



## Communication Journal

**Verbal:** Individuals can use their understanding of English grammar and public speaking, listening, and responding, convey an idea, express information, and be understood by others.

**Written:** Individuals can use their understanding of standard business English to ensure that written work is clear, direct, courteous, and grammatically correct.

**Digital:** Individuals can use their understanding of email, keyboarding, word processing, and digital media to convey work that is clear, direct, courteous, and grammatically correct.

*In this journal you will find tools and activities to help you understand what proper workplace communication entails. Through self-reflection, activities, examples, and questioning, you will develop a better sense of why good communication skills are necessary in the workplace and how you can demonstrate those qualities to the best of your ability. You will be able to see your own growth by completing a self-check at the beginning and end of the process.*

### Self-Check

#### A. Consider This....

*Someone with proper communication skills actively listens to others and asks clarifying questions. They acknowledge others' points of view and are sure to keep the context of the situation in mind when responding. They write and speak in clear, precise language adjusting verbiage to fit the audience. They are aware of digital tools available to their industry and know how to use those tools. They seek opportunities to ask questions when faced with ambiguity and direct those questions to the proper person or group of people. A person with good communication skills reflects upon their own work behaviors when feedback is given and adjusts their behavior if needed.*

#### B. Self-Reflection Questions (consider your own experiences—classroom, work, or activities—and answer the following)

1. In your experience, what are three important aspects of proper communication?
2. What are three examples of poor communication?
3. Why do you think communication skills are important for the workplace?

### Recorded Lesson and Employer Interview

Watch this recorded lesson for a quick overview on the importance of strong communication skills in the workplace. Learn from an employer how to demonstrate the skill:

- Recorded Lesson and Employer Interview: <https://youtu.be/nzNndarmJF4>

## Case Study

Carefully read the Case Study, then answer the reflection questions based on what you read.

### Communication

Luca is a construction laborer working for a small carpentry company. He is currently working on a large home remodeling job. He reports directly to the lead carpenter, Darcy, at the work site as well as the project manager. While he does not usually communicate directly with the clients, one day they were home during the workday and asked him some questions about his work and the progress of the construction. He did not know most of the answers, so he told them he wasn't sure and went about his work.

The next day, Darcy took him aside and reprimanded him for how he treated the clients. They were upset that their questions and concerns were dismissed. He thought he handled the situation well and was mad that they were being unreasonable and tattling to his superior. Darcy reminded Luca that the software program they use for clocking in and out also has all the information needed to answer client questions or direct them to the proper person. The software can also be used to communicate questions and problems on the worksite. She also pointed out that the work he was supposed to finish up today was taking too long. Luca knows he had some questions about the work yesterday, but it was 4:00 and time to clock out. He did not want to spend extra time at work to get the answers he needed for the next day if he wasn't getting paid.

While venting to a coworker, Muqet, Luca let slip a few swear words, knowing it is frowned upon, because they are in a client's home. Yet, Luca is too upset to care. He feels he is being treated unfairly. Muqet tells him that while he sympathizes, Luca needs to figure this out on his own. Luca then notices that one of the clients is home and probably overheard the conversation.

#### Reflection Questions

1. Identify the communication problems that Luca is having.
2. What steps should Luca take to improve this situation?
3. Who should Luca consult?
4. What questions should he ask?
5. How should Luca handle any interactions he has with clients moving forward?
6. What steps can Luca take to ensure that these problems do not recur?

## Activity – Communication Acronym

Look at the Top Ten Obstacles to Listening (below). Develop an acronym that will help you to be a better listener. An acronym is an abbreviation formed from the initial letters of other words and pronounced as a word.

Here is an example. **FLIP**

**F** – Focus on the words

**L** – Look at the speaker

**I** – Intention, why is the person speaking?

**P** – Push away wandering thoughts and own agenda

### Top Ten Obstacles to Listening

10. The thought that I'm being given advice that I don't want or need.

9. Distracted by pre-conceptions.

Thinking: "I hate exaggeration" or "I already know all this."

8. Chasing squirrels – the conversation makes you think about something else that you need to do.

7. Getting lost.

Thinking: "I have no clue about what is being said" or "Is anybody else lost?"

6. It's all about me.

Thinking: "What's in it for me?" or "What do you want from me?" or "Did I do something wrong?"

5. Negative thoughts about the speaker.

Thinking: "You are just throwing your weight around" or "It takes you so long to get to the point" or "All they do is complain."

4. Totally bored – don't care about the subject, don't see the relevance.

3. Busy – just don't think you have the time for the conversation.

2. Multi-tasking – continue working or doing something else when the person is speaking.

1. Thinking about what you are going to say or how you will respond.

What is keeping you from being an attentive listener?

**Use the space below to create your own acronym.**

### Reflection Questions

1. Which of the Top Ten Obstacles did you identify as the top one for you? Why?
2. How can you become a better listener?
3. How can you become a better speaker?
4. What reasoning did you use to select the letters and meanings for your acronym?
5. What strategies can you use to make the speaking and listening interaction be more positive?

## Activity – Effective PowerPoint/Google Slide Presentations

Read the Effective PowerPoint/Google Slide Presentations document (below). Find a poor example of a PowerPoint presentation or Google Slide presentation online. Document and make notes about how the presentation could be improved. Find five ways to improve the presentation and list them below in the blue box.

### Effective PowerPoint/Google Slide Presentations

#### Presentations by the Numbers

- 5/5/5 Rule – This suggests no more than 5 words per line, 5 lines of text per slide, and not more than 5 text heavy slides in a row.

- 1x6x6 Rule – This is slightly different and refers to bullet points – one thought per line, no more than 6 words per line, and no more than 6 bullet points per slide.
- 10/20/30 – Some experts recommend only 10 slides, making it a 20 minute presentation, and using size 30 font.
- Other experts suggest a minimum of 24 point font for body of text and 35-45 point font for titles.

### Font Hints

- Avoid italicized words unless it is a book or movie title.
- DO NOT USE ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, as they are harder to read.
- Keep the font style clean and simple.

### Graphics and Design Hints

- Keep the background consistent and subtle.
- Use the built-in slide layouts.
- Use minimal text when presenting charts or graphs.
- White backgrounds can be blinding with some projectors, however very dark backgrounds may make it difficult to read any color text other than white.
- Be consistent with the style of graphics you are using.

### Color Palette Hints

- Limit the number of colors on a single screen, some experts say no more than four.
- Check colors by projecting them on a screen, they may look very different.
- Avoid harsh, intense colors that overpower the text or message.

### Always Remember

- Check spelling and grammar.
- Never turn your back on the audience while you are speaking.
- Don't read the slides to the audience. You should be able to talk about the key points without reading them.
- Practice, practice, practice.

List the five ways that you recommend improving the PowerPoint or Google Slide presentation that you found online.

1. Improvement:
2. Improvement:
3. Improvement:
4. Improvement:
5. Improvement:

## Activity – Email Etiquette and Efficiency

Email is a vital part of communication in most workplaces. It is important to keep your emails professional, appropriate, and easy to read. Study the following tips and tricks to help with the related activity below.

- When writing an email, be sure to compose your message first and then add the email address at the very end. This prevents accidental sending and gives you one more chance to review the content and specify the recipient. This also helps you to check to see if you have attached whatever file you might want to send.
- **Always** assume that a supervisor, owner, superintendent, director, or company president might read your email. Nothing is confidential, so always write appropriately.
- If you are feeling angry, stop, take a breath, and if possible do not send a reply for several hours giving you time to calmly word your response.
- Include a clear and specific subject line.
- Keep it short and focused on point.

- Check for correct spelling.
- Avoid using any texting abbreviations.
- Do not use slang or laid-back salutations. "Yo," "Hey, guys," or "Dude" are not professional.
- If you have several questions, put them in a numbered list.
- Do not use work email for social activities outside of the workplace.
- Avoid using all capital letters. That implies that you are SHOUTING.
- Do not use fancy fonts. They are harder to read.
- Watch your tone. Keep it neutral and professional.
- Be aware that people from different cultures may speak or write differently.
- Be cautious with humor. Not everyone would find the same joke or reference humorous.
- Carefully consider whether you want to Reply or Reply to All.

Read each of the following emails. List or circle the reason(s) each email needs to be revised. If the revision is in the actual text, write the revised version below the original. There may be more than one problem in any of the examples.

Keyung, dude.

I have a ?4U. Can you send the data on trouble tickets for Jan. 2020? I will be OOO until 2, but need that today. LMK when you have the 411.

Julio

*Dear Jamal,*

*Please be sure to get the videos for Mandelorian Corp. and Baggins Bookstore ready by Friday. The clients are scheduled to be here on Monday for a preview.*

*Thanks for your hard work,*

*Samantha*

Dear Annalise,

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING? You are an IDIOT! How could you agree to those changes without checking with ME? Of all the STUPID things you have done this is the WURST. We have a meeting at 1:00 today. You better be there and be prepaired to feel my RATH!

Q

Good morning, Monte.

Please send me any documentation of behavior problems that you have for Clarissa Jones. The Special Ed team will be meeting with her parents, tomorrow. I am going to hit a bunch of garage sales on Saturday. Want to come along? We could have lunch at the Espresso Café.

Hope you can join me,

Karina

Yo, Skate-Man

Wasn't the supervisor a complete jerk? Just because I leave a little early, he is on my case. Blah, blah, blah. So, I guess I better stay until 5:00. Can we meet at 4:00 to discuss the schedule for next month?

Sebastian

## Video and Article Links

Watch at least two of the following videos and read at least two of the listed articles. Based on what you saw and read, answer the reflection questions listed at the bottom of the section.

### Video Links

- Recorded Lesson and Employer Interview: <https://youtu.be/nzNndarmJF4>
- P-20 Network Virtual Trailhead Video: Desiree Smith, Media Relations, discusses the need to communicate well with team members & media.  
<https://p20network.niu.edu/career-pathways-virtual-trailheads-desiree-battaglia-communications-media-relations/>
- P-20 Network Virtual Trailhead Video: Arthur Mingo, Attorney, discusses the importance of returning phone calls, listening to clients and clear writing skills.  
<https://p20network.niu.edu/career-pathways-virtual-trailheads-arthur-mingo-attorney/>
- Purdue University Owl Writing Lab Vidcast on Public Speaking, which focuses on knowing your audience and subject matter.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nY29ayJnA6w>
- Purdue University Owl Writing Lab: This vidcast discusses strategies and best practices for composing with and in a variety of media.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OT6cz6oBd2E>
- P-20 Network Virtual Trailhead Video: Molly Levy, VP Product, Liberis, stresses the importance of the feedback loop. In the case of her company, that feedback loop is specifically between customers and the design team, and it results in an iterative design process through which products are always being improved.  
<https://p20network.niu.edu/career-pathways-virtual-trailheads-molly-levy-fintech-product-management/>

### Article Links

- Career One Stop website: Tips on networking and responding professionally via email.  
<https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Network/contact-potential-employers.aspx>
- Visual Examples of Bad Power Point Slides.  
<https://24slides.com/presentbetter/bad-powerpoint-examples-you-should-avoid/>
- IL WorkNet Center: Digital Literacy, "4/7 Why Software and Apps Matter" (Article and Tips).  
<https://www.illinoisworknet.com/Qualify/Pages/SoftwareAndApps.aspx>
- IL WorkNet Center: Digital Literacy, "5/7 Why Online Skills Matter" (Article and Tips).  
<https://www.illinoisworknet.com/Qualify/Pages/ComputerSkills.aspx>

### Reflection Questions

1. Please give an example from the resources that was particularly noteworthy to you as a positive example of good communication.
2. Please give an example from the resources that was particularly noteworthy to you as an example of poor communication.
3. Have you ever found yourself in a situation that requires you to use good communication skills? How did you succeed?
4. After watching the videos and reading the articles what would you have done differently?
5. What are some ideas that you can apply to your own work experiences?

## Career Development Activity

Over 50 different employers came together to develop GPEAK. They agreed that communication skills are in the top 10 essential skills desired by employers. They identified certain behaviors on the job that indicate good communication skills.

Our GPEAK employers described these behaviors as:

- Builds understanding through active listening, asking questions, focusing on context, and acknowledging others' points of view
- Writes in a manner so that others understand
- Speaks in a manner so others understand
- Selects and uses proper digital tools
- Adjusts word choice, tone, and time based on audience, purpose of communication, and situational context

### Resume Bullets Activity

In this Career Development exercise, you will describe your past experiences where you demonstrated or developed communication skills. For many positions, it will be important to note these skills on your job application materials and resume.

Think back on some of your past experiences (classes, jobs, activities, sports, or volunteer positions). Are you proud of certain moments where you demonstrated or developed your communication skills? If you were interviewing for a job tomorrow, which story would you tell to demonstrate that you have experience with this important workplace skill?

Focusing on your past experiences, write six bulleted statements about your communication skills. A resume bullet should start with an action verb (past tense or present) and be concise. You will want to write the bullets without the use of personal pronouns (refrain from using me, my, or I in the statement). These bulleted statements can be used on a resume, application form, or for interview prep. Here are a few examples:

- Focused on developing communication skills for the workplace in a GPEAK training session
- Wrote promotional materials and coordinated social media for a club in high school
- Utilized good communication skills and delivered outstanding customer service in my summer job
- Proficient in Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint), Google Docs, Google Forms, and social media platforms
- Serve as a youth leader for a summer camp and build strong relationships through effective communications with campers and co-workers
- Rely on strong active listening skills when meeting with supervisors and co-workers

Now it is your turn. Think about your experiences and write six bullets that highlight your communication skills.

## Post Self-Check

### Career Development Goals

Now that you have a better understanding of what employers are looking for in communication skills, answer the questions below:

1. What is something that you can do in 3 months, 6 months, and 1 year to further develop your communication skills?
2. What is your interest level in this competency (communications)?
3. Are you drawn to projects or work that require this skill?
4. Would you say that you have natural abilities around this skill or is it something you have to work at?
5. In the future, would you apply to a job in your field that asked for a high level of communication skill?