10.2 Cover Letters

This chapter focuses on the cover letter (sometimes called an *application* letter), which typically accompanies your resume in an employment package. In fact, your cover letter is often the potential employer's first introduction to you.

The purpose of the cover letter is to ***draw a clear connection between the job you are seeking and your qualifications*** listed on the resume. Put another way, your cover letter ***should match the requirements of the job with your qualifications***, emphasizing how you are right for that job.

> ***NOTE**: The cover letter is *not* simply a lengthier or narrative version of your resume. The cover letter should selectively illustrate how the information contained in the resume is relevant to the position.

Common Types of Cover Letters

To begin planning your letter, decide which type of letter you need. This decision is, in part, based on the employers' requirements and, in part, based on what your background and employment needs are. Here are the two most common cover letter types:

- **Objective letters**: This type of letter says very little: it identifies the position being sought, indicates an interest in having an interview, and calls attention to the fact that the résumé is attached. It also mentions any other special matters that are not included on the résumé, such as dates and times when you are available to come in for an interview. This letter does no salesmanship and is very brief.

- **Highlight letters**: This type of letter (the type you would do in most technical writing courses) tries to summarize the key information from the résumé, key information that will emphasize how you are a good candidate for the job. In other words, it selects the best information from your résumé and summarizes it in the letter—this type of letter is especially designed to make the connection with the specific job.

Common Sections in Cover Letters

As for the actual content and organization of the paragraphs within the application letter (specifically for the *highlight* type of application letter), consider the following common approaches.

- **Introductory paragraph**: That first paragraph of the application letter is the most important; it sets everything up—the tone, focus, as well as your most important qualification. A typical problem in the introductory paragraph involves diving directly into your work and educational experience. A better idea is to do some combination of the following in the space of a very short paragraph (some introductory paragraphs are a single sentence):
    - State the purpose of the letter—to apply for an employment opportunity.
    - Indicate the source of your information about the job—a website posting, a newspaper ad, a personal contact, or other.
    - State one attention-getting thing about yourself in relation to the job or to the employer that will cause the reader to want to continue.
- **Main body paragraphs**: In the main parts of the application letter, you present your work experience, education, and training—whatever makes that connection between you and the job you are seeking. Remember that this is the most important job you have to do in this letter—to enable the reader to see the match between your qualifications and the requirements for the job.

Author Steven Graber in his article "The Basics of A Cover Letter" suggests the following points for developing your cover letter's body paragraphs:

- **First (Introductory)**: "State the position for which you're applying. If you're responding to an ad or listing, mention the source."
- **Second**: "Indicate what you could contribute to this company and show how your qualifications will benefit them….discuss how your skills relate to the job's requirements. Don't talk about what you can't do."
- **Third:** "Show how you not only meet but exceed their requirements—why you're not just an average candidate but a superior one."

- **Fourth:** "Close by saying you look forward to hearing from them" and "thank them for their consideration. Don't ask for an interview. Don't tell them you'll call them."
- **Closing:** "Keep it simple—'Sincerely' followed by a comma suffices."

There are two common ways to present this information:

- **Functional approach**: This one presents education in one section and work experience in the other. Whichever of these sections contains your "best stuff" should come first, after the introduction.

- **Thematic approach**: This one divides experience and education into groups such as "management," "technical," "financial," and so on and then discusses your work and education related to them in separate paragraphs.

Of course, the letter should not be an exhaustive or complete summary of your background—it should highlight just those aspects of your background or experience that make the connection with the job you are seeking.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/communication/?p=999#oembed-1

General Guidelines for Writing Successful Cover Letters

- Specify what it is you want (to apply for the position, inquire about a summer internship, etc.);
- Explain how/where you learned of the position;
- Highlight key areas of your education and professional experience (volunteer work counts!);
- Be as specific as possible, using examples when appropriate;
- Use language that is professional and polite;
- Demonstrate your enthusiasm and energy with an appropriate tone;
- Use simple and direct language whenever possible, using clear subject-verb-structured sentences;
- Appeal to the employer's self-interest by showing that you have researched the company or organization;
- State how you (and perhaps only you) can fulfill their needs, telling them why you're the best candidate;

- Give positive, truthful accounts of accomplishments and skills that relate directly to the field or company;
- Stress what you **have done** rather than what you haven't and what you **do have** rather than what you don't (in other words, don't apologize for your lack of experience, expertise, or education);
- Emphasize **what you *can* and *will* do** rather than what you cannot or will not;
- Highlight **what you can do specifically** for the company/organization rather than why you want the job.

Length

A cover letter can be fairly short (usually a single page, but this is not a rule). It should be long enough to provide a detailed overview of who you are and what you bring to the company.

Accentuate the positive

Your cover letters will be more successful if you focus on positive wording rather than negative simply because most people respond more favorably to positive ideas than to negative ones. Words that affect your reader positively are more likely to produce the response you want. A positive emphasis helps persuade readers and create goodwill.

In contrast, negative words may generate resistance and other unfavorable reactions. You should therefore be careful to avoid words with negative connotations. These words either deny—for example, **no**, **do not**, **refuse**, and **stop**—or convey unhappy or unpleasant associations—for example, **unfortunately**, **unable to**, **cannot**, **mistake**, **problem**, **error**, **damage**, **loss**, and **failure**. Be careful in your cover and/or inquiry letters of saying things like, "I know I do not have the experience or credentials you are looking for in this position…" These kinds of statements focus too much on what you don't have rather than what you do. Also, don't call attention to **gaps in employment**—let that come up in the interview.

***NOTE**: Just because your résumé will be attached, don't make the all-too-common mistake of thinking that your resume should or will do all the work. **If something is important, be sure to discuss it in your cover letter** because there's no guarantee that your reader will even look at your resume. Part of your task in crafting a cover letter is to keep your reader interested and engaged.

Additional resources

- "**Cover Letter**" from *Purdue OWL*

Reference

Graber, Steven. "The Basics of A Cover Letter." *Strategies for Business and Technical Writing*, edited by Kevin Harty, Pearson, 2011.

Material in this chapter is adapted from "Job Application Letters." *Online Technical Writing.* [License: CC BY 4.0] "Tips for Creating A Great Cover Letter." Uploaded by GCFLearnFree.org, 29 May 2018, *Youtube.com.*

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VERSIONING HISTORY

This page provides a record of changes made to this textbook.

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Version	Date	Change	Details
1.00	July 2023	First version	Collated from multiple sources, as acknowledged by the authorship for each chapter. Localised and edited by Michael Cop and Richard White. Some images have been removed from previous versions as part of copyright checking. Additional licensing metadata added.