# **Effective Communications in the Workplace**

Research indicates that 80% of all problems in the workplace are due to poor or lack of effective communication. That statistic is staggering. You would assume that we do a pretty good job of communicating, but often we are not communicating but just talking at someone, not getting their acknowledgment of what is being said.

The words we choose make up just 7% of the message being conveyed, making non-verbal communication more critical. Body language is an essential communication tool. Your body language should help convey your words. Other factors you should consider are the tone of your voice, your hand gestures, and ensuring eye contact. When making eye contact, you want to look the person in the eye to demonstrate that you are focused on them and the conversation (however, be sure not to stare at the person, making them uncomfortable).

Also, pay attention to other people's nonverbal signals while talking. Often, nonverbal cues convey how a person is feeling. For example, if the person is not looking you in the eye, they might be uncomfortable or hiding the truth. A person will be encouraged to speak openly with you if you are relaxed and have a friendly tone. Adopt an open stance position, with relaxed legs and open arms. You must make eye contact with the person you communicate with but be careful not to stare at them, as this is uncomfortable. It is just as vital that you recognize the non-verbal signals being displayed by the other person. These signals will give you an insight into how that person is feeling.

Adapted from a blog by Fremont University ([Top 10 Tips for Effective Workplace Communication | Fremont University](https://fremont.edu/top-10-tips-for-effective-workplace-communication/)) are ten easy-to-follow steps that will improve your communications with others.

## **1. Communicate face-to-face whenever possible**

In the past 15 years or so, many of us have been relying on email or texts as a primary method of communication. Electronic communication can have a detrimental effect on any relationship, especially with co-workers. How often have you sent an email to a co-worker or superior that was misconstrued? Even if you had good intentions, this medium is often misinterpreted. Since most meaning during a conversation comes from nonverbal gestures and facial expressions, it is easier to decipher the meaning behind what a person says when communicating face-to-face. When gestures and smiles are taken out of the equation, recipients can get the wrong idea – especially if the person isn’t the most articulate writer. To improve workplace communication, pick up the phone occasionally, or pay a visit to your co-worker when you have something important to say.

## **2. Provide clear information**

Workplace communication involves passing information from one person to the other. If you do not communicate clearly and accurately, it can cause confusion instead of clarity. Plan your communication to ensure that you pass along the correct information and the right amount for others to understand what you are saying. Avoid emails written in haste and always plan what you want to say before speaking to avoid miscommunication.

## **3. Combine verbal and nonverbal communication**

If you want to become a more effective communicator, you need to understand the importance of nonverbal communication. Be mindful that your verbal and nonverbal messages agree with one another. If you are trying to convey the approval of something your co-worker has said, for example, ensure that your nonverbal gestures complement your words. Positive nonverbal feedback, such as head-nodding when the other person is talking accompanied by open body posture, helps the conversation flow more smoothly.

## **4. Don’t just hear – listen**

Listening is an important communication skill that many people do not practice. Most conflict is a result of poor listening. To share information with another person, you must hear what is communicated. If you’re thinking about your next meeting or planning tonight’s dinner during the conversation, you’re not paying attention; you are on a mental vacation. To learn how to listen well, paraphrase what was said to show that you are listening and verify accuracy. This will reduce the likelihood of conflict and help you become a more effective communicator. Another way to learn how to listen better is to pretend there will be a quiz at the end of the discussion. Try to keep a mental checklist of all of the essential points the person makes.

## **5. Ask questions**

Asking questions shows you were listening and confirms that you understood the other person. You can also use questions to gather additional information and help you understand the conversation. Make sure your questions relate specifically to what is being said. Don’t change the subject by asking questions about a different topic.

## **6. Handle conflicts with diplomacy**

If you feel someone misunderstood something you communicated, talk to them about it as soon as possible. Doing so can prevent unnecessary resentment and loss of productivity. To avoid a small misunderstanding from turning into a significant crisis, handle it immediately. When handling a conflict, respond with an open mind and refrain from personal attacks. Ask questions and listen carefully to the responses to understand where the other person is coming from. Doing so will help you reach a resolution that is acceptable to everyone.

## **7. Refrain from gossip**

If your co-workers, or you, have a habit of gossiping about others in the office, listen and smile, and get back to work. Gossiping gives people a negative impression of you and can cause problems down the line. Gossip also gets in the way of effective workplace communication because it hurts relationships with co-workers. You will earn the respect of your co-workers if you refrain from engaging in gossip, and you will be viewed with more credibility.

## **8. Avoid being personal with your co-workers**

Be aware of disclosing too much personal information to the people you work with. Aim to be friendly yet professional. If you become too personal with co-workers, you’ll risk the likelihood of being perceived as less credible when communicating about something important. Controlling your emotions is also very important. Your co-workers don’t need to witness your hysteria over an argument with your significant other; behaving this way will give them a negative impression and cause them to avoid talking to you.

## **9. Avoid discussing controversial topics**

Try to keep the topic of conversation in the workplace neutral. Refrain from discussing politics or other controversial issues in the office to prevent offending anyone. While it’s a great idea to talk to the people you work with and get to know them; it’s best to avoid controversial subjects.

## **10. Offer positive feedback**

If your co-worker performs a task well, tell them. Providing positive feedback is a great way to improve workplace communication. It also helps people view you more favorably and encourages open communication. Having a positive attitude at work will open the door for effective communication prompting people to respond more favorably.