



Effective Communication Techniques

Unit: Developing Leadership and Communication Skills

Problem Area: Developing Communication Skills

Lesson: Effective Communication Techniques

- **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

- 1 Identify effective communication techniques.**
- 2 Discuss the importance of effective feedback.**
- 3 Examine ways to improve communication.**
- 4 Identify the types of nonverbal cues.**

- **List of Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

E-unit: *Using Effective Communication Skills*. Danville, IL: CAERT, Inc.
www.mycaert.com

- **List of Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities**

- ✓ Writing surface
- ✓ Overhead projector
- ✓ Copies of sample test
- ✓ Visuals from accompanying masters
- ✓ Copies of student lab sheets
- ✓ Copies of a current news article

■ **Terms.** The following terms are presented in the lesson (shown in bold italics):

- ▶ action language
- ▶ context
- ▶ decoding
- ▶ feedback
- ▶ filtering
- ▶ interference
- ▶ nonverbal communication
- ▶ nonverbal cues
- ▶ object language
- ▶ paralanguage
- ▶ scanning
- ▶ sign language
- ▶ skimming
- ▶ summarizing
- ▶ total communication

■ **Interest Approach.** Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches based on their unique class and student situations. A possible approach is included here.

Give each student a copy of a relevant news article. Explain the importance of skimming and scanning when reading. Allow the class five minutes to read the article and come up with a mental summary. Call on several students to give their summary. Explain to the class how skimming, scanning, and summarizing are all examples of the communication process.

SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1: Identify effective communication techniques.

Anticipated Problem: What techniques can be used to become a more effective communicator?

- I. Effective skills in listening, speaking, writing, and reading enhance your communication abilities.
 - A. Effective listening skills are important in communication.
 1. Listen with a purpose or interest. Know why you are listening and for what you are listening.
 2. Identify listening cues, such as introduction, main idea, examples, details, and conclusion.
 3. Recognize common patterns of organizing information.
 4. Concentrate on the message rather than the speaker.
 - B. There are three important steps to follow in effective speaking.
 1. Select the message to match the receiver.
 2. Organize the message in a pattern the receiver will recognize.
 3. Use proper technique in delivering the message.
 - C. Effective reading skills will improve your ability to communicate.
 1. **Scanning** is the process of locating specific detail mixed with other material in text.
 2. **Skimming** is reading to determine only the main idea.
 3. **Summarizing** is putting all the writer's ideas into your own words.
 - D. Developing good writing skills is the foundation of effective communication.
 1. Plan your writing by asking yourself the following:
 - a. Who is the audience?
 - b. What is the purpose?
 - c. What do I want to say?
 - d. How should I organize the information?
 - e. What examples will help my audience remember the main points?
 - f. What is the most effective format?
 2. When writing, remember the five "W's": who, what, when, where, and why.

Use an interest approach at the start of the lesson. Discuss the learning objectives and introduce key terms. Build a multimedia presentation to be used during class discussion. Use VM-A to help explain listening cues. Use VM-B to

demonstrate the various patterns of organizing information. Show VM–C to help explain some simple reading techniques. Have students complete LS–A to inventory their own communication skills, LS–B as a writing activity, and LS–C as a reading activity.

Objective 2: Discuss the importance of effective feedback.

Anticipated Problem: Why is effective feedback important?

- II. An important tool for maintaining total communication is the proper use of feedback.
 - A. During feedback, a reversal in the direction of the communication process occurs.
 - 1. **Feedback** is the way the receiver responds to a message the sender is expressing.
 - 2. **Filtering** is manipulating a message so it is perceived as the receiver desires. A filter is a group of perceptions that a message passes through while it is being exchanged from the sender to the receiver.
 - 3. **Total communication** exists when the exact information the sender intends to convey is understood completely by the receiver.
 - 4. Individuals interpret messages using their perceptions, including their values, needs, feelings, and experiences.
 - B. The object of feedback is to report to the sender what the receiver sees, hears, and feels about the transmission.
 - 1. The receiver must give feedback as soon as transmission of the message takes place.
 - 2. When providing feedback, the receiver should use the same channel as the sender used.
 - 3. **Decoding** is taking a message and converting it into a form that can be understood.

Have the students practice giving messages and providing instant feedback in a simulated telephone setting where they cannot see each other. Have students explain how to make a landscape sale to a friend or family member, who will then attempt to repeat the explanation. Assess how well the students communicated. Use LS–D to have students describe a communication problem.

Objective 3: Examine ways to improve communication.

Anticipated Problem: How can communication be improved?

- III. **Interference** is anything that is or could be a blockage in the communication process.
- A. Interference may come from a source outside the receiver (e.g., noise in the classroom), or it may come from the receiver (e.g., not paying attention).
 - B. There are three major ways to improve communication.
 - 1. Improving perception—You can improve perception by putting yourself in the other person’s position and assuming his or her emotions and by separating the facts from opinions.
 - 2. Improving the physical process of communication—You can improve the physical process of communication by providing feedback, improving listening and speaking skills, and simplifying language.
 - 3. Improving relationships—You can improve relationships by building trust and confidence.

Lead a discussion on ways to improve communication. Use VM–D to explain the three ways to improve communication.

Objective 4: Identify the types of nonverbal cues.

Anticipated Problem: What are examples of nonverbal cues in communication?

- IV. **Nonverbal communication** is exchanging information without the use of words.
- A. Nonverbal communication requires a sender, a receiver, a message, and a medium.
 - B. In nonverbal communication, the sender may not be aware a message is being sent.
 - C. **Nonverbal cues** are the signals we use to tell others about our emotional state, our attitudes, and other information about ourselves. There are four major types of nonverbal cues.
 - 1. **Sign language** includes forms of communication that take the place of spoken words (e.g., head movements, shoulder shrugs, etc.).
 - 2. **Action language** includes action or body movements that transmit specific meanings.
 - 3. **Paralanguage** consists of vocal sounds that influence the expression of spoken words.
 - 4. **Object language** includes physical items that convey messages.

- D. Nonverbal cues can send several messages.
1. Cultural and contextual factors affect the way messages are interpreted.
 - a. Research should be done to understand cultural differences and similarities.
 - b. **Context** refers to all the things in an experiment that help determine the meaning of a cue.
 2. There are six commonly used nonverbal cues: eye contact, facial expressions, distance, tone of voice, appearance, and body movements.
- E. It is important for the sender to monitor the behavior of the receiver.
1. Nonverbal cues may indicate that the receiver does not understand the message, that he or she is not listening intently, or that there is interference.
 2. Monitoring audience behavior is important when speaking to a group. If there are cues that the message is not getting across, the sender should adjust his or her delivery.

Have the students practice giving and receiving nonverbal messages with one another. Show students VM-E and have them identify the message in each facial expression.

- **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives as the basis for review and summary. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Use their responses in determining which objectives and concepts need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle. The anticipated problems can be used as student review questions.
- **Application.** Use the included visual masters and lab sheets to apply the information presented in the lesson.
- **Evaluation.** Evaluation should be based on student comprehension of the learning objectives. This can occur during instruction, review, or later as students apply the information. The sample written test can also be used.
- **Answers to Sample Test:**

Part One: Matching

1. d
2. a
3. g
4. h
5. f
6. b
7. c
8. e

9. j
10. i

Part Two: Multiple Choice

1. c
2. c
3. b
4. d
5. d

Part Three: Short Answer

1. Select the message to match the receiver, organize the message in a pattern the receiver will recognize, and use proper technique in delivering the message.
2. who, what, when, where, and why

Effective Communication Techniques

► Part One: Matching

Instructions: Match the term with the correct definition.

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| a. scanning | f. sign language |
| b. paralanguage | g. decoding |
| c. object language | h. interference |
| d. filtering | i. skimming |
| e. feedback | j. summarizing |

- ____ 1. Manipulating a message so that it is perceived as the receiver desires
- ____ 2. The process of locating specific detail mixed with other material in text
- ____ 3. Taking a message and converting it into an understandable form
- ____ 4. Anything that could be a blockage in the communication process
- ____ 5. Includes forms of communication that take the place of spoken words
- ____ 6. Vocal sounds that influence the expression of spoken words
- ____ 7. Includes physical items that convey messages
- ____ 8. The way the receiver responds to a message the sender is expressing
- ____ 9. Putting all the writer's ideas into your own words
- ____ 10. Reading to determine only the main idea

► Part Two: Multiple Choice

Instructions: Write the letter of the correct answer.

- ____ 1. What is the first of three important steps to follow in effective speaking?
- Monitor the audience behavior.
 - Organize the message in a pattern the receiver will recognize.
 - Select the message to match the receiver.
 - Use proper technique in delivering the message.

- _____ 2. Which of the following determines only the main idea of a reading selection?
- Filtering
 - Scanning
 - Skimming
 - Summarizing
- _____ 3. Which of the following is a major way to improve communication?
- Improve relationships by providing feedback, improving listening and speaking skills, and simplifying language.
 - Improve perception by putting yourself in the other person's position and assuming his or her emotions and by separating the facts from opinions.
 - Improve the physical process of communication by building trust and confidence.
 - Improve the message by including anecdotes and appropriate humor.
- _____ 4. _____ exists when the exact information the sender intends to convey is understood completely by the receiver.
- Interpretation
 - Nonverbal communication
 - Perception
 - Total communication
- _____ 5. _____ is putting all the writer's ideas into your own words.
- Decoding
 - Object language
 - Paralanguage
 - Summarizing

► **Part Three: Short Answer**

Instructions: Complete the following.

1. What are the three steps to follow in effective speaking?

2. What are the five "W's" to keep in mind when writing?

LISTENING CUES

Words or phrases that tell you what to expect:

- ◆ Introduction—“let me begin”
- ◆ Main idea—“one main point,” “a central idea”
- ◆ Examples—“for instance,” “for example,” “like,” “such as”
- ◆ Details—“specifically,” “an important part of”
- ◆ Conclusion—“in summary,” “finally”

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZING INFORMATION

Words or phrases that indicate pattern of organization:

- ◆ Chronological order—“first,” “next,” “then”
- ◆ Order of importance—“most important,” “least significant,” “priority”
- ◆ Comparison and contrast—“similar,” “like,” “different,” “in contrast”
- ◆ Cause and effect—“because,” “so,” “therefore”

SCANNING AND SKIMMING TECHNIQUES

Steps to follow when scanning:

- ◆ Read down the page (rather than across).
- ◆ Read section and column headings.
- ◆ Use a reading aid, such as a bookmark.

Steps to follow when skimming:

- ◆ Note the titles and subtitles.
- ◆ Read the introduction and the conclusion.
- ◆ Read boldface and/or italic type.
- ◆ Look at illustrations.

THREE MAJOR WAYS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

1. Improve perception by trading places with the receiver.
2. Improve the physical process of communication by providing feedback, enhancing listening and speaking skills, and simplifying language.
3. Improve relationships by building trust and confidence.

IDENTIFYING MESSAGES IN FACIAL EXPRESSIONS



Communication Skills Inventory

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to assess your communication skills.

Objectives

1. Identify strengths and weaknesses in your communication skills.
2. Determine areas that need improvement.

Materials

- ◆ lab sheet
- ◆ writing utensil

Procedure

1. Complete the following inventory by circling the appropriate letter to indicate your skill level.
2. Use the following key: A=Always, S=Sometimes, R=Rarely, N=Never, U=Unsure.

Communication Skills Inventory

1. I use natural facial expressions and gestures to convey ideas and feelings.
A S R N U
2. I am aware of factors, such as deadlines and interference, that hinder communication.
A S R N U
3. I try to reduce factors that negatively affect communication (e.g., prejudices, environmental noise, message errors).
A S R N U
4. I am able to switch easily from sender to receiver when I communicate.
A S R N U

5. I am able to select the best mode (speaking, writing, visual, or nonverbal signals) for communicating.

A S R N U

6. I use standard patterns of organization (chronological order, comparison and contrast, cause and effect) to present information orally or in writing.

A S R N U

7. I listen with a purpose so I can concentrate on the message.

A S R N U

8. I adjust my spoken or written message to the needs of the people listening to or reading the message.

A S R N U

9. I use reading techniques, such as scanning, skimming, and summarizing, to assist me in my work.

A S R N U

10. I write with attention to conventions, accurate content, grammatical and mechanical correctness, and proper layout and design.

A S R N U

Writing Activity

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to practice writing a memo that provides the requested information.

Objective

Demonstrate the ability to write an effective memo.

Materials

- ◆ lab sheet
- ◆ writing utensil

Procedure

1. Read the facts given in the following scenario.
2. Respond with a short memo.

Cindy Cooper, a farm manager, has received an inquiry from a landowner who wants to use 20 acres of pasture to graze livestock. Cindy has asked for your advice. Using the facts presented below, write a memo to Cindy.

- A. A saddle horse will eat 30 to 40 pounds of forage per day.
- B. An acre of average non-irrigated pasture will produce between 500 and 1,000 pounds of usable forage per year.
- C. Beef cows should have at least 2 acres of pasture per head.
- D. Pasture carrying capacities can be increased by irrigation, rotation grazing, a balanced fertilization program, superior grass species, and supplemental feed.
- E. Overgrazed pastures can become barren or weed infested and can erode more easily.
- F. New landowners typically overestimate the carrying capacity of land for livestock.
- G. The landowner has 20 acres available for pasture land.

Writing Activity

To: Cindy Cooper, Farm Manager

From: (Student's name)

Subject: Use of Pasture for Livestock

Date:

In response to your request for information, the following guidelines should help you answer the landowner who wants to use 20 acres as pasture land.

A common mistake of new landowners is overestimating the carrying capacity of land. When this occurs, the land can become barren or weed infested and can erode more easily. This reduces the land's value. A safe recommendation would be to graze no more than 10 beef cows or one horse, if no supplemental feed is provided.

The grazing capacity of a pasture can be increased through irrigation, rotation grazing, balanced fertilization, seeding of superior forage grasses, and the provision of supplemental feed to the livestock.

Reading Activity

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to learn how to skim and scan when reading material.

Objective

Demonstrate the ability to skim and scan reading material.

Materials

- ◆ lab sheet
- ◆ writing utensil

Procedure

1. Skim and scan the following information.
2. Answer the questions that follow the reading selection.

100 Series Lawn Tractors

Features

Eight sleek models: the 9-hp 130 with gear drive and high-performance 30-inch mower; the 12½-hp 160 and 165 with 38-inch mower and gear and hydrostatic drive, respectively; the 14-hp 175 with hydrostatic drive and 38-inch mower; and the 17-hp 180 and 185 with gear and hydrostatic drive, respectively, each available with 38- or 46-inch mower.

Aluminum engine block with cast-iron cylinder liner for lightweight strength. Overhead valves on 130, 175, 180, and 185 engines provide more torque, better fuel economy, and greater productivity.

Full-pressure lubrication on the 160, 165, 175, 180, and 185 delivers oil to bearings and other vital engine parts.

Rustproof fiberglass hood fully encloses engine for quieter operation.

Fully regulated electrical system and 13- or 15-amp charging system for quick, reliable starts.

Hinged seat tilts forward to protect it against the elements and allow easier refueling when rear bagger is attached.

Black dash with low-fuel indicator on 160, 165, 175, 180, and 185; in-tank fuel gauge on 130; battery and oil indicators on 175, 180, and 185.

Full-length steel frame for durability.

Replaceable dry-type air filter with foam precleaner.

Color-coded controls, sturdy footrests, and beadlock rims for comfort and convenience.

Sector and pinion steering and tight turning radius for superb handling and maneuverability.

Triple-safety starting shift lever must be in neutral (gear drive models) or brake pedal depressed (hydrostatic models), PTO disengaged, and ignition key used before tractor will start.

Seat switch automatically shuts off engine if you inadvertently leave seat with PTO engaged.

Mechanical lift lever lowers mower to any of seven preset cutting heights, 1 to 4 inches.

Optional 6½-bushel rear bagger for tractors with 30- or 38-inch mower, optional 6½-bushel Power Flow system for tractors with 46-inch mower. All can be lined with trash bags for added convenience.

Built-in headlights on 175, 180, and 185.

Add versatility with:

- 42-inch front blade
- 38-inch snow thrower
- 30 or 50 Dumpcart
- 31T or 38T Lawn Sweeper
- 5-B Sprayer
- Thatcher
- Spiker

Adapted from *Grounds Care Equipment Purchasing Guide* (Moline, IL: Deere & Company, 1987), p. 76.

Questions

1. Skim: What is the purpose of this selection?

2. Scan: What accessories are available?

3. Scan: Do all the mowers have gauges to indicate oil pressure and battery charge?

4. Scan: Why have they started using overhead valve engines?

5. Write a brief summary of the advantages of these lawn tractors.

Reading Activity

Possible Answers

1. It provides a description of the features of 100 series lawn tractors.
2. Optional rear bagger, Power Flow system, 42-inch front blade, 38-inch snow thrower, 30 or 50 Dumpcart, 31T or 38T Lawn Sweeper, 5-B Sprayer, Thatcher, Spiker.
3. No, only models 175, 180, and 185.
4. Overhead valve engines provide more torque, better fuel economy, and greater productivity.
5. The 100 series of lawn tractors offers eight models to choose from. They are all lightweight and durable with fully regulated electrical systems. Other features include triple-safety starting and sector and pinion steering. Several types of baggers are provided as optional equipment.

Describing a Communication Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to enhance your awareness of the problems that cause poor communication.

Objectives

1. Identify problems that cause poor communication.
2. Identify skills that will improve communication.

Materials

- ◆ lab sheet
- ◆ writing utensil

Procedure

1. Describe a recent communication problem you believe was the result of poor listening skills—yours or someone else's.
2. Answer the following questions.
 - a. Who was the sender?
 - b. Who was the receiver?
 - c. What was the message?
 - d. What were the specific barriers that prevented effective listening?
 - e. How could the communication problem have been solved?