



## Cheat Sheet

# Communicating Effectively For Dummies

From *Communicating Effectively For Dummies* by Marty Brounstein

Effective communications involves listening as well as speaking. When you do speak to a group, how you deliver your message plays a part in how it's received. In the workplace, effective communication techniques can help foster positive relationships — just be sure you avoid some communication pitfalls so that you don't undermine your good work.

## Ten Ways to Listen Well as Part of Communicating Effectively

Communicating effectively involves not only speaking well, but listening well, too. Active-listening tools, such as those in the following list, help you hold up your end of a successful conversation or discussion.

- Concentrate on what the speaker has to say.
- Listen for content and emotion to understand the entire message.
- Maintain steady eye contact so speakers know your attention is with them.
- Reflect back with verbal feedback to confirm your understanding of the message.
- Stay patient when people talk to you.
- Keep your tone sincere and nonjudgmental when you listen.
- When you give feedback to check understanding, do so in one sentence.
- Tune into how the message is being said, not just what the words are.
- Acknowledge feelings that are important to the message you're hearing.
- Make your goal in conversations to show understanding of what the speaker truly means.

## How to Communicate Effectively to an Audience

When you speak to a crowd, communicating effectively means that your delivery is positive and confident so that your message comes across effectively. Use the tips in the following list to convey your points:

- Speak up so others can easily hear you, especially in group situations.
- Make your message as concise as possible; wordiness is not needed or wanted.
- Use language in the best way possible to make your points.
- Talk with your hands and use them to emphasize your key points.
- Be direct and honest with people as a consistent practice.
- Provide steady eye contact with your listeners to engage their attention when you talk.
- Maintain an alert body posture when you speak to put life behind your message.
- Pause to gather your thoughts so you avoid extraneous sounds, such as “um” that clutter your message.
- Focus on getting solutions when you talk about problems.
- Be sincere: People respond best to those who are genuine and respectful in their delivery.

## How to Build Strong Working Relationships with Effective Communication

Effective communication strategies can help you build strong working relationships with clients and customers, team members, managers, and internal customers. Use the tips in the following list:

- Respond to requests by emphasizing what you can do to help meet them.
- Follow through and do what you say you'll do.
- Listen without passing judgment and don't rush in to give advice.
- When you have concerns, work them out with the source, not with others.
- Communicate with respect in every interaction regardless of whether you like

the person.

- When others give you assistance or support, express appreciation for it.
- Focus on issues, not personalities, when you discuss work matters and problems.
- When differences in views or ideas occur, work first to understand them from the other person's perspective.
- Be direct and sincere as normal practices.
- Use humor in good taste.

## Pitfalls to Avoid in Workplace Communications

Effective communications includes choosing the proper method to communicate, the right time, and the relevant message. The pitfalls in the following list are ones to avoid:

- **Using e-mail to express concerns.** Instead, go to the source to work out problems in person.
- **Talking too much in sales situations.** Instead, learn to understand the customer's needs and then speak to indicate how you can help meet those needs.
- **Responding to requests by immediately saying it can't be done.** Instead, emphasize what you *can* do and *when* you can meet the request.
- **\*Providing your employees, if you are a manager, with opinionated criticism when their performance needs improvement.** Instead, provide employees with specific performance-focused feedback based on your observations.
- **Saying yes when you really don't mean it.** Instead, express your concerns constructively and offer alternatives as to what you think will work better in the situation.
- **Sitting by quietly and passively when people discuss issues with you.** Instead, interact with the message you're hearing and provide verbal feedback to check your understanding of the message.
- **Dwelling on what's wrong or who's at fault when dealing with problem situations.** Instead, put your focus on working out solutions with others and on how to make the situation better.

- **Focusing on yourself — what you like and don't like — as you receive others' messages.** Instead, shift your focus from yourself to concentrating on your speaker's message and work to understand what that message means without passing judgment on it.
- **Attempting to soften a point when addressing tough or sensitive issues.** Instead, be direct, constructive, and straightforward so that your message and its importance come across clearly and respectfully.
- **Pushing forward with your idea and disregarding concerns that people have with it.** Instead, listen to and acknowledge the concerns and address them. Sometimes the best way to gain support for an idea about which others have reservations is to show that you hear those concerns.

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