

How to Become a Better Communicator

Strong communication is key to building meaningful connections in every area of life. But being a good communicator involves more than just speaking clearly—it's about understanding different perspectives, truly connecting with others, and expressing yourself in a way that resonates. While some people seem naturally gifted in this area, anyone can develop and refine their communication abilities with practice.

Here are some practical steps to help you communicate better, boost your confidence, improve your interactions, and create stronger relationships.

Practice Active Listening

One of the most important elements of good communication is listening—not just hearing, but actively listening. Active listening involves fully focusing, understanding, and responding thoughtfully to the other person.¹ Try these tips to enhance your listening skills:

- **Be Fully Present:** Active listening means focusing entirely on the speaker, using all your senses to tune into their words and emotions. Set aside distractions, quiet your inner thoughts, and give your full attention to the conversation.¹
- **Maintain Eye Contact:** This shows you're engaged and interested in what the other person is saying. Aim to maintain eye contact for about 50–70% of the conversation, holding it for 4–5 seconds at a time.¹
- **Avoid Interrupting:** Allow the speaker to express their thoughts fully before you respond, ensuring you've heard and understood the entire message. Remember, active listening is a two-way process that involves both listening carefully and responding thoughtfully.²
- **Reflect Back:** Summarize the speaker's message in your own words to confirm understanding. For example, saying, "So, what you're saying is..." can help clarify and validate their perspective.¹

Improve Your Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal cues, like body language and facial expressions, play a crucial role in how your messages are received. People often remember how you made them feel more than the words you used.³ To communicate effectively, keep your posture open and relaxed, maintain eye contact to show engagement, and be mindful of your tone and volume.³ By being aware of these nonverbal elements, you can make your communication clearer and more impactful.

Choose your Words Carefully

Words carry weight, and the language you choose can greatly influence how others perceive your message. Effective communication is primarily about word choice, and often, less is more.

Before you speak or write, consider your goals and audience to ensure your message is clear and free from unnecessary details.⁴ Avoid jargon or flowery language, as simplicity often aids understanding. While repetition can help reinforce your message, use it sparingly to avoid losing your audience's attention.⁴ Focusing on positive, solution-oriented language can also encourage more productive interactions.

Continue Learning, Adapting, and Growing

Improving communication is an ongoing journey that benefits from reflection and adaptation. Digital communication adds new layers to this process, requiring extra mindfulness around tone and clarity for things like emails, texts, or social media posts. Take time to adapt your style for different settings to build stronger connections and avoid misunderstandings.

Seeking feedback from trusted colleagues, friends, or mentors can also be invaluable as they may notice habits or areas for improvement you might overlook. By welcoming constructive input and staying open to change, you can continually refine your skills and enhance both personal and professional relationships.

¹"7 Active Listening Techniques For Better Communication." *Verywell Mind*, 2024.

²"Active Listening." *National Library of Medicine*, 2023.

³"Body Language and Nonverbal Communication." *HelpGuide.org*, 2024.

⁴"8 Ways You Can Improve Your Communication Skills." *Harvard Division of Continuing Education*, 2021.