

Making Yourself Understood

Did you know that words make up only 20 percent of communication? Many factors such as your life experiences, the time of day, body language and even intuition affect how you communicate and are understood. This can make it tricky when you're trying to receive or send messages. But you can make sure your meaning corresponds with your message by following these guidelines.

- Use a tape recorder to capture your style of speaking.
- Pick a time when you're relaxed and alone.
- Talk into the machine until you know your voice is natural.
- Talk long enough to pick up repeating patterns of speech.
- Avoid reading your words.

Ask Yourself

- How's my volume? too loud? too soft?
- How's my tone? aggressive? whiny?
- Is my pitch high or low?
- How are my speech patterns? Am I emphasizing or repeating key words?
- How's my pace? fast? slow?
- How's my attitude? bossy? unsure?

Look at Yourself

Focus on how you look and become aware of your physical movements while talking. Ask yourself:

- Do I move close to my listener?
- Do I use hand gestures?
- What sort of facial expressions do I make?
- Do I maintain good posture?
- Do I dress appropriately for each situation?

Check Your Impact

Review how you sound and look to your listener.

Make sure your style doesn't interfere with or contradict your message. For example, an aggressive tone may mask a gentle nature. Too slow of a pace may make listeners impatient. Closeness can be positive or negative.

Observe your listener.

Is your listener moving away from you? Is your listener distracted? Does the situation feel tense?

Build feedback into your conversational style.

Ask questions to confirm understanding. For example, if a project is due next week, confirm the day.

State your feelings and encourage a response.

You Can Do It

Verbal communication takes up about 50 percent of your day. It's easier to send and receive the right message when you understand the effect your presentation has on others. Professionals in radio and television practice to make their speech patterns friendly and persuasive. So can you.

Writing Effectively

Communicating often requires effective writing skills. Do you know how to write a letter, memo or e-mail that will convey your message and get the results you want? Reviewing these guidelines for good writing will help.

Ask Yourself...

- Why am I writing?
- Who am I writing to?
- What information or message am I trying to convey?
- What results do I want?

First, Plan What You'll Write...

Plan your message with a formal outline or a list of the contents you want to include. Planning involves three steps:

- **Step 1:** List the major points you want to cover.
- **Step 2:** Arrange the points in order.
- **Step 3:** Fill in the details.

Begin Writing

Most letters contain three to four parts:

- **an opening or instruction:** gets the reader's attention, contains reason for writing
- **the main message:** contains the details
- **the result you want:** states the information or action you're seeking
- **the closing:** a summary of the major ideas

Good Writing Tips

- Include all needed information.
- Write only what's necessary.
- Be specific.
- Use as few words as possible.
- Cover only one major idea per paragraph.
- Limit paragraphs to five or six lines each.
- Use lists rather than narratives for lengthy details.
- Use positive words and phrases.
- Avoid big words.
- Avoid clichés, slang, abbreviations and jargon.
- Use the active voice.
- Use correct grammar.
- Eliminate unnecessary closings.
- Check for accuracy before sending the final copy.
- Proofread for correct spelling and usage of words.

Writing E-mails

Although e-mail has emerged as an easy and fast way to communicate, keep in mind that work e-mail should be treated as a letter or memorandum. Use proper grammar and avoid using slang or abbreviations when writing a professional e-mail.