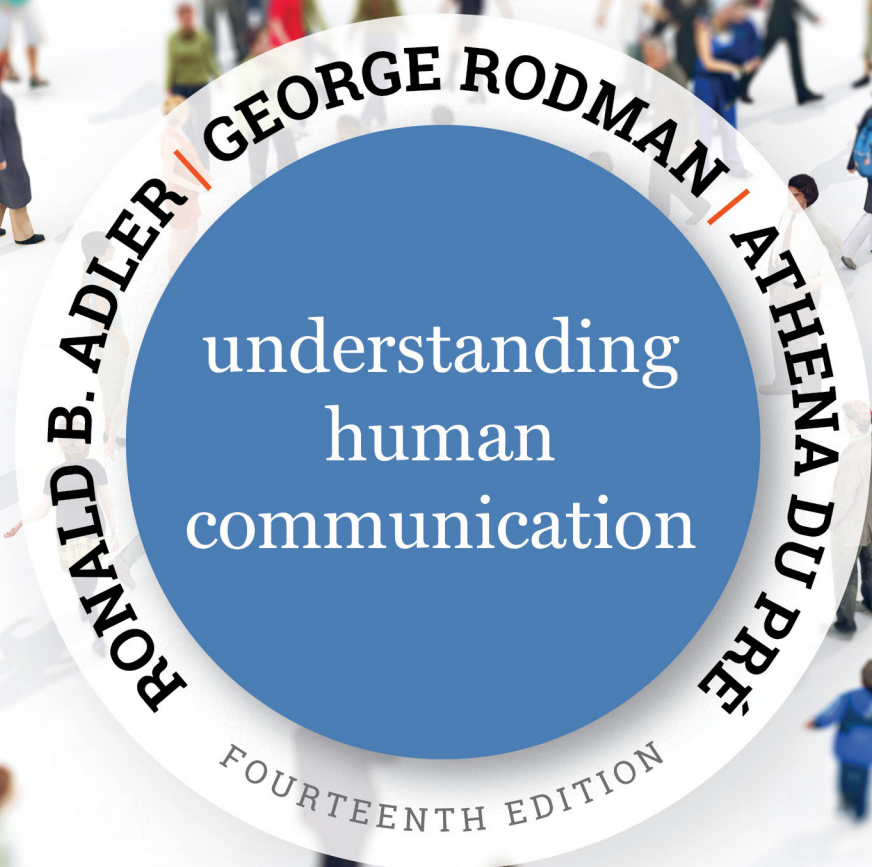










understanding human communication

FOURTEENTH EDITION

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Preface

The case for learning about human communication is compelling. Consider the practical benefits: Effective communicators are more likely than others to be popular among their peers,¹ land the jobs they want,² succeed in their careers,³ and be considered appealing friends⁴ and romantic partners.⁵

Communication is more than a collection of techniques. *Understanding Human Communication* introduces readers to the scholarship that underlies everyday skills. We invite you and your students to look at any page of this book and ask: *Is the content important, clearly explained, and useful?*

Approach

This new edition builds on the successful approach that has served more than one million students. Rather than focusing solely on either skills or scholarship, *Understanding Human Communication* embraces the idea that each enhances the other. Reader-friendly content is up to date and clear without being simplistic. Real-life examples and engaging images make concepts interesting, clear, and relevant to students' lives.

New to This Edition

Updates in this edition reflect the changing world that *Understanding Human Communication* seeks to explain.

- **Expanded Coverage of Social Media.** Chapter 2 (new in this edition) is dedicated to social media, including the associated advantages and dangers, the masspersonal and hyperpersonal nature of social media, and the challenges of managing communication across a multitude of platforms. In addition, readers will find information about online communication throughout the book. Discussions include identity management through social media (Chapter 3), the influence of bots and trolls (Chapter 4), when to put technology aside (Chapter 6), the lack of inhibition online (Chapter 9), establishing a professional identity online (Chapter 10), and avoiding plagiarism in online research (Chapter 12).
- **Additional Strategies for Career Success.** Chapters 10 and 11 have been revised to extend general coverage of teamwork and leadership to organizational and workplace communication. Discussions include strategies for landing a desirable job, adapting to organizational cultures, and succeeding as a team member and leader. In addition, *@Work* boxes throughout the text offer tips on networking (Chapter 2), developing communication skills that pay off at work (Chapter 6), using vocal cues and touch in professional environments (Chapter 7), and dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace (Chapter 9).

- **Updated Discussions of Communication, Gender, and Culture.** Chapter 4 focuses exclusively on culture and communication, with updated explorations of race and ethnicity, regional differences, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, physical abilities, age/generation, and socioeconomic status, as well as a new section on political viewpoints. The discussion of culture extends throughout the book, with topics such as traditional patterns in the way men and women communicate (Chapter 2), generational differences in social media use (Chapter 2), sexist assumptions in everyday language (Chapter 3), nongendered pronouns (Chapter 5), cultural listening styles (Chapter 6), nonverbal communication differences around the world (Chapter 7), organizational culture in the workplace (Chapter 10), the challenges and advantages of multicultural teamwork (Chapter 11), and examples of phenomena such as “mansplaining” in public speaking (Chapter 14).
- **“On Your Feet” speech activities.** New prompts incorporate public-speaking activities and integrate with **GoReact**, an interactive platform for video assignments.
- **Expanded Focus on Ethics.** “Ethical Challenge” sidebars throughout the book have been updated and expanded to explore honesty on social media (Chapter 2), the hidden influence of stereotypes (Chapter 3), the line between innocent online communication and digital infidelity (Chapter 8), negotiating with people who don’t fight fair (Chapter 9), responding to illegal job interview questions (Chapter 10), and audience adaptation in a time of political polarity (Chapter 15).
- **Coverage of Media Literacy.** Given the importance of media literacy skills today, we have included new sections on evaluating the credibility, quality, and accuracy of online stories and information (e.g., Chapter 2 includes a section titled “Don’t Believe Everything You See”; Chapter 4 presents a checklist on discussing politics responsibly on social media; and Chapter 5 includes a checklist on distinguishing between facts and opinions).
- **New and Expanded Coverage in Each Chapter.** Changes include the following:
 - Chapter 1 (**Communication: What and Why**) includes expanded coverage of the way communication functions in today’s technological world and the sensitive nature of language when describing groups of people.
 - Chapter 2 (**Communicating with Social Media**) considers the unique qualities of mediated communication as well as strategies for using social media to enhance understanding and build relationships while avoiding social isolation, deception, and loss of privacy.
 - Chapter 3 (**The Self, Perception, and Communication**) includes new coverage of emotional intelligence, gender diversity, and identity management. A new “Ethical Challenge” feature invites readers to look below the surface of their fears and stereotypes.
 - Chapter 4 (**Communication and Culture**) includes expanded coverage of identity and intersectionality theory. The chapter features new strategies for engaging in respectful online discourse and coping with culture shock. It also introduces coverage of political viewpoints as a form of diversity.
 - Chapter 5 (**Language**) opens with a new segment on the use of non-binary pronouns to reflect diverse gender identities. The chapter now includes a segment on the increased use of profanity and name calling in society, with insights from coordinated management of meaning and speech acts. Another new segment helps readers learn to distinguish between facts and opinions.

- Chapter 6 (**Listening**) features expanded coverage of how and why to listen respectfully to people who have different viewpoints. It presents updated real-life examples that incorporate a diverse array of listening contexts and challenges. A new description of Feynman's Technique offers a process to boost comprehension of material that is complex but important.
- Chapter 7 (**Nonverbal Communication**) now features a discussion of tattoos as a form of nonverbal communication. The chapter also introduces coverage of expectancy violation theory and tips for sending and interpreting nonverbal cues mindfully.
- Chapter 8 (**Understanding Interpersonal Communication**) includes tips for avoiding relationship-damaging communication patterns. It also presents new coverage of parental and sibling communication patterns.
- Chapter 9 (**Managing Conflict**) has been reconfigured to focus on productive ways to address differences at work and in interpersonal relationships. The chapter now includes a "Rules for Fighting Fair" checklist and a "You Can't Take It Back" feature about the pros and cons of using mediated communication to manage conflict.
- Chapter 10 (previously Chapter 9, Communicating in Groups and Teams) is now titled **Communicating for Career Success** and has been refocused to cover both organizational and workplace communication. It presents strategies for landing a desirable job, adapting to a new work environment, and being a highly valued follower. In addition, a new section on organizational communication covers power, patterns of interaction, and culture in the workplace.
- Chapter 11 (previously Chapter 10, Solving Problems in Groups and Teams) is now titled **Leadership and Teamwork**. Featuring updated research, the chapter introduces leadership concepts and foundational information about group and team work before segueing into coverage of collaborative problem solving. The section titled "Making the Most of Group Interaction" presents new tips for conducting effective meetings, an expanded ethical challenge box about dealing with quiet and talkative team members, updated coverage of brainstorming, and a new feature on round robin discussions.
- Chapter 12 (**Preparing and Presenting Your Speech**) has increased its emphasis on public speaking skill builders and opportunities for student practice.
- Chapter 13 (**Speech Organization and Support**) now has additional coverage and examples of the roles and formats of different types of speech outlines.
- Chapter 14 (**Informative Speaking**) now features a new sample speech on how different languages may shape the way people think.
- Chapter 15 (**Persuasive Speaking**) now includes more coverage of Aristotle's Rhetorical Triad.

Learning Tools

- **Checklists** throughout the book provide handy information and tips to help students build their communication skills. Topics include how to use social media courteously (Chapter 2), perception checking (Chapter 3), coping with culture shock (Chapter 4), avoiding misunderstandings (Chapter 5), listening mindfully (Chapter 6), managing dialectical tensions (Chapter 8), creating positive communication climates (Chapter 9), and getting slackers to do their share (Chapter 11).

- **Understanding Your Communication quizzes** invite students to evaluate and improve their communication skills. These include quizzes about communication style (Chapter 1), emotional intelligence (Chapter 3), intercultural sensitivity (Chapter 4), listening strengths (Chapter 6), friendship types (Chapter 8), interpersonal communication climates (Chapter 9), follower styles (Chapter 10), and leadership approaches (Chapter 11).
- **Learning Objectives** correspond to major headings in each chapter and coordinate with the end-of-chapter summary and review. They provide a clear map of what students need to learn and where to find that material.
- A **Making the Grade** section at the end of each chapter helps students test and deepen their mastery of the material. Organized by learning objective, this section summarizes key points from the text and presents questions and prompts to help students understand and apply the material.
- **Understanding Communication Technology** boxes highlight the increasingly important role of technology in human communication.
- **Understanding Diversity** boxes provide in-depth treatment of intercultural communication topics.
- **@Work** boxes show students how key concepts from the text operate in the workplace.
- **Ethical Challenge** boxes engage students in considering whether honesty is always the best policy, the acceptability of presenting multiple identities, how to deal effectively with difficult group members, and more.
- **Key Terms** are boldfaced on first use and listed at the end of each chapter.
- A **running glossary** in the margins helps students learn and review new terms.
- **Activities** at the end of each chapter help students apply the material to their everyday lives. Additional activities are available in the Instructor's Manual (*The Complete Guide to Teaching Communication*) at www.oup.com/he/adler-uhc14e.
- **Ask Yourself** prompts in the margins invite students to apply the material to their own lives.
- **On Your Feet** prompts provide confidence-building opportunities to get students speaking in class before undertaking formal presentations.
- An **enhanced support package** for every chapter (described in detail below) includes video links, pre- and post-reading quizzes, activities, discussion topics, examples, GoReact-powered tools for recording and uploading student speeches for assessment, an online gradebook, and more.

Teaching and Learning Support

The 14th edition of *Understanding Human Communication* contains a robust package of digital materials that make teaching more efficient and learning more effective. Instructors and students alike will be pleased to find a complete suite of resources.

The course package works with a **variety of learning management systems**, including Blackboard Learn, Canvas, Moodle, D2L, and Angel. Course cartridges allow instructors to create course websites that integrate resources available on the Ancillary Resource Center. Contact your Oxford University Press representative for access or for more information about these supplements or customized options.

Enhanced Ebook

An accessible, multi-device enabled enhanced ebook version integrates a rich assortment of digital resources, including interactive “Understanding Your Communication” diagnostics, self-quizzes, and videos. The enhanced ebook is available via your preferred textbook eBook vendor. After purchase, it can be accessed through your LMS.

For Instructors

The **Ancillary Resource Center (ARC)** at www.oup.com/he/adler-uhc14e is a convenient, instructor-focused website that provides access to all of the up-to-date teaching resources for this text, while guaranteeing the security of grade-significant resources. In addition, it allows OUP to keep instructors informed when new content becomes available. The following items are available on the ARC:

- The **Enhanced Ebook**, an accessible, multi-device enabled version, integrates a rich assortment of digital resources, including interactive “Understanding Your Communication” diagnostics, self-quizzes, and videos.
- *The Complete Guide to Teaching Communication*, written by coauthor Athena du Pré, provides a complete syllabus, teaching tips, preparation checklists, grab-and-go lesson plans, high-impact learning activities, handouts, links to relevant video clips, and coordinating PowerPoint lecture slides.
- A comprehensive **Computerized Test Bank** includes 60 exam questions per chapter in multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay formats. The questions have been revised for this edition, are labeled according to difficulty, and include the page reference and chapter section where the answers may be found.
- **PowerPoint slides** include key concepts, video clips, discussion questions, and other elements to engage students. They correspond to content in the lesson plans, making them ready to use and fully editable so that preparing for class is faster and easier than ever.
- *Now Playing, Instructor’s Edition*, includes an introduction on incorporating film and television segments in class, as well as video clips, viewing guides and assignments, sample responses to discussion questions in the student edition, and an index by subject. A companion website to *Now Playing* is available at www.oup.com/us/nowplaying. It features video clips from previous editions.
- **TED Talks** on key topics show students how studying communication can enrich their own lives. In addition, quizzes following each talk help students internalize what they’ve learned.
- **Integration with GoReact** allows for uploading speech videos in response to both suggested prompts and instructor-created activities.

For Students

- *The Digital Study Guide* offers videos, activities, tutorials, chapter outlines, review questions, worksheets, practice quizzes, flashcards, and other study tools. The site is ideal for students who are looking for extra study material online. Students can access the full suite of resources via a code included with each new print or ebook purchase. Several of these resources are also available without a code at www.oup.com/he/adler-uhc14e.



Code Required (Comes with New Book Purchase):

- TED Talk Videos with Quizzes
- Chapter Outline Quizzes
- Pre- and Post-Reading Quizzes
- “Understanding Your Communication” Activities
- Matching Quizzes
- Speech Activities
- Selected Supporting Videos and Concept Animations with Quizzes
- Self-Quizzes (Expanded)

Open Access:

- Selected Supporting Videos
- Concept Animations
- Self-Quizzes (Basic)
- Flashcards
- Exam Prep Questions

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Communication: What and Why



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Compare and contrast how linear and transactional models illustrate key characteristics of communication.

1.2

Distinguish between communication in a variety of contexts.

1.3

Describe how changing technology affects communication.

1.4

Analyze elements of effective and ineffective communication.

1.5

Replace common misconceptions about communication with more accurate information.



Communication has a profound impact on the relationships we form with others and how well we are able to reach our goals. Nathan Vass uses communication to build relationships and express himself artistically.



What role does communication play in the quality of your relationships at school, at work, and in your personal life?

Describe the communication style of someone you admire. In what ways does that person display respect for others and encourage mutual understanding?

What communication skills will be most essential in your career? Why?

AS A BUS DRIVER IN SEATTLE, Washington, Nathan Vass meets a lot of people. But what sets him apart is his ability to connect with them. He knows the names of hundreds of regular passengers. They look forward to riding his bus and even bring him cookies now and then. Some riders purposefully sit near Vass to talk about hard times, loss, accomplishments, and everyday happenings. They appreciate that he's an attentive listener and an engaging storyteller.¹ "I think we've all had those moments where we have a brief encounter with a stranger on the street that is profoundly meaningful because it emphasizes the commonalities we all share," he says. "Driving the bus is an opportunity to have those special moments all day." Vass has not only received hundreds of customer commendations but has been featured in numerous news stories and podcasts. He has even been honored as one of Seattle's "Most Influential People."^{2,3}

A University of Washington graduate with a degree in fine arts, Vass is also a writer, photographer, and filmmaker. He says he enjoys these occupations nearly as much as driving a bus, which "fuels the art."⁴ His blog, *The View from Nathan's Bus*, is popular around the country, and his recent book, *The Lines That Make Us: Stories from Nathan's Bus*, has been reprinted multiple times to keep up with demand.

Vass's success makes a strong case for the importance of communication. No matter what you do, communication is sure to play a central role in your life. The average person spends 7 out of 10 waking hours communicating with family members, friends, coworkers, teachers, and even strangers.⁵ With computers, phones, tablets, and all the rest, it's possible to carry on several conversations at once. Of course, the quality of communication doesn't always match its quantity. In this chapter, we begin to explore what happens when people exchange messages and how to make wise choices when interacting with others.

Why do people spend so much time communicating? There's good reason: Communication satisfies many needs. Here are just a few:

- **Identity management.** How you dress, act, and speak can help you create and display your identity so that others understand you better.
- **Social connection.** Communication provides a means of fitting in socially and, at the same time, learning about people who are different from you. Social connection is so important that lonely people typically

experience abnormally high levels of pain, depression, fatigue, and illness.^{6,7} Evidence suggests not only that loneliness affects people at a psychological level, but also that the stress can cause changes in body chemistry and compromise immune systems.⁸

- **Relationship management.** Communication allows you to establish and manage relationships. People are typically happiest when they are with friends they consider to be good communicators⁹ and with romantic partners who are good listeners and who share personal feelings and information.¹⁰
- **Goal accomplishment.** Language helps you share goals and work with others—everything from asking your hairstylist for a new look to launching a successful career.
- **Education and persuasion.** Public speaking skills in particular can help you educate and influence others.

Communication skills are a vital element in any successful career. It's probably no surprise that several of the top qualities employers look for in job candidates involve communication skills—including the ability to work well with team members, write and speak well, and influence others.¹¹ Communication can also help you fit in and get up to speed when you join a new organization.¹² And this skill set is just as important outside of work. It's a means of getting things done, learning, having fun, giving and receiving affection, feeling included, and managing conflict.¹³

1.1 Characteristics of Communication

What does it mean to communicate? We begin by examining three defining characteristics, then consider ways of modeling the process.

Definition of Communication

Defining *communication* isn't as simple as it might seem. People use the word in a variety of ways that are only vaguely related:

- A dog scratches at the back door to be let out.
- Data flows from one computer database to another.
- A satellite transmits a signal.
- Strangers who live thousands of miles apart build a relationship via social media.
- Locals offer directions to a group of confused-looking people from out of town.
- A civic leader encourages citizens to get more involved in helping homeless populations.

For starters, we'll be exploring *human* communication. Animal behavior, computer networks, and satellite communications aren't our focus, so that rules out the first three examples in the list above. In fact, there is a difference between *communications* (with an "s") and *communication* (without an "s"). (With an "s" generally refers to the technologies that enable exchange of information.) The last

Communication (without an “s”) refers to the study of how people share messages. That’s the primary focus of this book. *Communications* (with an “s”) usually refers to technologies that enable the exchange of messages.

Can you give examples of “communication” versus “communications”?



communication The process of creating meaning through symbolic interaction.

symbol An arbitrary sign used to represent a thing, person, idea, or event in ways that make communication possible.

three examples do meet our definition of **communication**: *the process of creating meaning through symbolic interaction*. Let’s unpack this definition to explore three fundamental qualities of communication.

Communication Is a Process Most people think about communication as if it occurs in discrete, individual acts: telling a joke, asking for a raise, and so on. But communication is actually a continuous, ongoing process. Consider, for example, a conversation about politics in which you disagree with others. Your response will most likely depend on a host of considerations: your relationship to them, your opinion of their analytical skills, how open- (or closed-) minded you think they are, whether past disagreements have been handled respectfully or contentiously, whether you think the conversation is serious or casual . . . the list goes on. The response you choose will shape the reaction you get, both in the moment and going forward. Metaphorically speaking, communication isn’t a series of episodes pasted together like photographs in a scrapbook. Instead, it’s more like a movie in which meaning emerges as interrelated experiences unfold.

Communication Is Relational Communication isn’t something you do *to* others. Rather, it is something you do *with* them. Like many types of dancing, communication depends on the involvement of a partner. Great dancers who don’t consider and adapt to the skill level of their partner can make both dancer and partner look bad. In communication and in dancing, even two highly skilled partners must work at adapting and coordinating their efforts.

Psychologist Kenneth Gergen captures the relational nature of communication well when he points out that our success depends on our interaction with others. As he says, “one cannot be ‘attractive’ without others who are attracted, a ‘leader’ without others willing to follow, or a ‘loving person’ without others to affirm with appreciation.”¹⁴

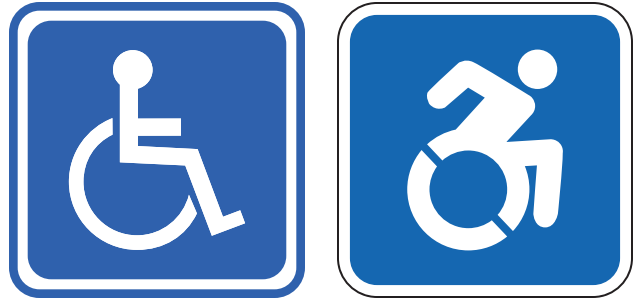
Because communication is relational, it’s often a mistake to suggest that just one person is responsible for a relationship. Rather than blaming each other for a disappointing outcome, it’s usually better to ask, “How did we handle this situation poorly, and what can we do to make it better?”

Communication Is Symbolic Words are **symbols** in that they represent people, things, ideas, and events, making it possible for us to communicate about them.

One feature of symbols is their arbitrary nature. For example, there's no logical reason why the letters in the word *book* should stand for what you're reading now. Speakers of Spanish call it a *libro*, and Germans call it a *buch*. Even in English, another term would work just as well as long as everyone agreed to use it in the same way. Symbolic communication allows people to think or talk about the past, explain the present, and speculate about the future.

People are most likely to understand each other if they interpret symbols in the same way. For example, bus driver/artist Nathan Vass recognized it as a compliment when a regular passenger called him a "beast." When Vass countered, "No, you're the beast man," the passenger said, "No, no no, I'm not the friggin' beast, dude . . . YOU'RE the Beast. Don't be modest man."¹⁵

On the other hand, conflicts can arise when people attach different meanings to a symbol. Decision makers in several states and countries have advocated for replacing the International Symbol of Access—an image of a person in a wheelchair—with a new version. Some prefer the new symbol for its more active implication.¹⁶ Others feel that it marginalizes wheelchair users who aren't as active as the image suggests. One critic charges that the new symbol looks "like a person in a wheelchair race."¹⁷ Others object to both symbols because they imply that everyone with a



Symbols—whether linguistic or graphic—can be powerful but ambiguous. Some feel the older International Symbol of Access (at left) depicts wheelchair users as passive and incapable, while the one on the right conveys more energy and control. Others feel that the newer symbol implies that everyone in a wheelchair is, or should be, athletic.

Think of a verbal or visual symbol that could be interpreted in more than one way. How might communication be affected depending on the interpretation?

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

The Limits of Language When Describing People

Language is a useful tool, but it often falls short or exacerbates problems. Consider how we describe racial and ethnic groups. Terms such as *black*, *white*, and *brown* are inadequate to describe the rich diversity within and between groups. Moreover, putting labels on people can be misleading and divisive.

What connotations are attached to color words? White is often associated with purity and black with negativity. "I'm troubled when clients or colleagues use the word *black* to refer to negative or unwanted traits, in phrases such as *black sheep* and *black mark*," says a therapist who identifies as black.¹⁸ Using terms such as *black* and *white* also implies that the people so described are opposites.

Some people identify as brown, particularly if they are from certain regions of North Africa, Asia, or Latin America. However, they may have a range of skin tones from dark to pale. As observed on the podcast *Code Switch*, race is about much more than skin color.¹⁹

Terms such as *Asian American* and *Latinx American* highlight diversity in the American population. Non-Latinx white people, however, are usually referred to as Americans without a qualifier. The implication is that they are somehow more authentically American than other racial groups.²⁰

How should you decide what racial or ethnic terms to use and when? First, consider whether referring to someone's race or ethnicity is relevant to a situation. For example, when telling a story about the nurse who cared for you, is the nurse's race an important detail? On the other hand, pretending not to see race—to be "color blind"—is also problematic. Talani Shoneye describes an uncomfortable moment in her workplace when a colleague struggled to point her out without mentioning her race. Every description (white shirt, brown hair, and so on) described more than one person in the group, but Shoneye was the only black person in sight. "So I helped her out," she says, "Waving my hands I cheerfully replied, 'It's me, the black woman over here.'"²¹ Others, such as Donya Momenian, an American with Iranian heritage, wish there were more terms in everyday use to describe membership in diverse groups. Momenian says that people view her as brown sometimes and white at others, but standardized forms in the United States seldom give her the opportunity to identify as Middle Eastern, which she feels more accurately describes her identity.²²

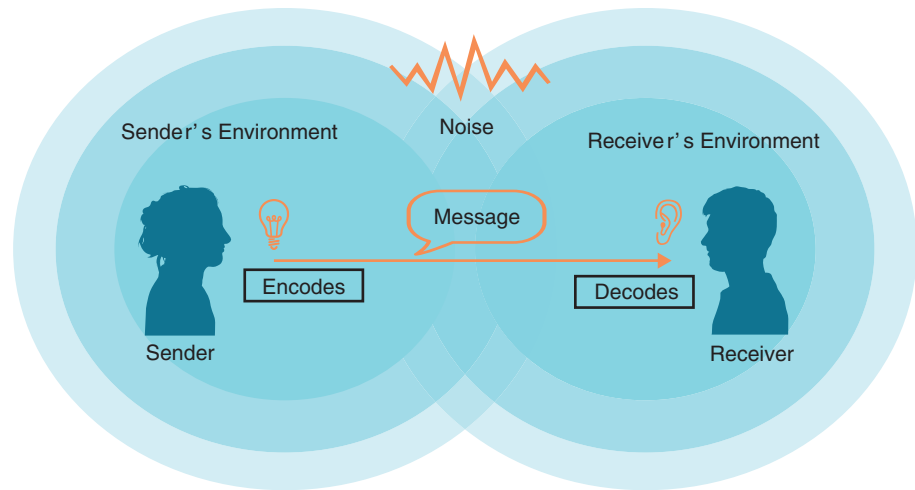


FIGURE 1.1 Linear Communication Model

ASK YOURSELF



What terms do you prefer when people describe you? Which, if any, make you cringe or feel misunderstood? How might you consider changing your language to avoid bias?

linear communication model A characterization of communication as a one-way event in which a message flows from sender to receiver.

sender The originator of a message.

encode To put thoughts into symbols, most commonly words.

message A sender's planned and unplanned words and nonverbal behaviors.

receiver One who notices and attends to a message.

decode To attach meaning to a message.

noise External, physiological, and psychological distractions that interfere with the accurate transmission and reception of a message.

physical disability uses a wheelchair. “When you have a disability but you’re not in a wheelchair, using an accessible parking space or restroom often makes you the target of all kinds of catty and hostile behavior,” observes one analyst.²³ The strong feelings surrounding this issue underscore the importance of symbols in our lives.

You might wish that communication didn’t rely so heavily on words, behaviors, and images that can be interpreted in many different ways. But that’s the nature of symbols. The “Limits of Language” feature on page 7 explores the nuances of using words to describe racial and ethnic groups, and in Chapter 5 we’ll discuss the nature of symbols in more detail.

Models of Communication

So far we have introduced a basic definition of communication and considered its characteristics. This information is useful, but it only begins to describe the process we will examine throughout this book. One way to deepen your understanding is to look at some models that describe what happens when two or more people interact. Over the years, scholars have developed an increasingly accurate and sophisticated view of this process.

Linear Communication Model Researchers once viewed messages as something that one person sends in some form to another.²⁴ In the **linear communication model** shown in Figure 1.1, communication is like tossing a ball: A **sender encodes** ideas and feelings into a **message** conveyed to a **receiver**, who **decodes** (attaches meaning to) it. The idea is that people take turns being either a sender or a receiver.

At first glance, the linear model suggests that communication is a straightforward matter: If you choose your words correctly, your message should get through without distortion. But in reality, misunderstandings are common, even in close relationships.²⁵

Why are misunderstandings so common? One factor is what scholars call **noise**, a broad category that includes any force that interferes with the accurate reception of a message. Three types of noise can disrupt communication—external, physiological, and psychological.

- **External noise** (also called *physical noise*) includes factors outside of a person that are distracting or make hearing difficult. For example, a text message that catches your eye might divert your attention during a lecture, or a lawnmower might make it difficult to hear the professor’s remarks clearly.

- *Physiological noise* involves biological factors in the receiver or sender that interfere with accurate reception. For example, you might find it difficult to listen well if you are tired, sick, or hungry.
- *Psychological noise* refers to thoughts and feelings that interfere with the ability to express or understand a message accurately. If you come home annoyed or preoccupied, it will probably be harder to give the people you live with the attention they deserve.

A communication **channel** is the method by which a message is conveyed between people. Channels include face-to-face contact and various **media** (intervening mechanisms) such as phones and other screens. The channel you use can make a big difference in the effect of a message. For example, if you wanted to say “I love you,” a generic ecard probably wouldn’t have the same effect as a handwritten note. Likewise, saying “I love you” for the first time on the phone might be a different experience from saying the words in person. Media can facilitate personal messages and public ones.

The linear model also shows that communicators occupy different **environments**—fields of experience that influence how they interpret others’ behavior. In communication terminology, *environment* refers not only to a physical location but also to the personal experiences and cultural backgrounds that participants bring to a conversation. It’s easy to imagine how your position on economic issues might differ depending on whether you are struggling financially or are well off, and how your thoughts on immigration reform might depend on how long your family has lived in this country.

The model in Figure 1.1 shows that the environments of two people overlap. This area represents the background that the communicators have in common. The overlap may be quite large if they belong to the same groups, have had similar life experiences, and share many of the same opinions. By contrast, communication may be challenging if participants’ shared environment is small. That doesn’t mean you should avoid it. Communicating with people who are different from you—perhaps of different ages, socioeconomic status, abilities, or ethnicities—can be rewarding. In Chapter 4, we discuss the advantages and skills involved in intercultural communication, and information throughout this book offers ways to bridge the gaps that separate each of us to a greater or lesser degree.

The linear model provides a good start to understanding communication, but it oversimplifies the factors involved. For example, if you recall the definition of communication we discussed earlier, you’ll note that the linear model doesn’t depict communication as an ongoing process. The transactional communication model, which we will cover next, presents a more accurate picture in several respects.

Transactional Communication Model The **transactional communication model** shows that people usually send and receive messages simultaneously. Consider what happens when a friend yawns as you complain about your family or when a business associate blushes at one of your jokes. Even though you are a “sender” in these episodes, you’re also a “receiver” who is aware of the other person’s reactions. While it’s true that some types of mass communication flow in a one-way manner, most personal communication involves a simultaneous, two-way exchange.²⁶ As depicted in Figure 1.2, the roles of “sender” and “receiver” that seemed separate in the linear model are redefined as “communicators” to reflect the fact that we receive, decode, and respond to other people’s behavior at the same time that they receive and respond to ours.

Nonverbal reactions such as yawning and blushing, as well as verbal and written responses, are forms of **feedback**—a communicator’s response to another’s

channel The medium through which a message passes from sender to receiver.

media Communication mechanisms such as phones and computers used to convey messages between people.

environment Both the physical setting in which communication occurs and the personal perspectives of the parties involved.

transactional communication model A characterization of communication as the simultaneous sending and receiving of messages in an ongoing process that involves feedback and includes unintentional (often ambiguous) messages.

feedback A receiver’s response to a sender’s message.



ASK YOURSELF

Think of a recent conversation. Write down not what the other person said but what you were thinking. Did psychological noise interfere with your ability to listen well? If so, how?

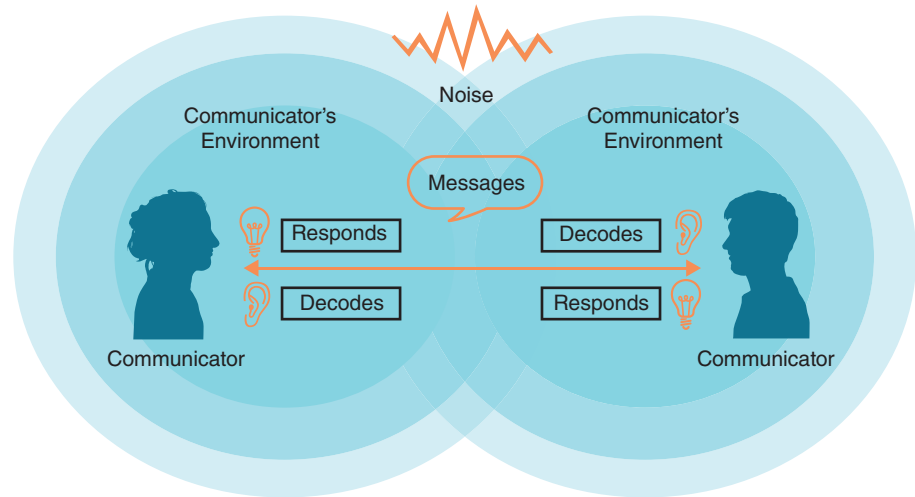


FIGURE 1.2 Transactional Communication Model

ON YOUR FEET



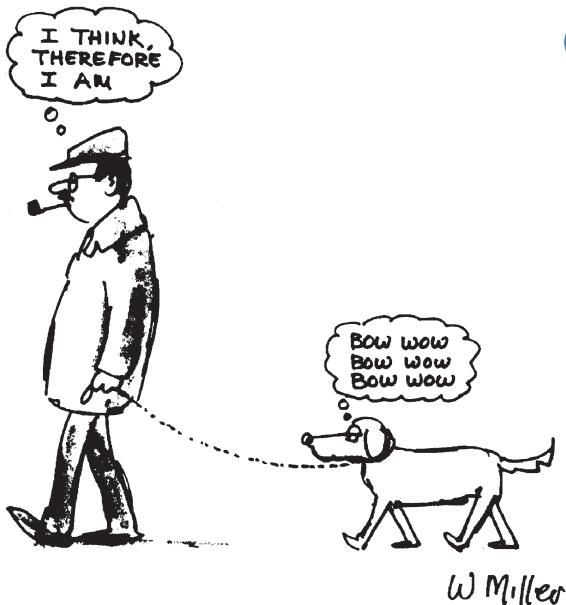
Describe a time when a listener's reaction led you to change your communication approach. What was it about the listener's feedback that stood out to you? How did you change your communication as a result? Create a brief oral presentation in which you explain this encounter in terms of the transactional model of communication.

Intrapersonal communication

Communication that occurs within a single person.

message. In person, you might field questions and comments following a presentation. Online, the comments viewers append to a status update, tweet, photo, or video give you an idea of how they feel about it. Even advertisements and news stories, which were once considered one-way communication, are now the subject of influential feedback. A few years ago, Nivea skin care discontinued an advertising campaign with the tagline "White Is Purity" after white supremacists praised it on social media and others condemned the slogan as racist.²⁷

Another difference between the linear and transactional model is that the transactional includes unintentional messages. Your facial expressions, gestures, postures, and vocal tones may offer information to others even when you aren't aware of them.²⁸ As you have certainly experienced, these messages can be powerful but confusing. For example, if you look at the ceiling during an important conversation, the other person may assume (rightly or wrongly) that you disagree or aren't paying attention.



Source: © The New Yorker Collection 1984 Warren Miller from cartoonbank.com. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

1.2 Types of Communication

Nathan Vass says he loves face-to-face communication because it allows him to make a personal connection with others. Via his blog, book, photography exhibits, and film projects, he also enjoys sharing stories with a wider range of people than he may ever meet in person. He's got a point. Each method of communicating has unique qualities. In this section, we consider seven communication contexts, each with its own characteristics, advantages, and challenges.

Intrapersonal Communication

Intrapersonal communication involves "communicating with oneself."²⁹ One way that each of us communicates internally is by engaging with our inner voice. Take a moment and listen to your own self-talk before reading on. It may have said something like, "What inner voice? I don't have any inner voice!" That's the "sound" of your thinking.

Intrapersonal communication affects almost every type of interaction. A conversation with a new acquaintance is shaped by your

self-talk (“I’m making a fool out of myself” or “She likes me!”). Take this idea further by imagining your thoughts in each of the following situations:

- You’re planning to approach a stranger you would like to get to know better.
- You pause a minute and look at the audience before beginning a 10-minute speech.
- The boss yawns while you are asking for a raise.
- A friend seems irritated lately, and you’re not sure whether you are responsible.

You’ll read more about self-talk later. Much of Chapter 3 deals with how what you think shapes how you relate to others, and part of Chapter 14 explains how the right kind of intrapersonal communication can minimize anxiety when delivering a speech.

Dyadic and Interpersonal Communication

Social scientists use the term **dyadic communication** to describe two people interacting, either in person or via mediated channels. Dyadic conversations are the most common type of personal communication. Even communication within larger groups (such as classrooms, parties, and work environments) often consists of multiple, shifting dyadic encounters.

It’s a common misconception that dyadic communication is the same as interpersonal communication. As Chapter 8 will explain, not all dyadic communication is interpersonal (think of idle banter about sports or the weather). And not all interpersonal communication is dyadic (consider a deep conversation between several close friends).

Small-Group Communication

In **small-group communication**, each person can participate actively with the other members. Small groups are a fixture of everyday life. Your family is an example. So are athletic teams, colleagues at work, and groups of students collaborating on a class project.

Small groups exhibit characteristics that aren’t present in a dyad. With two communicators, there’s no chance of being outvoted. In a group, however, the majority of members can overrule or put pressure on those in the minority. And for better and worse, groups take risks that members wouldn’t take if they were alone or in a dyad. On the plus side, groups may be more creative than dyads, if only because there are more people from whom to draw ideas. Finally, group communication is affected strongly by the leader. Leadership and teamwork are so important to career success that Chapter 11 focuses extensively on them.

Organizational Communication

Larger, more permanent collections of people engage in **organizational communication** when they work collectively to achieve goals. Organizations operate for a variety of reasons: commercial (such as a corporation), nonprofit (such as the Humane Society or Habitat for Humanity), political (a government or political action group), health-related (a hospital or doctor’s office), and even recreational (a YMCA or sports league).

Organizational communication involves specific roles (e.g., sales associate, general manager, coach) that shape what people communicate about and how they relate to one another. As you’ll read in Chapter 4, each organization develops its own culture and traditions that influence how members behave. The “Communication Skills and Career Success” feature on page 12 shows the advantages that effective communicators enjoy in the career world.

dyadic communication Two-person communication.

small-group communication Communication within a group of a size such that every member can participate actively with the other members.

organizational communication Interaction among members of a relatively large, permanent structure (such as a nonprofit agency or business) in order to pursue shared goals.



ASK YOURSELF

In your daily life, how much of an overlap is there between dyadic and interpersonal communication?

@WORK

Communication Skills and Career Success

When more than 3,000 U.S. adults were asked what skills are most important “to get ahead in the world today,” communication skills topped the list—ahead of math, writing, logic, and scientific ability.³⁰

Employers agree. Representatives from a wide range of industries rank the “ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization” as the most essential skill for career success. In fact, they rate communication skill as more important than “technical knowledge related to the job.”³¹ Other research reinforces the value of communication. An analysis of almost 15 million job advertisements from across all occupations revealed that the ability to speak and write effectively was the most requested skill, identified twice as often as any other quality.³²

The reasons are clear. Regardless of the job, people spend most of their working lives communicating.³³ The average American office worker receives nearly 12,000 emails every year and spends the equivalent of 111 work days responding to them.³⁴ When you also consider telephone and face-to-face conversations, instant messaging, team meetings, videoconferences, presentations, and many other types of interaction, it’s undeniable that communication is at the heart of the workplace.³⁵

Evidence such as this shows that communication skills can make the difference between a successful and a disappointing career. For more detail on increasing your efficiency and productivity at work, see Chapters 10 and 11, as well as *Communicating for Career Success* at www.oup.com/he/adler-uhc14e.

public communication Communication that occurs when a group is too large for everyone to contribute. It is characterized by an unequal amount of speaking and by limited verbal feedback.

mass communication The transmission of messages to large, usually widespread audiences via TV, Internet, movies, magazines, and other forms of mass media.

Public Communication

Public communication occurs when a group becomes too large for all members to contribute. It’s generally characterized by an unequal amount of speaking among the members. One or more people are likely to deliver their remarks to others, who act as an audience. Even when audience members have the chance to ask questions and post comments (in person or online), the speakers are still mostly in control and do most of the talking. This underscores the leadership potential of being a great public speaker. The last four chapters of this book describe the steps you can take to prepare and deliver an effective speech.

Mass Communication

Mass communication consists of messages that are transmitted to large, widespread audiences via electronic and print media such as websites, magazines, television, and radio, to name just a few. Mass communication is often less personal and more of a product than the other types of communication we have examined. That’s because most mass messages are aimed at a large audience without personal contact between senders and receivers.

Social Media Communication

Social media use doesn’t fit neatly within the groupings we’ve just described. A tweet or post might reach your closest friends *and* thousands of people you don’t know. This can be inspiring, as when a grocery clerk’s kindness to an autistic teenager became a viral video.³⁶ The clip was viewed by tens of thousands of people and became the focus of stories carried by CNN, ABC News, *The Washington Post*, and other news outlets. More attention isn’t always better, however. UC Berkeley graduate student Connor Riley learned this lesson the hard way when she tweeted “Cisco just offered me a job! Now I have to weigh the utility of a fatty paycheck against the daily commute to San Jose and hating the work.” Needless to say, the company withdrew its offer.³⁷



Star Wars actor Kelly Tran faced months of racist, sexist trolling on social media.

In your experience, what are the benefits and drawbacks of using various social media platforms?

Social media posts can be devastating. Following the release of *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, actor Kelly Tran faced racist, sexist trolling that continued for more than a year. The harassment led her to delete her social media accounts. As she wrote in an essay for *The New York Times*, “Their words seemed to confirm what growing up as a woman and a person of color already taught me: that I belonged in margins and spaces, valid only as a minor character in their lives and stories.”³⁸

Social media play such an important role in today’s communication environment that Chapter 2 is devoted entirely to the subject. Throughout the book, you’ll also find guidance on discussing politics respectfully on social media (Chapter 4), distinguishing between facts and inflammatory bot posts (Chapter 5), avoiding social media distractions to be a better listener (Chapter 6), using your online identity to help with a job search (Chapter 10), and more.

As useful as social media are, they can be overwhelming. The “Understanding Communication Technology” feature considers the reasons some people declare social media holidays now and then.

1.3 Communication in a Changing World

Today’s communicators are equipped with a range of technologies that, even two decades ago, would have been the stuff of fantasy and science fiction. As you read the following, ask yourself: *How have communication tools made your life richer? In what ways can they be overwhelming or distracting?*

Changing Technology

Communication technology is changing more rapidly than ever before. Until about 5,000 years ago, written language didn’t exist and face-to-face speech was the primary form of communication. For thousands of years after that, most people were still unable to read and write. Books were scarce, and the amount of written information available was small. Speaking and listening were the predominant communication “technologies.”

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Dear Social Media, I Need a Little Space

Something interesting happened when tech writer Eric Griffith left social media: nothing. “I didn’t miss out on anything world-shaking, the globe kept on spinning,” Griffith says. “Eventually, it felt utterly normal to not be on Twitter all the time.”³⁹ He did, however, experience a personal rise in productivity and uninterrupted time with friends. No one is suggesting a total break from the Twitter feed. Well, some people are. But they usually announce that via—you guessed it—social media.

Here are the most common reasons people give for limiting time on social media:

- **To Reclaim Time and Focus**

Taken to extremes, social media drain effort that could be spent on other activities. On average, college students spend about 3 times more of their day on cell phones than they do on school and 4 times more than they spend on work-related activities.^{40,41}

- **To Live in the Moment**

The lure of online activities can detract from the here and now. “How many of you have sat down for dinner with friends or family at a restaurant, you take out your phone to check Facebook or Twitter?” asks reformed social media junkie Chris Mullen.⁴² To participate in the online chatter, “you take a pic of everyone at dinner. Then you tweet ‘at din w/ fam,’” Mullen predicts. All the while, the people closest to you (physically speaking) are distanced from interacting with you.

- **To Give Your Ego a Break**

“One of the main problems with social media is you are often bombarded by others’ accomplishments,” observes a writer for *Elite Daily*.⁴³ It’s a distorted reality in that few people post unflattering photos of themselves or broadcast their failures. A steady diet of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can make life seem dull and inadequate by comparison.

- **To Break the Approval Craving**

Social media posts are often designed to get a validating response from others. That can foster an unhealthy dependency. “If you are waiting for people to like your status or your photos, you might be seeking and spending a lot of time waiting on others to approve of the online version of yourself,” warns pop culture writer Christen Grumstrip.⁴⁴

All in all, our relationship with social media is best described as “it’s complicated.” One online story urging people to cut back on use of social media garnered more than 2 million Facebook likes,⁴⁵ which suggests more than a little ambivalence about that advice. And no wonder. A little space doesn’t mean a permanent breakup. Eric Griffith, who had quit Twitter, is now back on it. But the break gave him a healthy perspective. As with any relationship, he says, “when [social media] takes over your life, it’s not a good thing.”⁴⁶

By the mid-1700s, literacy grew in industrial societies, giving ordinary people access to ideas that had previously been available only to the most privileged. By the end of the 1800s, the telegraph made it possible for everyday people to send messages over vast distances.

The first half of the 1900s introduced a burst of communication technology. The invention of the telephone, radio, and then television extended the reach of personal and business relationships and made mass communication possible.

By the dawn of the 21st century, cellular technologies and the Internet broadened people’s ability to communicate beyond the dreams of earlier generations. Pocket-sized telephones have made it affordable and easy to talk, send data, and exchange images with people around the globe. Now, new fiber-optic technology allows for tens of millions of phone calls every second.^{47,48} Videoconferencing now allows us to see one another’s facial cues, body movements, and gestures almost as if we were face to face.

The accelerating pace of innovations in communication technology is astonishing:⁴⁹

- It took 38 years for radio to reach 50 million listeners.
- It took television only 13 years to capture the same number of viewers.
- It took less than 4 years for the Internet to attract 50 million users.
- Facebook added 100 million users in less than 9 months.

Changing Discipline

The study of communication has evolved to reflect the changing world. The first systematic analysis of how to communicate effectively focused on public address. Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, written about 2,500 years ago,⁵⁰ laid out specific criteria for effective speaking (called the "Canons of Rhetoric") which are still used today. (You'll read about them in Chapter 15.)

In the early 1900s, the study of communication expanded into a social science with a more diverse focus. As messages began to reach large numbers of people via print, film, and broadcasting, scholars began to study their effects on people's attitudes and behaviors. Propaganda became an important focus of research during and after World War II.⁵¹

In the 1950s and 1960s, researchers began asking questions about human relationships in family and work settings,⁵² leading to early research about small-group communication.⁵³ Decision making and other small-group communication processes emerged as a major area of study and continue to fascinate researchers today.

Communication scholars now study a wide range of phenomena, including how relationships develop, the nature of social support, the role of emotions, how honesty and deception operate, and how new technologies affect interpersonal relationships. Other branches of the discipline examine how health care providers and clients interact, the influence of gender, and how people from different backgrounds communicate with one another, to name just a few. As you can see, the scope of the field has expanded far beyond its roots in public speaking.



Communicating via wristwatch seemed like science fiction to earlier generations, but even more sophisticated technologies are commonplace today.

Think about the communication technologies you use. How would your life be different without them?

1.4 Communication Competence

Most scholars agree that **communication competence** involves achieving one's goals in a manner that, ideally, maintains or enhances the relationship in which it occurs.^{54,55} As you read about the elements of competence, think about how you can apply them.

communication competence The ability to achieve one's goals through communication and, ideally, maintain healthy relationships.

There Is No “Ideal” Way to Communicate

Some successful communicators are serious, while others are lighthearted. Some are talkative, while others are quiet. And some are straightforward, while others are subtle. Just as beautiful art takes many forms, there are many kinds of competent communicators. Others may inspire you to improve your communication skill, but ultimately it's important to find approaches that suit you.

Many struggling communicators are easy to spot by their limited approaches. Some are chronic jokers. Others seem always to be argumentative. Still others are quiet in almost every situation. Like a piano player who knows only one tune or a chef who can prepare only a few dishes, these people rely on a small range of communication strategies again and again, whether or not they are successful. By contrast, competent communicators have a wide repertoire from which to draw, and they choose the most appropriate behavior for a given situation.

Competence Is Situational

Because competent behavior varies from one situation and person to another, it's a mistake to think people are either great communicators or they aren't. It's more accurate to talk about *degrees* or *areas* of competence. You might be skillful socializing at a party but less successful making small talk with professors during office hours. This means it's an overgeneralization to say, in a moment of distress, “I'm a terrible communicator!” It would be more accurate to say, “I didn't handle this situation very well, even though I'm better in others.”

Competence Is Relational

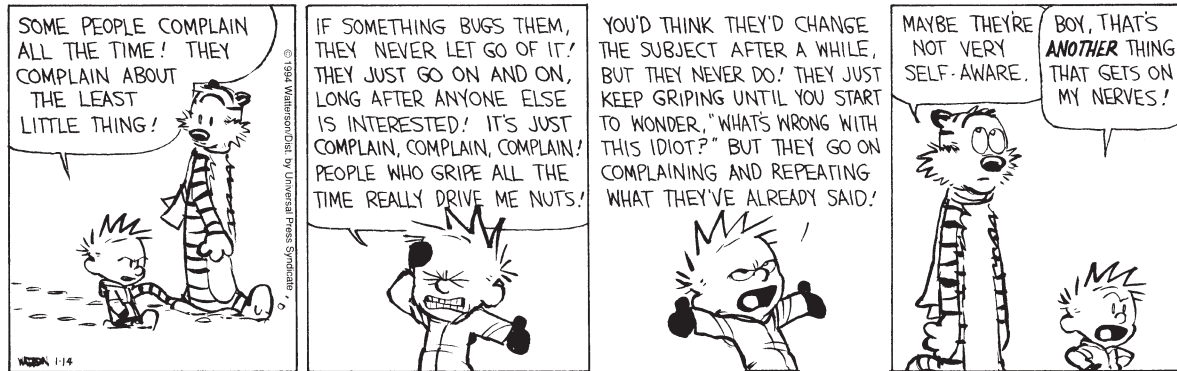
Because communication is transactional—something we do *with* others rather than *to* them—behavior that is competent in one relationship or culture won't necessarily succeed in others.

An important study on relational satisfaction illustrated that what constitutes satisfying communication varies from one relationship to another.⁵⁶ Researchers found that friendships were most satisfying when partners possessed harmonious communication styles. The same principle holds true in the case of jealousy. People deal with insecurity in a variety of ways, including keeping close tabs on their partner, acting indifferent, decreasing affection, talking the matter over, and acting angry. Researchers have found that no type of behavior is effective or ineffective in every relationship. Approaches that work well with some people are hurtful to others. Findings like these demonstrate that competence arises out of developing ways of interacting that work for you and for the other people involved.

Competent Communicators Are Empathic

You have the best chance of developing an effective message when you understand the other person's point of view. And because people don't always express their thoughts and feelings clearly, the ability to *imagine* how an issue might look from someone else's viewpoint is an important skill. **Cognitive complexity** is the ability to understand issues from a variety of perspectives. For instance, imagine that your longtime friend seems angry with you. Rather than jumping to a conclusion, you might consider a range of possibilities: Is your friend offended by something you have done? Did something upsetting happen earlier in the day? Or perhaps nothing is wrong, and you're just being overly sensitive. That's why listening is so important. It helps you understand others and judge how they are responding to your messages. Because empathy is such an important element of communicative competence, part of Chapter 3 and all of Chapter 6 are devoted to the topic.

cognitive complexity The ability to understand issues from a variety of perspectives.



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Competence Can Be Learned

Communication is, at least in part, learnable. Systematic education (such as the class in which you are now enrolled) and a little training can produce dramatic results.^{57,58} Communication skills also increase through trial and error and observation. Think of your own experience: You've learned from your own successes and failures and by seeing what works well, and not so well, for the people around you.

Competence Requires Hard Work

Knowing *how* to communicate effectively is necessary, but it isn't sufficient to be competent. Hard work is also an ingredient. For example, one study revealed that, even when college students were capable of paying attention to important conversational cues, they often didn't put in the effort to do so, perhaps because they were preoccupied or distracted.⁵⁹

Developing competence takes time. Simply reading about communication skills in the following chapters won't guarantee that you can use them flawlessly right off the bat. As with any other skill—playing a musical instrument or learning a sport, for example—the road to competence in communication can be a long one. You can expect that your first efforts at communicating differently will be awkward. After some practice you should become more skillful, even though you will still have to think about the new way of speaking or listening. Finally, after repeating the new skill again and again, you will find you can perform it without much conscious thought.

Competent Communicators Self-Monitor

Psychologists use the term **self-monitoring** to describe the process of paying close attention to one's own behavior and using these observations to make effective choices. High self-monitors are good at observing themselves from a detached viewpoint, which helps them understand the impressions they make on others. A high self-monitor might think, *"I'm making a fool out of myself,"* *"I'd better speak up now,"* or *"This approach is working well. I'll keep it up."*

High self-monitors are more likely than low self-monitors to develop relationships with many types of people⁶⁰ and to recognize ways they might improve as communicators.⁶¹ Self-monitoring is especially helpful in real time. Consider the mother of a 3-year-old who reflected: "I disciplined my son and he threw a tantrum that I thought was so funny that I disciplined him again just so I could video it. . . . After uploading it on Instagram I thought, 'What did I just do?'"⁶² Awareness of her actions came too late to change that situation, but perhaps it will help her be more of a self-monitor in the future.



ASK YOURSELF

Who are the most competent communicators you know? How does their behavior reflect the elements of competence described here?

self-monitoring Paying close attention to one's own behavior and using these observations to make effective choices.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR COMMUNICATION

What Type of Communicator Are You?



Answer the questions below for insight about your approach as a communicator.

- You are puzzled when a friend says, “The complex houses married and single soldiers and their families.”⁶³ What are you most likely to do?**
 - Tune out and hope your friend changes topics soon.
 - Declare, “You’re not making any sense.”
 - Ask questions to be sure you understand what your friend means.
 - Nod as if you understand, even if you don’t.
- You are working frantically to meet a project deadline when your phone rings. It’s your roommate, who immediately launches into a long, involved story. What are you most likely to do?**
 - Pretend to listen while you continue to work on your project.
 - Interrupt to say, “I don’t have time for this now.”
 - Listen for a few minutes and then say, “I’d like to hear more about this, but can I call you back later?”
 - Listen and ask questions so you don’t hurt your friend’s feelings.
- You are assigned to a task force to consider the parking problem on campus. Which of the following are you most likely to do during task force meetings?**
 - Talk in a quiet voice to the person next to you.
 - Express frustration if meetings aren’t productive.
 - Ask questions and take notes.
 - Spend most of your time listening quietly.
- Your family is celebrating your brother’s high school graduation at dinner. What are you most likely to do at the table?**
 - Ask for dessert in a take-out container so you can leave early.
 - Keep your cell phone handy so you won’t miss anything your friends post.
 - Give your undivided attention as your brother talks about his big day.
 - Paste a smile on your face and make the best of the situation, even if you feel bored.

INTERPRETING YOUR RESPONSES

For insight about your communication style, see which of the following best describes your answers. (More than one may apply.)

Distracted Communicator

If you answered “a” to two or more questions, you have a tendency to disengage. It may be that you are shy, introverted, or easily distracted. You needn’t change your personality, but you are likely to build stronger relationships if you strive to be more attentive and proactive. Chapter 6 offers tips that may help you become a more active listener.

Impatient Communicator

If you answered “b” more than once, you tend to be a straight-talker who doesn’t like delays or ambiguity. Honesty can be a virtue, but be careful not to overdo it. Your tendency to “tell it like it is” may come off as bossy or domineering at times. The perception-checking technique in Chapter 3 offers a good way to balance your desire for the truth with concern for other people’s feelings.

Tactful Communicator

If you answered “c” multiple times, you are able to balance assertiveness with good listening skills. Your

willingness to actively engage with people is an asset. Use tips throughout the book to enhance your already strong communication skills.

Accommodator

If you answered “d” two or more times, you tend to put others’ needs ahead of your own. People probably appreciate your listening skills but wish you would speak up more. Saying what you feel and sharing your ideas can be an asset both personally and professionally. Tips in Chapters 11 and 15 may help you become more assertive and confident without losing your thoughtful consideration for others.

Competent Communicators Are Committed

One feature that distinguishes effective communication in almost any context is commitment. Nathan Vass, the bus driver profiled at the beginning of the chapter, demonstrates again and again his commitment to the people he meets. He once helped a passenger load furniture onto the bus. He has encouraged people on the street to jump aboard the bus to escape assailants, and Vass’s listening skills are so

legendary that people talk about riding with him as “bus therapy.”⁶⁴ As a result, Vass is often able to stop fights by appealing to people by name and asking them to calm down as a favor to him. And riders who have come to know him lend assistance when there is trouble on the bus.

The same principles work in other relationships. People who are emotionally committed to a relationship are more likely than others to talk about difficult subjects and to share personal information about themselves. This commitment can strengthen relationships and contribute to a heightened sense of well-being.⁶⁵ Take the “Understanding Your Communication” quiz “What Type of Communicator Are You?” for insight about your communication strengths and challenges.



ASK YOURSELF

Describe the most skillful communicator you know. What makes this person so effective? What can you learn from them to be a more accomplished communicator yourself?

1.5 Misconceptions About Communication

Having spent time talking about what communication is, we should identify some things it is not. Understanding these myths can boost your effectiveness and prevent misunderstandings.

Myth: Communication Requires Complete Understanding

Most people operate on the flawed assumption that the goal of all communication is to maximize understanding between communicators. In fact, there are times when complete comprehension isn't the primary goal.⁶⁶ For example, when people in the United States ask social questions such as “How's it going?” they typically aren't interested in the details of how the other person is doing. Beyond formalities, competent communicators may also deliberately create ambiguous messages.⁶⁷ For example, consider what you might say if someone you care about asks a personal question that you don't want to answer such as “Do you think I'm attractive?” or “Is anything bothering you?”

Myth: Communication Can Solve All Problems

“If I could just communicate better . . .” is the sad refrain of many unhappy people who believe that if they could express themselves more effectively, their relationships would improve. This is sometimes true, but it's an exaggeration to say that communicating—even communicating clearly—is a guaranteed cure-all.

Myth: Communication Is a Good Thing

In truth, communication is neither good nor bad in itself. Rather, its value comes from the way it is used. Communication can be a tool for expressing warm feelings and useful facts, but under different circumstances words and actions can cause both physical and emotional pain.



Source: Cartoonbank.com

Myth: Meanings Are in Words

As communication scholars put it: *Meanings are in people, not in words.*

What they mean is that it's a mistake to think that, just because you use and understand a word in one way, others will too. Think about arguments over concepts such as privilege, freedom, and honor. It's easy to see how people can view complex ideas like these quite differently. On a more granular level, think of specific words that have multiple possible meanings. For example, the word *wicked* is common slang in New England and can mean either "really" or "excellent," but if you said "She's wicked" in the South, it might be an insult. Chapter 5 addresses the problems that come from mistakenly assuming that meanings rest in words.

ON YOUR FEET



Describe a time when a misunderstanding led to a mistake or to a comical situation. How did interpretations of the initial message(s) differ?

Myth: Communication Is Simple

Most people assume that communication is an aptitude that people develop without the need for training—rather like breathing. After all, you've been swapping ideas with one another since early childhood, and there are lots of people who communicate pretty well without ever having taken a class on the subject. However, regarding communication as a natural ability is a gross oversimplification. Communication skills are a lot like athletic ability: With training and practice, even the most inept of us can learn to be more effective, and those who are talented can always become better.

Myth: More Communication Is Always Better

Although it's true that not communicating enough is a mistake, there are situations in which *too much* communication is ill advised. Sometimes we "talk a problem to death," going over the same ground again and again without making any headway. And there are times when communicating too much can actually aggravate a problem. You've probably had the experience of "talking yourself into a hole"—making a bad situation worse by pursuing it too far. There are even times when *no communication* is the best course. Any good salesperson will tell you that it's often best to stop talking and let the customer think about the product. And when two people are angry and hurt, they may say things they don't mean and will later regret. One key to successful communication, then, is to share an adequate amount of information in a skillful manner when the time is right. The *Ethical Challenge* feature "To Communicate or Not to Communicate" gives you a chance to consider how you would respond in a range of situations.

ETHICAL CHALLENGE To Communicate or Not to Communicate?

Read the scenarios below and consider in each case whether it would be best to (a) say what you are thinking, (b) listen, or (c) remove yourself from the situation. Explain your reasons.

- A close relational partner of yours was hurt by something you said. You have apologized, but your partner still wants to talk about the issue.
- A coworker confides in you about a family issue that has the coworker worried and upset.
- A classmate is considering a job offer that would require leaving school and moving to another city. You think it's a bad idea, but your classmate seems excited about it.
- Your ex calls at all hours of the night wanting to "talk," which usually means asking you over and over why the relationship ended.

DISCUSSION: What moral obligation, if any, do you have to express your thoughts and feelings in each of these situations?

Throughout the chapter we have followed Nathan Vass—artist, bus driver, and communicator extraordinaire. Let's close with one more story about him. One night soon after midnight, Vass had completed his shift when he realized that a young man who looked to be 18 or 19 was still on the bus. Vass listened to the teen, whose name was Leroy, and learned that he had just arrived in Seattle that day after leaving a bad family situation in Philadelphia. Vass suggested some places Leroy might find shelter and gave him \$20. Within the week, the two ran into each other in town. "This was only four days later," Vass remembers, noting that "Leroy had not even found a change of clothes" yet.⁶⁸ However, Leroy had already lined up four job interviews, one of which led to full-time employment, and, eventually, a home of his own. Fifteen years later, the two are still friends, and Leroy says that Vass's kindness that night saved his life. "Nathan gave me hope," he says.⁶⁹

The bus is life on a small stage, Vass says. People come together. They make a difference in each other's lives. And very often, "the journeys [are] more interesting than the destinations."⁷⁰

MAKING THE GRADE

At www.oup.com/he/adler-uhc14e, you will find a variety of resources to enhance your understanding, including video clips, animations, self-quizzes, additional activities, audio and video summaries, and interactive self-assessments.

OBJECTIVE 1.1 Compare and contrast linear and transactional models in terms of how they illustrate key characteristics of communication.

- Communication is the process of creating meaning through symbolic interaction.
- Communication is influenced by many factors, including environment, noise, and the channel through which messages are shared.
- Because it acknowledges that people send and receive messages simultaneously, the transactional model of communication is more accurate than the linear model that preceded it.
 - > Describe a real-life example that illustrates how communication is process-oriented, relational, and symbolic.
 - > Have you ever overreacted to something someone said, only to realize later that you misinterpreted that person's intent? How can the knowledge that communication is an ongoing process help you put things in perspective?

- > Pause for a moment to consider what is on your mind right now. How might these thoughts create physiological noise that could interfere with your ability to listen closely? Brainstorm some techniques people might use to listen carefully rather than being distracted by their own thoughts.

OBJECTIVE 1.2 Distinguish between communication in a variety of contexts.

- Communication operates in many contexts, including intrapersonal, dyadic and interpersonal, small group, organizational, public, mass media, and social media.
 - > Provide examples of communication in three different contexts.
 - > In what way would you most like to improve your communication relevant to interpersonal communication? To small-group communication? To public speaking?
 - > Overall, what goals would you most like to set for yourself as a communicator? Which contexts will your goals involve?

OBJECTIVE 1.3 Describe how changing communication technology affects communication.

- After millennia with little change, the pace of innovation in communication technologies has accelerated in the last 150 years.

- The study of communication has also evolved, taking a more expansive approach to human interaction.
 - > How do the communication technologies you use differ from those of your parents' generation? Your grandparents'?
 - > How is your life enriched by using today's communication technologies? Do these technologies diminish the quality of your relationships in any ways? If so, how?

OBJECTIVE 1.4 Analyze the difference between effective and ineffective communication.

- Communication competence is situational and relational, and it can be learned.
- Competent communicators are able to choose and perform appropriately from a wide range of behaviors. They are also flexible, cognitively complex self-monitors who can take the perspective of others and who are committed to important relationships.
 - > Give examples from your own life to illustrate the situational and relational nature of communication competence.
 - > Based on the criteria in the "Communication Competence" section, how would you rate your own communicative skills?
 - > Imagine that someone you know often tells jokes that you find offensive. Reflect on which of the following you are most likely to do: (a) say nothing, (b) ask a third party to talk to the jokester, (c) hint at your discomfort, (d) use humor to comment on your friend's insensitivity, or (e) express your discomfort in a straightforward way and ask your friend to stop. Do you feel the strategies you use are effective?

OBJECTIVE 1.5 Replace common misconceptions about communication with more accurate information.

- Communication doesn't always require complete understanding.
- Communication is not always a positive factor that will solve every problem.
- Meanings are in people, not in words.
- Communication is neither simple nor easy.
- More communication is not always better.
 - > Give examples of how each misconception described in this chapter can lead to problems.
 - > Which misconceptions have been most problematic in your life? Give examples.
 - > How can you avoid succumbing to the misconceptions listed in this chapter? Give examples of how you could communicate more effectively.

KEY TERMS

- channel** p. 9
- cognitive complexity** p. 16
- communication** p. 6
- communication competence** p. 15
- decode** p. 8
- dyadic communication** p. 11
- encode** p. 8
- environment** p. 9
- feedback** p. 9
- intrapersonal communication** p. 10
- linear communication model** p. 8
- mass communication** p. 12
- media** p. 9
- message** p. 8
- noise** p. 8
- organizational communication** p. 11
- public communication** p. 12
- receiver** p. 8
- self-monitoring** p. 17
- sender** p. 8
- small-group communication** p. 11
- symbol** p. 6
- transactional communication model** p. 9

ACTIVITIES

1. Test for yourself whether communication is frequent and important by observing your interactions for one day. Record every occasion in which you are involved in some sort of human communication as it is defined in this chapter. Based on your findings, answer the following questions:

- What percentage of your waking day is involved in communication?
- What percentage of time do you spend communicating in the following contexts: intrapersonal, dyadic, small group, and public?
- What percentage of your communication is devoted to satisfying each of the following types of needs: physical, identity, social, and practical? (Note that you might try to satisfy more than one type at a time.)

Based on your analysis, describe 5 to 10 ways you would like to communicate more effectively. For each item on your list of goals, describe who is involved (e.g., "my boss," "people I meet at parties") and how you would like to communicate differently (e.g., "act less defensively when criticized," "speak up more instead of waiting for them to approach me"). Use this list to focus your studies as you read the remainder of this book.

2. Construct a diary of the ways you use social media in a three-day period. For each instance when you use social media (email, a social networking website, phone, Twitter, etc.) describe:

- The kind(s) of social media you use
- The nature of the communication (e.g., "Wrote on friend's Facebook wall," "Reminded roommate to pick up dinner on the way home.")

- The type of need you are trying to satisfy (information, relational, identity, entertainment)

Based on your observations, describe the types of media you use most often and the importance of social media in satisfying your communication needs.



Communicating with Social Media



CHAPTER OUTLINE

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 - Permanence
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

2.1

Identify the distinguishing characteristics of social media, which combine elements of mass and personal communication.

2.2

Outline cases for using social media versus face-to-face communication, noting important differences.

2.3

Identify the benefits and drawbacks of mediated communication, and use this knowledge to maximize effectiveness and minimize the potential for harm.

2.4

Describe how factors such as gender and age can influence social media use.

2.5

Understand how to use social media competently to minimize misunderstandings, maintain positive relationships, and protect yourself.