



ERA

Say It Like You Mean It:

Leveling Up Your Communication

Communication is how you share your ideas, whether you're talking, texting, posting online, or giving a thumbs up. Here are the basics of each different communication type and some practical ways to express yourself with clarity and confidence.

Verbal Communication

Using spoken words to share information.



Whether you're interviewing for a job, on the field with your teammates, or presenting a research project in class, you use verbal communication daily.

- **Tone of Voice:** Be aware of how tone shapes meaning. How you say something can matter just as much as what you say.
- **Word Choice:** Use language that's direct and easy to understand. Try to avoid filler words like *um* or *like*.
- **Context:** Let your words match your audience. Speaking with a teacher, hiring manager, or coworker will require a different vocabulary and tone than just talking with friends or family.

Nonverbal Communication

Sharing meaning without spoken language.

Making eye contact when answering a question, smiling at a new student, or rolling your eyes during a lecture all send messages—often even louder than words.

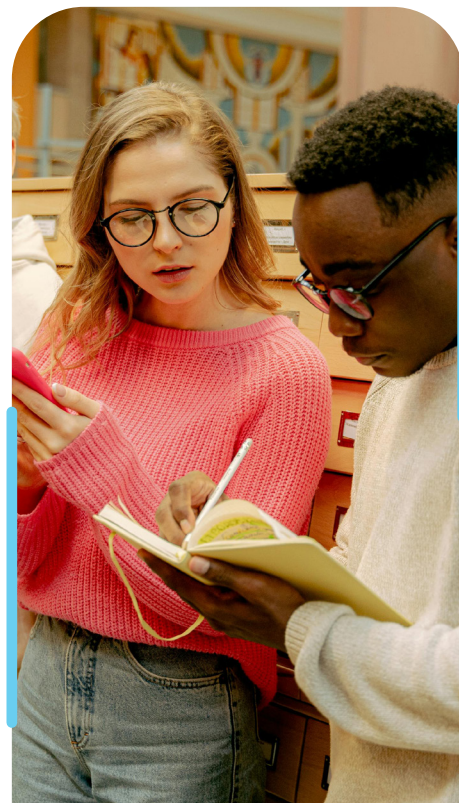
- **Facial Expressions:** Your face can reveal your emotions even before you speak. Be aware of your expressions and how they can show what you're feeling.
- **Gestures:** For presentations especially, be aware of fidgeting, crossed arms, or over-gesturing. Try to keep hand movements natural and purposeful.
- **Posture & Body Language:** Standing up straight is a sign of self-confidence. Keep your shoulders back and your head high, and try to avoid slouching when possible.
- **Eye Contact:** Eye contact shows people attentiveness and confidence. Avoid distractions, like looking at your phone while others are speaking.
- **Touch:** Be respectful of personal boundaries—not everyone is comfortable with physical contact.
- **Space:** Respect other people's personal space. Keeping appropriate distance between others communicates respect and social awareness.
- **Appearance:** You don't need to follow the latest trends or wear the newest clothes. Little things like practicing good hygiene and keeping your clothes clean and wrinkle-free tell people you're intentional, ready, and capable.

Written Communication

Sharing ideas and information through writing.

This can be anything from writing college essays and scholarship applications to emailing your coach to texting your friends.

- **Clarity:** Make sure your writing isn't vague or underexplained. Reread to make sure everything is straightforward and clear.
- **Grammar:** Grammar mistakes can significantly impact important material, like resumes, college essays, or scholarship applications. Make sure to double check—or use an application online to help point out errors.
- **Audience:** Adapt your writing to who will read it. For those in authority like bosses or hiring managers, keep your tone respectful and polite.



Visual Communication

Using images to share information.



Visual communication can be through pictures, charts, videos, drawings, or any visual medium intended to convey meaning. (Think about designing slides for a class presentation or creating a flyer for a school event.)

- **Be Consistent:** Stick with a clear style for your visuals. For example, choose a set of fonts and colors and use them in a way that's easy to read and presents a professional look, especially for presentations or resumes.
- **Simplicity:** A design with too much going on can distract from your message. Keep visuals simple and supportive of what you're trying to say.
- **Easy to See and Hear:** Try to avoid blurry images, low-quality and pixelated photos, and videos with poor audio or sound.

Digital Communication

Exchanging information through technology.



Digital communication examples include emailing your teacher for a recommendation letter, messaging classmates about homework, posting on social media, or even coordinating with your team in an online game.

- **Think Before You Post:** Be mindful of what you share online. Everything you post has a potentially lasting effect.
- **Be Respectful:** Remember to be respectful when communicating with others online. Harmful or disrespectful online behavior can have serious real-world consequences.
- **Avoid Miscommunication:** Try to avoid vagueness or sarcasm so your messages aren't taken the wrong way. In the same way, if someone's message has confused you, ask for clarification before making assumptions.
- **Consider Sources:** Not everything you see on the Internet is true or real. Ask yourself questions like: Where did this information come from? Does this make logical sense?

Building strong communication skills comes with real-life advantages, from standing out in the hiring process to avoiding misunderstandings in personal relationships. Keep these tips in mind next time you're writing an essay, giving a presentation, or meeting someone new—and don't worry if some don't come naturally to you. With time, you can build up communication skills and grow more comfortable expressing yourself in any situation!