



# 3 SIMPLE STEPS TO HELP IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Think about what your daily life would be like without the myriad of ways we communicate. Imagine how hard it would be to connect with others, obtain and share information, work out conflicts and build relationships. Communication is a “soft” skill—considered an interpersonal or “people” skill—that can help you build relationships and become an asset to your team, your organization, and even your family and friends.

When it comes to the workplace, the importance of communication skills can be even more prevalent. Consider the potential impact on your career if the tone of your email is misconstrued. Or the possible conflict that may ensue if you misspeak while trying to resolve a disagreement with a coworker.

Regardless of your position, your ability to communicate could be a key factor in building success on your career path. It can help you in many professional situations—leading a team, making contacts, having positive colleague interactions and more.

And in an online work environment, you may discover it can be even more challenging to convey the tone and intent of your words—especially through digital communication channels.

Here are three simple tips for becoming a more effective communicator in your work and daily life.



## 1. PRACTICE STORYTELLING FOR A COMMUNICATION SKILLS BOOST.

How do you tell stories? Can you concisely summarize big ideas into bite-size pieces for your audience? Can you sense when it’s time to wrap things up before your friend, coworker or boss becomes bored?

Focusing on improving your storytelling abilities is one way to refine the quality of your communication overall. You may learn that talking more isn’t always the answer—making your words count is what matters.

As you bring your storytelling skills to work, why not apply them to creatively summarizing your organization’s mission, or recapping a project? Make an impression on your manager and team!

## 2. FOCUS ON FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTION TO BUILD SKILLS

While online communication has its place, interaction in digital environments takes on a different dynamic than personal interactions with coworkers, industry associates and new business contacts.

Think about ways you can practice strong communication approaches by navigating between your personal and professional life. For instance, expressing and recognizing emotions can be beneficial for a whole range of connections. When things are going well, show your happiness with a job well done. In turn, make a point of recognizing others' worries or disappointments.

As you make time in your day to engage in open conversations with your friends, family and strangers, stay mindful of your level of confidence and your communication style. You can bring your best skills from your personal life into your interactions with leadership and key stakeholders at work.

## 3. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING IN TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Active listening is often considered a cornerstone of effective communication. You can do so by:

- Remaining neutral while listening to another person speak.
- Allowing pauses as others speak—rather than filling in before they finish.
- Showing attentive body language such as nodding, smiling and making eye contact.
- Asking thoughtful questions to confirm and validate feelings and perspective.
- Restating what the person has said to be sure you understand.

Focusing on the other person's communication with active listening also keeps you from being too hasty about your feedback. Processing time is helpful, no matter which side of the conversation you're on.

When you're communicating remotely, the absence of nonverbal cues can make a huge difference. Without your tone of voice, facial expressions or hand gestures to help convey tone, people on the receiving end of your communication need to read between the lines. Honing your communication skills in the online world can uniquely prepare you to handle these interactions.

## CAN EDUCATION HELP WITH COMMUNICATION SKILLS?

Adapting your communication skills to thrive in today's business landscape could influence your career path for years to come—especially in environments where business deals may be done at a distance, or remote workforce management comes into play.

For those who want to grow this skillset, there are flexible education options to supplement your efforts in self-learning. Look to education in various formats that may be available to you—from online webinars offered through your workplace, to formal communications studies, to DIY tips like these.

Heading back to school to earn a new credential or even just a few targeted course credits can help your skills evolve as you engage with peers and teachers to increase your communication acumen.

The more opportunities you can establish for yourself to hone conflict resolution, active listening and other soft skills, the better! It's never too late to add to your personal and professional growth.

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