

DENTAL ASSISTANT PROFESSIONALISM



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Licensing

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1.1: Professional Skills

Hard Skills

Hard skills might be something that is NOT hard for you to do! Hard skills are things you are trained to do, or have experience in, or have done in other jobs.

Hard skills include knowing how to use machines. For example: a forklift, cash register, printing press, scissors lift, computer, scanner, and word processor.

Hard skills also include things you know how to do, such as: clean, type, office management, file, work with wood or metal, plumbing, electrical work, drive a car, childcare, fix things, and cook. If you think hard, you can probably name some hard skills you have!

Play this dialog card game now to help you remember what hard skills are!

Query 1.1.1

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Soft Skills

Soft skills are what we call the things we can do, or the personal traits we have, that an employer would like.

Soft skills include being reliable, friendly, honest, enthusiastic, and a team player. Soft skills employers like to see in people they hire also include good communication skills, the ability to follow directions, work on your own or multitask, and be able to resolve conflicts with people.

We all have some of these skills that we use in our daily lives. We use these soft skills at school, in our community, within our family and at work.

Read the soft skills definitions and start remembering what these soft skills are. Remember to think about the ones you have!

Ten Soft Skills to Help You Succeed

1. **Reliable:** This type of person can be counted on to get things done. They come to work on time.
2. **Friendly:** This person is outgoing and kind to others.
3. **Team player:** This person works well with other people and does their best to help the company or group succeed.
4. **Communication skills:** This type of person is good at talking and explaining things. They make sure people are heard and answered.
5. **Follow directions:** This person can do what they are told in the right way. They can ask for clarification if they are not sure.
6. **Honest:** This type of person can be trusted and will not steal or be lazy.
7. **Enthusiastic:** This person has a cheerful and upbeat attitude.
8. **Conflict resolution skills:** This person is able to deal with problems and work things out with the people involved without causing a scene or making drama.

9. **Ability to work on your own:** A person like this works well by themselves or with little supervision. They don't need to be watched or supervised to do the right thing.
10. **Multi-tasking:** This type of person can do more than one thing at a time and not become confused.

Soft Skills Flash Cards

Test yourself and see if you've learned the soft skills:

Query 1.1.2

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Soft Skills Check

Take the check-up quiz to see if you understand what soft skills are.

Query 1.1.3

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What Are Your Skills?

Answer the questions. Save your answers and re-read them before you go to talk to employers at a job fair or before you go to a job interview.

- Write 4 soft skills you feel confident you are very good at.
- Write one or two sentences that tell why you are good at these 4 things.
- Write 4 hard skills you know you do well.
- Write one or two sentences to explain when you have done these things.
- Write a sentence explaining what type of worker you would be.

Read ALL your sentences to yourself. Say them to yourself in the mirror. Tell them to your family, a friend, a teacher, or a job coach.

Now, when you are asked, you have the words ready to talk about your skills!

Remember: You've got what it takes to get a job, and to do a good job!

Personal Branding

Personal brand is a term that means an individual is unique and has something different and good to offer. When you meet with prospective employers, you want them to know that you know yourself, you know what you want, and where you want to go.

Who are you?

- **Give facts.** You want to show that you are credible, believable, and genuine.
- **Exude Confidence.** Show your skill and ability to complete and succeed.
- **Share hope & ambition.** Let the people you meet know you have a plan for your future.
- **Build a rapport or connection.** Be yourself, build bridges, and make bonds with the people you meet.
- **Share your strength of character.** When have you forged ahead when things were hard?

Think about all these things and then state who you are in under 50 words. That's your Personal Brand!

Remember, once you have figured this all out, what you say, what you do, and what you post on social media should reflect this. This should be who you really are or who you are working to become!

1.2: Elements in Communication

Communication can mean different things to different people. It is affected by and influenced by our experiences, perceptions, culture, and more. To start, let's reflect on our beliefs about communication.

Questions to Ponder

- Think about communication in your daily life. When you make a phone call, send a text message, or like a post on Facebook, what is the purpose of that activity?
- Have you ever felt confused by what someone is telling you or argued over a misunderstood email?
- What does “communication” mean to you?
- What does “successful” communication look like to you?
- What are some barriers you've experienced when communicating with others in-person, online, or through writing?

There are many current models and theories that explain, plan, and predict communication processes and their successes or failures. In the workplace, we might be more concerned about practical knowledge and skills than theory. However, good practice is built on a solid foundation of understanding and skill.

Defining Communication

The word communication is derived from a Latin word meaning “to share.” Communication can be defined as “purposefully and actively exchanging information between two or more people to convey or receive the intended meanings through a shared system of signs and (symbols)” (“Communication,” 2015, para. 1).

Let us break this definition down by way of example. Imagine you are in a coffee shop with a friend, and they are telling you a story about the first goal they scored in hockey as a child. What images come to mind as you hear their story? Is your friend using words you understand to describe the situation? Are they speaking in long, complicated sentences or short, descriptive sentences? Are they leaning back in their chair and speaking calmly, or can you tell they are excited? Are they using words to describe the events leading up to their big goal, or did they draw a diagram of the rink and positions of the players on a napkin? Did your friend pause and wait for you to comment throughout their story, or just blast right through? Did you have trouble hearing your friend at any point in the story because other people were talking or because the milk steamer in the coffee shop was whistling?

All of these questions directly relate to the considerations for communication in this course, including analyzing the audience, choosing a communications channel, using plain language, and using visual aids.

Before we examine each of these considerations in more detail, we should consider the elements of the communication process.

The Communication Process

The communication process includes the steps we take in order to ensure we have succeeded in communicating. The communication process comprises essential and interconnected elements detailed in Figure 1.2.1. We will continue to reflect on the story of your friend in the coffee shop to explore each element in detail.

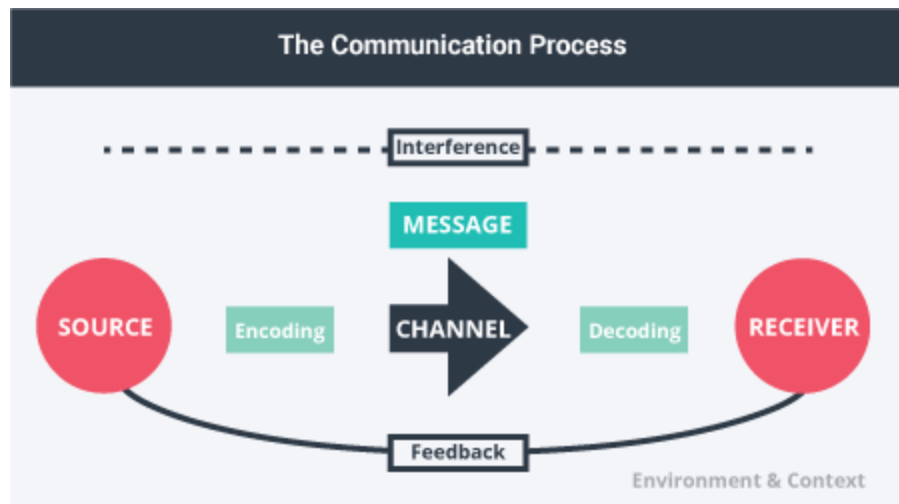


Figure 1.2.1: The communication process by Laura Underwood

Source: The source comes up with an idea and sends a message in order to share information with others. The source could be one other person or a group of people. In our example above, your friend is trying to share the events leading up to their first hockey goal and, likely, the feelings they had at the time as well.

Message: The message is the information or subject matter that the source intends to share. The information may be an opinion, feelings, instructions, requests, or suggestions. In our example above, your friend identified information worth sharing, maybe the size of one of the defence players on the other team, in order to help you visualize the situation.

Channels: The source may encode information in the form of words, images, sounds, body language, and more. There are many definitions and categories of communication channels to describe their role in the communication process, including verbal, non-verbal, written, and digital. In our example above, your friends might make sounds or use body language in addition to their words to emphasize specific bits of information. For example, when describing a large defense player on the other team, they may extend their arms to explain the height of the other team's defense player.

Receiver: The receiver is the person for whom the message is intended. This person is charged with decoding the message in an attempt to understand the intentions of the source. In our example above, you, as the receiver, may understand the overall concept of your friend scoring a goal in hockey and can envision the techniques your friend used. However, there may also be some information you do not understand—such as a certain term—or perhaps your friend describes some events in a confusing order. One thing the receiver might try is to provide some kind of feedback to communicate back to the source that the communication did not achieve full understanding and that the source should try again.

Environment: The environment is the physical and psychological space in which the communication is happening (McLean, 2005). It might also describe whether the space is formal or informal. In our example above, it is the coffee shop you and your friend are visiting.

Context: The context is the setting, scene, and psychological and psychosocial expectations of the source and the receiver(s) (McLean, 2005). This is strongly linked to expectations of those who are sending the message and those who are receiving the message. In our example above, you might expect natural pauses in your friend's storytelling that will allow you to confirm your understanding or ask a question.

Interference: There are many kinds of interference (also called "noise") that inhibit effective communication. Interference may include poor audio quality or too much sound, poor image quality, too much or too little light, attention, etc. In our working example, the coffee shop might be quite busy and thus very loud. You would have trouble hearing your friend clearly, which in turn might cause you to miss a critical word or phrase important to the story.

Those involved in the communication process move fluidly between each of these eight elements until the process ends.

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1.3: Team Work

It is highly likely you will have to work in a team at some point in your career. Being able to work with others effectively is an essential skill to have in today's workplace.

Small groups have to start somewhere. Even established groups go through changes as members come and go, as tasks are started and completed, and as relationships change. In this section, we will learn about the stages of group development, which are forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). As with most models of communication phenomena, although we order the stages and discuss them separately, they are not always experienced in a linear fashion. Additionally, some groups don't experience all five stages, may experience stages multiple times, or may experience more than one stage at a time.

Forming

During the forming stage, group members begin to reduce uncertainty associated with new relationships and/or new tasks through initial interactions that lay the foundation for later group dynamics. Groups return to the forming stage as group members come and go over the life span of a group. Although there may not be as much uncertainty when one or two new people join a group as there is when a group first forms, groups spend some time in the forming stage every time group membership changes.

Given that interpersonal bonds are likely not yet formed and people are unfamiliar with the purpose of the group or task at hand, there are high levels of uncertainty in the group. Early stages of role negotiation begin, and members begin to determine goals for the group and establish rules and norms. Group cohesion also begins to form during this stage. Group cohesion refers to the commitment of members to the purpose of the group and the degree of attraction among individuals within the group (Hargie, 2011). The cohesion that begins in this stage sets the group on a trajectory influenced by group members' feelings about one another and their purpose or task. Groups with voluntary membership may exhibit high levels of optimism about what the group can accomplish. Although optimism can be motivating, unrealistic expectations can lead to disappointment, making it important for group members to balance optimism with realism. Groups with assigned or mandatory membership may include members who carry some degree of resentment toward the group itself or the goals of the group. These members can start the group off on a negative trajectory that will lessen or make it difficult for group cohesiveness. Groups can still be successful if these members are balanced out by others who are more committed to and positive regarding the purpose of the group.

Many factors influence how the forming stage of group development plays out. The personalities of the individuals in the group, the skills that members bring, the resources available to the group, the group's size, and the group's charge all contribute to the creation of the early tone of and climate within a group (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). For example, more dominant personalities may take early leadership roles in the group that can affect subsequent decisions. Group members' diverse skill sets and access to resources can also influence the early stages of role differentiation. In terms of size, the bonding that begins in the forming stage becomes difficult when the number of people within the group prevents every person from having a one-on-one connection with every other member of the group. Also, in larger groups, more dominant members tend to assert themselves as leaders and build smaller coalitions within the group, which can start the group on a trajectory toward more conflict during the upcoming storming stage (Ellis & Fisher, 1994).

When a group receives an external charge, meaning that the goal or purpose of the group is decided by people outside the group, there may be less uncertainty related to the task dimensions of the group. Additionally, decisions about what roles people will play, including group leaders and other decisions about the workings of the group, may come from the outside, which reduces some of the uncertainty inherent in the forming stage. Relational uncertainty can also be diminished when group members have preexisting relationships or familiarity with each other. Although the decreased uncertainty may be beneficial at this stage, too much imposed structure from the outside can create resentment or a feeling of powerlessness among group members. Therefore, a manageable amount of uncertainty is actually a good thing for group cohesion and productivity.

Storming

During the storming stage of group development, conflict emerges as people begin to perform their various roles, have their ideas heard, and negotiate where they fit in the group's structure. The uncertainty present in the forming stage begins to give way as people begin to occupy specific roles and the purpose, rules, and norms of a group become clearer. Conflict develops when some group members aren't satisfied with the role that they or others are playing or the decisions regarding the purpose or procedures

of the group. For example, if a leader begins to emerge or is assigned during the forming stage, some members may feel that the leader is imposing his or her will on other members of the group. Leaders should expect some degree of resentment from others who wanted to be the leader, have interpersonal conflicts with the leader, or just have general issues with being led.

Although the word *storming* and the concept of conflict have negative connotations, conflict can be positive and productive. Just like storms can replenish water supplies and make crops grow, storming can lead to group growth. While conflict is inevitable and should be experienced by every group, a group that gets stuck at the storming stage will likely not have much success in completing its task or achieving its purpose. Influences from outside the group can also affect the conflict in the storming stage. Interpersonal conflicts that predate the formation of the group may distract the group from the more productive idea- or task-oriented conflict that can be healthy for the group and increase the quality of ideas, decision making, and output.

Norming

During the norming stage of group development, the practices and expectations of the group are solidified, which leads to more stability, productivity, and cohesion within the group. Group norms are behaviors that become routine but are not explicitly taught or stated. In short, group norms help set the tone for what group members ought to do and how they ought to behave (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Many implicit norms are derived from social norms that people follow in their everyday lives. Norms within the group about politeness, lateness, and communication patterns are typically similar to those in other contexts. Sometimes a norm needs to be challenged because it is not working for the group, which could lead a group back to the storming stage. Other times, group members challenge norms for no good reason, which can lead to punishment for the group member or create conflict within the group.

At this stage, there is a growing consensus among group members as to the roles that each person will play, the way group interactions will typically play out, and the direction of the group. Leaders that began to emerge have typically gained the support of other group members, and group identity begins to solidify. The group may now be recognizable by those on the outside, as slogans, branding, or patterns of interaction become associated with the group. This stage of group development is key to the smooth operation of the group. Norms bring a sense of predictability and stability that can allow a group to move on to the performing stage of group development. Norms can also bring with them conformity pressures that can be positive or negative. In general, people go along with a certain amount of pressure to conform out of a drive to avoid being abnormal, which is a natural part of our social interaction (Ellis & Fisher, 1994). Too much pressure, however, can lead people to feel isolated and can create a negative group climate.

Explicit rules may also guide group interaction. Rules are explicitly stated guidelines for members and may refer to things like expected performance levels or output, attitudes, or dress codes. Rules may be communicated through verbal instructions, employee handbooks, membership policies, or codes of conduct (Hargie, 2011). Groups can even use established procedures to manage the flow of conversations and decision-making procedures. Group members can contest or subvert group rules just as they can norms. Violations of group rules, however, typically result in more explicit punishments than do violations of norms.

Performing

During the performing stage of group development, group members work relatively smoothly toward the completion of a task or the achievement of a purpose. Although interactions in the performing stage are task-focused, the relational aspects of group interaction provide an underlying support for the group members. Socialization outside of official group time can serve as a needed relief from the group's task. During task-related interactions, group members ideally begin to develop a synergy that results from the pooling of skills, ideas, experiences, and resources. Synergy is positive in that it can lead group members to exceed their expectations and perform better than they could individually. Glitches in the group's performance can lead the group back to previous stages of group development. Changes in membership, member roles, or norms can necessitate a revisiting of aspects of the forming, storming, or norming stages. One way to continue to build group cohesion during the performing stage is to set short-term attainable group goals. Accomplishing something, even if it's small, can boost group morale, which in turn boosts cohesion and productivity.

Adjourning

The adjourning stage of group development occurs when a group dissolves because it has completed its purpose or goal, membership is declining, and support for the group no longer exists, or it is dissolved because of some other internal or external cause. Some groups may live on indefinitely and not experience the adjourning stage. Other groups may experience so much

conflict in the storming stage that they skip norming and performing and dissolve before they can complete their task. For groups with high social cohesion, adjourning may be a difficult emotional experience. However, group members may continue interpersonal relationships that were formed even after the group dissolves. In reality, many bonds, even those that were very close, end up fading after the group disbands. This doesn't mean the relationship wasn't genuine; interpersonal relationships often form because of proximity and shared task interaction. Once that force is gone, it becomes difficult to maintain friendships, and many fade away. For groups that had negative experiences, the adjourning stage may be welcomed.

To make the most out of the adjourning stage, it is important that there be some guided and purposeful reflection. Many groups celebrate their accomplishments with a party or ceremony. Even groups that had negative experiences or failed to achieve their purpose can still learn something through reflection in the adjourning stage that may be beneficial for future group interactions. Often, group members leave a group experience with new or more developed skills that can be usefully applied in future group or individual contexts. Even groups that are relational rather than task-focused can increase members' interpersonal, listening, or empathetic skills, or increase cultural knowledge and introduce new perspectives.

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1.4: Listening Skills

The Listening Process

Listening is the learned process of receiving, interpreting, recalling, evaluating, and responding to verbal and nonverbal messages. Because it is a process, it doesn't have a defined start and finish. Like the communication process, listening has cognitive, behavioural, and relational elements and doesn't unfold in a linear, step-by-step fashion. Models of processes are informative in that they help us visualize specific components, but keep in mind that they do not capture the speed, overlapping nature, or overall complexity of the actual process in action. The stages of the listening process are receiving, interpreting, recalling, evaluating, and responding.

Receiving

Before we can engage in other steps in the listening process, we must take in stimuli through our senses. We primarily take in information needed for listening through auditory and visual channels. Although we don't often think about visual cues as a part of listening, they influence how we interpret messages. For example, seeing a person's face when we hear their voice allows us to take in nonverbal cues from facial expressions and eye contact. The fact that these visual cues are missing in email, text, and phone interactions presents some difficulties for reading contextual clues into meaning received through only auditory channels.

Interpreting

During the interpreting stage of listening, we combine the visual and auditory information we receive and try to make meaning out of that information. It is through the interpreting stage that we may begin to understand the stimuli we have received. When we understand something, we are able to attach meaning by connecting information to previous experiences.

Recalling

Our ability to recall information is dependent on some of the physiological limits of how memory works. As stimuli are organized and interpreted, they make their way to short-term memory, where they either expire and are forgotten or are transferred to long-term memory. Recall is an important part of the listening process because it is most often used to assess listening abilities and effectiveness.

Evaluating

When we evaluate something, we make judgments about its credibility, completeness, and worth. In terms of credibility, we try to determine the degree to which we believe a speaker's statements are correct and/or true. In terms of completeness, we try to "read between the lines" and evaluate the message in relation to what we know about the topic or situation being discussed. We evaluate the worth of a message by making a value judgment about whether we think the message or idea is good/bad, right/wrong, or desirable/undesirable.

Responding

Responding entails sending verbal and nonverbal messages that indicate attentiveness and understanding or a lack thereof. We send verbal and nonverbal feedback while another person is talking and after they are done. Back-channel cues are the verbal and nonverbal signals we send while someone is talking and can consist of verbal cues like "uh-huh," "oh," and "right," and/or nonverbal cues like direct eye contact, head nods, and leaning forward. Back-channel cues are generally a form of positive feedback that indicates others are actively listening. People also send cues intentionally and unintentionally that indicate they aren't listening. If another person is looking away, fidgeting, texting, or turned away, we will likely interpret those responses negatively.

Paraphrasing is a responding behavior that can also show that you understand what was communicated. When you paraphrase information, you rephrase the message into your own words. For example, you might say the following to start off a paraphrased

response: “What I heard you say was...” or “It seems like you’re saying...” You can also ask clarifying questions to get more information. It is often a good idea to pair a paraphrase with a question to keep a conversation flowing. For example, you might pose the following paraphrase and question pair: “It seems like you believe you were treated unfairly. Is that right?” Or you might ask a standalone question like “What did your colleague do that made you think they were ‘playing favorites?’” Make sure to paraphrase and/or ask questions once a person’s turn is over because interrupting can also be interpreted as a sign of not listening.

Active Listening

Active listening refers to the process of pairing outwardly visible positive listening behaviors with positive cognitive listening practices. Active listening can help address many of the environmental, physical, cognitive, and personal barriers to effective listening you may encounter.

Being an active listener starts before you actually start receiving a message. Active listeners make strategic choices and take action in order to set up ideal listening conditions. Physical and environmental noises can often be managed by moving locations or by manipulating the lighting, temperature, or furniture. When possible, avoid important listening activities during times of distracting psychological or physiological noise. Effective listeners must also work to maintain focus as much as possible and refocus when attention shifts or fades (Wolvin & Coakley, 1993).

Eye contact is typically thought of as a key sign of active listening, and speakers usually interpret a listener’s eye contact as a signal of attentiveness. While a *lack* of eye contact can sometimes indicate *inattentiveness*, before assuming this is the case, it’s important to consider whether it stems from cultural differences, is a sign of thinking about or processing new information, or happens for other reasons.

A more direct way to indicate active listening is to reference previous statements made by the speaker. Norms of politeness usually call on us to reference a past statement or connect to the speaker’s current thought before starting a conversational turn. Being able to summarize what someone said to ensure that the topic has been satisfactorily covered and understood, or being able to segue in such a way that validates what the previous speaker said, helps regulate conversational flow. Asking probing questions is another way to directly indicate listening and to keep a conversation going, since they encourage and invite a person to speak more. You can also ask questions that seek clarification and not just elaboration. Speakers should present complex information at a slower speaking rate than familiar information, but many will not. Remember that your nonverbal feedback can be useful for a speaker, as it signals that you are listening but also whether or not you understand. If a speaker fails to read your nonverbal feedback, you may need to follow up with verbal communication in the form of paraphrased messages and clarifying questions.

As active listeners, we want to be excited and engaged, but don’t let excitement manifest itself in interruptions. Being an active listener means knowing when to maintain our role as a listener and resist the urge to take a conversational turn.

Note-taking can also indicate active listening. Translating information through writing into our own cognitive structures allows us to better interpret and assimilate information.

Listening with Empathy

To be a better empathetic listener, we need to suspend or at least attempt to suppress our judgment of the other person or their message so we can fully attend to both. Paraphrasing is an important part of empathetic listening because it helps us put the other person’s words into our frame of experience without making it about us. In addition, speaking the words of someone else in our own way can help evoke within us the feelings that the other person felt while saying them (Bodie, 2011). Active-empathetic listening is more than echoing back verbal messages. We can also engage in mirroring, which refers to a listener’s replication of the nonverbal signals of a speaker (Bruneau, 1993). Therapists, for example, are often taught to adopt a posture and tone similar to their patients in order to build rapport and project empathy.

Paraphrasing and questioning are useful techniques for empathetic listening because they allow us to respond to a speaker without taking “the floor,” or the attention, away for long. Specifically, questions that ask for elaboration act as “verbal door openers,” and inviting someone to speak more and then validating their speech through active listening cues can help a person feel “listened to” (Hargie, 2011). It’s important to resist the temptation to give unsolicited advice. It is also important to acknowledge any feelings or emotions the speaker has expressed directly through words or indirectly through paralinguistic cues.

Listening in Professional Contexts

Empathetic listening and active listening can play key roles in organizational communication. Managers are wise to enhance their empathetic listening skills, as being able to empathize with employees contributes to a positive communication climate. Active listening among organizational members also promotes involvement and increases motivation, which leads to more cohesion and enhances the communication climate.

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1.5: Workplace Conflict Management

- Have you ever disagreed with someone at work or at school? What happened? Were you able to resolve the disagreement? How?
- How do you feel about conflict? How do you react or cope?
- What strategies do you use when you find yourself in conflict?

Conflict may typically be thought of as being negative, and it understandably can produce feelings of anxiety for many people. However, conflict is not always negative. In fact, conflict can be positive and productive, leading to creative approaches, reinforced working relationships, and more efficient outcomes.

Positive conflict is conflict where there are positive outcomes—that is, the focus remains on the issues, and all parties respectfully and professionally search for outcomes that are agreeable to everyone involved. For example, say you and a colleague have to work together to develop a marketing plan for a new product your company has developed, and you disagree about what tools to use. If you and your colleague are focused on discussing the issues—what tools to use, why, and how they might help the promotion of the product—and you listen to each other actively and respectfully, then you will likely reach a solution that works for both of you.

On the other hand, negative conflict happens when the focus shifts away from finding a solution that works for everyone and towards causing harm. For example, say that instead of listening to your colleague as they explained their reasons for the tools they selected, you stormed out of the meeting and refused to answer follow-up emails from your colleague. Or, say that you and your colleague each explained your choices and listened respectfully, but then your colleague refused to use any of the tools you selected. How could these behaviors impact the ability to find a solution and move forward productively?

Harper (2004) suggests looking at conflict as the result of unmet needs. For example, two people who hold differing viewpoints could have difficulty understanding each other's perspective in order to move forward productively. In this case, the unmet need could be a lack of empathy or understanding. Another example might be someone who is torn between options. The unmet need in this case might be needing more information or more support.

When incompatible goals, scarce resources, or interference are present, conflict is a typical result, but it doesn't mean the relationship is poor or failing. All relationships progress through times of conflict and collaboration. How we navigate and negotiate these challenges influences, reinforces, or destroys the relationship. Conflict is universal, but how and when it occurs is open to influence and interpretation. Rather than viewing conflict from a negative frame of reference, view it as an opportunity for clarification, growth, and even reinforcement of the relationship.

Conflict Management Strategies

As professionals, we can acknowledge and anticipate that conflict will be present in every context or environment where communication occurs. To that end, we can predict, anticipate, and formulate strategies to address conflict successfully. How you choose to approach conflict influences its resolution. Joseph DeVito (2003) offers several conflict management strategies that you might adapt and expand for your use.

Avoidance

You may choose to change the subject, leave the room, or not even enter the room in the first place, but the conflict will remain and resurface when you least expect it. Your reluctance to address the conflict directly is a normal response, and one which many cultures prize. In cultures where independence is highly valued, direct confrontation is more common. In cultures where the community is emphasized over the individual, indirect strategies may be more common. Avoidance allows for more time to resolve the problem, but can also increase costs associated with the problem in the first place. Your organization or business will have policies and protocols to follow regarding conflict and redress, but it is always wise to consider the position of your conversational partner or opponent and to give them, as well as yourself, time to explore alternatives.

Defensiveness Versus Supportiveness

Defensive communication is characterized by control, evaluation, and judgments, while supportive communication focuses on the points and not personalities. When we feel judged or criticized, our ability to listen can be diminished, and we may only hear the negative message. By choosing to focus on the message instead of the messenger, we keep the discussion supportive and professional.

Face-detracting and Face-saving

Communication is not competition. Communication is the sharing of understanding and meaning, but does everyone always share equally? People struggle for control, limit access to resources and information as part of territorial displays, and otherwise use the process of communication to engage in competition. People also use communication for collaboration. Both competition and collaboration can be observed in communication interactions, but there are two concepts central to both: face-detracting and face-saving strategies.

Face-detracting strategies involve messages or statements that take away from the respect, integrity, or credibility of a person. Face-saving strategies protect credibility and separate the message from the messenger. For example, you might say that “sales were down this quarter,” without specifically noting who was responsible. Sales were simply down. If, however, you ask, “How does the sales manager explain the decline in sales?” you have specifically connected an individual with the negative news. While we may want to specifically connect tasks and job responsibilities to individuals and departments, in terms of language, each strategy has distinct results.

Face-detracting strategies often produce a defensive communication climate, inhibit listening, and allow for little room for collaboration. To save face is to raise the issue while preserving a supportive climate, allowing room in the conversation for constructive discussions and problem-solving.

Empathy

Communication involves not only the words we write or speak, but also how and when we write or say them. The way we communicate also carries meaning, and empathy for the individual involves attending to this aspect of interaction. Empathetic listening involves listening to both the literal and implied meanings within a message. By paying attention to feelings and emotions associated with content and information, we can build relationships and address conflict more constructively.

Managing Your Emotions

There will be times in the work environment when emotions run high. Your awareness of them can help you clear your mind and choose to wait until the moment has passed to tackle the challenge.

Emotions can be contagious in the workplace, and fear of the unknown can influence people to act in irrational ways. You can try to recognize when emotions are on edge in yourself or others, and choose to wait to communicate, problem-solve, or negotiate until after the moment has passed.

Learn From Experience

Every communication interaction provides an opportunity for learning if you choose to see it. Sometimes the lessons are situational and may not apply in future contexts. Other times, the lessons learned may well serve you across your professional career. Taking notes for yourself to clarify your thoughts, much like a journal, serves to document and help you see the situation more clearly.

Recognize that some aspects of communication are intentional and may communicate meaning, even if it is hard to understand. Also, know that some aspects of communication are unintentional and may not imply meaning or design. People make mistakes. They say things they should not have said. Emotions are revealed that are not always rational, and not always associated with the current context. A challenging morning at home can spill over into the workday, and someone's bad mood may have nothing to do with you.

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1.6: Oral Presentations

- Who is someone whose presentation style you admire? Describe it. What do they do when they present that you like? Why do you like it?
- How do you feel when you have to present? Do you feel nervous? Excited? Stressed out? What do you do to manage these emotions?
- What do you do to prepare for a presentation?
- What strategies or techniques do you use when you present? How might this differ from one context, culture, or environment to another?

Many people have very limiting beliefs about presentations and their own abilities to give one. Examining your skills, fears, and preferences can be helpful in becoming more comfortable in presenting.

You Don't Have to be Perfect

Letting go of perfection can be the hardest guideline to apply to ourselves. It's also in our nature to compare ourselves to others. You might forgive a classmate for the occasional "umm" during a speech, but then turn right around and spend a lot of mental effort chastising yourself for making the same error in your presentation. We all have distinct strengths and weaknesses. Knowing yourself and where you need to improve is an important first step. Recognizing that Rome wasn't built in a day, and that you won't become a world-class speaker overnight, may be easier said than done.

It may help to recognize that your listeners don't want to see you fail; on the contrary, they want you to do well because when you do, they will be able to relax, enjoy, and understand your presentation. You might be surprised to know that not everyone counts each time you say "umm." However, if you do tend to say "umm," "ahhh," or other filler phrases repeatedly, they can distract your audience from your message.

Organization is Important

Have you ever thought of a great comeback to something someone said a while after they said it? Wouldn't it have been nice to be quick and articulate and able to deliver your comeback right then and there? Speaking in public gives you a distinct advantage over "off the cuff" improvisation and stumbling for the right comeback. You get to prepare and be organized. You know you'll be speaking to an audience in order to persuade them to do, think, or consider an idea or action.

What issues might they think of while you are speaking? What comebacks or arguments might they say if it were a debate? You get to anticipate what the audience will want to know, say, or hear. You get to prepare your statements and visual aids to support your speech and create the timing, organization, and presentation of each point. Many times in life, we are asked to take a position and feel unprepared to respond. Speaking in public gives you the distinct opportunity to prepare and organize your ideas or points in order to make an impact and respond effectively.

Speaking in Public is Like Participating in a Conversation

This may sound odd at first, but consider the idea of an "enlarged conversation" described by Julia Wood (2001). She expresses a clear connection between everyday speech and public dialogue. Sometimes we take a speech turn, while at other times we remain silent while others take their turn. We do this all day long and think nothing of it. We are often the focus of attention from friends and colleagues, and it hardly ever makes us nervous. When we get on a stage, however, some people perceive that the whole game has changed. It hasn't. We still take turns, and the speaker will take a longer turn as part of an enlarged conversation. People in the audience will still communicate feedback, and the speaker will still negotiate their turn just the way they would in an everyday conversation. The difference is all about how we, as the speaker, perceive the context.

Some people feel that the level of expectations, the need for perfection, or the idealistic qualities we perceive in eloquent speakers are required, and then focus on deficiencies, fears, and the possibility of failing to measure up. By letting go of this ideal, we can approach the challenge with a more pragmatic frame of mind. The rules we play comfortably in conversation every day are the same as we shift to a larger conversation within the context of public speaking. This viewpoint can offer an alternative as you

address your apprehensions and can help you let go of unrealistic expectations.

What Makes a Presentation Successful

A successful presentation occurs when the presenter and the audience connect. Authenticity and passion can resonate so much with an audience that it can outweigh elements otherwise considered pitfalls. What you bring to the audience affects what they get from your presentation.

Verbal Cues

Pitch

Do you have a deep, low voice or a high-pitched one? We all have a normal speaking pitch where we are most comfortable, but we can move our pitch up or down. Use pitch inflections to make your delivery more interesting and emphatic. If you don't change pitch at all, your delivery will be monotone, which gets boring for the audience very quickly.

Volume

Do you speak softly or loudly? Adjust the volume of your voice to your environment and audience. If you're in a large auditorium, speak up, or better yet, use a microphone! It's not a badge of honor to avoid using a microphone; use one to help make your presentation accessible to those who may have hearing disabilities. You may need to use more volume to compensate for ambient noise like traffic or an air conditioner, or for presenting in a room with a lot of hard surfaces (where the sound can bounce off and echo). You can also use volume strategically to emphasize the most important points in your speech.

Emphasis

Stress certain words in your speech to add emphasis to them, that is, to indicate that they are particularly important. You may also use a visual aid to emphasize key points by using photographs or charts.

Enunciation

Practice enunciating your words, which means practicing saying each word distinctly. If you speak too quickly, the end of one word can start to blend into the start of another. One way to compensate for this is to practice slowing down your rate of speech by taking a micro-break between each word. If you've ever been told you sound like you're mumbling (early in my career, I was told this all the time!), it helps to focus on practice, moving your lips, jaw, and tongue as you say each word and to speak with more volume. These techniques can seem difficult to remember in the moment of giving a presentation, but they can get easier with practice (which I know from experience!).

Rate

Are you a fast or slow speaker? The pace at which you speak will influence how well the audience can understand you. Pause for breath naturally during your speech. Your speaking rate should be appropriate for your topic. A rapid, lively rate communicates enthusiasm, urgency, or humour. A slower, moderated rate conveys respect and seriousness. By varying your rate within a speech, you can emphasize your main points and keep your audience engaged.

If you tend to speak too quickly or too softly, try practicing some vocal exercises, such as some of those described by Julian Treasure in his [2013 TED Talk](#). Vocal exercises can help reduce your nervousness and improve your voice control, making it easier for your audience to understand your message.

Filler words

Try to minimize the use of filler words, such as like, er, um, and uh, because they can be distracting if they are overused. One way to find out whether you use filler phrases is to record yourself presenting and then watch it. You might be surprised to find out you're

unconsciously saying something over and over—or that you only said twice what you thought you’d repeated a hundred times! Once you are aware of your tendency to use filler phrases, eliminating them can become a goal for improvement. A technique I find helpful is to try substituting a short pause in place of where I catch myself about to say a filler word.

Non-verbal Cues

Gestures and Body Language

A gesture is “a movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or meaning” (OxfordDictionaries.com, 2015). You can use these to channel nervous energy into an enhancement of your speech, reinforcing important points, but they can be distracting if overused. If the audience is busy watching your hands fly around, they will not be able to concentrate on your words.

Watching a recording of yourself presenting can also be informative for other reasons. It can help you pick up on your body language cues that might be distracting for your audience. For example, you might see if you sway or rock; wring or rub your hands repeatedly; or fiddle with papers, pens, or other objects in your hands. Many of these habits are often carried out unconsciously because of nervousness. Once you’re aware of doing these things, you can work to eliminate them. But how do you stop, for example, swaying or twirling your cue cards if you don’t even realize you’re doing it? Preparation and practice are key.

Here are some techniques to try:

- If you are swaying or rocking out of nervousness, trying to stand perfectly still might be incredibly difficult. Instead, consider turning that swaying or rocking into a gentle pacing.
- If you wring or rub your hands, you can instead try gesturing as you speak.
- If you fiddle with any objects that are in your hands, then make sure you present with empty hands! For example, if you don’t have papers in your hand, you won’t be able to twirl them, and if you don’t have a pen in your hand, you won’t be able to click it open and closed.

Eye Contact

By recording yourself presenting and practicing in front of friends or family, you can also gauge what level of eye contact you are making. If you find you’re presenting to just one or two people in the audience, you can try practicing looking in a “Z” gaze at the audience. Look first at the back left corner, then the back right, move to the front left, and then the front right. You can then move in reverse or start back at the beginning.

If you find you’re having difficulty maintaining eye contact with the audience, try looking between people in the audience, cycling between 3 or 4 different areas. While you still may not be making eye contact with anybody, you will at least be looking out at the entire audience rather than at your feet, your notes, or at the wall at the back of the room.

Silence

Silence is a powerful technique if used well, but it is often overlooked. They can add emphasis and dramatic effect when you are speaking. They can also allow your audience some time to process the information you are sharing.

Presentation Techniques

There are many different presentation techniques that you can use, but there is no single technique that may be “correct” or “the best.” The key is to use the ones you think will help you connect with your audience and help maintain their interest in your presentation.

The following list describes some strategies you can consider using in your presentation. It’s important to note that this is not an exhaustive list nor is it an exhaustive or comprehensive discussion of these techniques.

- **Audience references** – Highlight something common to the audience that will make them interested in the topic.
- **Current events** – Refer to a current event in the news that demonstrates the relevance of your topic to the audience.

- **Question** – Ask either a question that asks for a response from your audience, or a rhetorical question, which does not need a response but is designed to get them thinking about the topic.
- **Personal reference** – Refer to a story about yourself that is relevant to the topic.
- **Storytelling** – Include an anecdote, a narrative, or a story.

Storytelling can be a very powerful technique to help you connect with your audience. For better or worse, audiences are likely to remember anecdotes and narratives long after the statistics are forgotten. Human beings love stories and often will walk away from a speech moved by or remembering a powerful story or example more than anything else. A story can be a brief component in your presentation, or you can structure your entire presentation as a story.

From a Euro-Western dominant culture point of view, stories will often have linear structures, which is a “classic formula [where] a protagonist with goals meets an unexpected obstacle and a crisis results. The protagonist attempts to overcome the obstacle, leading to a climax, and finally a denouement. (There can also be interruptions and plot twists).” (Anderson, 2016, p. 65). However, this is but one perspective on storytelling. Storytelling structure, Protocols, and formats can differ from culture to culture.

Furthermore, stories can be shared through spoken or written word, dance (such as the Lion Dance during Chinese New Year), music (such as hip hop), or visual means (such as art displays or interactive websites). ‘Welila’ogwa Irene Isaac, a member of the ‘Namgis First Nation and a contributing author to *Knowing Home: Braiding Indigenous Science with Western Science, Book 1*, describes how other cultural practices can be forms of storytelling as well, saying that “central to the cultural and spiritual practices of the Kwakwaka’wakw people is the Potlatch or Winter Ceremonies when stories are retold, dramatized, and shared” (2016, Chapter 14, para. 2).

What is important to take away from this brief discussion is that members of your audience may have different understandings of and experiences with what form a story takes, how it is structured, who can tell it, when it can be told, and how they (the audience) are to reflect on and interact with it. Before incorporating a story in your presentation, it’s critical to consider context, protocols, your audience, and your own relationship to the story, the story creator (or owner), and the culture from which it originates.

Preparing to Present

Here are some strategies for preparing to present.

As you rehearse and practice your presentation, try to identify the weaknesses in your delivery to improve on them. Try practicing in front of a mirror or even recording yourself and playing it back. It’s also helpful to get feedback from a supportive audience at this stage. Perhaps a few family members or friends could watch you give your presentation and provide some feedback. These sessions should help you get comfortable and help you remember what you want to say without having to constantly refer to notes.

If at all possible, access the room where you will be presenting. This way, you can get a feel for its setup and decide how you will stand or move during your presentation.

If you are using technology to support your presentation (i.e., PowerPoint slides or a projector), test everything before you begin. Do a microphone check and test its volume, view your slides on the computer you will be using, check any weblinks, play videos to test their sound, or make a call to test the phone connection prior to your teleconference. Your audience will get restless quickly if they arrive and are expected to wait while you fix a technical problem. This can also make you seem disorganized and hurt your credibility as an authoritative speaker.

Contingency Planning

Well before the day of your presentation, ask yourself, “What could go wrong?” This might sound like a good way to stress yourself out, but it can actually be very helpful. If you anticipate the worst-case scenario and are prepared for it, problems on the day of your presentation are less likely to bother you.

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1.7: Communication Competence

Communication is common in that it is something that we spend most of our time doing. Still, making sense of and improving communication takes competence learned through deliberate study and personal reflection. So, to get started on your road to competence, we propose that you do two things. **First**, challenge yourself to see the value of studying communication in your health field. Apply the concepts we are learning to your personal and professional lives and find ways to make this class help you achieve your goals. **Second**, commit to using the knowledge you gain in this class to improve your communication and the communication of those around you. Become a higher self-monitor, which means starting to notice your communication more. We all know areas where we could improve our communication, and taking this class will expose us even more. But you have to be prepared to put in the time to improve; for example, it takes effort to become a better listener or to give better feedback. If you start these things now, you will be primed to take on more communication challenges presented throughout this book.

The ability to communicate effectively is often included as a primary undergraduate learning goal, along with other vital skills like writing, critical thinking, and problem-solving. You may not have heard professors or university administrators use the term *communication competence*. Still, as we learn more about it in this section, you will see how communication competence can benefit you in many aspects of your life. Though this resource focuses on professional communication in health studies, strategies for developing communication competence are not limited to this. Watch the following video and consider how communication competence leads to effective communication in health care.

Defining Competence

We have already defined **communication**, and you probably know that to be competent at something means you know what you are doing. When we combine these terms, we get the following definition: communication competence refers to the knowledge of effective and appropriate communication patterns and the ability to use and adapt that knowledge in various contexts (Cooley & Roach, 1984, p. 25). To better understand this definition, let's break apart its components.



Figure 1.7.1: Developing communication competence can bring many rewards, but it also requires time and effort. [Communication](#) by Paul Shanks. Licensed under [CC BY-NC 2.0](#).

The first part of the definition we will unpack focuses on **knowledge**. The cognitive elements of competence include knowing how to do something and understanding why things are done the way they are (Hargie, 2011, p. 9). People can develop cognitive competence by observing and evaluating the actions of others. Cognitive competence can also be developed through instruction. Since you are currently taking a communication class, you are encouraged to observe the communication concepts you are learning in the communication practices of others and yourself. This will help bring the concepts to life and also help you evaluate how professional communication matches up with communication concepts. As you build a repertoire of communication knowledge based on your experiential and classroom knowledge, you will also develop behavioural competence.

The second part of the definition of communication competence that we will unpack is **the ability to use communication effectively**. Individual factors affect our ability to do anything. Not everyone has the same athletic, musical, or intellectual ability. At the individual level, a person's physiological and psychological characteristics affect competence. In terms of physiology, age,

maturity, and communication ability affect competence. In terms of psychology, a person's mood, stress level, personality, and level of communication apprehension (level of communication anxiety) affect competence (Cooley & Roach, 1984, p. 25). All of these factors will either help or hinder you when you begin to apply the knowledge you have learned to actual communication behaviors. For example, you might know strategies for communicating interpersonally. Still, interpersonal communication anxiety kicks in when you are in front of a client, peers, or colleagues, and may prevent you from fully putting that knowledge into practice.

The third part of the definition we will unpack is the **ability to adapt to various contexts**. Whether something is deemed competent or not is based on social and cultural context, which makes it impossible to have a single standard for communication competence (Cooley & Roach, 1984, p. 25). Social variables such as status and power affect competence. In a social situation where one person — say, a professor — has more power than another (for example, a student), the professor is typically the person who sets the standard for competence. Cultural variables such as race and nationality also affect competence. A Taiwanese woman who speaks English as an additional language may be praised for her competence in the English language in her home country, but be viewed as less competent in North America because of her accent. In summary, although we have a clear definition of communication competence, there are no definitions for how to be competent in any given situation since competence varies at the individual, social, and cultural levels.

Even though no guidelines for or definitions of competence will be applicable in all situations, each professional body within the field of health studies identifies many aspects of competence related to communication. The primary focus has been on competencies related to speaking, listening, therapeutic relationships, and working effectively together (Rider & Keefer, 2006). Scholars suggest that health studies students taking a communication class should be able to effectively perform the following competencies in terms of speaking, listening, therapeutic communication, and teamwork:

- State ideas clearly
- Communicate ethically
- Recognize when it is appropriate to communicate
- Identify their communication goals
- Select the most appropriate and effective mode and techniques of communication for the situation
- Demonstrate mutuality through collaboration and cooperation
- Identify and manage misunderstandings
- Manage conflict
- Be open-minded about another's point of view, cultural and ethnic beliefs, practices, and language
- Actively listen

(Morreale et al., 1998; Rider & Keefer, 2006)

While most of these are skill-focused rather than interpersonally or culturally focused, they provide a concrete way to assess your communication competencies and prepare yourself for professional speaking, listening, relationship building, and teamwork, which is often skill-driven.

Developing Competence

Knowing the dimensions of competence is an important first step toward developing competence. Everyone reading this book already has some experience with and knowledge about communication. After all, you have spent many years explicitly and implicitly learning to communicate. For example, we are explicitly taught the verbal codes we use to communicate. On the other hand, although there are numerous rules and norms associated with nonverbal communication, we rarely receive explicit instructions about it. Instead, we learn by observing others and through trial and error with our own nonverbal communication. Competence obviously involves both verbal and nonverbal elements, but it also applies to many situations and contexts. Communication competence is needed in order to understand communication ethics, develop cultural awareness, use computer-mediated communication, and think critically. Competence involves knowledge, motivation, and skills. It is not enough to know what good communication consists of — you must also have the motivation to reflect on and better your communication, and the skills needed to do so.

With regard to competence, we all have areas where we are skilled and areas where we have deficiencies. In most cases, we can consciously decide to work on our deficiencies, which may take considerable effort. There are multiple stages of competence that we challenge you to assess as you communicate in your daily life: unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence, and unconscious competence (Hargie, 2011, p. 9).

Before you have built up a rich cognitive knowledge base of communication concepts and practiced and reflected on skills in a

particular area, you may exhibit **unconscious incompetence**, which means you are not even aware that you are communicating in an incompetent manner. Once you learn more about communication and have a vocabulary to identify concepts, you may find yourself exhibiting **conscious incompetence**. This is when you know what you should be doing, but realize that you are not doing it as well as you could. However, as your skills increase, you may advance to **conscious competence**, meaning that you know you are communicating well at the moment, which will add to your bank of experiences to draw from in future interactions. When you reach the stage of **unconscious competence**, you communicate successfully without straining to be competent. However, reaching the stage of unconscious competence in one area or with one person does not mean you will always stay there. We are faced with new communication encounters regularly, and although we may be able to draw on the communication skills we have learned about and developed, it may take a few instances of conscious incompetence before we can advance to later stages.

Students assume that individuals working in health-related environments have a high level of communication competence, and may be hard on themselves for being at the stage of conscious incompetence, where they catch themselves communicating poorly with regard to a concept recently studied. It is important to note that just because they know the concepts and definitions does not mean they can always put them to good use. We are all imperfect and fallible, and if we expect to be perfect communicators after studying this, then we are setting ourselves up for failure. However, when we do mess up, it is important to reflect on it. And now you are starting to do the same thing, which is to notice and reflect on your communication ability within the field of health studies. That already puts you ahead of most people.



Figure 1.7.2: Becoming more mindful of your communication and the communication of others can contribute to your communication competence. [Woman Beautiful](#) by Allesandro Zangrilli. In the public domain.

One way to progress toward communication competence is through the ability to monitor yourself. This is also known as **self-monitoring**. This is the ability to focus on your behaviour, and in turn, determine how to behave in the situation. In every speaking situation, most people will have an internal gauge of what they might say next or not say. Some people never give any thought to what they might say to others. These individuals would have low self-monitoring skills, in which what you see is what you get. Other people may have high self-monitoring skills and pay attention to every little thing: how they stand, where their eyes move, how they gesture, and maybe even how they breathe. They pay attention to these minor details because they are concerned with how the message might come across to others. Competent communicators have a balance of high and low self-monitoring, in which they realize how they might be perceived, but they are not overly focused on all the details of themselves.

Another way to progress toward communication competence is to become a more **mindful communicator**. A mindful communicator actively and fluidly processes information, is sensitive to communication contexts and multiple perspectives and is able to adapt to novel communication situations (Burgoon et al., 2000). Becoming a more mindful communicator has many benefits, including achieving communication goals, detecting deception, avoiding stereotypes, and reducing conflict. Whether or not we achieve our day-to-day communication goals depends on our communication competence. Various communication behaviors can signal that we are communicating mindfully. For example, when an instructor asks a health studies student to paraphrase their understanding of the instructions they were just given shows that the instructor is aware that verbal messages are not always clear, that people do not always actively listen, and that people often do not speak up when they are unsure of instructions for fear of appearing incompetent or embarrassing themselves. Some communication behaviors indicate that we are not communicating mindfully, such as withdrawing from a client or instructor or engaging in passive-aggressive behavior during a period of interpersonal conflict. Most of us know that such behaviors lead to predictable and avoidable conflict cycles, yet we are all guilty of them. Our tendency to assume that people are telling us the truth can also lead to negative results. Therefore, a certain amount of tentativeness and mindful monitoring of a person's nonverbal and verbal communication can help us detect deception.

Overcoming Anxiety

Whether you will give your first oral presentation in this class or another class, you may be one of many students in a health studies communication course to face anxiety about communication in general or public speaking in particular.



Figure 1.7.3: Communication apprehension and public speaking anxiety are common but can be managed productively. *Day 339 butterflies* by Ana C. Licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/).

Decades of research conducted by communication scholars show that communication apprehension is common among college students (Priem & Solomon, 2009, p. 260). **Communication apprehension (CA)** is fear or anxiety experienced by a person due to actual or imagined communication with another person or persons (Priem & Solomon, 2009). Communication apprehension can include multiple forms of communication, not just public speaking. Of post-secondary students, 15% to 20% experience high-trait CA, meaning they are generally anxious about communication. Furthermore, 70% of post-secondary students experience some traits of CA, which means that addressing communication anxiety in a class like the one you are taking now will benefit most students (Priem & Solomon, 2009, p. 260). Public speaking anxiety is a type of CA that produces physiological, cognitive, and behavioural reactions in people when faced with a real or imagined presentation (Bodie, 2010, p. 72). Physical reactions such as “sweaty palms, perspiring, a fast pulse, shallow breathing, cold extremities, flushed skin, nausea, trembling hands, quivering legs or butterflies in the stomach are the body’s response to the release of hormones such as adrenaline” (Engleberg et al., 2005). Additionally, CA can lead others to make assumptions about communication competence that may be unfavourable. Even if you are intelligent, prepared, and motivated, CA and public speaking anxiety can detract from your communication and lead others to perceive you in ways you did not intend. Communication apprehension is a common issue faced by many people, so you are not alone. There are ways that you can manage your anxiety:

Top 10 Ways to Reduce Speaking Anxiety

1. Remember, you are not alone. Public speaking anxiety is common, so do not ignore it — confront it.
2. You cannot literally “die of embarrassment.” Audiences are forgiving and understanding.
3. It always feels worse than it looks.
4. Take deep breaths. It releases endorphins, which naturally fight the adrenaline that causes anxiety.
5. Dress professionally to enhance confidence.
6. Channel your nervousness into positive energy and motivation.
7. Start your outline and research early. Better information equals higher confidence.
8. Practice and get feedback from a trusted source.
9. Visualize success through positive thinking.
10. Prepare, prepare, prepare! Practise is a speaker’s best friend.

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1.8: Professional Communication

Professional communication is an essential part of working in health studies. You are entering a “profession,” which means there are certain expectations regarding your professional conduct and, specifically, how you communicate.

Professional communication involves a **level of formality** and is an essential component of your post-secondary education. It differs from the informal communication you may engage in with friends and family. It also applies to your verbal and written communications, including email.

Professional communication principles include being ethical, truthful, accurate, clear, concise, and comprehensive. For example, you should say or write something clearly and concisely while including all relevant information. You should also have a professional tone conveyed through appropriate greetings, complete sentences, and grammar. To be professional, you need to know your audience; the content and form of your message should be tailored to your audience.

Professional Communication Tips

Here are some tips to follow in terms of professional communication:

- Introduce yourself by **name, role, and institution**, such as: “I am Abbie, a Year One health studies student from MacEwan University.”
- Address the person you are speaking to formally. Also, **do not assume the gender** of the person you speak to. For example, you should avoid using terms such as “miss,” “ma’am,” “sir,” or “mister” until you know how the recipient identifies and wants to be addressed. If uncertain, introduce yourself fully and ask how the recipient wants to be addressed.
- State your **personal pronouns** if applicable and invite others to share their personal pronouns.
- Clearly **articulate** your message (what you are trying to say).
- Speak in **complete sentences**.
- Be **honest**.
- Be **polite**. Your communication is a reflection of **YOU** and your professionalism.

Because a lot of communication occurs electronically, it is essential to consider **how to construct an email**. Here are some tips:

- Use a professional email address. At most universities, your email with a professor should originate from your **university email (not your Gmail or other accounts)**.
- Begin with a clear description in the **subject line**. For example, students should include the course code in the subject line and a brief description identifying the reason for the email (e.g., “HLST 154 Section BN02: question regarding Week 3 quiz”).
- Use a **professional email greeting** and salutation to address your professor or the salutation preferred by the professor.
 - Appropriate: “Dear Professor Smith” or “Hello, Dr. Hall.”
 - Inappropriate: “Hey teacher” or “Hey Lindsey.”
- **Introduce yourself** so that the email recipient knows who you are. Remember, professors teach several courses and course sections. Thus, you might say, “I am Minta Lee. I am a student in your Wednesday section of HLST 154.”
- Refer to any **attachments** in the email text.
- **Avoid** point form, slang, abbreviations, and emoticons.
- Include a **signature block** at the end of your email identifying your full name, role, institution, and contact information.
- **Proofread** your email for accuracy, grammar, and spelling.
- Avoid humour and excessive use of exclamation points and all caps. These can easily be misinterpreted.

Addressing and Referring to Your Instructor

Students are often uncertain about how to address their instructors or professors. It is okay to ask them how they would like to be addressed. Until you know, you should refer to them as “Professor X” (insert their surname) or “Dr. X” (insert their surname).

Although some instructors and professors may invite you to use their first name, it is part of professional communication etiquette to use “Professor X” or “Dr. X” (including both their first and last name) when referring to them with others. In addition to ensuring professional communication, this helps to clarify if your instructors share a first or last name with another instructor.

Example: Dr. Huang is your course instructor, and they have encouraged you to contact another professor to discuss potential research opportunities. Although Dr. Huang has permitted you to call her Lisa in the classroom, you should always refer to them as Dr. Lisa Huang in communication with others. Thus, when initiating communication with the instructor Dr. Huang referred you to, you may consider a beginning such as: "Dear Dr. Hameed. I am a student in the undergraduate Year One health studies communication course with Dr. Lisa Huang. Dr. Huang has encouraged me to reach out to you about potential research opportunities because of my interest in emotional intelligence in health care."

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1.9: Principles and Functions of Nonverbal Communication

All five senses can take in nonverbal communication. Health professionals rely on touch, an especially powerful form of nonverbal communication.

We must distinguish between vocal and verbal aspects. Verbal and nonverbal communication includes both vocal and nonvocal elements.

A **vocal element** of verbal communication is spoken words — for example, saying, “Come back here.” **Paralanguage** is a vocal element of nonverbal communication, which is the vocalized but not verbal part of a spoken message, such as speaking rate, volume, and pitch. **Nonvocal elements** of verbal communication include using unspoken symbols to convey meaning. Writing and American Sign Language (ASL) are nonvocal examples of verbal communication and are not considered nonverbal. Nonvocal communication elements include body language, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact. Gestures are both nonvocal and nonverbal since most do not refer to a specific word like a written or signed symbol does. Relationships among vocal, nonvocal, verbal, and nonverbal aspects of communication are shown below (Hargie, 2011, p. 45).

Principles of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication has a distinct history and separates evolutionary functions from verbal communication. For example, nonverbal communication is primarily biological, while verbal communication is primarily culturally based. This is evidenced by the fact that some nonverbal communication has the same meaning across cultures, while no verbal communication systems share the same universal recognizability (Andersen, 1999). Nonverbal communication evolved earlier than verbal communication, serving an essential survival function that helped humans later develop verbal communication. While some of our nonverbal communication abilities, such as our sense of smell, lost strength as our verbal capacities increased, other abilities, such as paralanguage and movement, have grown alongside verbal complexity.

Nonverbal Communication Conveys Important Interpersonal and Emotional Messages

You have probably heard that more meaning is generated from nonverbal communication than from verbal. Mehrabian (1997) asserted that as much as 93% of meaning in any interaction is attributable to nonverbal communication. Of the three main elements of communication — vocalics (such as tone of voice), verbal (words), and body language — words account for only 7%. Regardless of the actual percentage, it is worth noting that the majority of meaning in interaction is deduced from nonverbal communication.

a pie chart: 38% Vocalics, 55% Body language, 7% verbal.

Figure 1.9.1: Derivation of meaning relies less on words than on nonverbal communication. Mehrabian, A. (1971). *Silent messages*. Wadsworth.

We may rely more on nonverbal signals when verbal and nonverbal messages conflict and when emotional or relational communication occurs (Hargie, 2011, p. 47). For example, when someone asks a question, unsure about the “angle” they are taking, we may hone in on nonverbal cues to fill in the meaning. The question “What are you doing tonight?” could mean many things: we rely on posture, tone of voice, and eye contact to see if the person asking is just curious, suspicious, or hinting that they would like company for the evening. We also put more weight on nonverbal communication when determining a person’s credibility. For example, if a health professional verbally speaks with a client, the content seems well-researched and unbiased. Still, if their nonverbal communication is poor (voice is monotone, avoids eye contact, fidgets), the health professional will likely not be viewed as credible. Conversely, verbal communication might have more meaning in some situations than nonverbal communication. In interactions where information exchange is the focus — at a briefing at work, for example — verbal communication likely accounts for much more of the meaning generated. A fundamental principle of nonverbal communication is that it often takes on more meaning in interpersonal and emotional exchanges.

Nonverbal Communication is More Involuntary than Verbal

There are some instances in which we verbally communicate involuntarily. These types of exclamations are often verbal responses

to a surprising stimulus. For example, we say “Oww!” when we stub our toe or scream “Stop!” when we see someone heading toward danger. Involuntary nonverbal signals are much more common. Although most nonverbal communication is not entirely involuntary, it is more below our consciousness than verbal communication and, therefore, more difficult to control.

This involuntary nature of nonverbal communication makes it more difficult to control or “fake.” For example, although you can consciously smile and shake hands with someone when you first see them, it is difficult to fake that you are “happy” to meet someone. Nonverbal communication leaks out in ways that expose our underlying thoughts or feelings. Health professionals and students in health studies must learn to control their facial expressions and other nonverbal communication to effectively convey their message without having their thoughts and feelings leak through.

Have you ever tried to conceal your surprise, suppress your anger, or act joyful even when you were not? Most people whose careers do not involve conscious manipulation of nonverbal signals find controlling or suppressing them challenging. While we can consciously decide to stop sending verbal messages, our nonverbal communication always has the potential to generate meaning for another person. The teenager who decides to shut out his dad and not verbally communicate with him still sends a message with his “blank” stare (still a facial expression) and lack of movement (still a gesture). In this sense, nonverbal communication is “irrepressible” (Andersen, 1999).

Nonverbal Communication is More Ambiguous

Language’s symbolic and abstract nature can lead to misunderstandings, but nonverbal communication is even more ambiguous. As with verbal communication, most of our nonverbal signals can be linked to multiple meanings, but unlike words, many nonverbal signals do not have one specific meaning. If you have ever had someone wink at you and did not know why, you have probably experienced this uncertainty. Did they wink to express their affection for you, their pleasure with something you just did, or because you share some inside knowledge or joke?

Just as we look at context clues in a sentence or paragraph to derive meaning from a particular word, we can look for context clues in various sources of information, such as the physical environment, other nonverbal signals, or verbal communication, to make sense of a particular nonverbal cue. Unlike verbal communication, nonverbal communication does not have explicit rules of grammar that bring structure, order, and agreed-upon usage patterns. Instead, we implicitly learn norms of nonverbal communication, which leads to more significant variance. In general, we exhibit more idiosyncrasies in our usage of nonverbal communication than in verbal communication, which also increases the ambiguity of nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal Communication is More Credible

Although we can rely on verbal communication to fill in the blanks sometimes left by nonverbal expressions, we often put more trust into what people do than what they say. This is especially true in times of stress or danger when our behaviour becomes more instinctual, and we rely on older systems of thinking and acting that evolved before our ability to speak and write (Andersen, 1999). This innateness creates intuitive feelings about the genuineness of nonverbal communication, and this genuineness relates to our earlier discussion about the sometimes involuntary and often subconscious nature of nonverbal communication. An example of the innateness of nonverbal signals can be found in children who have been blind since birth but still exhibit the same facial expressions as sighted children. In short, nonverbal communication’s involuntary or subconscious nature makes it less easy to fake, making it seem more honest and credible.

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

A primary function of nonverbal communication is to convey meaning by reinforcing, substituting for, or contradicting verbal communication. Nonverbal communication is also used to influence others and regulate conversational flow. Perhaps even more important are how nonverbal communication functions as a central part of relational communication and identity expression.

Nonverbal Communication Conveys Meaning

As we have established, nonverbal communication plays an important role in communicating successfully and effectively and cannot be underestimated.

Complementing

Complementing is defined as nonverbal behaviour combined with the verbal portion of a message to emphasize the meaning of the entire message. Regarding complementing verbal communication, gestures can help describe a space or shape that another person is unfamiliar with in ways that words alone cannot. Gestures also reinforce basic meaning — pointing to the door when you tell someone to leave. Facial expressions reinforce the emotional states we convey through verbal communication (Hargie, 2011, p. 46); smiling while telling a funny story better conveys your emotions. Vocal variation can help us emphasize a particular part of a message, which helps reinforce a word or sentence's meaning. For example, "How was *your* weekend?" conveys a different meaning than "How was your *weekend*?" An excellent example of complementing behavior is when a child exclaims, "I'm so excited," while jumping up and down. The child's body further emphasizes, "I'm so excited."

Contradicting

At times, an individual's nonverbal communication **contradicts** their verbal communication. Because we often perceive nonverbal communication as more credible than verbal communication, this is especially true when we receive mixed messages or messages in which verbal and nonverbal signals contradict each other. For example, a person may say, "You cannot do anything right!" in a mean tone but follow that up with a wink, which could indicate the person is teasing or joking, or a person could say, "I am fine" in a quick, short tone that indicates otherwise. Mixed messages lead to uncertainty and confusion for the receivers, which leads us to look for more information to determine which message is more credible. If we cannot resolve the discrepancy, we will likely react negatively and potentially withdraw from the interaction (Hargie, 2011, p. 52). Persistent mixed messages can lead to relational distress and hurt a person's credibility in professional settings.

Accenting

Accenting is a form of nonverbal communication that emphasizes a word or a part of a message. The word or part of the message accented might change the meaning of the message. Accenting can be accomplished through multiple types of nonverbal behaviour. Gestures paired with a word can provide emphasis, such as when an individual says, "No (slams hand on table), you do not understand me." By slamming the hand on a table while saying "no," the source draws attention to the word. Vocalic cues also allow us to emphasize particular parts of a message, which helps to determine the meaning (e.g., "*She* is my friend," or "She is *my* friend," or "She is my *friend*"). Additionally, words or phrases can also be emphasized via pauses. Speakers will often pause before saying something important. Your professors likely pause just before relaying important information in the course content.

Repeating

Nonverbal communication that **repeats** the meaning of verbal communication assists the receiver by reinforcing the sender's words. Nonverbal communication that repeats verbal communication may stand alone, but when paired with verbal communication, it repeats the message. For example, nodding one's head while saying "yes" reinforces the meaning of the word "yes," and the word "yes" reinforces the head nod, or saying "I am not sure" with an uncertain tone.

Regulating Conversational Flow

Conversational interaction has been likened to a dance, where each person has to make moves and take turns without stepping on the other's toes. Nonverbal communication helps us regulate our conversations so we do not constantly interrupt each other or wait in awkward silence between speaker turns. **Pitch**, a part of vocalics, helps cue others into our conversational intentions. A rising pitch typically indicates a question, and a falling pitch indicates the end of a thought or the end of a conversational turn. We can also use a falling pitch to indicate closure, which can be very useful at the end of a speech to signal to the audience that you are finished, which cues the applause and prevents an awkward silence that the speaker ends up filling with "That's it" or "Thank you."

Other behaviors that regulate conversational flow are **eye contact**, moving or leaning forward, changing posture, and eyebrow raises, to name a few. You may also have noticed several nonverbal behaviors people engage in when trying to exit a conversation. These might include stepping away from the speaker, checking one's watch or phone for the time, or packing up belongings. These are referred to as **leave-taking behaviors**. Without the regulating function of nonverbal behaviors, it would be necessary to interrupt conversational content to insert phrases such as "I have to leave." Repeating a hand gesture or using one or more verbal fillers can extend our turn even though we are not verbally communicating. We can "hold the floor" with nonverbal signals even when we are unsure what to say next. However, verbal communication will be used instead when interactants fail to recognize

regulating behaviour.

Substituting

Nonverbal communication can **substitute** for verbal communication in a variety of ways. Nonverbal communication can convey much meaning when verbal communication is ineffective because of language barriers. Language barriers exist when a person has not yet learned to speak or loses the ability to speak. For example, babies who have not yet developed language skills make facial expressions at a few months old that are similar to those of adults and, therefore, can generate meaning (Oster et al., 1992). People who have developed language skills but cannot use them because they have temporarily or permanently lost them or are using incompatible language codes, as in some cross-cultural encounters, can still communicate nonverbally. Although it is always a good idea to learn some of the languages of a client who may not speak the same language as you, gestures such as pointing or demonstrating the size or shape of something may suffice in fundamental interactions.

Nonverbal communication is also helpful in a quiet situation where verbal communication is disturbing; for example, you may gesture to signal to your professor that you are ready to leave the classroom. Crowded or loud places can impede verbal communication and lead people to rely more on nonverbal messages. Getting a server or bartender's attention with a hand gesture is more polite than yelling, "Hey you!" Finally, sometimes we know it is better not to say something aloud. If you want to point out a person's unusual outfit or signal to a friend that you think his or her date is incompatible, you are probably likelier to do that nonverbally.

Influencing Others

Nonverbal communication can be used to **influence** people in a variety of ways, but the most common way is through deception. **Deception** is typically thought of as the intentional act of altering information to influence another person, which extends beyond lying to include concealing, omitting, or exaggerating information. At the same time, verbal communication is to blame for the content of the deception; nonverbal communication partners with language in deceptive acts to make them more convincing. Since most intuitively believe that nonverbal communication is more credible than verbal communication, we often intentionally try to control our nonverbal communication when using deception. Likewise, we evaluate other people's nonverbal communication to determine the veracity of their messages. Students initially seem surprised when we discuss the prevalence of deception, but their surprise diminishes once they realize that deception is not invariably malevolent, mean, or hurtful. Deception has negative connotations, but people use deception for many reasons, including to excuse their mistakes, be polite to others, or influence others' behaviors or perceptions.

The fact that deception served a crucial evolutionary purpose helps explain its prevalence among humans today. Species that are capable of deception have a higher survival rate. Other animals engage in nonverbal deception that helps them attract mates, hide from predators, and trap prey (Andersen, 1999). To put it bluntly, the better at deception a creature is, the more likely it is to survive. So, over time, the humans who were better liars were the ones whose genes were passed on. However, the fact that lying played a part in our survival as a species does not give us a license to lie.

Aside from deception, we can use nonverbal communication to "take the edge off" a critical or unpleasant message to influence the other person's reaction. We can also use eye contact and proximity to get someone to move or leave an area. For example, hungry diners waiting to snag a first-come-first-served table in a crowded restaurant send messages to the people who have already eaten and paid that it is time to go. People on competitive reality television shows such as *Survivor* and *Big Brother* play what they call a "social game." The social aspects of the game involve the manipulation of verbal and nonverbal cues to send strategic messages about oneself in an attempt to influence others. Nonverbal cues such as the length of a conversational turn, volume, posture, touch, eye contact, and choices of clothing and accessories can become part of a player's social game strategy. Although reality television is not a reflection of real life, in real life, people do engage in competition and strategically change their communication to influence others, making it essential to be aware of how we nonverbally influence others and how they may try to influence us.

Affecting Relationships

To successfully relate to others personally and professionally, we must possess some skill at encoding and decoding nonverbal communication. The nonverbal messages we send and receive influence our relationships positively and negatively and can work to bring people together or push them apart. Nonverbal communication in the form of tie signs, immediacy behaviors, and expressions of emotion are just three examples illustrating how nonverbal communication affects our relationships.

Tie signs are nonverbal cues that communicate intimacy and signal the connection between two people. These **relational indicators** can be objects like wedding rings or tattoos that symbolize another person or the relationship, actions like sharing the same drinking glass, or touch behaviors such as hand-holding (Afifi & Johnson, 2005, p. 190). Touch behaviors are the most frequently studied tie signs and can communicate much about a relationship based on the area being touched, the length of time, and the intensity of the touch. Kisses and hugs, for example, are considered tie signs, but a kiss on the cheek is different from a kiss on the mouth, and a full embrace is different from a half embrace. If you consider yourself a “people watcher,” note the various tie signs you see people use and what they might say about the relationship.

Immediacy behaviors play a central role in bringing people together and have been identified by some scholars as the most crucial function of nonverbal communication (Andersen & Andersen, 2005). **Immediacy behaviors** are verbal and nonverbal behaviors that lessen the real or perceived physical and psychological distance between communicators and include things such as smiling, nodding, making eye contact, and occasionally engaging in social, polite, or professional touch (Comadena et al., 2007). Immediacy behaviors are a good way of creating rapport or a friendly and positive connection between people. Skilled nonverbal communicators are more likely to create rapport with others due to attention-getting expressiveness, warm initial greetings, and an ability to get “in tune” with others, which conveys empathy (Riggio, 1992, p. 12). These skills are essential to help initiate and maintain relationships.

While verbal communication is our primary tool for solving problems and providing detailed instructions, nonverbal communication is our primary tool for communicating emotions. Touch and facial expression are two primary ways we express emotions nonverbally. Love is a primary emotion we express nonverbally and forms the basis of our close relationships. Although no single facial expression for love has been identified, it is expressed through prolonged eye contact, close interpersonal distances, increased touch, and increased time spent together, among other things. Given many people’s limited emotional vocabulary, nonverbal expressions of emotion are central to our relationships.

Expressing Our Identities

Nonverbal communication expresses who we are. Our identities (the groups to which we belong, our cultures, our hobbies and interests, and so on) are conveyed nonverbally through the way we set up our living and working spaces, the clothes we wear, the way we carry ourselves, and the accents and tones of our voices. Our physical bodies give other impressions about who we are; some of these features are more under our control than others. Height, for example, has been shown to influence how people are treated and perceived in various contexts. Our level of attractiveness also influences our identities and how people perceive us. Although we can temporarily alter our height or looks — for example, with different shoes or colored contact lenses—we can only permanently alter these features using more invasive and costly measures such as cosmetic surgery. We have more control over other aspects of nonverbal communication regarding how we communicate our identities. For example, the way we carry and present ourselves through posture, eye contact, and tone of voice can be altered to present ourselves as warm or distant, depending on the context.

Aside from our physical body, artifacts, the objects and possessions surrounding us, also communicate our identities. Examples of artifacts include our clothes, jewelry, and space decorations. In all the previous examples, **implicit norms or explicit rules** can affect how we nonverbally present ourselves. For example, in a particular workplace, it may be a norm (implicit) for people in management positions to dress casually, or it may be a rule (explicit) that different levels of employees wear different uniforms or follow particular dress codes. We can also use nonverbal communication to express identity characteristics that do not match up with who we think we are. Through changes to nonverbal signals, a capable person can try to appear helpless, a guilty person can try to appear innocent, or an uninformed person can try to appear credible.

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1.10: Listening Versus Hearing

“Are you listening to me?” You may have been asked this question because the speaker thinks you are nodding off or daydreaming. Many mistakenly think of listening as a “passive” activity: We need to sit there and let words wash over us. Yet the reality is different. Effective listening demands active participation.

In our sender-oriented society, listening is often overlooked as an essential part of the communication process. Still, research shows that adults spend about 45% of their time listening, more than any other communicative activity. In some contexts, we spend even more time listening than that. On average, workers spend 55% of their workday listening, and managers spend about 63% listening (Hargie, 2011).

The Oprah Magazine featured a cover article titled, “How to Talk So People *Really* Listen: Four Ways to Make Yourself Heard.” This title leads us to expect a list of ways to leave listening to others and insists that they do so, but the article contains a surprise ending. The final piece of advice is this: “You can’t go wrong by showing interest in what other people say and making them feel important. In other words, the better *you* listen, the more you’ll be listened to” (Jarvis, 2009).

The adage, “We have two ears but only one mouth,” reminds us that listening is often even more important than talking. Still, many of us think that listening is the same as hearing and therefore put minimal effort into the process. The reality is quite different.

Listening versus Hearing

Hearing is an automatic brain response to sound that requires no effort. Most of the time, we are surrounded by sounds like airplanes, lawnmowers, furnace blowers, the rattling of pots and pans, and so on. We hear those incidental sounds, and unless we have a reason to do otherwise, we train ourselves to ignore them. We learn to filter out sounds that mean little to us, just as we choose to hear our ringing phones and other sounds that are more important to us.

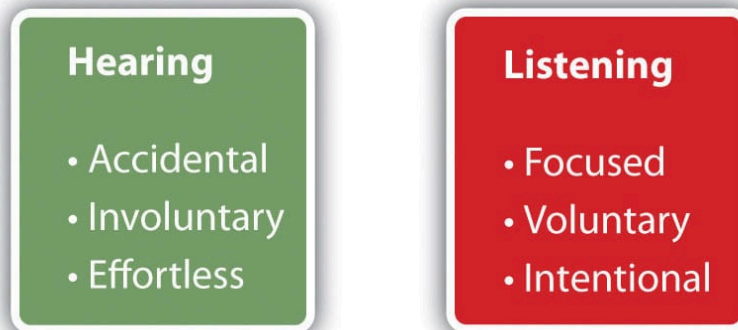


Figure 1.10.1: Hearing does not equal listening—the image of two boxes. [Hearing vs. Listening](#) by Anonymous. Licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](#).

On the other hand, **listening** is purposeful and focused rather than accidental. As a result, it requires motivation and effort. Listening is *active, focused, concentrated attention to understanding the meanings expressed by a speaker*. We do not always listen at our best; later, we will examine some reasons for this and strategies for becoming more active critical listeners.

Benefits of Listening

Today, you can gain much information and entertainment through reading and electronic recordings rather than real-time listening. If you become distracted and let your attention wander, you can go back and replay a recording. However, much of what we need to hear at work and in our relationships is not recorded and can not be replayed. There are many benefits to listening effectively and competently in real-time, including the compelling benefits discussed next.

Since listening is a primary means of learning new information, good listening skills help us complete tasks effectively at home, work or school and get things done. Second, when we listen attentively to others, we support them; thus, effective listening helps

us build and maintain satisfying relationships with those who are important to us. Third, listening to what others say about us helps us develop an accurate self-concept, which can help us put our best foot forward and communicate our identity in the best way possible. Fourth, practical listening skills can help us be better students and more successful professionals.

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1.11: Improving Listening Competence

Many people admit that they could stand to improve their listening skills. In this section, we will learn strategies for developing and improving competence at each stage of the listening process. We will also define active listening and the behaviors that go along with it. Looking back to the types of listening discussed earlier, we will learn specific strategies for sharpening our critical and empathetic listening skills. In keeping with our focus on integrative learning, we will also apply the skills we have learned in academic, professional, and relational contexts and explore how culture and gender affect listening.

Listening Competence at Each Stage of the Listening Process

We can develop competence within each stage of the listening process, as the following list indicates:

To improve listening at the receiving stage:

- Prepare yourself to listen
- Discern between intentional messages and noise
- Concentrate on stimuli most relevant to your listening purpose(s) or goal(s)
- Be mindful of the selection and attention process as much as possible
- Pay attention to turn-taking signals so you can follow the conversational flow
- Avoid interrupting someone while they are speaking to maintain your ability to receive stimuli and listen

To improve listening at the interpreting stage:

- Identify main points and supporting points
- Use contextual clues from the person or environment to discern additional meaning
- Be aware of how a relational, cultural, or situational context can influence the meaning
- Be aware of the different meanings of silence
- Note differences in tone of voice and other paralinguistic cues that influence the meaning

To improve listening at the recalling stage:

- Use multiple sensory channels to decode messages and make more complete memories
- Repeat, rephrase, and reorganize information to fit your cognitive preferences
- Use mnemonic devices as a gimmick to help with recall

To improve listening at the evaluating stage:

- Separate opinions, facts, inferences, and judgments
- Be familiar with and able to identify persuasive strategies and fallacies of reasoning
- Assess the credibility of the speaker and the message
- Be aware of your own biases and how your perceptual filters can create barriers to effective listening

To improve listening at the responding stage:

- Ask appropriate clarifying and follow-up questions, and paraphrase information to check to understand
- Give feedback that is relevant to the speaker's purpose or motivation for speaking
- Adapt your response to the speaker and the context
- Do not let the preparation and rehearsal of your response diminish the earlier stages of listening

(Ridge, 1993)

Active Listening

Active listening refers to pairing outwardly visible positive listening behaviors with positive cognitive listening practices. Active listening can help address many environmental, physical, cognitive, and personal barriers to effective listening that we discussed

earlier. The behaviors associated with active listening can also enhance informational, critical, and empathetic listening.

Active Listening Can Help Overcome Barriers to Effective Listening

Being an active listener begins before you start receiving a message. Active listeners make strategic choices and take action to set up ideal listening conditions. Physical and environmental noises can often be managed by moving locations or manipulating lighting, temperature, or furniture. When possible, avoid important listening activities during distracting psychological or physiologic noise. For example, we often know when we will be hungry, full, more awake, less awake, more anxious, or less anxious, and planning can alleviate these barriers. Knowing when you best listen can help you make strategic choices regarding which class to take and at what time. Of course, you do not always have control over your academic schedule, so you must utilize other effective listening strategies.

In the last section, we explored poor listening habits, including pseudo-listening, where we pretend to listen but do not listen.

Active Listening Behaviors

From the suggestions discussed, we can prepare for active listening in advance and engage in specific cognitive strategies to help us listen better. We also engage in active listening behaviors as we receive and process messages.

Eye contact is a crucial sign of active listening. Speakers usually interpret a listener's eye contact as a signal of attentiveness. While a lack of eye contact may indicate inattentiveness, it can signal cognitive processing. We usually do it unconsciously when we look away to process new information. Be aware, however, that your conversational partner may interpret this as not listening. If you do need to take a moment to think about something, you could indicate that to the other person by saying, "That is new information to me. Give me just a second to think through it." We have already learned the role that back-channel cues play in listening. An occasional head nod and "uh-huh" signal that you are paying attention. However, when we give these cues as a form of "autopilot" listening, others can usually tell we are pseudo-listening. Whether they call us on it or not, that impression could lead to negative judgments.

A more direct way to indicate active listening is to reference previous statements made by the speaker. Norms of politeness usually call on us to reference a past statement or connect to the speaker's current thought before starting a conversational turn. Summarizing what someone said to ensure that the topic has been satisfactorily covered and understood, or segueing in a way that validates what the previous speaker said, helps regulate conversational flow. Asking probing questions is another way to directly indicate listening and to keep a conversation going, since they encourage and invite a person to speak more. You can also ask questions that seek clarification and not just elaboration. Speakers should present complex information at a slower speaking rate than familiar information, but many will not. Remember that your nonverbal feedback can be helpful for a speaker, as it signals that you are listening and whether you understand. If a speaker fails to read your nonverbal feedback, you may need to follow up with verbal communication through paraphrased messages and clarifying questions.

As active listeners, we want to be excited and engaged but not let excitement manifest itself in interruptions. Being an active listener means knowing when to maintain our role as listeners and resisting the urge to take a conversational turn. Research shows that people with higher social status are more likely to interrupt others, so keep this in mind and be prepared for it if you are speaking to a high-status person or try to resist it if you are the high-status person in an interaction (Hargie, 2011).

Watch: Improve Your Listening Skills

As you watch this video, carefully consider the listening skills you can improve upon from personal and professional contexts.

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



View on YouTube for transcript: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2z9mdX1j4A>

Note-Taking



Figure 1.11.1: Good note-taking skills allow listeners to stay engaged with a message and aid in the recall of information. Image of a man taking notes in a notebook. In *Communication in the Real World* [open.lib.umn.edu]

Note-taking can also indicate active listening. Translating information through writing into our cognitive structures and schemata allows us to interpret and assimilate information better. Of course, note-taking is not always a viable option. Taking notes during a first date or a casual exchange between new coworkers would be fairly awkward. But in some situations where we would not normally consider taking notes, a little awkwardness might be worth it to understand and recall the information. For example, many people do not think about taking notes when getting information from a health professional. Students could be invited to take notes during informal meetings because they sometimes do not think about it or do not think it is appropriate. But many people would rather have someone jot down notes instead of having to respond to follow-up questions on information that was already clearly conveyed. To help facilitate your note-taking, you might ask, “Do you mind if I jot down some notes? This seems important.”

In summary, active listening is exhibited through verbal techniques such as summarizing, clarification, probing and paraphrasing, and nonverbal cues including steady eye contact with the speaker, smiling, slightly raised eyebrows, upright posture, body position that is leaned in toward the speaker, nonverbal back-channel cues such as head nods, verbal back-channel cues such as “OK,” or “oh,” and a lack of distracting mannerisms like doodling or fidgeting (Hargie, 2011).

Becoming a Better Critical Listener

Critical listening involves evaluating a speaker’s message’s credibility, completeness, and worth. Critical listening is also important in a democracy that values free speech. North American and Western European citizens have the right to free speech, which many people duly protect. Since people can say just about anything they want, we are surrounded by countless messages that vary tremendously regarding their value, degree of ethics, accuracy, and quality. Therefore, we must responsibly and critically evaluate the messages we receive. Intentionally misleading people produces some messages that are ill-informed or motivated by the potential for personal gain. Still, such messages can be received as honest, credible, or altruistic even when they are not. Evaluating messages critically helps us have more control over and awareness of the influence such people may have on us. To critically evaluate messages, we must enhance our critical-listening skills.

Some critical-listening skills include distinguishing between facts and inferences, evaluating supporting evidence, discovering your own biases, and listening beyond the message. We noted earlier that part of being an ethical communicator is being accountable for what we say by distinguishing between facts and inferences (Hayakawa & Hayakawa, 1990). This ideal is not always met in practice, so a critical listener should make these distinctions since the speaker may not. Since facts are widely agreed-upon conclusions, they can be verified through extra research. Take care in your research to note the context from which the fact emerged, as speakers may take a statistic or quote out of context, distorting its meaning. Inferences are not as easy to evaluate because they are based on unverifiable thoughts of a speaker or speculation. Inferences are usually based at least partially on something known, so evaluating whether an inference was made carefully is possible. In this sense, you may evaluate an inference based on several known facts as more credible than an inference based on one fact and more speculation. Asking a question like “What led you to think this?” is an excellent way to get the information needed to evaluate the strength of inference.

Distinguishing among facts and inferences and evaluating the credibility of supporting material are critical-listening skills that also require good informational-listening skills. Speakers may cite published or publicly available sources to support their messages in more formal speaking situations. When speakers verbally cite their sources, you can use the source’s credibility to

help evaluate the credibility of the speaker's message. For example, a national newspaper would likely be more credible on a major national event than a tabloid magazine or an anonymous blog. In regular interactions, people also have sources for their information, but are not as likely to note them within their message. Questions like "Where did you hear that?" or "How do you know that?" can help get the information needed for critical evaluations. You can look to future chapters to learn more about persuasive strategies and how to evaluate the strength of arguments.

Discovering your biases can help you recognize when they interfere with your ability to process a message fully. Unfortunately, most people are not asked to reflect critically on their identities and perspectives unless they are in post-secondary settings. Even those who were once critically reflective in post-secondary or elsewhere may no longer be so. Biases are also challenging to discover because we do not see them as biases; we see them as normal or "the way things are." Asking yourself, "What led you to think this?" and "How do you know that?" can be a good start toward acknowledging your biases.

Last, to be a better critical listener, think beyond the message. An excellent critical listener asks what is being said and what is not being said. In whose interests are these claims being made? Whose voices or ideas are included and excluded? These questions consider that speakers intentionally and unintentionally slant, edit, or twist messages to make them fit particular perspectives or for personal gain. Also, ask yourself questions like "What are the speaker's goals?" You can also rephrase that question and direct it toward the speaker, asking them, "What is your goal in this interaction?" When nearing an evaluation or conclusion, pause and ask yourself what influenced you. Also, check your emotional involvement to know how it may influence your evaluation. Also, be aware that how likable, attractive, or friendly you think a person is may also lead you to evaluate his or her messages.

Becoming a Better Empathetic Listener

Empathy is considered an essential component of the therapeutic relationship. This involves feeling *with* them rather than *for* them. In understanding the purpose and goals of the therapeutic relationship, an empathetic approach facilitates a nuanced understanding of your clients' lived experiences. It thus can help guide your plan of care.

Reflect

- Why do you think empathy is more effective than sympathy?
- Why does sympathy "not work"?

Empathy is the action of understanding, being aware of, appreciating, and connecting with the experiences, circumstances, and feelings of others. It involves using strategies to share understanding and connect with another person. While **sympathy** is commiserating with someone else's feelings or struggles, so that whatever affects one person will affect the other. It involves a shared mental state instead of developing an understanding.

Developing empathy is a skill that will allow you to consider another person's perspectives, experiences, and feelings, or their struggles and challenges. Empathy helps you equip yourself with strategies to effectively communicate this understanding of people around you. One of the key elements of empathy is the link between considering what one person is going through and reflecting on that, coming from a place of understanding. You do not need to be an expert communicator to use empathy, but this does not come without challenges, as you will find out next.

Watch the following short video explaining the difference between sympathy and empathy and how it works on a personal level. Before you watch, think about a time when you needed support and understanding from another person. Can you remember what they said? What effect did that have?

Watch: Empathy - The Human Connection to Patient Care

As you watch the following video, reflect on the often invisible needs of those around us and the difference we can make by creating caring human connections. The video shows different people in a hospital setting and then provides information about what they are thinking or why they are there.

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

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Compassion and empathy must also be distinguished conceptually. Like empathy, **compassion** is evoked by the experiences and suffering of others; however, a compassionate response typically involves action or commitment to not turn away. When healthcare professionals demonstrate compassion, they enter a client's suffering and commit to doing something about it. In other words, empathy gives rise to the response of compassion (Cooper, 2001). Importantly, empathy and compassion must be expressed without judgment and require setting aside perceptions of what it might be like *for you*. As such, it takes relational skills to feel with others yet maintain the objective approach necessary for alleviating the suffering of those you care for.

A prominent scholar of empathetic listening describes it this way: "Empathetic listening is to be respectful of the dignity of others. Empathetic listening is a caring, a love of the wisdom to be found in others, whoever they may be" (Bruneau, 1993). This quote conveys that empathetic listening is more philosophical than the other types of listening. We must be open to subjectivity and engage in it because we genuinely see it as worthwhile.

Combining active and empathetic listening leads to active-empathetic listening. During **active-empathetic listening**, a listener becomes actively and emotionally involved in an interaction so that it is conscious and perceived by the speaker (Bodie, 2011, p. 278). To be a better empathetic listener, we need to suspend or at least attempt to suppress our judgment of the other person or their message so we can fully attend to both. Paraphrasing is integral to empathetic listening because it helps us put the other person's words into our frame of experience without making it about us. In addition, speaking someone else's words in our way can help evoke within us the feeling that the other person felt while saying them (Bodie, 2011, p. 278). Active-empathetic listening is more than echoing back verbal messages. We can also engage in mirroring, which refers to a listener's replication of the nonverbal signals of a speaker (Bruneau, 1993, p. 194). Health professionals, for example, are often taught to adopt a posture and tone similar to their clients to build rapport and project empathy.

Paraphrasing and questioning are valuable techniques for empathetic listening because they allow us to respond to a speaker without taking "the floor," or the attention, away for long. Specifically, questions that ask for elaboration act as "verbal door openers," inviting someone to speak more and validating their speech through active listening cues, which can help a person feel listened to (Hargie, 2011). Paraphrasing and asking questions is also helpful when we feel tempted to share our stories and experiences rather than maintain our listening role. These questions are not intended to solicit more information so that we can guide or direct the speaker toward a specific course of action. Although it is easier for us to slip into an advisory mode, saying things like "Well, if I were you, I would ...", we must resist the temptation to give unsolicited advice.

Empathetic listening can be worthwhile, but it also brings challenges. In terms of costs, empathetic listening can use up time and effort. Since this type of listening can not be contained within a proscribed time frame, it may be challenging for time-oriented listeners (Bruneau, 1993, p. 194). Empathetic listening can also test our endurance, as its orientation toward and focus on supporting the other requires the processing and integrating of a lot of verbal and nonverbal information. Because of this potential strain, you must know your limits as an empathetic listener. While listening can be therapeutic, it is not appropriate for people without training and preparation to try to serve as a therapist. Some people have chronic issues requiring professional listening for evaluation, diagnosis, and therapy. Lending an ear is different from diagnosing and treating. If you have a friend exhibiting signs of a more serious issue that needs attention, listen to the extent that you feel comfortable. Then, be prepared to provide referrals to other resources who have had the training to help. To face these challenges, good empathetic listeners typically have a generally positive self-concept and self-esteem, are nonverbally sensitive and expressive, and are comfortable with embracing another person's subjectivity and refraining from too much analytic thought.

Becoming a Better Contextual Listener

Active, critical, and empathetic listening skills can be helpful in various contexts. Understanding the role that listening plays in professional, relational, cultural, and gendered contexts can help us more competently apply these skills. Whether listening to or

evaluating messages from a supervisor, parent, or intercultural conversational partner, we have much to gain or lose based on our ability to apply listening skills and knowledge in various contexts.

Listening in Relational Contexts

Listening is central to establishing and maintaining relationships (Nelson-Jones, 2006, pp. 37–38). Without some listening competence, we would be unable to self-disclose, which is essential for establishing relationships. Newly acquainted people get to know each other through increasingly personal and reciprocal disclosures of personal information. To reciprocate a conversational partner's disclosure, we must process it through listening. Once relationships are formed, listening to others provides a psychological reward through the simple act of recognition that helps maintain our relationships. Listening to our relational partners, we are taking an interest in their lives and are willing to put our own needs and concerns aside for a moment to attend to them. Listening is also closely tied to conflict, as a lack of listening often plays a significant role in creating conflict, while effective listening helps us resolve it. Being listened to in return is part of the give-and-take of any interpersonal relationship.

Listening and Culture

Some cultures place more importance on listening than other cultures. In general, collectivistic cultures tend to value listening more than individualistic cultures that are more speaker-oriented. The value placed on verbal and nonverbal meaning varies by culture and influences how we communicate and listen. A low-context communication style is one in which much of the meaning generated within an interaction comes from verbal communication rather than nonverbal or contextual cues. Conversely, much of the meaning generated by a high-context communication style comes from nonverbal and contextual cues (Lustig & Koester, 2006). For example, Canadians of European descent generally use a low-context communication style, while people in East Asian and Latin American cultures use a high-context communication style.

Contextual communication styles affect listening in many ways. Cultures with a high-context orientation generally use less verbal communication and value silence as a form of communication, which requires listeners to pay close attention to nonverbal signals and consider contextual influences on a message. Cultures with a low-context orientation must use more verbal communication and provide explicit details since listeners are not expected to derive meaning from the context. Note that people from low-context cultures may feel frustrated by the ambiguity of speakers from high-context cultures. In contrast, speakers from high-context cultures may feel overwhelmed or even insulted by the level of detail used by low-context communicators. Cultures with a low-context communication style also tend to have a monochronic orientation toward time, while high-context cultures have a polychronic time orientation, which also affects listening.

Cultures that favor a structured and commodified orientation toward time are said to be monochronic, while cultures that favor a more flexible orientation are polychronic. Monochronic cultures such as Canada value time and action-oriented listening styles, especially in professional contexts, because time is a scarce commodity and must be managed (McCornack, 2007). This is evidenced by leaders in businesses and organizations who often request “executive summaries” that only focus on the most relevant information and who use statements like “Get to the point.” Polychronic cultures value people and content-oriented listening styles, which makes sense when we consider that polychronic cultures tend to be more collectivistic and use a high-context communication style. In collectivistic cultures, indirect communication is preferred, whereas direct communication threatens the other person's “face” (desired public image). For example, flatly turning down a business offer would be too direct, so a person might reply with a “maybe” instead of a “no.” The person proposing, however, could draw on contextual clues that they implicitly learned through socialization to interpret the “maybe” as a “no.”

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1.12: Factors Influencing Interprofessional Communication

Several factors can influence interprofessional communication positively or negatively and can have varying effects on healthcare professionals and client outcomes.

The factors affecting interprofessional communication can be divided into three main categories: those related to the **physical environment**, those related to the **context**, and those related to the **communication styles** of the people involved.

You should consider these factors and how to modify your communication patterns for effective interprofessional communication.

Physical Environment

First, you will often be working in physical environments that are sometimes noisy and have many moving parts, including clients, families, and multiple members of interprofessional teams. In addition to the many people, there may be beeping machines and overhead announcements. You should be aware that this can cause sensory overload: health care environments are often unfamiliar to clients and their families, so you should consider this.

Context

Second, interprofessional communication in healthcare environments occurs in a complex context involving a lot of information and dynamic and complex clinical situations requiring a high acuity level. Healthcare professionals often work in fast-paced and high-pressure environments, making it challenging to communicate effectively. Time constraints may prevent professionals from communicating thoroughly, leading to errors or misunderstandings. It can be very intense, with life-threatening conditions, death, uncertainty, fear, and anxiety – and can lead to work overload. This context can also influence the dynamic nature and intensity of interprofessional conversations.

The hierarchical relationships in interprofessional teams and imbalances of power or ideas about power can also affect how individuals communicate and interpret conversations. You must communicate compassionately and systematically. The healthcare organization's culture can impact how professionals communicate with each other. For instance, a culture of blame or punishment for mistakes can discourage open communication and transparency.

Personal biases, such as stereotypes or prejudices, can impact how professionals communicate. For example, a nurse may make assumptions about a physician's competence based on race or gender. Professionals from different disciplines may have different goals and priorities, impacting communication. Communication can become fragmented or ineffective without a shared understanding of goals and priorities.

Communication Style

Third, each group of healthcare professionals has its own culture and communication styles, which may not align with those of other healthcare professionals. For example, nurses are often taught to be descriptive and embed narrative elements in their communication. This descriptive style capitalizes on a comprehensive and storied approach. Other healthcare professionals, such as physicians and pharmacists, are taught to be more concise and efficient. As you can imagine, these two communication styles may not always align, so you should reflect on how to tailor your communication to the person or group you are speaking with while still communicating your point of view. Education and communication skills training can be crucial in improving interprofessional communication. Without sufficient training, professionals may lack the skills and knowledge necessary to communicate effectively with each other.

Ineffective Communication

Some examples of ineffective interprofessional communication and strategies to manage each are presented below (*HCP = health care professional).

Disrespectful Communication

Example: HCP #1: "It's 11:00 a.m. already!" [shakes head in disapproval] "Goodness gracious, you haven't got her out of bed yet?! What's wrong with you?"

Effects: Demoralizes and demeans another person. Although there may be a reason why the client was not helped out of bed, the healthcare professional may feel disempowered and not share the information.

How to Manage: HCP #2 could respond: "It is probably better for you to inquire why I have not gotten the client out of bed. Your communication is disrespectful and disregards what is going on with Mrs. Hart. Would you like to know what is going on?"

Alternatively, HCP #1, who was initially disrespectful, could have engaged in a discussion guided by inquiry instead of blame and said: "I noticed Mrs. Hart is not out of bed yet. How can I help?"

Failure to Communicate Concern

Example: HCP #1: "The client's BP is 140/88."

HCP #2: "Okay."

Effects: The first healthcare professional stated a finding but did not indicate or emphasize their concern. Thus, the second healthcare professional did not recognize the need to be concerned or engage in a dialogue. Failure to communicate one's concerns can have a negative effect on patient outcomes.

How to Manage: When communicating, it is essential to explicate and emphasize when you have concerns and make sure that the individual with whom you are discussing it recognizes the importance of what you are saying.

For example, the conversation could be modified such that the concern is acknowledged, and they engage in a discussion about the plan of care:

HCP #1: "The client's BP is 140/88. This is unusual for this client; their baseline BP is 100/60. I am concerned about the high BP and think we should intervene."

HCP #2: "That is quite a jump. Is the client's pain well-controlled?"

Failure to Communicate the Rationale for an Action or Decision

Example: HCP #1: "Let's try putting the client in the prone position."

HCP #2: "You want us to roll the client onto their abdomen?"

HCP #1: "Yes."

HCP #2: "I think that will be difficult."

Effects: The communication is not dialogical because of the failure to communicate a rationale for an action or decision by either of these professionals. As a result, neither professional understands the perspective of the other.

How to Manage: When communicating, it is essential to provide the rationale for your actions and decisions. For example, the conversation could be modified so that each person's rationale is identified:

HCP #1: "Let's try putting the client in the prone position. Some recent research has suggested that this can improve respiratory function when a client has severe respiratory distress that is not responding to other interventions."

HCP #2: "I am concerned about rolling the client onto their abdomen with all the tubes and wires. Do you have a suggestion?"

HCP #1: "If you are open to it, I can get one more person, and we can do it as a team. What do you think?"

Unclear/Incomplete Communication or Miscommunication

Example: HCP #1: “Can you help Ms. Di Lallo with her breakfast?”

HCP#2: “Yes.” HCP#1: “She’s at Table 1.”

HCP#2: [walks over to the client], “Hi, Ms. Di Lallo. Are you ready for your breakfast?”

Client: “Yes, can you please pass me my coffee?”

HCP#2: [passes Ms. Di Lallo her coffee].

HCP#3: “Oh, hold on! Ms. Di Lallo, I need to thicken your coffee first.”

Effects: This unclear communication about the client’s diet led to a near miss. Unclear, incomplete, or miscommunication can result in client care errors and have serious consequences for their health.

How to Manage: When communicating, it is important to include all pertinent information to provide safe, effective care. All healthcare professionals need to clarify any communication shared.

For example, the conversation could be modified by ensuring that all the required information:

HCP#1: “Can you help Ms. Di Lallo with her breakfast?”

HCP#2: “Yes”

HCP#1: “Great, she’s at Table 1. Ms. Di Lallo has dysphagia, so you need to make sure all her fluids are thickened and follow the dysphagia diet protocol. The thickener should be on her tray. Do you have any questions?”

HCP#1: “No, I’m aware of the dysphagia diet protocol and will monitor Ms. Di Lallo during her meal.”

Ineffective Conflict Resolution on a Plan of Care

Example: HCP#1: “Mr. Pink said he does not feel ready to be discharged, and I agree.”

HCP#2: “I think I can determine when Mr. Pink can be discharged, considering I have been working with him for six months, and you just met him last week.”

HCP#1: “We must talk to the whole team.”

Effects: The communication is ineffective because the HCPs disagree about the client’s care plan. They are not focusing on the context of the interprofessional communication and/or explaining their reasoning based on the client’s needs. They focus on their opinions instead of using a client-centered perspective and evidence-informed approach.

How to Manage: In the case of a disagreement, HCPs need to effectively explain their reasons in the context of client-centered care and evidence-informed approaches. It’s always important to use effective conflict resolution strategies.

For example, the conversation could be modified as follows:

HCP#1: “Mr. Pink said he is not ready to be discharged. I agree with him because he has no support system to help him with his activities of daily living at home.”

HCP#2: “I believe he is physically and mentally ready to go home, but you make a good point. Let’s put together a plan for home care.”

HCP#1: “Great.”

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1.13: Self-Reflection in Interprofessional Communication

You are responsible for your communication, actions, and behaviors in a professional workplace setting. You should begin by engaging in the practice of self-reflection.

Start by thinking about your values concerning communication.

- What factors do you believe are essential in shaping how you communicate effectively?
- How do you speak with others?
- What bothers you or empowers you within a communication encounter?
- What are your strengths when communicating with another person?
- What are some areas for improvement in your communication?

Consider how your strengths and barriers may influence a communication encounter. For example, how do barriers influence your capacity to engage in communication and your capacity to deliver and receive a message?

Reflection on Communication Barriers

Your communication barriers may be very personal and developed as a child. Reflect on the following questions:

- Do you engage in excessively using first-person pronouns or delaying expressions (e.g., “I think that maybe, well, I wonder if the person needs to be assisted, you know?”)?
- Do you get nervous when speaking to another person or in a group? If so, how does that affect your communication? Do you avoid talking or stumble over your words? Do you avoid eye contact?
- Do you speak quietly to the extent that others have difficulty hearing you?
- Do you have communication quirks, such as saying “like” or “umm” a lot?
- Do you become distracted quickly and lose your point when talking?
- Do you lack focus, go on an unrelated tangent, and talk too much?
- Do you rely on jargon-words or expressions used by a particular profession or group that are difficult for others to understand?
- Do your emotions influence your capacity to engage in communication effectively?
- Are there any cultural differences that might affect your communication with another person?
- Do you feel you lack credibility?
- How do you feel about speaking up on issues you are concerned about when people around you do not share the same view?
- Are you comfortable seeking a resolution with another individual who has authority or power?

Next, reflect on the professional values of communication and what you strive to achieve. You may consider these in the context of health studies students within your chosen professional practice area and what is expected of you. For example, professional competencies often involve being a communicator, an advocate, a collaborator, and a leader. Each role will require you to communicate and use various strategies, including conflict resolution, to create and maintain professional relationships.

Some of your communication barriers may be related to your professional capacity. Reflect on the following points:

1. **Practice positive self-talk.** Healthcare professionals are often hyper-aware of their errors and assume our colleagues are as well. Consider what contributes to your self-perception as a professional — what is realistic and what is exaggerated?
2. **Ensure consistency in verbal and nonverbal communication** — reflect on how your nonverbal reactions correspond with the interprofessional context and the verbal communication. Do your thoughts pervade your actions and get inadvertently communicated to others?
3. **When possible, start by speaking with the colleague with whom you are in conflict.** Gossip and rumors often begin with the compulsion to share. Are you more likely to talk to someone directly or talk to others about a problem? Use “I” statements when possible. These statements require you to express what you think or feel instead of simply projecting on a colleague or (mis) identifying their motives/behaviors.

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2: ETHICS- THE MORAL COMPASS IN THE DENTAL OPERATORY

2.1: Values and Ethics

2.2: Licensure and Scope of Practice

2.3: Law and Ethics in Healthcare

2.4: Code of Ethics in Healthcare

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2.1: Values and Ethics

People strive to be “good,” to do the “right” thing, and to lead a “good life,” but where do such basic, familiar moral values as good and right originate? Throughout history, religious people have explained these ideas as revelations of divine command. Anthropologists, however, view morals as customs that govern social interactions, and because all cultures display such customs, they interpret moral practices in terms of a survival function rooted in human nature. By contrast, many social and political thinkers emphasize that moral concepts result from social conventions or agreements that are subject to deliberation and change. Governments today often consult social scientists and health experts who empirically investigate what fosters or improves human life, health, and happiness. Where science informs law and policy, it helps define, in a conventional sense, what we mean by good and right. In particular, health science helps establish what is considered good for the health of populations and communities. Further below, we will examine how ethics, the law, and the health profession interact and intersect. We will also explore some of the major sources of ethical challenges in healthcare.

Values and Ethics for Interprofessional Practice

The first IPEC competency is related to values and ethics, and it states, “Work with team members to maintain a climate of shared values, ethical conduct, and mutual respect” (Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2023). See this link from [Interprofessional Education Collaborative](#) regarding the sub-competencies related to this competency.

Ethics and Why They Matter in Healthcare

Ethics are a set of standards that govern the conduct of a person, especially a member of a profession. While ethical beliefs are held by individuals, they can also be reflected in the values, practices, and policies that shape the choices made by decision-makers on behalf of their organizations.

Principles are general categories, rules, or guidelines that form the basis of a discipline. In ethics, there are various kinds of principles and many examples of each kind. The kinds include basic ethical categories (e.g., virtues, values, or rights), ethical commands or rules of conduct (e.g., not stealing, not harming, or treating others with respect), and guidelines for weighing outcomes (e.g., achieving the greatest good for the greatest number, distributing burdens and benefits fairly, or properly proportioning benefit to harm).

Many people who study medical ethics say that the basics of healthcare ethics can be captured by four principles: respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. However, the concept of these four basic principles is widely used and serves as the starting point for many discussions of healthcare ethics.

Ethics Can Assist In

- Recognizing ethical issues and distinguishing them from factual issues
- Providing a vocabulary to systematically discuss ethics
- Identifying appropriate ethical principles to guide action in a particular context
- Using these principles to analyze actions in regard to their ethical acceptability
- Understanding the competing moral claims and values of stakeholders
- Designing alternative courses of action that incorporate these claims and values
- Evaluating which alternative best fits a given context, all things considered
- Establishing a procedurally just, transparent process for decision-making
- Justifying decisions regarding recommendations, policies, or interventions

Ethical principles like justice or respect for autonomy are simultaneously values, ideals, and the basis for deriving rules of conduct. When addressing complex or controversial issues or issues involving numerous stakeholders, many different principles can come into play. However, because ethical decision-making depends on context (e.g., on local circumstances, community stakeholders, and decision-makers), no formula can determine the most relevant ethical principles.

Healthcare professionals have an obligation to consider difficult questions about how far and wide their ethical duties extend. It is not reasonable to think that every individual healthcare professional is responsible for caring for every individual in the world. But

is each healthcare professional responsible for everyone in their community? How about everyone in the country? Furthermore, does the healthcare profession as a whole have a duty to society as a whole? Do healthcare professionals have to respect the rights of laboratory animals or the whole natural environment? These are difficult questions, and well-meaning people can have fundamentally different beliefs about the answers.

Ethics, The Law, and The Healthcare Profession

People in the medical profession are required to meet both ethical standards and legal standards. Sometimes these standards are one and the same. For example, it would be both an ethical violation and a crime to perform disabling surgery on a healthy person. Sometimes, ethical standards and legal standards overlap or interact, and they are subject to interpretation by both legal authorities and professional oversight committees. In other cases, ethical and legal standards may conflict. For example, even though a physician has an ethical duty to maintain patient confidentiality, a court may order the release of a patient's medical records for use in a lawsuit.

The relationship between professionalism and law is a two-way street. The law sets standards for professionalism, and standards set by a profession can provide a basis for legal responsibility. State medical practice laws are a primary source of legal standards of professionalism, but other state and federal laws also apply. Courts sometimes decide that a healthcare professional did not meet the bottom-line standard for professionalism. In other words, healthcare professionals are sometimes found legally liable for actions that are not specifically prohibited by law.

Another way in which law, ethics, and professionalism intersect is in the self-regulation of the healthcare profession. On one hand, the healthcare profession holds itself to lofty ethical goals. On the other hand, the severity of the potential consequences can make it difficult for the profession to police itself.

Sources of Ethical Challenges in Healthcare

It is beyond the scope of this textbook to review all the ways in which ethics intersect with healthcare. However, we will review a few of the major areas in which ethics pertain to interprofessional practice in the healthcare environment.

Informed Consent

A photo. A patient sitting at a table and reading a document on a clipboard is in the foreground, and a doctor is sitting across the table.

Figure 2.1.1: Obtaining informed consent is both an ethical and legal duty.

Informed consent is based on the duty to respect patient autonomy. Healthcare professionals are required to obtain informed consent from patients before administering treatment (or from participants before conducting research), as both a legal and ethical duty. Before giving informed consent, a patient needs to know the nature of the proposed treatment. This includes the purpose of the treatment and a description of how the treatment will be administered or performed. In order to give informed consent, a person also needs to know about the alternatives to the proposed treatment and the risks and benefits of each option.

One of the basic tenets of informed consent is that the patient must be capable of making medical decisions. An adult who is capable of making their own medical decisions must be given all the relevant information necessary to give valid informed consent. The information must be provided in a way that is understandable to the person being asked to consent, and they must voluntarily communicate a decision to accept the treatment or participate in the research study.

If an adult does not have the ability to make informed decisions, that person is said to lack the mental capacity to give informed consent. Typically, in these cases, another person is designated to make decisions for the patient. Alternatively, a child might have the mental ability and understanding to make their own decisions, but the law may deny them that right. In that case, the child is said to lack the legal capacity to give informed consent.

Sometimes an emergency situation is an exception to the rule of getting informed consent before treatment. For example, if a patient is unconscious and a surrogate decision-maker is not available in a life-threatening situation, it may be determined that the patient has given implied consent to treatment. Furthermore, some experts say that the principle of beneficence requires that treatment be provided under these circumstances.

Health Information Privacy

In the United States, the **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996** (HIPAA) is a federal law that requires most doctors, nurses, hospitals, nursing homes, and other healthcare providers to protect the privacy of a patient's health information. However, if the patient doesn't object, a healthcare provider or health plan may share relevant information with family members or friends involved in the patient's healthcare or payment for their healthcare in certain circumstances. The law also permits, but does not require, healthcare providers or entities to use and disclose protected health information, without an individual's authorization, in specific situations, such as for use in a public health dataset. Healthcare professionals should rely on professional ethics and best judgment when considering requests for these permissive uses and disclosures.

Conflicts of Interest

A **conflict of interest** is a situation in which a person has a private or personal interest sufficient to appear to influence the objective exercise of their official duties, as, say, a public official, an employee, or a professional.

Infographic. An icon representing a healthcare professional is in the center. This icon is surrounded by interests related to healthcare obligations (patient welfare, medical education quality, and medical research integrity) and interests related to personal benefits (financial gain, favors to others, professional advancement, and recognition).

Figure 2.1.2: Opportunities for financial gain, favors to others, professional advancement, and recognition may influence the decisions a healthcare professional makes regarding patient welfare, medical education quality, and medical research integrity. This is a conflict of interest. Adapted from "Ethics and Professionalism: Lecture C" by Oregon Health and Science University. Made with TechSmith Snagit™ assets. All rights reserved.

Conflict of interest is ethically important for two reasons. First, a person who is in a conflict of interest may not be able to exercise their duties in an objective, professional manner. In spite of their best intentions, their judgment may be biased in a way that leads to giving bad advice or making a bad decision. Just as importantly, if a conflict of interest is not dealt with properly, it can lead to a loss of faith in an entire decision-making process, and ultimately to a loss of faith in an entire organization.

It is important to see that conflict of interest is not an accusation, but rather a situation in which an individual may find themselves. Many people get this wrong, especially when discussing conflicts of interest in the public sphere. It is common, for example, for politicians to accuse each other of conflict of interest. However, there is nothing unethical about *being* in a conflict of interest. Being in a conflict of interest can happen to you through no fault of your own. The crucial question, ethically, is how an individual *handles* being in a conflict of interest. To be in a conflict of interest is not unethical, but failure to do the right thing when in a conflict of interest can be.

Ethical dilemmas

A conflict between ethical principles is called an **ethical dilemma**. People working in the healthcare field are often faced with ethical dilemmas, and although the four principles are a guide, they do not always provide an answer.

Sometimes, ethical issues are divided into those that are professional obligations and those that are aspirational:

- An obligation is a standard that must be met, the minimum of care that must be provided. Some examples of ethical obligations are to provide competent healthcare to individual patients and to make sure patients understand the risks and benefits of treatment.
- In contrast, an aspirational goal is a standard that would be met in an ideal world but is not currently achievable in the real world. Some examples of aspirational goals are providing equal worldwide access to care and finding cures for diseases that are currently incurable.

Barriers to Disclosing Unethical Behavior

Most healthcare professionals behave ethically, but sometimes, unethical acts or practices occur. General attributes of the culture of healthcare can make it difficult for people to report unethical behavior to their bosses or outside authorities.

A study into well-known cases in which institutions refused to acknowledge ethical lapses by doctors or researchers, even after extensive investigations, revealed that organizational culture can make it difficult to report ethical gaps.

Three general types of barriers to disclosing unethical behavior were identified:

- Personal motivations (e.g., loyalty to the profession)
- Institutional motivations (e.g., fear of negative publicity associated with a scandal)
- Shared understandings of how to behave (e.g., be confident and exercise independent judgment, or do not raise concerns with others).

This leads to another area in which law, ethics, and professionalism intertwine: whistleblowing. The term **whistleblower** refers to someone who reports illegal or unethical behavior to their superiors at work, or to outside authorities. A wide range of activities have been described as healthcare whistleblowing, from telling a patient about an error to disclosing violations of professional conduct that are occurring throughout an entire institution.

Deciding to “blow the whistle” can be a difficult choice, especially if a person fears that their reputation or career will be negatively affected by bringing unethical behavior to light.

Resolving Ethical Conflicts

[A photo. Healthcare professionals talking to each other at a meeting.](#)

Figure 2.1.3: When facing an ethical dilemma, healthcare professionals may benefit from input from their peers or an ethics committee.

A common way for healthcare professionals to resolve ethical dilemmas is to consult with others, including co-workers. In some cases, they might even consult a medical ethicist, a person who is specially trained to deal with ethical questions. This can be accomplished by having an ethics committee that is consulted to make ethical decisions. In the United States, all accredited hospitals must have a process for resolving ethical questions, and this usually takes the form of an ethics committee. Many long-term-care facilities and home healthcare organizations also have ethics committees. The members of the ethics committee usually represent the many kinds of people who have a stake in resolving ethical questions. This can include doctors, nurses, social workers, lawyers, members of the clergy, and people from the community who are not healthcare professionals.

Another way in which healthcare professionals may get guidance about a difficult ethical situation is to consult a code of ethics created by an organization related to their specific profession. A code of ethics may also be called an ethical statement, statement of professional conduct, or something similar. They can be statements of current professional standards, or they can be aspirational, seeking to raise the standards of the profession. Some codes of ethics contain both obligatory and aspirational statements. Review the following pages and take note of similarities and differences in expectations of ethical behavior:

- [American College of Healthcare Executives – Code of Ethics](#)
- [American Medical Association – Principles of Medical Ethics](#)
- [American Psychological Association – Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct](#)
- [American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science – Code of Ethics](#)
- [National Commission for Health Education Credentialing – Health Education Code of Ethics](#)

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2.2: Licensure and Scope of Practice

Licensure

Licensure is the process by which a governmental authority (usually a state or national board) grants permission to individuals to practice a profession, like medicine, nursing, or physical therapy. Licenses are issued after the individual has met certain qualifications, such as completing an accredited education program, passing exams, and meeting other state or national requirements.

Scope of Practice

Scope of practice defines the tasks, duties, and procedures that a licensed professional is legally permitted to perform, based on their qualifications and training.

The scope is typically established by state laws, professional regulations, and standards of practice within the healthcare field. The scope of practice ensures that healthcare professionals only perform tasks they are trained and certified to do, reducing the risk of harm to patients.

Relationship Between Licensure and Scope of Practice

Licensure gives a professional the legal authority to practice, but **scope of practice** limits what they can do based on their role, training, and education.



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2.3: Law and Ethics in Healthcare

Ethics in healthcare refers to the moral principles and values that guide decision-making and conduct in medical practice. Healthcare ethics focus on what is considered right or wrong in the treatment and care of patients, prioritizing respect, integrity, and compassion. Unlike laws, which are enforceable by legal systems, ethics are often governed by professional bodies and personal judgment.

Ethical Behavior

Selected virtues that influence ethical behavior:

- **Beneficence:** This principle refers to actions that promote the well-being of others. In healthcare, it involves taking steps to help or benefit patients, including providing care that enhances their health and quality of life.
- **Empathy:** Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. In healthcare, empathy is crucial for building rapport with patients and providing compassionate care.
- **Fidelity:** This concept involves loyalty, truthfulness, and keeping promises. In healthcare, it means being faithful to the commitments made to patients, colleagues, and the profession, ensuring trust and ethical responsibility.
- **Humility:** Humility is defined as recognizing one's limitations, weaknesses, and the need for ongoing learning. Healthcare providers with humility are open to feedback, self-improvement, and collaboration with others for the best patient outcomes.
- **Perseverance:** This is the determination to continue working hard despite challenges or difficulties. In healthcare, perseverance is essential for managing difficult cases, continuing care under stressful conditions, and advocating for patients.
- **Tolerance:** This attribute involves the acceptance and respect of different beliefs, practices, and values. In healthcare, tolerance is important when working with diverse patient populations, ensuring that care is delivered without bias or prejudice.

2.4: Code of Ethics in Healthcare

The **Code of Ethics in Healthcare** is a set of **guiding principles** that healthcare professionals follow to ensure they deliver ethical, compassionate, and competent care. It outlines the responsibilities and moral obligations of healthcare providers to patients, colleagues, and society as a whole.

Why is a Code of Ethics Important?

- **Establishes Trust:** Promotes trust between patients and healthcare providers by ensuring accountability and ethical decision-making.
- **Guides Practice:** Helps healthcare professionals navigate complex situations, such as end-of-life care, resource allocation, or conflicts of interest.
- **Protects Patients:** Ensures the safety, dignity, and rights of patients are respected at all times.

While different professions (e.g., nursing, medicine, pharmacy) have specific codes of ethics, the following lists outline the principles of ethics that are foundational across the field.

Autonomy

- Respecting patients' rights to make informed decisions about their care
- Informed consent is a key aspect of this principle, ensuring patients understand and agree to treatment options.

Beneficence

- Acting in the best interest of the patient by providing care that promotes the well-being and health of individuals

Non-Maleficence

- "Do no harm."
- Avoiding treatments or interventions that might harm patients, unless the potential benefits outweigh the risks.

Justice

- Ensuring fairness and equity in the distribution of healthcare resources
- Treating all patients with impartiality, regardless of their background, financial status, or other factors

Confidentiality

- Safeguarding patient information and respecting their privacy (E.g., HIPAA)

Fidelity

- Being loyal and trustworthy in the patient-provider relationship and maintaining professional commitments

Veracity

- Providing honest and transparent information about diagnoses, treatments, and outcomes

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3: IDENTIFY AND CREATE YOUR PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

3.1: Personality, Skills, and Interests

3.2: Online Portfolios

3.3: Building a Portfolio- Why You Should Show What You Know

3.4: Showcasing Your Artifacts- Show and Tell What You Know

3.5: Demonstrating Career Readiness- Highlighting Career Skills

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3.1: Personality, Skills, and Interests

Personality Type

Taking the time to ensure that your personality is compatible with your career choice is extremely important. If you do not invest the time now to figure out what makes you happy and keeps you motivated every day, you could be very unhappy in the future.

But why is personality so important? Learning about your personality allows you to think about your emotions, behaviors, and ways of thinking on a day-to-day basis. For example, do you prefer to work alone or do you prefer to work with others? Would you be content in a career that requires you to be extremely organized and have a set schedule? Or are you the type of person who likes to have an open, flexible schedule that allows you to be spontaneous? This information will assist you in deciding which career(s) match your personality preferences.

To review personality preferences, one of the most common tools used to understand personality preferences is based on the personality theory of Myers and Briggs. Businesses use the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI) to find out more about the personalities of their potential employees (very commonly used by police departments), some universities use the MBTI to learn more about the personalities of potential graduate students considering psychology, counseling, and social work fields, and it is commonly used in couples therapy (to help both individuals in a relationship understand each other and their behaviors better).

Watch: Discover Your Personality Types | Myers Briggs

Watch the following video to get an introduction of four facets that comprise the 16 possible personality types.

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



View on YouTube for transcript - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQoOqQiVzwQ>

Personality Theory: The 4 Facets

- Extroversion-Introversion (EI): How you get your energy and where you prefer to focus your attention
- Sensing-Intuition (SN): How you take in information about the world around you
- Thinking-Feeling (TF): How you like to make decisions
- Judging-Perceiving (JP): How you prefer to organize your life

Complete the following activity to identify your personality type based on your own self-reflection. As part of the course requirement, you will also be taking the MBTI personality test through our career center. Please check the syllabus for instructions. You can complete the following quick activity to self-identify your personality type. Then compare the results with the actual MBTI assessment to see how your results are similar and different.

Activity: What's Your Type?

Read descriptions for the four facets. Pick which is more like you.

- **E** (Extroversion) **or** **I** (Introversion)?

- **S** (Sensing) or **N**? (Intuition)?
- **T** (Thinking) or **F**? (Feeling)?
- **J** (Judging) or **P**? (Perceiving)?

Facet Characteristics and Types

Characteristics 1	Type 1	Characteristics 2	Type 2
Could be described as: • Talkative, outgoing • Like to be in a fast-paced environment • Tend to work out ideas with others, think aloud • Enjoy being the center of attention	Then you prefer (E) Extraversion	Could be described as: • Reserved, private • Prefer a slower pace with time for contemplation • Tend to think things through inside your head • Would rather observe than be the center of attention	Then you prefer (I) Introversion
Could be described as: • Focus on the reality of how things are • Pay attention to concrete facts and details • Prefer ideas that have practical applications • Like to describe things in a specific, literal way	Then you prefer (S) Sensing	Could be described as: • Imagine the possibilities of how things could be • Notice the big picture, see how everything connects • Enjoy ideas and concepts for their own sake • Like to be described in a figurative, poetic way	Then you prefer (N) Intuition
Could be described as: • Make a decision in an impersonal way, using logical reasoning • Value justice, fairness • Enjoy finding the flaws in an argument • Could be described as reasonable, level-headed	Then you prefer (T) Thinking	Could be described as: • Base your decision on personal values and how our actions affect others • Value harmony, forgiveness • Like to please others and point out the best in people • Could be described as warm and empathetic	Then you prefer (F) Feeling
Could be described as: • Prefer to have matters settled • Think rules and deadlines should be respected • Prefer to have detailed step-by-step instructions • Make plans, want to know what you're getting into	Then you prefer (J) Judging	Could be described as: • Prefer to leave your options open • See rules and deadlines as flexible • Like to improvise and make things up as you go • Are spontaneous, enjoy surprises and new situations	Then you prefer (P) Perceiving

What is your 4-letter personality type?

The following are brief descriptions of the 16 personality types from [Humanmetrics](#). Click on your personality type or a similar type to see which describes you best.

The 16 personality types

ES-Types	IS-Types	EN-Types	In-Types
ESTJ	ISTJ	ENTJ	INTJ
ESTP	ISTP	ENTP	INTP
ESFJ	ISFJ	ENFJ	INFJ
ESFP	ISFP	ENFP	INFP

Work Styles

O*NET Online provides an online tool that helps you to review your personal characteristics and how they can affect how well one performs a job. This tool is available via the [Work Styles](#) search function on O*NET Online. You can browse O*Net data by clicking on the quality that you think best represents you, including achievement, innovation, and leadership, to explore the different jobs that will require the specific characteristic.

Skills

In addition to personality, skills are also important to consider in the career development process. If you lived and worked in colonial times in the United States, what skills would you need to be gainfully employed? What kind of person would your employer want you to be? And how different would your skills and aptitudes be then, compared to today?

Many industries that developed during the 1600s–1700s, such as health care, publishing, manufacturing, construction, finance, and farming, are still with us today. And the professional abilities, aptitudes, and values required in those industries are many of the same ones employers seek today.

For example, in the health care field, just like today, employers look for professionals with scientific insight, active listening skills, a service orientation, oral comprehension abilities, and teamwork skills. And in the financial field, then, just like today, employers looked for economics and accounting skills, mathematical reasoning skills, clerical and administrative skills, and deductive reasoning.

Why is it that with the passage of time and all the changes in the work world, some skills remain unchanged (or little changed)? The answer might lie in the fact that there are two main types of skills that employers look for: hard skills and soft skills.

Hard Skills & Soft Skills

- **Hard skills** are concrete or objective abilities that you learn and perhaps have mastered. They are skills you can easily quantify, like using a computer, speaking a foreign language, or operating a machine. You might earn a certificate, a college degree, or other credentials that attest to your hard-skill competencies. Obviously, because of changes in technology, the hard skills required by industries today are vastly different from those required centuries ago.
- **Soft skills**, on the other hand, are subjective skills that have changed very little over time. Such skills might pertain to the way you relate to people, or the way you think, or the ways in which you behave—for example, listening attentively, working well in groups, and speaking clearly. Soft skills are sometimes also called “**transferable skills**” because you can easily transfer them from job to job or profession to profession without much training.

What Employers Want in an Employee

Employers want individuals who have the necessary hard and soft skills to do the job well and adapt to changes in the workplace. Soft skills may be especially in demand today because employers are generally equipped to train new employees in a hard skill—by training them to use new computer software, for instance—but it’s much more difficult to teach an employee a soft skill, such as developing rapport with coworkers or knowing how to manage conflict. An employer might rather hire an inexperienced worker who can pay close attention to details than an experienced worker who might cause problems on a work team.

In this section, you will look at ways of identifying and building particular hard and soft skills that will be necessary for your career path. You will also learn how to use your time and resources wisely to acquire critical skills for your career goals.

Transferable Skills for Any Career Path

Transferable (soft) skills may be used in multiple professions. They include, but are by no means limited to, skills listed below:

- Dependable and punctual (showing up on time, ready to work, not being a liability)
- Self-motivated
- Enthusiastic
- Committed
- Willing to learn (lifelong learner)
- Able to accept constructive criticism
- A good problem solver
- Strong in customer service skills
- Adaptable (willing to change and take on new challenges)
- A team player
- Positive attitude
- Strong communication skills
- Good in essential work skills (following instructions, possessing critical thinking skills, knowing limits)
- Ethical
- Safety conscious
- Honest
- Strong in time management

These skills are transferable because they are positive attributes that are invaluable in practically any kind of work. They also do not require much training from an employer—you have them already and take them with you wherever you go. Soft skills are a big part of your “total me” package.

So, identify the soft skills that show you off the best, and identify the ones that prospective employers are looking for. By comparing both sets, you can more directly gear your job search to your strongest professional qualities.

Activity: Identifying Your Skills

Objective:

- To self-identify your Top 5 transferable (soft) skills, skills you are good at, and those skills you wish to learn or develop further.

Instructions:

1. Review the list of transferable skills to complete the chart below.

Transferable Skills Activity Table

Number	Top 5 Skills I Enjoy Using	Top 5 Skills That Come Naturally	Top 5 Skills I Want to Learn
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Assessing Your Skills and Interests

In this section, you will continue to assess your skills and your interests in more depth. Most career assessment tests created to measure skills and interests are based on the career theory developed by Dr. John Holland.

Holland defined six categories of people based on personality, interests, and skills:

1. **Realistic:** These people describe themselves as honest, loyal, and practical. They are doers more than thinkers. They have strong mechanical, motor, and athletic abilities; like the outdoors; and prefer working with machines, tools, plants, and animals.
2. **Investigative:** These people love problem-solving and analytical skills. They are intellectually stimulated and often mathematically or scientifically inclined; like to observe, learn, and evaluate; prefer working alone; and are reserved.
3. **Artistic:** These people are the “free spirits.” They are creative, emotional, intuitive, and idealistic; have a flair for communicating ideas; dislike structure and prefer working independently; and like to sing, write, act, paint, and think creatively. They are similar to the investigative type but are interested in the artistic and aesthetic aspects of things more than the scientific.
4. **Social:** These are “people” people. They are friendly and outgoing; love to help others, make a difference, or both; have strong verbal and personal skills and teaching abilities; and are less likely to engage in intellectual or physical activity.
5. **Enterprising:** These people are confident, assertive risk takers. They are sociable, enjoy speaking and leadership; like to persuade rather than guide; like to use their influence; have strong interpersonal skills; and are status conscious.
6. **Conventional:** These people are dependable, detail-oriented, disciplined, precise, persistent, and practical; value order; and are good at clerical and numerical tasks. They work well with people and data, so they are good organizers, schedulers, and project managers.

Activity: What’s Your Occupational Type?

Objective:

- To determine your occupational types and code

Instructions:

1. Using the descriptions above, choose the three types that most closely describe you and list them in order in the following table. Most people are combinations of two or sometimes three types.
2. Then list the specific words or attributes that you feel describe you best.
3. After determining your primary, secondary, and tertiary occupational types, take the first initial for each type, in order, to establish your occupational code.

Occupational Type Activity Table

Occupational Type	Words and Attributes That Closely Describe Me
Primary type (the one I identify with <i>most closely</i>)	
Secondary type	
Tertiary type	

Note: Your occupational code is made up of the initials of the three personality types you selected, in order.

My occupational code:

(For example: if Social, Enterprising, and Conventional are your top three occupational types, your occupational code would be: SEC)

Exploring Careers and Your Occupational Type

Now that you have determined your top three occupational types, you can begin to explore the types of careers that may be best

suited for you. Holland studied people who were successful and happy in many occupations and matched their occupations to their occupational type, creating a description of the types of occupations that are best suited to each personality type. Just as many individuals are more than one personality type, many jobs show a strong correlation to more than one occupational type.

This is a rough beginning to finding your occupational type, but you will soon be seeking out more detailed results from the Strong Interest Inventory assessment as a part of this course.

Use the top three occupation types you defined in "Activity: What's Your Occupational Type?" to help identify careers you may want to consider from the table below.

Occupational Options by Type

Type	Ideal Environments	Sample Occupations
Realistic	- Structured - Clear lines of authority - Work with things and tools - Casual dress - Focus on tangible results or well-thought-out goals	- Contractor - Emergency medical technician (EMT) - Mechanic - Military career - Packaging engineer
Investigative	- Non-structured - Research oriented - Intellectual - Work with ideas and data	- Pharmacist - Lab technician - Nanotechnologist - Geologist - College professor
Artistic	- Non-structured - Creative - Rewards unconventional and aesthetic approaches - Creation of products and ideas	- Advertising career - Architect - Animator - Musician - Journalist
Social	- Collaborative - Collegial - Work with people and on people-related problems/issues - Work as a team or community	- Teacher - Geriatric counselor - Correctional officer - Coach - Nurse
Enterprising	- Typical business environment - Results oriented - Driven - Work with people and data - Entrepreneurial - Power focused	- Sales manager - Banker - Lawyer - Business owner - Restaurant manager
Conventional	- Orderly - Clear rules and policies - Consistent processes - Work with systems to manipulate and organize data - Control and handling of money	- Auditor - Insurance underwriter - Bank teller - Office manager - Database manager

You can also use the Department of Labor's O*Net Occupation Keyword Search (<https://www.onetonline.org/>) to get a deeper understanding of your occupation. For each occupation, O*Net lists the type of work, the work environment, the skills and education required, and the job outlook for that occupation. This is a truly rich resource that you should get to know.

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3.2: Online Portfolios

When an artist is asked about her work, she can dig into an oversized folder and slap down photographs or sketches that she feels best represent her artistic prowess. When a teacher is seeking a job, he can trot out, in paper form, his evaluations from student teaching, his lesson plans, and his written philosophy about education.

By comparison, how can a scientist or engineer, equipped with an armload of skills and bucketfuls of experience, effectively present this background to a potential employer in a way that is personal, relevant, interesting, and cohesive? Answer: an online portfolio.

Fields such as fine arts and education enjoy a long-standing tradition of portable portfolios as vehicles to showcase a student's best work. Now, thanks to the lightning-fast information age, where details can be zipped across virtual space, and both text and graphics can be rendered in neat, downloadable packages, all students can readily create online portfolios that they feel best represent their work and their lives. Essentially, an online portfolio is a series of linked webpages uploaded and maintained by the student—pages that represent the student both personally and professionally. An online portfolio is your chance to work with cache—a storage buffer in a computer's CPU—and to create cachet—a personal insignia representing your individuality and quality.

Publishing an online portfolio isn't just fun and creative—it's quickly becoming common practice for the best students in a program. Schools are now coaxing students to start creating portfolios as early as their first year of study, and they're hiring support staff and posting pages to be sure students have the tools they need to publish their work online. As described in most literature on the subject, preparing an online portfolio boils down to a three-step process: Collect, Select, and Reflect. Collection involves amassing your evidence and beginning to launch it into cyberspace; selection means culling the best pieces from your evidence; reflection is your opportunity to ponder and explain the choices you made about your portfolio pieces and even your life choices. And as you publish your portfolio online, following some basic principles of design will help ensure that your work makes an effective splash. The result is an organized virtual space where friends, family, and employers can gaze through a public window to catch intriguing glimpses of your online world.

Collect: Gathering the Parts of Your Portfolio

Think of your college experiences as a living mosaic. You've spent years completing diverse tasks or creating "snapshots" of your work: fine-tuning a project design, performing research, writing papers or memos, composing a resume, participating in group work, writing co-op reports, learning graphics packages, and earning grades. All of these experiences make for worthy candidates for your portfolio. You've also spent years gathering more personal "snapshots": IM sports participation, photographs of friends and pets, bookmarks of favorite websites, personal accomplishments, inspiring quotations, journal writings, society membership, awards, and hobbies. These are equally worthy candidates for a portfolio. Your collection process begins with you mentally cataloging each piece of the mosaic and deciding how to use it.

Most students begin to collect material for their portfolios by thinking of the work they've done as a printed product. With the professional resume being the most common and efficient standard of printable evidence available, almost all portfolios include an updated resume, perhaps downloadable as a PDF file. In fact, you might begin your portfolio simply by uploading your resume just to get you started, since the resume tends to be a critical cornerstone to the whole package. Portfolio writers also typically upload sample essays or reports they've written—again, these are common standards by which all students are judged. However, more creative students think about additional pieces of "printable" evidence for their portfolios—pieces that stress the student's skills as a communicator, a consultant, an engineer, a designer. Among the online portfolios I've seen, students have presented their Excel-based designs for everything from a coffee mug to a Battlebot; a copy of a PowerPoint presentation or an effective letter they wrote to the campus newspaper editor; the daily construction site logs they kept while completing an internship; scanned copies of handwritten evaluations they received from their co-op supervisor; even a sample family newsletter that they edited. Such pieces of evidence are usually presented essentially as they would look in a hard copy, thus inviting the viewer to print them off or read them right in the browser.

For those willing to think even further outside the box, portfolio contents can reflect such personal attributes as oral communication skills, reliability, aptitude for planning, creativity and innovation, level of community service, willingness to travel, quality of judgment, and even social responsibility. Some students create videos of themselves giving a speech or participating in a debate; others present tables that chart their course selection for each school year as a kind of "planning matrix," listing

the competencies they achieved as part of those particular courses. Still others offer pictures of themselves that they think will demonstrate those more personal assets that all employers are interested in, using photograph captions to define how they have developed intercultural awareness ("Here I am in a village in France, chatting with locals about. . ."), or why they believe in volunteerism ("This Habitat for Humanity project helped three families . . ."), or showing they have a sense of humor ("This is me, last Halloween, as Austin Powers.") In one portfolio I found online, the student included the gutsy invitation, "Click here if you dare to experience my singing voice," linked to an mp3 of him crooning away in his dorm room. (He had a pretty good voice, actually.)

Select: Choosing the Best Evidence

When selecting material to include in your portfolio, the first principle you should consider is privacy and suitability. You should only upload material that you would like to be directly associated with your name, and you must carefully consider whether you want to give out personal information such as a mailing address or phone number (giving out your e-mail address is, of course, pretty standard). Some portfolio writers are even hesitant to put photos of themselves online (though others bravely display their prom pictures, no matter how cheesy the tux or how high the hair-do). If you're especially concerned about privacy, you could cloak your portfolio contents by keeping the material password-protected, and you must always be careful not to give out highly private information that others could use, such as your social security number. A final point about privacy is that it works both ways—you must respect the privacy of others as well. This means that you shouldn't link to the pages of other individuals you know without their permission, and you also must attribute credit to any sources that you use, especially when borrowing material from someone else's website or posting copyrighted images.

Secondly, to give your portfolio coherence and continuity, try to think of all the material you select as pieces of unified evidence arguing the case that you're worth taking an interest in. Essentially, select material that inspires people to read and browse through your work, and choose artifacts that will demonstrate your growth over time (e.g., a paper from an introductory class as well as a senior thesis). Adopt an upbeat, welcoming tone ("In these pages, you'll discover exactly what makes me tick"), but also maintain enough professionalism to keep an employer's critical eye locked on your pages. Among the many portfolios I've browsed through, I've seen students take foolish risks such as publishing potentially embarrassing photographs (here I am, mooning my roommates), letting serious typos slip by ("Bachelor of Sciwence in Engginerring"), or revealing information that is too personal or leaves them open to judgment ("I've tried every beer on this list of 50 at least once, and some of them way too many times."). To emphasize the point of suitability, I've heard one instructor comment that you should only post something online if you'd be willing to show it to your grandmother. Though most students wouldn't go this far (and presumably most grandmothers would be pretty forgiving anyway), perhaps a good benchmark is that you only post material that you can be proud of a year from now, especially if you intend to advertise the URL to employers.

Finally, when selecting material, recognize the value of piggybacking. In addition to posting pages such as your home page, your resume, essays and reports, project designs, and photos, keep in mind that you can readily link your pages to those that others have created. Where logical, provide relevant links to your program or course descriptions, personal organizations with which you're affiliated, or pages that reflect your hobbies and personal interests.

Reflect: Being True to Yourself while Considering How You Come Across to Others

Good reflective writing is about reviewing what you've accomplished (or even what you'd like to accomplish someday) and projecting value. Students in technical fields often shy away from the concept of reflective writing, either out of unfamiliarity or because they hesitate to make private reflections public; yet reflective writing is standard and natural to most online portfolios. In fact, smart students realize that the portfolio is the safest place for reflective writing, in that it's inappropriate to make subjective, personal comments in a technical paper, resume, or cover letter, while it makes perfect sense in a portfolio. In an online portfolio, you have the space and opportunity to share your thoughts on everything from your personal passions to discussing how you performed in a particular course. The rules for such reflection are flexible, but there are some rules nevertheless.

The first rule I recommend is being selective about where the reflection occurs and how much of it you use. Reflecting on coursework right on your downloadable resume is neither conventional nor efficient, while trying to reflect on every single course you've taken as a student would be overwhelming both for you and your reader. However, creating a page that summarizes your experience and reflecting briefly on the value of each experience as you describe it makes perfect sense. ("I valued this job because it taught me how to analyze the network configuration needs of a small business." "This class taught me to use cascading style sheets—something I will apply to my future web designs.")

A second rule for good reflective writing is that it has a purpose both for you and your audience. Both you and your audience should be interested in commentary about why you chose your particular major, relationships (or the lack of them) that you see between your coursework and experience, and what sets you apart from others in terms of both training and life choices. In giving examples, especially related to your education, offer those that will demonstrate learning, change, empowerment, self-development, problem-solving, and results. Good examples are concrete, providing names, lists, scenarios, dates, definitions, etc. In the portfolios that I've reviewed, one student wrote an essay reflecting on how her intercultural understanding had been shaped by a year abroad, while another student wrote a few short poems defining his interest in engineering and even created a sketch to accompany each poem. Still another student took an even bolder stroke—writing about lessons she'd learned about teamwork after being reprimanded by a co-op supervisor for working too independently. What these students are doing in the process of reflection is not only taking stock of their personal assessment of their growth, but they're also preparing themselves for the toughest of interview questions. ("Tell me about the greatest challenge you've faced in life." "Argue to me how your education prepared you to work at our company.") Ultimately, effective reflection online is about learning to speak well in the company of others.

Finally, look for opportunities to write reflective comments on any major portion of your portfolio, including the resume, papers, projects, and photography, etc. The bottom line: If it's worth a menu-based category in your e-portfolio, it's probably worth reflective commentary.

Principles of Portfolio Design

Although the design of online portfolios can vary greatly, especially depending on the computer skills of the creator, I've found that the best portfolios share three traits: unity, navigability, and simplicity.

The more unified the pages of your portfolio are, the more likely we are to dwell there. Come up with a basic design and background for each page that is repeated on other pages, and keep associated items parallel with each other from one page to the next. Use headings for short blocks of text, and when you do need to use long blocks of text, such as in a complete essay, provide a ready means for us to return to the root pages of your portfolio. If you're handy with web editors, you can set up your portfolio so that when we click on outside pages that you've linked to, these pages will open in a separate new window—thus when we click them closed, we automatically return to your portfolio.

With these principles in mind, a unified design for one set of pages might go something like this: The page is entitled "My Design Projects," and it describes four projects you were involved in as part of your classwork and work experience. Each project has a short heading, written in boldfaced red text, followed by a short project description (just 3-4 lines long, in black text), and at the end of each description is the clickable line, "Click here to visit the project page." Between each description is a solid black line to enhance separation, and the background is white so that all text readily stands out. Also, at the left of each of these descriptions is a small screenshot (also clickable) of the page we'd visit to find out more about the associated project. Once we click to go into a specific project page, we see a "Click here to return to My Design Projects page" and a "Click here to return to my homepage" link at the top of the page. This basic form is repeated on other associated pages, and thus, we have a strong sense of unity to your portfolio, no matter what pages we are visiting.

Assuming a unified portfolio, one of the best ways to aid users in navigation is also the simplest—use icons and menus. We're used to thinking of icons as clickable, and we intuitively use menus—whether they appear at the top of the page or on the left side—to help us quickly drive through cyberspace. Many portfolio writers make sure the same clickable menu appears at the top of each portfolio page, with typical menu contents including simple, rapidly identifiable terms such as "Home," "Resume," "Major," "Projects," "Coursework," "Computer Skills," "Work Experience," and "Interests."

Beyond a menu or icon-driven strategy, you make your pages easier to navigate by creating a clear visual hierarchy on each page, by avoiding root pages that require a large amount of scrolling, and by making sure that we have clickable links readily available on every page. Most portfolio designers also avoid using frames, in that they create multiple scrollbars on the same page, and you run the risk of having your viewer miss one of the scrollbars or becoming confused about how the frames are related. Also, if your portfolio is optimized for a particular version of Netscape, Explorer, or Firefox, you should make your reader aware of that fact right on your homepage, and perhaps even provide a clickable link where the appropriate software can be downloaded.

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3.3: Building a Portfolio- Why You Should Show What You Know

What is a Portfolio?

A portfolio is you telling your story. For years, people assembled a notebook of their work to share with others; now, most people put that work online. It goes by many names: "ePortfolios," "digital portfolios," "digital dossiers," or just plain "portfolios," but the goal is the same--to tell your story about who you are and about what you have learned. According to the American Association of Colleges and Universities, it is "a personal website used to deepen student learning through reflection on, and curation of, work products produced across the college experience."

There are many types and purposes for portfolios.

Types of Portfolios

Professional Portfolio: Designed to showcase professional skills and communicate educational achievements.

Learning Portfolios: Designed to demonstrate learning in a class or a program.

Program Assessment Portfolios: Compilation of things you learned in your major that are used to assess your learning and often used to assess the program's efficacy.

Now that you know a little about portfolios, let's move on to answering the question, "Why should you build a portfolio and why should you make that portfolio available online?"

Why Should You Build a Portfolio?

It Can Help You with Career Focus

Building your portfolio can help you reflect on how your college courses connect to your future career. Research shows that students who reflected on the relevance of their coursework tended to be more motivated in their studies. When college students were asked, "How have you benefited from the process of portfolio development?" One student answered it best when they wrote, "The portfolio development itself is a means of becoming professional."

It Can Showcase Your Career Readiness

Once you begin to see how what you are learning in college connects to your professional goals, you become more career-ready. Employers can look at your portfolio and see your past positions as well as how the things that you have done in college prepared you for a career. The American Association of Colleges and Universities reported that most "employers say an electronic portfolio would be useful to them in ensuring that job applicants have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in their company or organization." Transcripts are good, "but ePortfolios are better" because they help you to tell your story. Nine in ten employers said they were "very likely" to click on an applicant's portfolio link, and ePortfolios ranked among the top five experiences that, according to employers, would make them more likely to hire a candidate.

It Can Help You Begin to Think of Your Professional Identity

Creating a professional portfolio helps you to think about your online presence. As you begin to work on your portfolio, it can help you think about what image you project, who you want to be, and how you want others to view you. A portfolio is also a good place to align your online presence by connecting your media in one place. For example, you can connect to your LinkedIn, your YouTube channel, and other media where you present yourself as a professional. Rowley and Munday's research highlights that the act of working on your online identity can help you find your voice, leading to a stronger sense of self as a professional.

It Can Let You Show Off to Your Friends and Family

This may seem like an unusual thing to highlight, but stay with me here. Chances are, you have family and friends who have helped you along your educational journey. For those who are helping to pay your way or helping you by giving emotional support, it can be rewarding for them to see your work. They like to see what you are doing, and they like to celebrate your achievements.

This benefits you in several ways. It helps to keep those in your social support network involved. Next, it helps others to see how you are evolving. Sometimes those you have grown up with have a hard time seeing you as more than just a child. Seeing your accomplishments and reading your thoughts helps them to see you as a professional. Many opportunities come from family and friends who are willing to say to someone they know, "Hey, check out my nephew's portfolio."

It Can Help You with Networking

Once you have your portfolio built, you can share the link with potential employers, with graduate schools, and with family and friends. Employers in one study suggested that there are often many good candidates to apply for a job, and they are willing to forward information about qualified candidates that they did not hire to friends and colleagues. One employer said they would be less likely to take the time to mail a resume or even download the resume, but the portfolio made it easy for them to send it forward to interested parties.

It Can Help You Be More Successful in College

You are more likely to push through and persist to graduation because you can "see the point" and can imagine the end goal. A report from the US Department of Education showed that students who build portfolios are more likely to have higher course completion rates and are substantially more likely to return to college from semester to semester. It makes sense that students who can make sense of what they are learning and how it applies to them are more likely to find meaning in their classes.

It Can Help You Document Learning

Your portfolio is a useful place to store your grading rubrics, research papers, and projects. When you upload those and add a personal reflection, it gives you a place to think about your learning. Once you have that in place, you can then show others what you have learned.

Peter Seldin asked students in his organizational behavior class what benefits they observed by doing student learning portfolios. Here are a few of their answers.

- Portfolios capture intellectual substance and deep learning in ways that other methods of evaluation cannot.
- Portfolios encourage improved student performance.
- Portfolios place some responsibility for assessing learning in the hands of the students instead of relying only on the judgment of others.
- Portfolios engage students in what they are learning so that transformation and internalization can take place.
- Portfolios lead students to relate new concepts to existing experiences and critically evaluate and determine key themes.
- Portfolios show evidence and learning that stems from deep reflection.

Reflection is at the very heart of portfolio learning. "Through deep reflection," Seldin writes, "Students explain what the evidence shows about what they have learned. They tell their own stories, assess their own strengths and weaknesses as learners, evaluate their products and performances, reflect on past learning, and think about paths for future learning." By telling the story of what you have learned, you are engaging in metacognition-- thinking about your thinking. Research indicates that by engaging in metacognition you are learning even more. Portfolios can help you show what you have learned, monitor what you have learned, and evaluate what you have learned.

Artifacts

Artifacts are the objects that you display in your portfolio that are intentionally chosen to tell your story. They are used to show what you know. It is important that you choose your artifacts to fit the purpose of your portfolio and that you organize and label them in a way that they forward your story.

Artifacts might be a number of different things: an essay, a photograph, an art project, a blog, a video, a lab report, and much more.

Reflection and Storytelling

You tell the reader why your artifact matters by writing a narrative reflection. This narrative should connect the artifact to the story about yourself that you are telling.

In addition, you may choose to include stories that help the reader to get to know you. This might be a story of how you overcame an obstacle or how you learned a new way to do things.

3.4: Showcasing Your Artifacts- Show and Tell What You Know

Making the Case for Your Credibility

Imagine you are a lawyer making a case for why a person is credible. You stand before the judge and the jury, and you describe the person and the things they have done. You show evidence to support your case. Just as a skilled lawyer meticulously assembles evidence to establish the credibility of their client, a portfolio serves as your compelling evidence, demonstrating your worthiness to be considered trustworthy and knowledgeable. Within these carefully curated artifacts lies the power to not only show that you attended classes, but that you actively absorbed and applied valuable knowledge.

An artifact, in this context, becomes the cornerstone of your credibility. You use it to prove to others what you know and why you can be trusted. It serves as tangible proof of your accumulated learning, practical experiences, and ambitions. Your portfolio is a way that you can tell your story. Whether you wish to highlight your creativity, your adeptness at forging intricate connections, or any other trait, the artifacts you choose are your storytellers.

In the same way, a lawyer doesn't merely present evidence, but meticulously explains its relevance; presenting an artifact isn't enough. It must be accompanied by your thoughtful reflection. You need to explain why your artifact matters. Never assume your audience will inherently grasp the connection; spell it out for them. If your story is that you are creative, then show artifacts that demonstrate your creativity and explain to them your creative process. If your story is that you can make complex connections, then show artifacts that support that story and write about how you brought the pieces together.

In this section, you will learn about artifacts and how to collect, select, reflect, and connect your artifacts. You will learn to consider lessons learned from leisure and will be asked to explore any high-impact practices you have engaged in. Your portfolio is not merely a process of assembling artifacts; it is a journey of self-discovery, purposeful selection, thoughtful reflection, and intentional connection.

Artifacts

Artifacts are evidence of what you have learned. They are used to demonstrate skills, show evidence of learning, document experiences, and showcase competencies. Artifacts typically are accompanied by a reflection to help your audience make connections. Look at the lists below for ideas and examples of artifacts used in portfolios.

Writing

- Essays
- [Science -based research paper](#)
- [Research papers](#)
- Journal entries
- Grants
- Art analysis
- Scientific Analysis Paper
- Blogs
- Reports
- Lesson plans
- Grant proposals
- [Scientific Writing -Children's Book](#)
- Case studies
- Research proposal
- Technical review of scientific literature
- Thesis or Dissertation
- Literature Review
- Worksheet to teach a concept

- [Research Philosophy](#)

Videos

- [Film](#)
- [YouTube Videos](#)
- [Teaching collages](#)
- [Speeches](#)
- [Performance videos](#)
- [Lectures](#)
- [Video Shorts](#)
- [Nonverbal conducting video](#)
- [Classroom video projects](#)
- [Recordings of classroom projects](#)
- [Slide show](#)
- [Conducting videos](#)
- [Video about an athlete's story from the media page](#)

Visuals

- [Photos showing you working](#)
- [Photos of artistic accomplishments](#)
- [Photos showing you doing research](#)
- [Graphic design work](#)
- [Drawings](#)
- [Scanned art projects](#)
- [Posters](#)
- [Paintings](#)
- [Three-Dimensional Art Projects](#)
- [Slideshow of your projects](#)
- [Digital projects](#)
- [Flow charts](#)
- [Flyers of programs you attended](#)

Audio Recording

- [Sound Cloud files](#)
- [Podcasts-Built for Earth](#)
[Podcast-Mosquito Control](#)
- [Musical recording](#)
- [Recitals](#)
- [Vocal tracks](#)
- [Musical arrangements](#)

Assignments

- [Group projects](#)
- [Spreadsheet analysis for teachers](#)
- [Presentation slides](#)
- [Sample lesson plans](#)
- [Capstone project](#)
- [Web page mock-up](#)
- [Journal presentation](#)
- [Specialized items for teaching artifacts](#)
- [Engineering capstone course](#)

Scientific Reports

- Lab reports
- [Lab work and collaboration](#)
- Mathematical proofs
- [Workflow chart for the project](#)
- [Research poster](#)
- Schematics
- [Math Paper](#)
- [Data visualization](#)
- [Petri net data analysis](#)
- [Research poster -example 2](#)

Business Applications

- Spreadsheets
- Financial reports
- [Marketing Plan](#)
- [Marketing Research Report](#)
- [Leadership Development Plan and Speech](#)
- [Strengths Quest, Strength Deployment Inventory](#)

Proof of Credentials

- Awards
- [Certifications](#)
- Digital badges
- [Press releases about achievements](#)
- [News articles about you](#)
- Scholarship/fellowship award letters
- Memberships
- [Posts about your work](#)

Special Projects

- [Internships](#)
- Internship at a veterinary [clinic](#)
- [Study abroad-Internship](#)
- Products from fellowship projects
- Volunteer experiences
- Service learning
- [Campus group](#)
- [Social media posts](#)

Many of these have links to examples for you to see how it looks in someone's portfolio. It is important to realize that every college and every class has different reasons and expectations for what should accompany an artifact. Be sure to check with your teacher regarding expectations around captioning and writing reflections for artifacts.

Four-Step Process: Collect, Select, Reflect, and Connect

Now that you know what an artifact is, you need to start gathering and making sense of your artifacts. This is a four-step process: collect, select, reflect, and connect.

1. Collect

As we already discussed, it is important to collect things to include in your portfolio. Create a computer file of items that show your learning. Include anything that you can show to build the case for your competency. Don't only show things that are perfect examples, but also include some things that tell a story of personal growth. In the collection phase, you want to have many things from which to choose.

2. Select

Once you have a collection of artifacts to pick from, start sorting through them to find ones that can best tell your story. You are looking for meaningful evidence to support the case that you are credible. As with all things in a portfolio, you should determine your audience and your purpose. You should always ask yourself, "Why am I writing this portfolio, and who will look at it? If you are applying to a graduate school that values writing, it will be important to showcase your research papers. If you are applying to be a teacher, you will provide your lesson plans as evidence. If you are applying to work as a curator of art, you will want to show your art projects.

Questions to ask yourself in the selection phase:

- How does this artifact illustrate your brand?
- Why will it matter to your portfolio's audience?
- How will you present this artifact to be engaging for viewers in your portfolio?
- Does this artifact advance the story that you are telling about your abilities?

3. Reflect

After you have selected your artifact, you need to write about what it means. This means writing a narrative reflection using the what, so what, now what process. In this step, the goal is to describe your artifact and how your interaction with it has transformed you.

Example: Reflections 3.4.1

- Check out how [Lea Bourgade](#) highlights an artifact. In the portfolio, they demonstrate the use of a Halo Sport product for a neuroscience experiment involving a violin. (It is as interesting as it sounds.) This is a great illustration of reflecting on an internship, using a YouTube video as an artifact, and writing a well-thought-out reflection that answers the what, so what, and now what.
- Look at how [Maggie Engler](#) uses the what, so what, and now what to reflect on a class project.

Ask yourself, "What did I learn by looking at these artifact examples?"

4. Connect

In the connect phase, you connect your artifact to the audience who will read about it, and you write in a way that forwards your purpose. You want to highlight how this artifact links to the larger picture of who you are and what you want.

Example: Connections

Notice in this example from Sydney Maples that she answers the what, so what, and now what questions.

The last paragraph also links what she has learned to other things she is doing.

Two pictures that are dots on a page with lines between showing locations of a brain disorder.

Figure 3.4.1: Sydney Maples' Artifact

The Introduction to Science Communication class that I took allowed me to blend my interest in neuroscience and computer programming. In addition, it gave me the opportunity to practice my science communication abilities through a variety of different genres, ranging from short-form articles to full literature reviews. For my final project, I was allowed to present on a scientific topic using any style or medium, and I chose to create a visual brain in a JavaScript platform using the d3 library, in order to visualize which regions of the brain are affected by specific disorders.

The two images on the side reflect a sample output of the application. The image on the left presents a picture of the landing page before a brain disorder is selected by the user. The image on the right is a picture of the nodes (represented by brain regions) of the brain, with the highlighted nodes representing the relevant regions to the brain disorder selected. The highlighted nodes are clickable, and selecting a node allows you to read more about the role that the brain region plays in the respective brain disorder. I intentionally designed this such that each network had a different color, providing an appendix (not pictured) that describes the general function of each brain network.

Though I had had a small bit of experience with JavaScript in a previous class, this class was (indirectly) my first “real” introduction, and I owe that to the independent nature of the project. Working on this project also showed me how compatible all the fields I am interested in can be together, and, more importantly, how they can overlap. [Sydney Maples](#)

Turn Leisure Activities into Career Lessons

Many people overlook the benefit of leisure activities in building career confidence. In many settings, you may decide to include them if you can connect them to meaningful life lessons. Consider artifacts that you can display to draw attention to these activities. Xavier Smith, Career Counselor at the University of Arkansas, often helps students write about and talk about leisure activities as valuable experiences, so I asked him to share his ideas:

Throughout college, you may engage in several activities that you would consider to be leisurely, such as intramurals, Greek life, or RSOs like yearbook. You do those things out of enjoyment, not necessarily for monetary gain or prestige. Additionally, you may find in college that some of your most impactful learning takes place outside of the classroom in times of leisure. You may not see it initially, but there are many workplace skills that you can learn in leisure activities skills, such as communication, teamwork, use of technology, professionalism, networking, and the list continues. You could consider skills as currency. Skills determine how much you're worth to a company, which ultimately may affect how much you may earn or even negotiate. Skills are massively important to the flexibility and trajectory of your career. So, let's talk about the types of skills you are developing.

Let me provide you with an example. Toward the end of my undergraduate career, I rediscovered an old pastime of roller skating. I decided to transition from skating with blades to quads to learn a new version of skating. The process was very taxing mentally and physically because I had a fear of falling. I did not want to embarrass myself in front of others. One day, a man in his seventies skated past me with style and stopped nearby to tell me that if I was not willing to fall, then I was not prepared to learn to be an advanced skater. I had to get over myself to get better. This taught me the importance of failure to inform the master of a task. It taught me the perseverance to persist in past initial frustration to achieve a goal. In the process, I learned how to teach others to skate, which also translated to me learning how to communicate. Roller skating was my leisure, and it informed the development of workplace skills.

- What lessons have you received from a leisure activity that can translate to the workplace?
- How would you describe the skills you developed?
- As a result of the leisure activity, who did I meet?
- How can I use the skills in other settings?
- What skills did I learn or use?
- What did I do that translates to a career skill?
- What did I learn about myself?

By highlighting the skills acquired through seemingly recreational pursuits, you can better understand your own capabilities, enhance your marketability, and navigate your career paths with a heightened sense of self-awareness and purpose.

Experiences Valued By Employers: Include Them If You Can

Some experiences carry a lot of weight with employers. Experiences where you have had an opportunity to apply what you have

learned, such as internships, work-study, community projects, and collaborative research, may elevate you as a job candidate.

Take a look at the chart below from the Association of American Colleges and Universities' [report](#), "How College Contributes to Workforce Success: Employer Views on What Matters Most." These are experiences that make you much more likely to be considered for employment by employers.

Percentages of employers who indicated they would be "much more likely to consider" hiring a college graduate with the following experiences.

Experiences	Percent
Completion of an internship or apprenticeship	49%
Experience working in a community setting with people from diverse backgrounds or cultures	47%
Had a job or engaged in work-study while in college	46%
Completion of a portfolio or work showcasing skills and integrating college experiences	45%
Exposure to global learning experiences	44%
Completion of multiple courses requiring significant writing assignments	42%
Completion of a community-based or service-learning project	41%
Completion of a research project done collaboratively with faculty	41%
Completion of an advanced, comprehensive project in the senior year	41%

High-Impact Practices

High-impact practices are those experiences that result in high levels of student learning. As you are brainstorming to think of artifacts to include in your portfolio, look at this list and see if you have experienced any high-impact practices that you might be able to showcase.

- Capstone Courses and Projects
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Diversity or Global Learning Projects
- First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- Internships or Apprenticeship
- Learning Communities
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Undergraduate Research
- Writing-Intensive Courses

Closing

As you embark on the journey of collecting, selecting, reflecting, and connecting your artifacts, remember that your portfolio is more than a compilation of achievements; it is a dynamic narrative that encapsulates your individuality. By displaying your artifacts and writing about them in meaningful ways, you can "show what you know." Your portfolio should resonate with the things you deeply care about and the wealth of knowledge from classes, leisure, and community activities that you have acquired. Throughout this process, consistently pause to assess whether the artifacts that you have chosen align with your purpose and audience. By doing so, you will not only craft a portfolio that reflects your journey authentically but also create a powerful story that lets others know of your skills and experiences.

This page titled [3.4: Showcasing Your Artifacts- Show and Tell What You Know](#) is shared under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Jami Van Enkevort via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

3.5: Demonstrating Career Readiness- Highlighting Career Skills

With so many things you might include in your portfolio, it can be hard to decide which things to include and which things to leave out. Research from the Associative American Colleges and Universities indicates that employers are looking for job candidates to showcase their career readiness by showing that they can demonstrate career competencies. In this chapter, you will learn about the career competencies and ways to include them in your portfolio.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) has done extensive research asking employers about what they are looking for in college graduates to demonstrate that they are career-ready and they have identified eight competencies. The list below comes from NACE. For each section, you will see a definition and sample behaviors. I have added examples of what these might look like in your portfolio.

Career and Self-Development

Proactively develop oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and outside one's organization.

Sample Behaviors

- Show an awareness of your own strengths and areas for development.
- Identify areas for continual growth while pursuing and applying feedback.
- Develop plans and goals for your future career.
- Professionally advocate for yourself and others.
- Display curiosity; seek out opportunities to learn.
- Assume duties or positions that will help you progress professionally.
- Establish, maintain, and/or leverage relationships with people who can help you professionally.
- Seek and embrace development opportunities.
- Voluntarily participate in further education, training, or other events to support your career.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Show certificates or badges demonstrating your training.
- List development programs or special lectures you attended and how you grew from the experience.
- Discuss your personal journey map or your goals.
- Write about examples of a project that you initiated and saw through to completion.
- Write a reflection about a strengths assessment that you took and what it means to you.

Example: Career Development in a Portfolio

Notice how Rachel does an excellent job of using the What, So What, and Now What model in her reflection, and notice how the pictures complement her story.



Figure 3.5.1: Portfolio images

Job shadowing has not only solidified my **commitment to making a meaningful difference** in the lives of children, but it has also equipped me with confidence and skills to become an impactful leader in my field. By establishing meaningful connections with professionals in my field, I have **embraced lifelong learning** and enhanced critical skills such as leadership, communication, and problem-solving. I had the privilege of shadowing a school psychology specialist, where I observed the complexities of student assessments, evaluations, and reporting. This experience gave me a deeper understanding of the field, emphasizing the importance of patience, adaptability, and effective communication with students and parents.

This opportunity not only **sharpened my technical skills** but also gave me clarity about my career path. It reaffirmed my passion for working more closely with children and **supporting their growth on a personal level**. Through observing experienced psychologists and counselors in action, I gained valuable insights into academic, intellectual, and behavioral challenges and how to approach them with empathy and critical thinking. These experiences have boosted my **confidence** in pursuing a career in psychology and counseling while also helping me **refine my leadership abilities** through the guidance of respected professionals.

Through this journey, I have gained valuable lessons in both career and self-development, learning that personal growth and professional success are deeply interconnected. This experience has empowered me to embrace both personal and professional growth, reinforcing my passion for **guiding the next generation** with **empathy, resilience, and purpose**. By immersing myself in real-world challenges and learning from experts, I am now more motivated than ever to pursue a career where I can **contribute positively and lead with compassion**.

Rachel Yordan, University of Arkansas

Communication

Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside an organization.

Sample Behaviors

- Understand the importance of and demonstrate verbal, written, and non-verbal/body language, and abilities.
- Employ active listening, persuasion, and influencing skills.
- Communicate in a clear and organized manner so that others can effectively understand.
- Frame communication with respect to the differing of learning styles, varied individual communication abilities, and cultural differences.
- Ask appropriate questions for specific information from supervisors, specialists, and others.
- Promptly inform relevant others when needing guidance with assigned tasks.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Show your graded speech or an outline of one of your speeches, and write a reflection about it.

- Show evidence of a persuasive social media plan, persuasive speech, or other persuasive act.
- Show a multimedia product from a class.
- Show an article you wrote for the newspaper.
- Show a press release.
- Present a paper that you wrote. Include the various drafts to show progression.
- Write about a grant or fellowship proposal that you wrote.
- Upload a video of a presentation that you gave.
- Provide a variety of writing samples: Research paper, poetry, blog, essay.
- Write a reflection about an encounter with someone different than yourself.

Examples: Communication in a Portfolio

Patricia Gonzales, Engineering, Stanford University

Rachel Smith, Communication and Film, Arizona State University

Critical Thinking

Identify and respond to needs based on understanding situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.

Sample Behaviors

- Make decisions and solve problems using sound, inclusive reasoning and judgment.
- Gather and analyze information from a diverse set of sources and individuals to fully understand a problem.
- Proactively anticipate needs and prioritize action steps.
- Accurately summarize and interpret data with an awareness of personal biases that may impact outcomes.
- Effectively communicate actions and rationale, recognizing the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of stakeholders.
- Multi-task well in a fast-paced environment.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Show a paper you wrote that involved complex reasoning and write a reflection about the process.
- Show a lab report where you gathered facts and came to a conclusion. Write about the process.
- Show photos of a problem-solving situation you encountered.
- Display a SWOT analysis or VIN diagram showing complex connections.

Leadership

Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.

Sample Behaviors

- Inspire, persuade, and motivate oneself and others under a shared vision.
- Seek out and leverage diverse resources and feedback from others to inform direction.
- Use innovative thinking to go beyond traditional methods.
- Serve as a role model to others by approaching tasks with confidence and a positive attitude.
- Motivate and inspire others by encouraging them and by building mutual trust.
- Plan, initiate, manage, complete, and evaluate projects.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Write reflections about your leadership experience.
- Write about your leadership philosophy

- Give examples of classroom projects where you took the lead.
- Write reflections about community projects where you were the leader.
- Take a leadership assessment and reflect on the results.

Examples: Leadership Highlighted in a Portfolio

[Montana Humphries](#) – Human Development and Family Science, Auburn University. Winner of Auburn Universities' Award for ePortfolio Excellence

[Brandon San](#) -Biology and Medicine, University of Washington

[Patricia Gonzales](#), Engineering, Stanford University

[Baylee Brown](#), Law Student, Tennessee Tech University

[Megan Diem](#), Marketing, Tennessee Tech University

Professionalism

Knowing work environments differ greatly, understanding and demonstrating effective work habits, and acting in the interest of the larger community and workplace.

Sample Behaviors

- Act equitably with integrity and accountability to self, others, and the organization.
- Maintain a positive personal brand in alignment with the organization and personal career values.
- Be present and prepared.
- Demonstrate dependability (e.g., report consistently for work or meetings).
- Prioritize and complete tasks to accomplish organizational goals.
- Consistently meet or exceed goals and expectations.
- Have attention to detail, resulting in few, if any, errors in their work.
- Show a high level of dedication toward doing a good job.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Reflect on artifacts such as this [internship time sheet with reflections](#).
- Write about a time you had to push to get the job done.
- Give an example of how you demonstrated [professionalism](#). (See [this example by Rachel Smith](#).)
- Show a teacher's evaluative comments where they commented about how you exceeded expectations.

Examples: Professionalism in a Portfolio

[Rachel Yordan](#), University of Arkansas

[Rachel Smith](#), Communication and Film, Arizona State University

Teamwork

Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.

Sample Behaviors

- Listen carefully to others, taking time to understand and ask appropriate questions without interrupting.
- Effectively manage conflict, interact with and respect diverse personalities, and meet ambiguity with resilience.
- Be accountable for individual and team responsibilities and deliverables.
- Employ personal strengths, knowledge, and talents to complement those of others.
- Exercise the ability to compromise and be agile.
- Collaborate with others to achieve common goals.
- Build strong, positive working relationships with supervisor and team members/coworkers.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Provide examples of team projects.
- Share any team leader feedback about your contributions.
- Share the results of any personality or team assessment and reflect on what it means.
- Provide the output of a team project and write about your contributions, your challenges, and your lessons learned.
- Show photos of you working as a team and write about what you learned.

Example: Teamwork in a Portfolio

Notice how Lidia does an excellent job of answering What, So What, and Now What?

The amount of work you put in is the outcome you get back. In the African Students Organization, I serve as the Content Creator, developing posts for our social media accounts and flyers for people to see, as well as submitting awards for the different programs we held. While I only create content, I have had the pleasure of being involved in all aspects of the organization by helping my other executive members. I work closely with the Webmaster, who is responsible for posting the content, working the website, and creating captions for posts. I felt a sense of personal responsibility to ensure that not only was our organization a legitimate one at the University of Arkansas, but also recognized African culture from the students who shared that. My parents were both born and raised in Arkansas, but I lived all my life in America. Because I was not well-versed in the experience of African students, I utilized the experiences and advice of my executive team, who were all born and raised in an African country, to develop informational posts. While I served my role to contribute to the organization, I was also able to work with my executive team to get help with some of the responsibilities my role entails. While getting help with some of my weekly content was helpful, the most notable instance of teamwork came from preparing for the African Gala Night.

The African Gala Night is the biggest event of the semester for our organizations. I was placed to head the food committee and publicity committee. In those roles, I helped to get a list of ingredients and a menu for the food that would be served during the time of the event. Being on the publicity committee was essentially the role of the Content Creator centered on the gala. I helped make posts and flyers to be publicized for students and non-students to see. While each executive member was a part of their committee, we eventually had an all-hands-on-deck mentality. It took extensive meetings, long nights of preparation, traveling to different places, and cooking before eventually finishing the night.

While my role consisted of only doing content, it was a great experience of helping others and getting help. Everyone has days when they may experience questions or encounter unexpected situations, so serving in a leadership position also entails helping others in times of need. I can say that I can not only be relied on, but I can also rely on them when I need help. That can look like asking upper executive members questions or ideas about potential future projects. Teamwork is an expected skill to have because there could be a time when a person experiences hardship or would like to collaborate on things where they rely on another person.



Figure 3.5.2: Lidia's Teamwork Photo

Technology

Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

Sample Behaviors

- Navigate change and be open to learning new technologies.
- Use technology to improve the efficiency and productivity of their work.
- Identify appropriate technology for completing specific tasks.
- Manage technology to integrate information to support relevant, effective, and timely decision-making.
- Quickly adapt to new or unfamiliar technologies.
- Manipulate information, construct ideas, and use technology to achieve strategic goals.

What This Might Look Like In Your Portfolio.

- Share any media projects.
- Share data sheets.
- List all programs where you demonstrate proficiency.
- Write a reflection of all the media used in a project.
- Write about a time that you had to adapt to a technology shift.

Pass on the Phrase, “Career Competencies.”

“Career competencies” is an insider’s phrase. It is used by career services professionals and some human resources professionals. Most employers and many graduate schools will not be familiar with the phrase, so consider incorporating specific phrases and examples that highlight your capabilities. In other words, you might have a portfolio page titled “skills” and then have communication and leadership highlighted on that page.

Skills Expected from Graduate Students in Search of Employment in Academic and Non-Academic Settings

Compare the career competencies to this list compiled as skills expected from graduate students. If you are using your portfolio to go to graduate school, you might want to focus on these items in your portfolio.

- Communication and Interpersonal Skills
- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Personal Effectiveness
- Integrity and Ethical Conduct
- Teaching Competence
- Societal and Civic Responsibilities
- Leadership
- Research management
- Knowledge mobilization and knowledge translation
- Career Management

[Full report](#) and a list of ways to demonstrate each are available online.

Closing

Your portfolio is not just a digital repository of your past accomplishments; it is a tool for showcasing your readiness to tackle real-world challenges. Employers are looking for you to provide concrete examples and quantify your achievements whenever possible, especially when it comes to showing that you have career competencies. By infusing your portfolio with artifacts and reflections that highlight career competencies, you are creating a professional portfolio to get you noticed by future employers.

4: RESUME- MINDSET TO MARKETING

- 4.1: Putting Together a Resume
- 4.2: Developing a Strong Resume
- 4.3: Writing the Conventional Resume
- 4.4: Quality Checking Your Resume
- 4.5: Common Action Words Used to Describe Job Experience

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4.1: Putting Together a Resume

What is a Resume and Why Do I Need One?

A resume is a representation of your skills, abilities, education, and work experience.

Each resume should be customized to fit the position to which you are applying.

You never get a second chance to make a first impression!!!

Types of Resumes

Chronological Resume: These resumes are organized by date. They list specific education and work accomplishments, and focus on industry experience.

Functional Resume: These resumes highlight qualifications. They can shift the focus away from gaps in employment. They are tailored to a specific employment opportunity.

Combination Resume: These resumes highlight transferable skills by focusing on 1-3 skill sets. They are more flexible and can include skills, accomplishments, and work history. This format allows you to customize the content you are sharing.

Resume Sections

1. Contact Information
2. Summary
3. Education
4. Skills/Certifications
5. Work, Internship, and Volunteer Experience
6. Activities/Honors and Awards

Let's Build Your Resume

Personal Contact Information

- Name
- Permanent Address
- Phone Number
- Email (Professional)
- LinkedIn URL
- Online Portfolio URL

Example: Personal Information

Emily M. Jones

123 Main Street | Omaha, NE 68110

(402) 555-1234 | EJones06@gmail.com

[LinkedIn Url](#)

What's at the Top?

- Professional Summary
- Area of Expertise
- Professional Experience
- Professional Qualifications

Skills Summary

Skills Summary / Technical Skills/ Technical Tool Kit

- What skills do you possess that are relevant to this opportunity?
- What technical skills do you have? Certificates, systems, programs, languages, projects, portfolios, coursework

Example: Summary of Skills

Summary of Skills

- Operating Systems: Windows 2003/2008 servers, Windows XP, 7-8, Mac OS X, Linux
- Databases: SQL, MySQL
- Applications & Software: Microsoft Office Suite, Oxygen XML, MySQL, Workbench
- E-mail & Mobile devices: Microsoft email systems, Google, iPhone, Android
- Programming languages: C, COBOL, Java

Hard and Soft Skills

Hard Skills

- Observed, measured, or trained to do
- Computer Skills
- Machine Operation
- Financial procedures
- Filing and bookkeeping

These are good skills for a resume and cover letter.

Soft Skills

- “People skills”, what your parents, friends, and teachers would say about you
- Leadership skills
- Communication skills & dependable
- Time Management
- Ability to take direction & learn quickly

These are good skills for an interview and cover letter (depending on your work experience, this may be left off your resume).

Experience

- Where have you worked in the past?
- What did you do?

- Promotions or Awards for Performance
- List at least 3 past positions OR the last 7 - 10 years
- Volunteer & Internship Experience

Volunteer/Community Service Experiences

- Included either under the Work Experience or Volunteer Experience section.
- Under Work Experience: For a significant period of time (not something you do every year for one day)

Example: Volunteer/Community Service Example

- Boys & Girls Club, Omaha, NE June 2014-present
 - Assist elementary students with math and science homework two days per week.
 - Monitor the front desk and answer general questions for visitors.
- Nebraska Humane Society, Omaha, NE 03/15-present
 - Responsible for the intake process and evaluating each dog that is admitted for adoption.

Caution

Do not include court-mandated community service.

Education

- What is your highest level of education?
- Certification (CPR, Microsoft, CNA)
- Include high school and college information

Example: Education

Which of these does not belong?

1. Metropolitan Community College, January 2014-Present, *Adult Education (GED)*
2. MCC GED Program - I have taken one of the tests

4.2: Developing a Strong Resume

Marketing Focus

Your resume is a marketing document that sells your candidacy. It provides an outline of your educational background, your work experience, and the key skills you have acquired. Your resume should be marketed in a format that is pleasing to read, efficient in its use of the English language, and so concise that it fits on one page. Once you have approximately ten years of experience, it is more acceptable to have a two-page resume, but until then, you should adhere to a one-page document. Recruiters can frown on the audacity of a college student with a two-page resume. Whether you are not sure you can fill a one-page resume, or whether you think it's not possible to fit your information to only one page, this section will help you get to your goal: an exceptional, one-page resume.

Quality, Clarity, and Accuracy

Your resume is the most critical component, or cornerstone, of your marketing campaign, and it must meet two important criteria:

1. Your resume must be written in a clear and concise manner so the reader can quickly grasp what you offer as a candidate. Most seasoned recruiters scan a resume in about seven to ten seconds, but do not let that short review time throw you. Recruiters have an eye for the key things to look for in a resume, so a lot of care should be put into its construction. That construction should highlight the following features:
 - Your strengths
 - Your responsibilities
 - Your accomplishments
2. Your resume must be completely error-free. A resume represents you when you are not there. Recruiters look for reasons to reduce the number of resumes to review, so one error can be all that is needed to discard your resume and your candidacy. This is true in both good and bad economies, so take great care to guarantee 100 percent accuracy. Proofread your resume several times, use spell check, and ask someone who is exceptional at proofreading to review it. Always assume that an error lurks somewhere in your resume and review it and review it and review it until you find that error! Resumes often have the following common errors:
 - Misspellings (Spell check does not catch every misspelled word; meat will not be corrected if you meant to write meet.)
 - Errors in verb tense (Past experiences should be written in the past tense, and current experiences in the current tense.)
 - Grammatical errors of any kind
 - Inconsistent formatting
 - Inappropriate length

How to Craft the Perfect Resume

This is a trick title because there is no perfect resume. You could always choose to have a particular bullet point written in ways that are grammatically correct, are results-oriented, and use action verbs, but writing a resume is not a perfect science. You could show your resume to five different recruiters, and you might get five different opinions. There is no need to worry. The important thing is that it is well-written and highlights your accomplishments (no matter how big or how not so big). It's important that the format be consistent and that you get an opinion from a professional, whether it is someone from career services, a professor, or a person who is currently working in the field in which you are most interested.

A well-written resume can do seven specific things for you and your job search:

It Represents You When You Are Not There

Your resume can be uploaded to global job boards like Monster, CareerBuilder, and others in a few minutes. It can be sent to a company's online database with the push of a button. It can then be shared with dozens of recruiters and hiring managers without you even knowing about it. In fact, it's a lot easier to get your resume in front of a recruiter than it is to have a physical presence in their office; therefore, make certain it's a well-written, well-positioned document that makes an exceptional first impression.

It Quantifies Your Accomplishments

The best resume quantifies results and accomplishments clearly and easily. Here are some examples:

1. If you reduced errors by 35 percent, if you increased profits by 55 percent, and if 75 percent of your customers are repeat customers, include this information clearly, succinctly, and proudly.
2. If you have been a student teacher with thirty-five students in a classroom and student grades improved by 25 percent, include that as well.
3. If you have worked as an administrative assistant in a dentist's office and you are part of a marketing team that has increased new patient accounts by 10 percent last quarter, include that!
4. If you worked in the school library and the number of lost books has declined by 50 percent, or if you provide guidance to approximately fifty students per day, that information should be in your resume.

Quantifying your accomplishments gives your resume readers the specific information they need to know about your abilities and to be intrigued by what you can do for them.

It Clearly States Your Abilities

Focus on the results of your actions. Being results-oriented helps resume readers understand your abilities. What exactly do you do, or what have you done in the past? Your resume should answer this question very quickly. For example, if you have been responsible for opening and closing a retail store on a daily basis and for managing the register that took in approximately \$5,000 worth of merchandise a day, state that clearly and concisely. If you have written three to four sports articles for your school paper every month for the past three years, include that as well.

The more you quantify your accomplishments, the more your abilities will be understood.

It Shows Your Command of the Written Word

You don't have to be an English major to make sure that your resume is well written. Visit the career services department and inquire about resume writing workshops. Be sure to participate in them and consider scheduling a 1:1 appointment with a career counselor for additional support with your resume. Ask an older sibling who is in the workplace to review your resume before it goes into cyberspace or to a future employer. Other options include asking a teacher, professor, or perhaps someone with whom you worked or for in the past to review your resume. Whatever the case, it is your responsibility to have a well-written resume. Remember that if it has one misspelled word, your resume could easily be dismissed, along with your candidacy. It's critical that your resume be accurate and well-written.

It Creates Talking Points for Your Future Interviews

Clearly listing your accomplishments and quantifying those accomplishments can create talking points for your future interviews. For example, perhaps your bullet point is the following:

- Responsible for the intake and outtake of approximately 1,000 books daily, ensuring that all library users are logged into the new electronic database, which has decreased the number of lost books by 80 percent in the past year.

Many individuals have to think about the results of their work. Including this detailed information in your resume actually allows you to easily talk about the value you've brought to previous employers. During an interview, with the preceding example in mind, you can easily talk about how you use technology to improve processes. You can discuss the team environment of the library staff and how you are all working toward decreasing the number of lost books. It shows that you have positively affected the bottom line by helping libraries hold onto books versus losing them, which results in unnecessary fees to library users.

It Proves Your Worth to Your Past Employers

Whenever including bullet points about past work, always tie your efforts to the bottom line. Earlier examples in this Unit included the following accomplishments:

- Reducing errors by 35 percent

- Increasing profits by 55 percent
- Boosting repeat sales to 75 percent

Information relating to a company's bottom line is exactly what employers want to read. Highlighting results like these increases your chances of having your resume noticed.

It Demonstrates What You Can Do for Your Future Employer

Unlike financial investments, past performance is an indicator of future success, so include and quantify your past performance, and future employers will be inclined to believe you can do the same for them. They will believe it, but you have to continue supporting that belief with your exceptional networking and interviewing skills. Interviewing skills will be addressed later in this Unit. Remember, however, that your resume is introductory in nature. You want to get their attention and initiate their interest so your foot can inch ever closer to getting in their door.

Resume Format

Perhaps the hardest part of writing a resume is figuring out what format to use to organize and present your information in the most effective way. There is no correct format, per se, but most resumes follow one of the four formats below. Which format appeals to you the most?

1. **Reverse chronological resume:** A reverse chronological resume (sometimes also simply called a chronological resume) lists your job experiences in reverse chronological order—that is, starting with the most recent job and working backward toward your first job. It includes starting and ending dates. Also included is a brief description of the work duties you performed for each job, and highlights of your formal education. The reverse chronological resume may be the most common and perhaps the most conservative resume format. It is most suitable for demonstrating a solid work history, growth, and development in your skills. It may not suit you if you are light on skills in the area you are applying to, or if you've changed employers frequently, or if you are looking for your first job.
2. **Functional resume:** A functional resume is organized around your talents, skills, and abilities (more so than work duties and job titles, as with the reverse chronological resume). It emphasizes specific professional capabilities, like what you have done or what you can do. Specific dates may be included, but are not as important. So if you are a new graduate entering your field with little or no actual work experience, the functional resume may be a good format for you. It can also be useful when you are seeking work in a field that differs from what you have done in the past. It's also well-suited for people in unconventional careers.
3. **Hybrid resume:** The hybrid resume is a format reflecting both the functional and chronological approaches. It's also called a combination resume. It highlights relevant skills, but it still provides information about your work experience. With a hybrid resume, you may list your job skills as most prominent and then follow with a chronological (or reverse chronological) list of employers. This resume format is most effective when your specific skills and job experience need to be emphasized. [Hybrid Resume Examples](#)
4. **Video, Infographic, and Website resume:** Other formats you may wish to consider are the video resume, the infographic resume, or even a Website resume. These formats may be most suitable for people in multimedia and creative careers. Certainly, with the expansive use of technology today, a job seeker might at least try to create a media-enhanced resume. But the paper-based, traditional resume is by far the most commonly used—in fact, some human resource departments may not permit submission of any format other than paper-based. [Video Resume Examples](#); [Infographic Resume Examples](#); [Website Resume Examples](#)

An important note about formatting is that, initially, employers may spend only a few seconds reviewing each resume—especially if there is a big stack of them or they seem tedious to read. That's why it's important to choose your format carefully so it will stand out and make the first cut.

Here are some [example templates](#) from College of the Canyons.

Resume Contents and Structure

For many people, the process of writing a resume is daunting. After all, you are taking a lot of information and condensing it into a very concise form that needs to be both eye-catching and easy to read. Don't be scared off, though! Developing a good resume can be fun, rewarding, and easier than you think if you follow a few basic guidelines.

Contents and Components to Include

1. **Your contact information:** Full name (avoid nicknames), address, phone number, professional email address
2. **Objective:** A brief statement sharing what you are looking for and what you have to contribute
3. **A summary of your skills:** 5–10 skills you have gained in your field; you can list hard skills as well as soft skills (refer to the Professional Skill Building topic in this course)
4. **Work experience:** Depending on the resume format you choose, you may list your most recent job first; include the title of the position, employer's name, location, and employment dates (beginning, ending). Use brief bullet point statements to list your responsibilities and achievements. Use action words to start each bullet point. Refer to the table below.
5. **Volunteer experience:** Highlight related experience or experiences that show additional skills.
6. **Education and training:** Formal and informal experiences matter; include academic degrees, professional development, certificates, internships, study abroad, etc.
7. **References statement (optional):** "References available upon request" is a standard phrase used at the end of resumes, or you may take a proactive approach and create a separate document that lists your references. See the sample below

Caution

Resumes resemble snowflakes in that no two are alike. Although you can benefit from giving yours a stamp of individuality, you will do well to steer clear of personal details that might elicit a negative response. It is advisable to omit any confidential information or details that could make you vulnerable to discrimination, for instance. Your resume will likely be viewed by a number of employees in an organization, including human resource personnel, managers, administrative staff, etc. By aiming to please all reviewers, you gain maximum advantage.

- Do not mention your age, gender, height, or weight.
- Do not include your Social Security number.
- Do not mention religious beliefs or political affiliations, unless they are relevant to the position.
- Do not include a photograph of yourself or a physical description.
- Do not mention health issues.
- **Do not use first-person references.** (I, me, my).
- Do not include wage/salary expectations.
- Do not use abbreviations.
- Proofread carefully—absolutely no spelling mistakes are acceptable.

Top Ten Tips for a Successful Resume

1. Aim to make a resume that's 1 page on letter-size paper.
2. Make it visually appealing.
3. **Use action verbs and phrases.** See Table 1 below for a list of action verbs.
4. Proofread carefully to eliminate any spelling, grammar, punctuation, and typographical errors.
5. Include highlights of your qualifications or skills to attract an employer's attention.
6. Craft your cover letter as a pitch to people in the profession you plan to work in (more on cover letters in the next section)
7. Stand out as different, courageous.
8. Be positive and reflect only the truth.
9. Be excited and optimistic about your job prospects!
10. Keep refining and reworking your resume; it's an ongoing project.

Remember that your resume is your professional profile. It will hold you in the most professional and positive light, and it's designed to be a quick and easy way for a prospective employer to evaluate what you might bring to a job. When written and formatted attractively, creatively, and legibly, your resume is what will get your foot in the door. You can be proud of your accomplishments, even if they don't seem numerous. Let your resume reflect your personal pride and professionalism.

Action Words

accelerated	expanded	launched	regulated
accomplished	expedited	maintained	related
achieved	extracted	managed	remodeled
acquired	fabricated	marketed	reorganized
administered	facilitated	mediate	repaired
advised	formulated	minimized	represented
analyzed	founded	monitored	researched
appointed	generated	motivated	resolved
approved	headed	negotiated	restored
arranged	helped	obtained	restructured
assisted	hired	operated	retrieved
assembled	identified	organized	reviewed
audited	illustrated	originated	revised
attained	implemented	overhauled	scheduled
delegated	improved	oversaw	shaped
demonstrated	increased	participated	solved
designed	headed	performed	sorted
determined	helped	persuaded	spoke
developed	hired	planned	streamlined
devised	identified	prepared	summarized
directed	illustrated	presented	supervised
distributed	implemented	prioritized	tabulated
drafted	improved	processed	taught
edited	increased	produced	trained
educated	initiated	programmed	translated
eliminated	innovated	promoted	trimmed
encouraged	inspected	proposed	upgraded
enhanced	installed	provided	utilized
enlarged	instructed	published	validated

established	integrated	recorded	worked
evaluated	interpreted	recruited	wrote
examined	interviewed		
exceeded	investigated		
executed			

4.3: Writing the Conventional Resume

The Heading

There is no title for this section; it's simply your name and contact information at the top of the page. This section is always presented at the top of the resume, taking up anywhere from two to five lines. Think of this section as highly readable data about yourself, and format and word it efficiently, following these principles:

- Do not title this section; simply provide your legal name, addresses, and phone numbers as shown in the examples. No matter how attached you are to it, do not use your nickname—use the formal name under which you will be cashing your paychecks.
- Either beneath your name or address, provide relevant e-mail addresses.
- Boldfacing and capitalizing your name is reasonably standard, though not required, and making your name stand out with a larger or fancier font is acceptable, but beware of graphic overkill.
- Never use titles such as "Resume" or "Personal Data Sheet" at the top of the page—redundant and silly; your name centered at the top automatically tells readers that the document is a resume.
- If the phone number you provide for contact information is a cell phone, note the information efficiently as you present the number. It's useful for readers to know whether or not they're calling a cell phone, because that fact can change their expectations slightly.
- If you've created a personal webpage or online portfolio, you might offer the URL so that readers can visit it for further information. The material at that URL should go beyond the resume and be professionally presented, of course.

Objective

Some resume writers do not include an objective, either for reasons of space, personal taste, or because they want to hand out a lot of resumes at a career fair and think that an objective might not allow them to cast as wide a net. But most undergraduate resumes do include an objective, embracing these principles:

- As a rule of thumb, include a job objective on an undergraduate resume. Keep it as short as is practical, with the goal of taking up no more than two lines of text.
- If possible, use an actual job title ("forecaster," "engineering intern") and provide the specific type of employer or type of position that you are seeking ("internship at a research facility," "entry-level position with a consulting firm").
- Avoid the overuse of phrases such as "a challenging position," "a progressive company," "an established firm"—you need not preach to the employer about its status or sound too picky. Your aim here is to categorize the role that you can fulfill.
- Your job objective can be tailored a bit to the position that you are applying for, but avoid mentioning a company's actual name in your job objective—the objective is intended to define a role, not a specific job at a specific place.

Education

In this section, be at your most objective on the resume—simply report the facts. The order of information is up to you, but most writers begin by providing the title and address of their school. On the next line, provide your exact degree title, including a minor or program emphasis if relevant. Include your projected graduation date, even if it is years away. Other material that might be included under "Education":

- **GPA:** Generally, include if it is a 3.0 or better; include GPA in major if impressive. Recognize that opinions vary about whether or not your GPA should be included on the resume, and that even if it is excluded, you may be expected to reveal it at some point to a potential employer anyway.
- **Dean's List:** Provide actual semesters or years.
- **Relevant Coursework:** List actual course titles or offer appropriately worded categories. You could combine courses for efficiency (i.e., Statistical Analysis I and II). Typically, you only include courses that you've actually completed or are currently enrolled in, although you might include projected courses followed by their target semester of completion in parentheses.
- **Curriculum Description:** This could be included to describe your background concretely. Turn to your school's descriptions of course curricula to help you with wording.
- **Study Abroad:** Always include it and provide the college's name and location. Most writers include the dates or semesters

of attendance as well.

- **Honor's Program:** Always include it as a representation of academic accomplishment.
- **Thesis:** Always include it and list it by title. In place of or in addition to the actual title, even a working title or a summary of the thesis contents or objective is useful.
- **Certifications/Training:** Consider a subheading under "Education" to reflect formal education that resulted in specialized knowledge or skills. Typical examples include CPR certification, OSHA HAZWOPER training, scuba diving instruction, and the completion of short courses.
- **ROTC/Military Training:** Especially if military training involved short courses and took place on college campuses, include it and give vital details such as course names, number of hours involved, times of completion, and certifications earned.

Experience/Work Experience/Employment

This section is the heart of the resume—the place where readers are likely to spend most of their time. Readers here expect concrete detail, an accessible format, and selective interpretation of detail. Methods used to achieve these goals include the following:

- Any of the above three titles is acceptable, though "Experience" is the most standard.
- The convention is to use the past tense throughout this section, even to describe jobs that you currently hold. Some writers elect to discuss current jobs in the present tense.
- As a rule, list your work experience in **reverse chronological order—most recent first**—and provide the actual dates of employment. Go back several years, even early into high school, if necessary. Provide exact job titles (invent them honestly if no actual titles were used), and give the locations of your employers. All jobs need not be directly relevant to the position you are applying for, *but be sure that the descriptions of your job duties are worded such that they enhance your accomplishments and responsibilities.*
- Use [action words](#) to describe your job skills and make each job description specific and efficient. Especially if you favor the present tense in your descriptions, you might use the "-ing" form of active verbs ("performing" rather than "perform").
- Do not feel compelled to describe every job duty ("waitstaff" and "newspaper carrier," for example, can be self-explanatory).
- As a rule, do not include your supervisor's name or phone number, unless you are seeking an internship (where formal applications are rare) and have express permission to do so.
- Including job salaries is rarely a good idea, but providing the number of hours you worked per week can be helpful.
- If computer skills were linked to your job duties, connect the work with them directly, even including software package names or describing what you used the computer programs for.
- Use identical margins and format for parallel items (e.g., line up all of your job titles with each other, and if you boldface one, then boldface them all).
- As you describe your experience, be certain to answer these two fundamental questions: "What was done?" and "How was it valuable?"

Computer Skills

Computer skills are not a mandatory resume section, although many students include it, knowing that employers are typically interested in your computer expertise. Present the material efficiently, as follows:

- Consider an overall approach that suits your skill level. Some students discuss computer skills in narrative form, others simply list their experience with specific hardware and software packages, and others combine computer skills and other types of skills into one section.
- If relevant, include the version number of software packages, programming languages, and operating systems you've used.
- If you worked on websites as part of your job or as a hobby, consider including the specific URLs so that the reader can access them. If you created an online portfolio that you're proud of, certainly offer that URL, perhaps even in the heading.
- Computer skills might be presented in a simple list or in the form of an informal table, depending on your level of expertise and space constraints.

Activities/Honors/Volunteer Work

For this section, choose whichever title or combination of titles above best fits your examples. "Activities" is the most commonly used. Honors could be presented separately if they are impressive enough or if there are simply too many to include within the "Activities" section. In addition, follow these tips:

- Dates are highly recommended, in that they illustrate your level of participation in activities, but some writers do exclude the dates and favor a simpler approach. Be consistent within the category in relation to whether or not dates are included.
- List the most noteworthy extracurricular activities and include offices that you have held. Include any honors you have received, especially scholarships, but do not repeat items that were included in other sections of the resume.
- Choose descriptions of your leisure activities wisely and sparingly, even to the point of presenting them all on one final line for the sake of efficiency.
- Try to include a conversation piece. I know students who have gotten into great discussions in interviews because they listed beekeeping, piano playing, or their golf handicap under "Activities."
- Use high school activities if needed, but avoid letting them sound too "high schoolish" as you present them (better to name your school sports team than to simply list "high school basketball"). Where possible, link your activities to a community or business ("Volunteer, Bear Creek Nursing Home") more so than to a high school, even if those activities took place when you were still in high school.
- The bottom line in this section: Provide a window into your uniqueness, whatever that uniqueness is. A volunteer firefighter, Eagle Scout, or licensed pilot can stand out as much as a scholarship recipient or professional sorority officer.

References

Employers generally like to see this section included as a convention and a courtesy, but in truth, it is optional because employers already know that you can provide them with references. When you do include a References section, heed this advice:

- Keep the section highly efficient, perhaps just one line long, i.e., **"References available upon request."**
- As a rule, do not include the actual names of your references on your resume unless you have their permission to do so and are simply seeking an internship or scholarship; for a full-time permanent position, you want your resume to inspire the employer to contact you and specifically request your references. Employers are often looking for specific kinds of references, and you do not want to hurt your chances by listing references who might not be quite right for their needs, or giving an employer the opportunity to call or write one of your references without your knowing about it.
- When references are formally requested, type up their full contact information, including address, phone, fax, and e-mail, on a page separate from your resume.

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4.4: Quality Checking Your Resume

Once your resume is composed, it must be quality checked. Three prominent issues that arise in a quality check are content, format, and computer-related problems.

Reconsidering Content

- Look over the resume and be certain you have considered effective wording and strong candidate material within each category, as detailed in the previous page of this manual.
- Consider accuracy and professionalism. If you simply volunteered at a position two hours per week, make sure your wording reflects this. Do your examples and wording reflect someone with a professional attitude, or are they too informal or potentially vague?
- Look over your job descriptions carefully. You should be reporting exactly what you did and how it was valuable. Make sure we can see that your work was of use to someone, and that performance was a concern.
- Browse for any major time gaps between jobs or other activities. If there are any, fill them in or otherwise eliminate them if possible.
- Review your Activities section with the idea of choosing an overall picture that reflects you and you alone. It should essentially contain an objective listing of information—data, and perhaps some description—unique to you. Your goal in this section is to make the reader want to meet you—to see you as an interesting and worthwhile person.
- Ask yourself: Have I only included content that I would feel comfortable discussing in an interview? At an on-site interview, your resume might be right on the interviewer's desk. Expect that you could be quizzed specifically about any resume content, and if you aren't sure you could pass such a quiz, eliminate the content.

Reviewing Overall Format

- With few exceptions, an undergraduate resume should be limited to one page.
- Maintain at least one-inch margins on all four sides of the page, and spread your information out so that it is visually balanced. Do not be afraid of white space as a formatting tool.
- Be sure you have used identical margins and format for related information. Keep parallel information parallel in form. For instance, treat all major headings in the same way.
- Exploit punctuation marks—especially dashes, semicolons, and colons—to present your material efficiently.
- Be line-conscious, especially horizontally, considering how much material can fit on a single line. If you are fighting for space and you see that just one or two words are gobbling up an entire line unnecessarily, revise accordingly.
- Remember that readers look at your resume left-to-right. Where logical, go to a new line for prominent new information. For instance, most writers put their degree name on a different line than their school name. Avoid line breaks that allow a single description of important information (say, your degree name or a course name) to spill onto more than one line.
- Present the final version of your resume on durable white or off-white paper. Absolutely avoid odd colors such as purple, green, or pink.

Making the Computer Your Ally

- Change font types or sizes if needed to fit the resume to one page, but use just one or two fonts throughout the resume—Times, Chicago, and Helvetica are popular resume fonts—and go no lower than 10-point and no higher than 12-point for the bulk of the resume text. Many writers do choose a larger or fancier font for their name at the top of the resume, but be sure it's readable and attractive.
- When lining up material, use tabs rather than space bars or even line up like columns by creating a table; otherwise, your output may appear differently than it does on the screen, or print differently from one printer to the next.
- If you need a bit more space horizontally for just a line or two, see if you can "stretch" the relevant lines by resetting the margin on the ruler at the top of the page just for the lines in question.
- Absolutely, work with a hard copy of your resume. Do not trust that the way it looks to you on the computer screen will exactly match the output.
- Proofread with perfection in mind, even having someone else proofread the resume, too. **Do not rely just on the spell checker**, and certainly not on the grammar checker—neither will ever be capable of proofing a resume effectively.

- If you need to submit the resume by e-mail to an employer, do not count on a Word version of the resume looking the same on someone else's computer as it does on yours—fonts may not translate perfectly, tabbed material may be misaligned, and line length may be compromised. The safest bet is to convert the resume to a PDF, check the resulting PDF to be sure it's exactly how you want it to look, and then e-mail the PDF file.

As a final quality check, seek a collective agreement that your resume is perfect. Other readers—your peers, professors, parents (gasp!), and the staff at your school's Career Center—can add fresh perspectives (and even corrections) to your resume. You get the last word, of course, but be sure that more than one other person agrees that you have presented yourself in the best possible way on paper. It pays off.

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4.5: Common Action Words Used to Describe Job Experience

List of Action Words

A-B	C-E	E-L	M-Q	R-Z
Accepted	Coordinated	Experienced	Made	Recognized
Achieved	Correlated	Experimented	Maintained	Recommended
Adapted	Counseled	Explained	Managed	Reconciled
Adjusted	Created		Mapped	Recorded
Administered	Critiqued	Facilitated	Measured	Recruited
Advised		Financed	Mediated	Reorganized
Allocated	Decorated	Formed	Modeled	Reported
Analyzed	Defined	Formulated	Moderated	Researched
Appraised	Delegated	Founded	Monitored	Retrieved
Approved	Demonstrated		Motivated	Reviewed
Arranged	Designed	Generated		Revised
Assembled	Detailed	Governed	Navigated	
Assessed	Determined	Grouped	Negotiated	Scheduled
Assigned	Developed	Guided	Nominated	Screened
Assisted	Devised			Served
	Diagnosed	Handled	Observed	Set forth
Balanced	Digitized	Headed	Operated	Shaped
Budgeted	Directed		Ordered	Simplified
Built	Discovered	Implemented	Organized	Solved
	Displayed	Improved	Originated	Sorted
Calculated	Dissected	Improvised	Overcame	Sparked
Catalogued	Distributed	Increased		Strengthened
Checked	Drafted	Indexed	Participated	Supervise
Clarified		Informed	Performed	Supplemented
Classified	Earned	Initiated	Persuaded	Systematized
Collected	Edited	Innovated	Pioneered	
Communicated	Effected	Inspected	Planned	Trained
Compared	Empowered	Inspired	Predicted	Transcribed
Compiled	Encouraged	Installed	Prepared	Transformed
Composed	Enforced	Integrated	Presented	Translated
Computed	Engineered	Interpolated	Presided	
Conceived	Enlarged	Interviewed	Prioritized	Unified
Conducted	Enlightened	Investigated	Produced	Utilized

A-B	C-E	E-L	M-Q	R-Z
Confronted	Enlisted		Programmed	
Constructed	Established	Justified	Promoted	Valuated
Consulted	Estimated		Protected	Validated
Contracted	Evaluated	Keynoted	Provided	Verified
Controlled	Examined			
Converted	Executed	Led	Quantified	Weighed
Conveyed	Expanded	Logged	Questioned	Wrote

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5: PROJECTING YOUR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY- COVER LETTERS AND INTERVIEWS

5.1: Putting Together a Cover Letter

5.2: Writing Cover Letters

5.3: The Cover Letter

5.4: Interviewing

5.5: Preparing for an Interview

5.6: Tips for Interviews

5.7: Professional Letters

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5.1: Putting Together a Cover Letter

Why Do We Use a Cover Letter?

The purpose of a cover letter is to tell a prospective employer what you can do and why you are qualified. A good, well-planned cover letter is just as important as an impressive resume, and together they form an important resource in your job campaign.

Good Cover Letter + Good Resume = Better Chances of Getting Hired

Cover Letter Format

Date

Name of Person

Job Title

Company/Organization

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr./Dr./Ms./Mrs.

Dear Hiring Representative:

Example: Cover Letter Format

February 4, 202X

Dr. John Smith

Villa Rosa

56 Northeast Avenue

Dublin, OH 43444

Dear Dr. Smith:

First Paragraph

What you are applying for and how you found out about the position (e.g., name the specific position or type of work for which you are applying). Mention the resource used in finding out about the opening or company/organization.

Example: First Paragraph

It is with great interest that I am applying for the position of Volunteer Management within Villa Rosa. I learned about this opportunity from Kristen Hall, of your Volunteer Program, who highly encouraged me to apply. I believe that my educational background in Child and Family Development, combined with my extensive experience at the Columbus YWCA and my excellent interpersonal skills, make me a strong candidate for the position.

Body Paragraph(s)

Your resume only shows a small picture of what you bring to the table. Let this section be where you paint a more detailed picture for them.

Answer these questions: Why do you want this job?

- Why are you interested in the position?
- What can you contribute to the position/company?
- What soft skills do you have that match this position?
- What have you done that qualified you for the job? (includes work, volunteer, and other experiences)
- What problem can you solve for this company?

Example: Second Paragraph

What appeals to me about Villa Rosa is your wide range of vital services to young mothers and expectant mothers, including a prenatal residential program and the Postnatal House. As you can see in my enclosed resume, I have developed the skills that will make me a good fit. My Bachelor's degree in Child and Family Development and my Volunteer Management course taken at the Volunteer Center of Columbus have acquainted me with the principles of volunteer recruitment, training, motivation, supervision, and evaluation.

I have considerable experience in working with young women in a helping capacity, both through my position as a peer counselor at the Columbus YWCA and as a camp counselor at a camp for behaviorally troubled adolescents. I can also offer you my experience in individual counseling, facilitating discussion groups, and teaching young people about health issues – all of which relate directly to the services which I would be training volunteers to provide within your organization.

Woo'ing Paragraph

- Why do you want to work for this company? RESEARCH
- Why do you want to be a part of this organization?

Example: Woo'ing Paragraph

In addition to my related experiences in the field, I also possess strong computer skills as well as proficiency in Spanish that may be very useful in your workplace and may add diversity to your work environment.

Closing Statement/Paragraph

- Refer the reader to the enclosed resume or other application instrument.
- What is the call to action?
- Include any additional information you think is important for your future employer to know.
- The closing paragraph of your cover letter must be one of the strongest elements because it is the last impression you leave in the reader's mind.

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5.2: Writing Cover Letters

When reading cover letters, the key benchmark I use is simple: Do I get to know both the person and the professional? As we read a cover letter, we should have a sense that no other candidate could have written this particular document in this particular way. Hence, we respect and honor the individual.

In conversation, the term "cover letter" is used loosely to mean any professional letter that you write in an attempt to get a job, with the term "cover" denoting that the letter is usually a "cover piece" designed to introduce and accompany your resume. Thus, too many writers think of the cover letter as mere mechanical introductory fluff—disposable goods—when in fact it can be more important than your resume.

The best tip that I have heard on cover letter writing is that the letter is for the *audience*, not for you. Certainly, you are selling yourself, but you do that best by molding your skills to what an employer needs and by knowing all that you can about your audience. This tells you that you should visit a company's website, read the company literature, and have a specific person's name and title to write to (you can always request this by phone or e-mail before you write). In sum, know what your audience is interested in and how you might fit into a company's plans, not the other way around. Unless an employer instructs you otherwise, always include a cover letter with your resume as you apply for a job.

Tone: Making it Sound Good

- The proper tone for the cover letter is that of an informed, straightforward, courteous, relaxed, literate writer.
- Use "I" comfortably as a sentence subject, but avoid being too informal—overusing contractions or jargon could make you appear unprofessional.
- Avoid being too cocky, aggressive, idealistic, or unrealistic; come off as mature, self-aware, and confident.

Appearance and Mechanics: Making it Look Good

- Limit cover letters to one page, and type them using single-spaced or 1.5-spaced typing, with about one-inch margins or more on all sides of the page.
- Skip lines between paragraphs.
- Favor short paragraphs over long ones.
- Use highly readable, tight fonts, such as Helvetica or Times, and point sizes no larger than 12 and no smaller than 10.
- Spell check, then proofread the hard copy carefully. Present the final version of the letter on durable white or off-white paper.
- Mail your letter and resume flat in a large envelope rather than folded in a small one. That way, they will be easier to read and Xerox.

The Heading and Greeting: Following the Formats

- At the top right or left corner of the page, type your address, your phone number, your e-mail address, and the date. Below that, at the left margin, put the name, title, and address of the person receiving the letter.
- Skip a line or two, then type "Dear," the person's title (Dr., Ms., Mr.), name, and a colon.
- If possible, find out the proper title, spelling, and gender of the receiver of the letter (all it usually takes is a phone call or a little web surfing). If you cannot be certain of the recipient's gender, it is acceptable to use both the first and last name (i.e., "Dear Jan Morris"). If no name is available, use a logical title such as "Dear Human Resources Representative." Greetings such as "Dear Sir or Madam" and "To Whom it May Concern" are old-fashioned—some even find them offensive—and should be avoided.

The Opening Paragraph: Showcasing Your Homework

- Ideally, open with a reference to how you derived knowledge of the company or position.
- If possible, provide context by some artful name dropping ("Ms. Judith Sowers, a Quality Control Specialist in your Meredith plant, informs me that you are seeking . . ."). Otherwise, simply be forthright about why you are writing the letter ("I am writing

to you because . . .").

- Include particulars about the company's activities and vision—prove that you have done your homework and know something about the company's products and mission. Even quote a mission statement if you can.
- Establish your own professional context by naming your major and school.

The Body Paragraphs: Selling your Skills

- One paragraph may suffice here, but use more if necessary, especially if you have several different skills or experiences to sell. Stick to one topic per paragraph.
- Through concrete examples, provide evidence of your work ethic and success—cite courses, co-ops, papers, projects, theses, or internships you have completed. Make your examples both quantitative and qualitative. Some writers use a bulleted list to introduce narrative examples of their skills. Some even provide URLs for their home pages or other web pages they helped to create.
- Introduce your resume ("As the enclosed resume shows . . .") and interpret it for your audience rather than simply repeat its details. Apply your education, work experience, and activities directly to the job, proving that you are a highly capable candidate.

The Closing Paragraph and Signoff: Exiting Gracefully

- Keep your closing short and simple. Do not waste time. Be gracious and sincere, not falsely flattering nor pushy. Respectfully indicate your desire for further action, reminding the company of your availability.
- Remembering that a company could try to call you over a break or during the summer, indicate relevant phone numbers right in the text. Provide your e-mail address as well.
- Under the final paragraph, skip a line or two, then, directly under your heading address, type "Sincerely," then hand write and type your name beneath.
- Indicate that a resume is included along with the letter by typing the word "Enclosure" at the left margin near the bottom of the page.

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5.3: The Cover Letter

A cover letter is a professional business letter that accompanies your resume and introduces you to the employer. It states the position you are applying for, your interest in the job and the company. It is designed to hook the reader and spark their interest in reading your resume.

Your cover letter should be engaging, informative, and show your command of the written word. It should flow easily from a reader's perspective, making the connection between the opportunity and your ability to succeed if given the chance. The tone should be compelling. You should be excited about the opportunity, and you should be confident of your ability to succeed (even if you truly lack the confidence).

The format of your cover letter should involve three basic parts:

- **The Introduction:** The introductory paragraph states the position you are applying for, how you heard about it, and why you are interested in the position. If someone referred you for the position, mention their name. The goal is to hook the employer and motivate them to want to review your resume and invite you for an interview!
- **The Closing:** the final paragraph shows enthusiasm for working for the company. Request an interview to further discuss the position and state that you will call within a week to follow up. Thank the employer for their time and consideration.

The body of the cover letter is the most important part. To help you craft a strong body, it is important to match your qualifications with those the employer is looking for. To help you do this, you will need to study the job description in great detail. Extract the main functions, tasks, and desired qualifications from the job description and give examples from your past work experience to illustrate how you are a good fit.

With each resume you send out, always include a cover letter specifically addressing your purposes.

Characteristics of an Effective Cover Letter

Cover letters should accomplish the following:

- Get the attention of the prospective employer
- Set you apart from any possible competition
- Identify the position you are interested in
- Specify how you learned about the position or company
- Present highlights of your skills and accomplishments
- Reflect your genuine interest
- Please the eye and ear

Sample Cover Letter Template

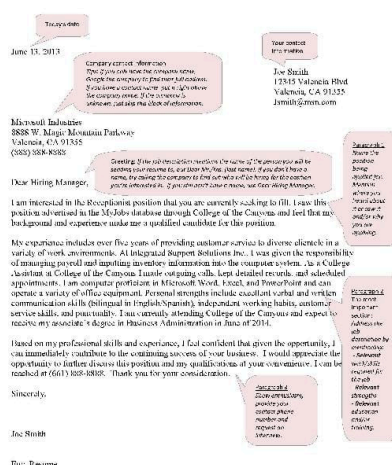


Figure 5.3.1: Sample Cover Letter Template.

5.4: Interviewing

Just as preparation is important for exams in college, preparation is key to success in interviews. Many of the principles are the same, but in an employment interview, the subject is *you*. Just as in an exam, the first step in preparation is to know your material.

- **Learn about the organization.** In almost every interview situation, you'll be asked, "What can you do for this company?" Practice your answer. Research press releases, stories in the *Wall Street Journal*, annual reports, blogs, websites, the news, and so on. Know the company's philosophies, goals, plans, new products, targeted customers, new executives, and major directional changes.
- **Use your network.** Do you know anyone who works for or has worked for this company or organization? Call or have lunch with them before your interview to learn more. Your competition likely won't have done their homework as well as you have. Your prospective employer will notice.
- **Review the job description.** Be prepared to explain how your background qualifies you for the job. Did you find the job posting online? Be sure to have a printed copy, and bring it with you to the interview. Some companies take weeks to start calling people in for interviews, and by then, the job description may have been removed from the site where you saw it.
- **Review your resume.** Think of examples that describe or illustrate your accomplishments. You will be asked about items on your resume, and you need to be able to support them and go into more detail.

The Importance of Listening Well

Being a good communicator involves not only being good at speaking. Listening is an essential part of communication and is often the weakest link in the communication process. People usually love to be heard but are often not as excited about listening. Active listening is being engaged as a listener, not just hearing the words.

Are you a good listener? Most of us like to think we are, but when we really think about it, we recognize that we are often only half-listening. We're distracted, thinking about other things, or formulating what we are going to say in reaction to what we are hearing before the speaker has even finished. Effective listening is one of the most important learning tools you can have in college or university. And it is a skill that will benefit you on the job and help your relationships with others. Listening is nothing more than purposefully focusing on what a speaker is saying with the objective of understanding.

Active Listening in Interview Settings

This definition is straightforward, but there are some important concepts that deserve a closer look. "Purposefully focusing" implies that you are actively processing what the speaker is saying, not just letting the sounds of their voice register in your senses. "With the objective of understanding" means that you will learn enough about what the speaker is saying to be able to form your own thoughts about the speaker's message. Listening is an active process, as opposed to hearing, which is passive.

Being an active listener takes concentration and work. The principles of active listening are not hard to understand, but they are hard to implement and require practice to use them effectively.

Listening is a significant part of the interview process. However, active listening is even more important, and it is vital to professional achievement. Recruiters rank listening at the top of employers' wish lists. People with good listening skills are more likely than others to be hired and promoted. Having read the above information on listening, we all need to make sure we are focused and concentrating on doing it well. Active listening is not just the famous nod of the head or giving good eye contact. Active listening is giving your undivided attention and acknowledging the message that is being delivered.

Even if the listener doesn't agree with the speaker, it is important to acknowledge that the speaker has a right to their point of view, their ideas, and their feelings. Be respectful of others' opinions, and keep in mind that cultural differences can impact beliefs, values, and communication styles. Signs of distraction include looking away, humming, doodling, checking your phone, texting, or surfing the web. This communicates that you are uninterested in what the speaker is saying.

Here are some things you can do to let the interviewers know you are actively listening:

- Paraphrase questions before responding.
- Communicate your appreciation for the question and repeat the question.

- Don't interrupt when questions are being asked or comments are being made.
- Lean forward when others are speaking and tilt your ear slightly towards the speaker.

Defining Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication refers to gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, eye contact (or lack thereof), body language, posture, and other ways people can communicate without using language.

What you say is a vital part of any communication, but what you don't say can be even more important. Research also shows that 55 percent of in-person communication comes from non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, body stance, and smell. According to one study, only 7 percent of a receiver's comprehension of a message is based on the sender's actual words; 38 percent is based on paralanguage (the tone, pace, and volume of speech), and 55 percent is based on non-verbal cues such as body language (Mehrabian, 1981).

Why is non-verbal communication important?

- Basically, it is one of the key aspects of communication (and especially important in a high-context culture). It has multiple functions:
 - Used to **repeat** the verbal message (e.g., point in a direction while stating directions.)
 - Often used to **accent** a verbal message. (e.g., verbal tone indicates the actual meaning of the specific words).
 - Often **complement** the verbal message, but also may contradict. E.g.: a nod reinforces a positive message (among Americans); a “wink” may contradict a stated positive message.
 - **Regulate** interactions (non-verbal cues convey when the other person should speak or not speak).
 - May **substitute** for the verbal message (especially if it is blocked by noise, interruption, etc) — i.e., gestures (finger to lips to indicate need for quiet), facial expressions (Tidwell, 2023).

How Nonverbal Cues Communicate Emotions and Identity

- **Kinesics:** Generally speaking, simplicity, directness, and warmth convey sincerity, and sincerity is key to effective communication. A firm handshake given with a warm, dry hand is a great way to establish trust. A weak, clammy handshake conveys a lack of trustworthiness. Gnawing one's lip conveys uncertainty. A direct smile conveys confidence. All of this is true across North America. However, in other cultures, the same firm handshake may be considered aggressive and untrustworthy. It helps to be mindful of cultural context when interpreting or using body language.
- **Eye Contact:** In business, the style and duration of eye contact people consider appropriate varies greatly across cultures. In the United States, looking someone in the eye (for about a second) is considered a sign of trustworthiness.
- **Facial Expressions:** The human face can produce thousands of different expressions. Experts have decoded these expressions as corresponding to hundreds of different emotional states (Ekman, Friesen, and Hager, 2008). Our faces convey basic information to the outside world. Happiness is associated with an upturned mouth and slightly closed eyes; fear, with an open mouth and wide-eyed stare. Flitting (“shifty”) eyes and pursed lips convey a lack of trustworthiness. The effect facial expressions have on conversation is instantaneous. Our brains may register them as “a feeling” about someone's character.
- **Posture:** The position of our body relative to a chair or another person is another powerful silent messenger that conveys interest, aloofness, professionalism—or lack thereof. Head up, back straight (but not rigid) implies an upright character. In interview situations, experts advise mirroring an interviewer's tendency to lean in and settle back in her seat. The subtle repetition of the other person's posture conveys that we are listening and responding

5.5: Preparing for an Interview

Resumes and cover letters interest the employer in hiring you. However, most employers compile a short list of candidates using the applications they receive, and then interview the people on this short list. This is especially true in the food service and hospitality industry, where personal suitability and presentation are key ingredients in customer service.

Remember that when you drop off a resume or application, or call regarding a job opening, employees of the company are forming an impression of you. Always be polite and friendly. If you visit the company, dress appropriately and pay attention to your grooming. The person with whom you speak may pass along his or her impressions of you to the person doing the hiring.

It takes a lot of work to get to the stage where you are offered an interview, so it is important to make the interview count. When employers are asked why applicants interviewed for jobs are rejected, interpersonal skills and personal characteristics are often key factors.

Applicants may be rejected because of:

- Poor personal appearance and hygiene
- An overbearing, conceited attitude
- Poor communication skills
- Lack of clear career goals
- Lack of interest, commitment, and enthusiasm for the job
- Lack of confidence and poise
- Overemphasis on what the employer offers them (salary, benefits, vacation)
- Lack of tact, maturity, and courtesy
- Poor attitude about the job, previous employers, or school
- Failure to look the interviewer in the eye and a limp handshake
- Inability to relate skills and experience to the job
- Lack of knowledge about the company
- Obvious personal problems
- Lack of tolerance, strong prejudices, and narrow interests

Types of Interviews

Often, you will be interviewed in person. However, in larger companies or when applying for a job in another province, you may also be interviewed by telephone. Today, it is quite common to have an interview via Skype. This allows the interviewer to see you and form an opinion on your appearance. It is important to look professional in this situation as well. Some companies conduct screening interviews as a way of reducing the number of applicants who are considered for a job. Screening interviews may be conducted by someone other than the person who is responsible for the actual hiring. These initial interviews may be a preliminary step to an in-depth personal interview.

Being Prepared

Before going to an interview, you should make sure that you have prepared carefully. You should research the dental office so that you know what types of procedures they do and how your skills might fit their needs. When applying for a position as a cook, you might visit the restaurant, study the menu, and perhaps even order and eat a meal. Take a good look around. What does the restaurant look like? What is the general ambiance and tone? Do the staff appear to get along well? Do staff members work as a team? Is this a place where you would like to work? Do you feel that you would fit in? Doing your homework about the potential employer makes you look interested in the job and committed to the new employer.

Before going to an interview, you should:

- Be able to describe how your experience and skills would benefit the company.
- Anticipate possible questions you might be asked and have answers prepared.
- Plan transportation to arrive a few minutes early.
- Choose appropriate, business-like clothing and accessories to wear. Take a look at how the staff is dressed when you visit, and dress accordingly. A suit or sports jacket, a tie, and dress slacks are appropriate for men. A suit or skirt and blouse are acceptable for women. Women may also wear dress slacks.
- Make sure that clothing is clean, well-pressed, and in good condition. Shoes should be freshly shined and in good condition.
- Be immaculately groomed (for men, freshly shaved or carefully trimmed beard or mustache; for women, simply styled hair and subdued makeup).
- Wear only simple, subdued jewelry and perfume.
- Make sure that you have a clean copy of your application letter, job ad, resume, and references and/or reference letters, and copies of transcripts or certificates relevant to the position to take to the interview.
- Take a pen and paper.
- Prepare questions to ask the interviewer and write them neatly or print them on a piece of paper.

Anticipating Questions the Interviewer May Ask

Employers use interviews to gauge whether you have the qualities to perform the job well. They are looking for ability and aptitude, a willingness to work and learn, a desire to help accomplish the organization's goals, and maturity and compatibility. For the most part, the interviewer will already have established that you have the minimum training and experience for the job by reading your resume.

Interviews use a question-and-answer format. You should be prepared to answer questions such as those listed below. Even if these are not the exact questions which will be asked, you should rehearse the subject matter so you have a well-rounded, complete answer to give when the question is asked.

Can you tell me something about yourself?

This is usually an invitation to talk about yourself on a personal but not intimate level. Stress such points as your family background, length of time in the community, work with community groups, hobbies, and interests. End by focusing on your work experience, work values, aptitudes, and qualities, and how these are relevant to the job in question.

What are your future plans?

Describe your specific career plans and how this job fits into these plans.

Why do you want to work here?

You want to emphasize how this position will use your existing skills and develop additional skills. You might also mention the company's reputation as a leader in the industry, a fair employer, or a good corporate citizen, its reputation for providing high-quality training to staff, and other relevant considerations.

Can you work under pressure and deadlines?

This question usually indicates that pressure is a feature of the job. Use examples from your work, school, and personal life to illustrate your ability to handle pressure and deadlines.

Why did you leave your last employer? Or, why do you want to leave your present employer?

Mention acceptable reasons for leaving a job, such as lay-off, illness, relocation, or retraining, or wanting a new challenge. If you were fired, be honest about the reason and explain why you think you would be a good employee now (e.g., learned from mistakes, dealt with personal problems).

What are your strengths?

Your strengths should present you as an efficient and committed worker who can perform the job competently. Other strengths required in every job are honesty, dependability, enthusiasm, and cooperation. Mention them if appropriate.

What are your weaknesses or limitations?

This question may sometimes be phrased in more subtle ways, such as “What are some areas in which you can improve?” “How have you grown over the past few years?” or “Where do you see yourself needing to grow in the next few years?” It is not a good strategy to avoid mentioning shortcomings because you may come across as dishonest, defensive, or weak.

Mention one or two shortcomings in a way that is not damaging. You can do this by mentioning a weakness that is a mirror of one of your assets or by mentioning those that are easily remedied. For example, you might say, “I drive myself very hard and have to be careful not to assume that other staff have the energy that I have.” Or you might say, “I would like to take a course in menu planning. So far, I have some on-the-job experience and have done some reading on my own.” These types of responses indicate a willingness to be open, a knowledge of your shortcomings, and a willingness to address them. This will create a favorable impression on interviewers.

Why should I hire you?

Your answer should stress how your skills and experience benefit the company and help meet the company’s goals. If you are being hired to address a specific problem, explain how you have handled similar situations in the past.

Other things you might be asked about include:

- An explanation of any gaps in your resume, poor grades, or a change in career direction
- How you might handle a specific problem on the job
- How would you describe your personality
- How do you feel about overtime, working on holidays, or other job conditions
- How much you expect to be paid (be flexible; indicate the average pay of someone with your experience for the surrounding area, or invite the employer to make the decision based on your previous jobs, experience, and salary)
- What you value at work and in life, what you look for in a job, or what is your ideal job
- What you find difficult to do or who you find difficult to work with

When planning responses, be positive. Indicate how you have learned from experience, what benefits you have gained, and how this learning benefits the employer. Be honest and sincere. Some employers may ask about your leisure activities. Often, these employers are looking for someone who is well-rounded and contributes to the community.

Handling Discriminatory Questions in Interviews

The Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination in the recruitment of employees except in the case of bona fide (genuine) occupational requirements. Most employers avoid questions regarding these prohibited grounds in interviews because they know that otherwise they may be open to complaints of discrimination by unsuccessful candidates.

Behavior in the Interview

Interviews are short, and interviewers have only a brief time to make a personal assessment. Small details can make a big impact. If you display confidence in yourself and in your ability to do the job, much of this confidence will be transmitted to the interviewer.

If you have not participated in an interview before, you can practise your responses with a friend or fellow student to build confidence and reduce nervousness. It can be very useful to videotape your mock interview. You will get useful feedback from watching yourself, which can be used to improve your performance in interviews.

Be courteous and friendly in the interview, without being overly familiar. Interviewers respond to pleasantness and respect.

Some tips on coming across well in an interview include the following:

- Arrive alone and a little early for the interview.
- Remove sunglasses and coat before the interview.
- Get the interviewer's correct name and use it during the interview.
- Smile and be ready to shake hands firmly.
- Look the interviewer in the eye. If there is more than one person conducting the interview, make sure you look at each of them when they are speaking with you, rather than only maintaining eye contact with the "lead" or more senior person.
- Remain standing until you are invited to sit.
- Do not bring your personal problems to the interview.
- Answer all questions clearly, specifically, and honestly.
- Do not make jokes or wisecracks or get into arguments.
- Be poised and calm. Do not fidget, crack your knuckles, or engage in other nervous mannerisms.
- Ask a few pertinent questions about the job.
- Thank the interviewer for his or her time and shake hands.

Questions You Can Ask

Asking some questions yourself in the interview demonstrates that you have confidence in your abilities and that you are genuinely interested in the job and in the company.

You can ask the following:

- Do you have any questions about my resume?
- Can you tell me more about the responsibilities of this job?
- What possibilities are there for promotion and advancement if I do a good job?
- What are the future plans of the company (e.g., expansion, franchising)?
- When will you make your decision about this job?
- What training programs do you have for employees?
- What opportunities are there to transfer to other properties owned by the company (if your research indicates that the company is part of a chain)?

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5.6: Tips for Interviews

Tips for Interviews

Few people relish interviews, and it is easy to respond to them by being either overly nervous or even overly cocky. It is important, then, to prepare for an interview as you prepare for any test. Incredible resources are available to you, including websites where you can "practice" by choosing among various responses to tricky interview questions, your school's Career Services staff, and technology that allows you to videotape yourself doing a mock interview. With all these resources, I'll keep my advice here brief, focusing on oft-overlooked fundamentals.

Basic Tips for Interviews

- Carefully review your resume and cover letter to prepare for the interview, and anticipate the kinds of questions that these documents might inspire from a stranger. It's surprising how many candidates forget that the resume and letter they sent might be right there in front of the interviewer.
- Read company literature and review any personal correspondence you've received from the company. Of course, research the company's web presence heavily, and go beyond the company's webpage—read publications by company members or search a local newspaper for the company for its mention.
- Be prompt, neat, and courteous, dressing appropriately for the occasion, even if it's simply a career fair at your school. Believe it or not, I've had recent graduates who came back to the school on recruiting trips cite this issue to me as their number 1 concern. I recall one recent graduate turned recruiter saying after a long day of career fair interviewing, "I wish to god they'd just be on time, cover their tattoos, and remove their piercings."
- Listen attentively and speak thoughtfully—do not rush yourself, and don't be afraid of a bit of dead air if it helps you to think before speaking. Try to sense when you have fully answered a question and then distinctly stop rather than trail off into mumbled uncertainty.
- Be prepared to ask relevant questions. You will likely be expected to do so, showing that you have an inquisitive mind and a genuine interest.
- Express enthusiasm, but be realistic about your expectations of the job.

Common Mistakes Made During Interviews

- Criticizing yourself, partly to show humility even when it isn't expected.
- Interrupting the interviewer's questions or speaking out of turn.
- Overselling your case, trying to be too funny or too personal, or intentionally acting cocky to make an impression.
- Making uninvited or elaborate promises that are inappropriate for the circumstances.
- Drawing out the interview beyond its scheduled time frame or otherwise trying to control its pace.
- Lingering over questions that can better be addressed later, such as fringe benefits or starting salary.
- Speaking either too colloquially or too formally.

Qualities That You Can and Should Enhance in an Interview:

- Communication and technical skills.
- Motivation and willingness to accept responsibility.
- Self-confidence, decisiveness, stability, maturity, amiability, and loyalty.
- Perseverance, energy, common sense, and tact.

The Top Reasons Why Job Seekers Are Rejected:

- Lack of enthusiasm and interest; no evidence of initiative; no goals; lack of maturity.
- Poor personal appearance; extreme or careless dress.
- Poor scholastic record or few extra-curricular activities without a reasonable explanation.
- Excessive interest in salary, benefits, or promotion.

- Lack of interest in or knowledge of the company.
- Poor presentation of self; therefore, lack of poise, awkward personality, abrasive manner, lack of confidence, timid approach, arrogant or conceited attitude, poor speech habits.

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5.7: Professional Letters

Beyond the cover letter, you will undoubtedly be faced with the need to write other professional correspondence, be it by email or envelope. These letters are just as important in that they can also become part of a file devoted to all of your correspondence with a company or individual. Professional letters you write are likely to be kept in a file along with your resume as part of your permanent record. Letters are also your opportunity to show professional courtesy, impress companies with your knowledge of and interest in them, and allow readers to know you as a person. Good letters humanize you. And employers tend to choose people they feel they know—not strangers.

In addition to the cover letter, the other types of professional correspondence you are most likely to write include:

- **A Query Letter:** Making a specific request for information.
- **A Thank You Letter:** Expressing thanks for an interview or an invited visit.
- **An Acknowledgment Letter:** Acknowledging the receipt of a job offer or some materials.
- **A Letter of Decline or Letter of Acceptance:** Declining or accepting a job offer.

While writing a letter for any of these circumstances, follow the same basic guidelines for tone, appearance, mechanics, and format as you do for cover letters. However, keep these letters brief—just a few short paragraphs—so they can be read in one minute's time. Using a gracious, professional tone, fill your letter with specifics particular to the circumstances, for example:

- The date of your previous correspondence or interview.
- The names of any other individuals relevant to the correspondence.
- Details about what action, if any, you want your audience to take.
- Clarifications of any points worth repeating or open to potential misunderstanding.
- Carefully worded, warm, personal remarks, especially if you have had repeated contact with the same person, and especially if you are asking for a favor.

Follow these guidelines carefully, and you can be assured that your letter will inspire your reader to take appropriate action, whether that is simply to place your letter into a file respectfully or perform a more involved task that you requested professionally.

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6: PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS AND STRATEGIC NETWORKING

6.1: Connecting with Professional Associations

6.2: The Power of Networking

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6.1: Connecting with Professional Associations

Professional Associations are a great way for you to connect with professionals working in the industry you may be considering. These associations are organizations where people in the same profession come together to engage and connect with each other to discuss current trends in the industry. The professional associations are a great way for you to make connections and network with professionals in the field you are considering. Most professional associations have membership fees and oftentimes have reduced fees for student membership. They usually host conferences. Check to see if the association you are interested in is hosting a conference nearby. Professional associations often list a job bank with current job openings in the industry. This is a great way for you to see what the industry is demanding and what skills, qualifications, and training they are requiring. The more you know now, the better prepared you will be when it is time for you to enter the industry.

A great online resource to help you locate professional associations is the [CareerOneStop](http://www.careeronestop.org) [www.careeronestop.org]. This site has a professional association finder and allows you to search by industry, occupation, or association name.

Industry Associations

Consider the top occupational choice you are interested in at this time and search for professional associations linked to this industry.

1. What is your top occupational choice at this time?
2. Explore two Professional Associations linked to the industry.
3. Give a brief description of the associations and how you think they may be helpful in your career exploration and development.
4. Find out what the fees are for signing up and if they provide any discounts for students.
5. Are there any upcoming conferences being sponsored by the association? If so, when, where, and how much is registration? Are you considering attending?

6.2: The Power of Networking

What Exactly is Networking?

Networking is the **process** of **engaging** others in helping to reach an **objective**. When you network as part of a job search, you are trying to find others who can help you to reach your employment objectives. Two words in this definition deserve a closer look:

1. **Engaging:** You are looking to have others do something for you—give you information, guidance, other contacts, or perhaps a recommendation.
2. **Objective:** You need to be clear about your purpose for networking—it is not merely to collect people's contact information but to further your career development.

A common question/misconception about networking is "Can I start to network while still in college?"

The answer is YES! Absolutely! Even though you aren't yet graduating from college, there are many benefits to starting now. As a student, you are likely to be applying for part-time jobs, internships, scholarships, and even volunteer positions. Networking is a process of building relationships, and the strongest relationships are built over time. Having a good network will help identify interesting and relevant opportunities.

All Contacts Are Equal, but Some Are More So Than Others

The first phase involves identifying whom you should be speaking to and pinpointing the people who can introduce you to them. This is like the game Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon applied to your own life. Whom do you need to speak to? That really depends on your objectives. If you are trying to learn about an occupation, it can be just about anyone involved with that field. If you are in the process of trying to land an internship or a job, you want to reach the person who will make the hiring decision.

Your objective also defines how you get started with your networking. In the first case, you might want to start with people you met at an industry conference; in the job-specific case, you'll want to think about whom you know in that company or who might know someone in that company. If you don't have any contacts who fit that description, whom do you know who lives in the town in which the company is based or in a nearby town?

Your success in this phase of networking will be driven by the quality of the candidates (those who can directly influence your ability to reach your objectives) as well as the quantity (those who will lead you to the most contacts). This is why there is no such thing as a bad contact.

As important as having contacts is your ability to access those contacts when you need to. That is where contact management comes into play. Don't be caught wishing you could call someone you met three weeks ago...if you could only remember what you did with their business card! There are countless ways to keep track of contacts, from writing names in an address book to keeping a Rolodex to using a computer-based contact management system. Choose a system you feel comfortable with—comfortable enough to use regularly.

Let technology help you in this endeavor. Your computer or smartphone has features for capturing contact information and retrieving it based on keywords, and most will even connect with your calendar for scheduling and reminders. Whatever your choices, invest the time to learn to use them well; you'll be very glad you did.

Building a network requires consistent work, and a strong network will take time to achieve. That is why we recommend you start building your professional network now—even early in your college career. Your network should include anyone who might have a connection that will help: family, friends, neighbors, past and present coworkers, bosses, people you met through associations and clubs (especially business associations), alumni from your college, and acquaintances you have met via online networking.

Personal Contact

Being in the right place at the right time has much less to do with luck than with the art of personal contact. Contacts are everywhere, and you don't know when you might turn one to your advantage. You may feel a little awkward following these tips at

first, but with practice, you will become quite adept at meeting new people and adding them to your network.

- **Be prepared.** If you are going to a conference, a party, or even a class, know ahead of time which people or kinds of people you want to meet. Be prepared with topics you can steer your contact toward so you don't spend two minutes awkwardly talking about the weather and then slink away.
- **Be confident.** Prepare and learn a short introduction for yourself. Be factual, don't brag, and give enough information about yourself to prompt your contact to ask questions.
- **Be curious.** The best way to get contacts to want to know you is to show you want to know them. Observe them before you step up to them. Is there something unique about them, the way they are dressed, or perhaps what you may have overheard that you can ask about? "I couldn't help but notice that lovely necklace; is that from a local designer?"
- **Have a good supply of personal cards to give out to contacts.** That will prompt them to give you their contact information, too. You don't have to be in business to have "business cards." Create a college student business card!
- **Be courteous.** If someone you know comes up to you while you are speaking with a contact, introduce them; if you see that the contact is getting antsy, tell them you enjoyed meeting them and then move on. Don't trap them!
- **Be organized.** Set yourself up for networking success by discreetly writing a word or two on the back of their card to jog your memory in the future.

Make the Call

What you say in your networking calls or e-mails will depend largely on the objective of your networking effort. (Is it to learn about an occupation or industry? Seek a job-shadowing opportunity? Ask for a job?) But some networking basics and elements of etiquette apply to all contacts:

- **Be mindful of your contact's time.** Keep your calls and e-mails courteous but brief. If you are calling, ask if it is a good time to talk.
- **If this is a first contact, tell the contact where you got his or her name.** "I was referred to you by our friend, Janet Smith," or "My colleague, Richard Stewart, suggested I call you," or "I heard you speak at the International Genius Conference," (remember the contact source information in your contact database?). This turns an interrupting cold call into a warm call with an interested individual.
- **Be specific about how the contact can help you.** Know what you are asking for and do so directly. Don't be shy.
- **Use your network for more than just asking for jobs.** It is a great vehicle for learning about new trends in the industry, for launching "trial balloons" for ideas or concepts you are developing, and for seeking advice on practical aspects of your occupation.
- **Help others in your network.** Networking is not a one-way endeavor. Be willing to offer your assistance whenever you can; the fact that you are still in college doesn't mean you can't be of value. You may be able to get an introduction to an instructor for a person in the industry or help that person's daughter learn about your college.

Care and Feeding of Your Network

Much of the success of your networking efforts depends on what you do after you've hung up after a call or received an e-mail reply. The first step is to thank your contact for his or her help. Do this right away; any thank-you after twenty-four hours of your contact can be considered late.

Find a reason (not just an excuse) to keep in touch with people in your network. If you read an article that people in your network would be interested in, send them the link. If you run across a problem that one of your contacts might help you with, don't be shy—give him or her a call to ask for help. If you meet someone you think a contact would like, make introductions. Send a follow-up note of thanks to a person who gave you a particularly productive lead. Let him or her know what you were able to accomplish. People like to know they are on a successful team. Finally, if a person in your network asks you for help, do what you say you will do.

How to Build Your Network on a Regular Basis, Even If You Are Shy: Venues for Meeting People

Build Your Network Every Day

Great networkers build their networks every day, while keeping in touch with those they have already met. Networking is work, but the rewards far outweigh the effort you will expend.

The most effective way to build a network is to have a genuine interest in every person you meet. Most individuals know when someone wants to know them for what they offer versus wanting to know them for what they can gain from the relationship. Don't fall into that self-serving trap. Genuine interest in others is the impetus for building long-term, mutually beneficial relationships of give and take, with the emphasis on the give.

Build Your Network Even If You Are Shy

If you are shy and the thought of networking wreaks havoc with your nervous system, certain strategies you can employ immediately will allow you to benefit from networking venues of all kinds.

Step 1: Observe the Networking Masters

We all know people who are natural networkers and who know how to work a room better than most. For those of you who are shy, watch people who network effectively. Observe how they meet and greet a variety of people. Notice their body language, especially their smile, posture, handshake, and eye contact. You will naturally pick up pointers from these individuals.

Step 2: Pair Up with Someone Who Is a Good Networker

If you can pair up with a networking master, by all means do. If you have a friend who is extroverted, ask them to attend an event with you and pair up to meet as many people as you can. This can be a very valuable adventure that results in meeting quite a lot of new people.

Step 3: Ask Questions That Get Other People to Talk Easily

You can ask seven questions that will naturally elicit a great response from a person you want to get to know:

1. How did you get your start in this business?
2. What do you enjoy most about what you do?
3. What separates you from your competition?
4. What do you see as the coming trends in this business?
5. What is the strangest (or funniest) incident you have ever experienced in this business?
6. What three or four critical skills are necessary to succeed in this business?
7. What advice would you give to me, knowing I want to get my start in this business?

Step 4: Don't Take Things Personally

When you take the plunge and begin networking and meeting individuals, try to develop a thick skin and don't take things personally. Some individuals will not want to communicate with you, and that is fine. Move on to those who do. To a large degree, it's a numbers game, so the more individuals you meet and follow up with correctly, the more will join your network.

Meet People at Different Venues

Your college environment is rich with potential networking contacts. Below are a few opportunities on campus for you to consider networking:

- **Join a club on campus:** There are so many different clubs on campus, ranging from academic clubs, community service clubs, cultural clubs, and honor societies, just to name a few. Consider contacting the club advisor to learn more about the club and check out their next meeting. Join at least two or three that spark your interest so you have variety in your friends and network. Club membership is a great way to get connected early on in your college career, meet people who have the same interests as you, and learn a tremendous amount. School clubs funnel information to their members about networking events, internships, and full-time opportunities.
- **Establish a relationship with the Career Center services:** Get involved with this group early on. People in career services have relationships with all the companies that come to campus to recruit. Check in with them early in your college career and find out what opportunities exist. The Career Center hosts different workshops and career-related activities throughout the year.
- **Get to know your professors!** They are not only your instructors, but they are connected to the industry and have experience in the discipline they teach, and have connections. Get to know your instructor more.... ask them about their backgrounds and how they ended up teaching at your school. Ask what they like about it. You will be surprised at what you find out. Some professors will have worked in the business world and will have some good connections for you. You never know until you ask.
- **Be curious about people and ask open-ended questions:** When meeting someone new, ask them questions like “How did you pick this school?” and listen. A good listener is so hard to find. Open-ended questions often yield a story (sometimes a compelling story), and you learn quite a bit about a person. Ask about their family relationships. Be genuine because it is wonderful to find out about people, and you never know who they know or who their extended family knows.
- **Meet as many different types of folks at school as possible:** Your school presents opportunities to meet people from all walks of life. Try to meet the president of the college, various administrators, deans (the dean of students is a great contact because that person manages the school clubs), professors, teaching assistants, fellow students, cafeteria workers, the hot dog vendor on the corner, the stationery store owner and clerks, the workers at your favorite coffee shop, security, library staff, and so on. Get to know these folks by (a) being polite and pleasant, (b) being responsible, and (c) recognizing them and knowing them by name. Even if your new acquaintances don't further your networking objectives, perhaps some will become friends and make your stay at school all the better!
- **Keep in touch with your old high school friends:** Your high school friends are likely at different schools, but it's important to maintain contact.

Your network will only grow this way, and you will enjoy continuing your friendships. Networking is critical to your success throughout life (Beiderwell, Bruce, Flatworld).

Your Networking Pitch

A networking pitch was originally termed an elevator pitch because in the time an elevator takes to go between floors (generally thirty to forty seconds), you should be able to articulate your value proposition (the skills you have and the position you are seeking). The elevator pitch is also known as the professional pitch, the networking pitch, or simply the pitch.

In thirty seconds or less, be able to introduce yourself in a **confident** and convincing manner, making a strong impression. If your pitch is too long and drawn out, it lacks conviction. When meeting networking contacts, recruiters, and hiring managers, this is your one chance to make a great impression and present yourself with clarity. No one wants to listen to a long, drawn-out speech. Make your pitch clear and concise, enabling the person who is listening to know exactly what type of job search candidate you are.

Any information you can share that distinguishes you from others is very helpful.

Perhaps you have something unique in your background:

- You speak two or three languages.
- You lived abroad for a particular length of time.
- You achieved something significant athletically or musically.
- You volunteered in a meaningful way and perhaps raised extraordinary funds for various charities.

Distinguish yourself from others in whatever way you can to ensure you are remembered in a positive light.

You will deliver your pitch at different times and occasions, including the following:

- Career fairs present an opportunity to meet representatives from various firms. These individuals will meet many students or candidates, so it is important that you make sure your pitch is short and crisp. Also, be certain to do your research on their

company, as many candidates do not.

- Networking events enable you to first meet someone in a more relaxed setting.
- Interviews often begin with the interviewer asking for a summary of your background or asking that you take one or two minutes to let them know about you. Include high-level themes in your past (e.g., you've always been involved in health care at some point in your schooling and in your career). If themes are not apparent, talk about your achievements and the quality of your efforts.

Consider the following steps as you prepare your pitch.

Step 1: Write Your Pitch

Your pitch should answer the following five questions:

1. What is your educational background? Detail every college or university you attended, your major and minor, and your expected degree and graduation month and year (include your GPA if it is 3.3 or higher).
2. Do you have any pertinent experience in the field in which you are interested?
3. What are your critical skills and strengths? Highlight your top two or three skills.
4. What do you want to do? Be specific regarding industry, function, and geography.
5. Why would you be good at the position? Focus on presenting your top two or three skills, and the skills you have that are necessary to succeed at the job you are targeting.

Step 2: Edit Your Pitch

Once your pitch is written, review and edit it accordingly. You should use words that come naturally to you because the more natural the delivery, the more impressive the pitch. Here are some steps you can consider while editing your pitch:

- After you edit the one-page answers to the pitch questions, ensuring that you've covered all the important items, cut it to half a page; this forces you to prioritize the essential elements.
- After you edit the half-page document, ensuring that you've covered all the important items, cut it in half again (it's now one-quarter of the page); this forces you to be even more ruthless in prioritizing.
- After you edit the quarter-page document, ensuring you've covered all the important items, cut it in half again, leaving only four or five key bullets; this forces you to be concise and select just the most important items.

Step 3: Practice Delivering Your Pitch

Once you have the final pitch in writing, you'll need to practice, then practice, then practice some more. Your pitch should be spoken in a confident and compelling manner. Deliver your speech out loud to ensure it flows smoothly and addresses your career highlights. Practice it until you have it memorized.

Example: Pitch

Below is a sample pitch:

Hi. My name is Joe Cougar.

I am currently attending College of the Canyons, majoring in business and communications.

I've seen the power marketing has to sell products. I have worked in retail for the past three years, and during this time, I have seen sales triple in cases where items were marketed well. I find this fascinating and know this is the career for me. I thrive on being creative and client-focused and enjoy using these skills to grow revenue.

Try It Out

To help you prepare for networking opportunities, take time to develop your pitch. Be sure to follow the guidelines and write

your pitch in 100 words. Recite it and see how it sounds. Modify it if needed and make sure you practice it with a confident and compelling manner!

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7: THE COMPLIANT CLINICIAN- JURISPRUDENCE, HIPAA, AND INFORMED CONSENT

7.1: Law and Ethics in Healthcare

7.2: The Legal System and Healthcare

7.3: Professional Liability and Medical Malpractice

7.4: Patient Confidentiality and HIPAA

7.5: The Physician-Patient Relationship

7.6: Importance of Informed Consent

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7.1: Law and Ethics in Healthcare

Laws in healthcare are legally binding rules and regulations enacted by governing bodies (such as local, state, or federal governments) to ensure that healthcare providers and institutions operate in a manner that protects patient safety, privacy, and well-being.

Healthcare laws provide the framework for practice, outlining what is permissible and required by healthcare professionals.

Example of Healthcare Laws

- HIPAA
- Licensing Laws

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7.2: The Legal System and Healthcare

Sources of Law

There are three main sources of law.

- **Constitutional Law:** These laws come from the U.S. Constitution and State constitutions. Constitutional law plays a significant role in healthcare by shaping policies, protecting individual rights, and guiding the distribution of healthcare services.
 - Example: Right to Privacy in Healthcare
- **Statutory and Regulatory Law:** These laws are passed by Federal or State legislative bodies. These laws provide the legal framework within which healthcare operates and define what is legally required or prohibited in healthcare practices.
 - Example: HIPAA
- **Common (Case) Law:** These laws are made by judges when applying previous court decisions. Case law, or judicial precedent, plays a crucial role in healthcare by interpreting statutory and regulatory laws and setting legal standards through court rulings.
 - Example: Roe v Wade

Classification of Laws: Civil & Contract

There are several types of laws.

- **Civil Law:** This type of law concerns relationships between individuals or between individuals, businesses, and the government. These laws award monetary damages. They include Tort Law and Contract Law
- **Contract Law:** This type of law addresses breach or neglect of a legally binding agreement between two parties. A contract is a voluntary agreement between two parties with the intent of benefiting each other.

Contract Law: Types of Contracts in Healthcare

- **Expressed Contract:** Agreement entered into orally or in writing; all components of the contract must be clearly stated
- **Implied Contract:** Agreement shown through inference by signs, inaction, or silence
- **Breach of Contract:** Either party fails to comply with the terms of the agreement.

Tort Laws

Tort (Intentional) is a wrongful act committed against a person or property that results in some type of harm.

- **Assault:** Threat of bodily harm. Example: A nurse threatens a patient by saying, "If you don't take this medication, I'm going to hold you down and inject it."
- **Battery:** Actual bodily harm or unprivileged touching of a patient. Example: Providing care to a nursing home patient who refused the care - The patient did not want a shower, but the CNA gave one anyway.
- **False imprisonment:** Violation of one's freedom. Example: A patient decides they want to pull out an IV and is restrained by Velcro straps on the wrists that the patient cannot undo. Other examples could include locking wheels on a wheelchair, facing the patient away from the door, and isolation.
- **Defamation of character:** Damage to one's reputation through false and malicious content. This includes:
 - **Slander:** A spoken form of defamation. Example: A CNA speaks poorly about the nursing home staff outside of work.
 - **Libel:** A written form of defamation. Example: Documenting an opinion of the patient's character that has nothing to do with patient care. Example: A staff member sends an email to other staff members, falsely claiming that a doctor on their team is frequently intoxicated at work. *If this were truly a concern, there would be steps taken to address it.
- **Fraud:** Misrepresentation of oneself or misappropriation of resources. Example of misrepresentation: A CNA allows the patient and their family to address her as "the nurse". Example of misappropriation: A CNA using a patient's belongings, such as phone chargers.

- **Invasion of privacy:** Unauthorized disclosure of patient information. Example: A CNA fails to pull the curtain when examining the patient or does not announce themselves when entering the room.

Classification of Laws: Criminal

As opposed to Civil Law, Criminal Law involves different types of cases and punishments.

Criminal Law: This type of law protects the public from the harmful acts of others. The government prosecutes the person(s) or institution that violates a law. Penalties may include fines, imprisonment, or both.

Types of Criminal Law

- **Felony:** A felony in healthcare is a serious criminal offense that typically involves intentional misconduct. Example: Working with an expired license. Note: As a healthcare provider, it is your responsibility to make sure your license is up to date and to notify your employer of lapses.
- **Misdemeanor:** A misdemeanor in healthcare is a less severe criminal offense than a felony, but it can still lead to penalties such as fines, probation, or short-term jail sentences. Example: Unauthorized Access is a misdemeanor. The employee accessed patient records without a valid reason or authorization. True care and concern is not a valid reason.

Classification of Laws: Administrative

Administrative Laws are regulations set by government agencies. In healthcare, this includes:

- **Licensing and supervision of prescribing controlled substances:** Examples: A physician must obtain a DEA license to prescribe opioids or other controlled substances, or a nurse practitioner's prescribing authority might be restricted based on state regulations.
- **Health department regulations:** Example: Hospitals must follow protocols for reporting infectious diseases like Tuberculosis or COVID-19 to local health departments
- **Regulations against billing fraud:** Example: A clinic submits claims for a higher cost procedure than those that were actually performed, or bills for services not provided or medically unnecessary.

7.3: Professional Liability and Medical Malpractice

Healthcare professionals carry a significant responsibility in ensuring patient safety and adhering to ethical and legal standards. Understanding concepts such as malpractice, negligence, liability, and the standard of care is crucial to navigating the complexities of medical practice.

This section delves into the legal principles that shape healthcare, including the standard of care, unintentional torts, negligence, and the importance of maintaining professional accountability. By being aware of these concepts, healthcare providers can protect themselves, their patients, and their practice from potential legal risks.

Liability

First, let's define some key terms:

- **Liable:** Accountable under the law
- **Liability:** Referring to the state of being accountable under the law.

In the context of healthcare, liability means that healthcare providers (e.g., doctors, nurses, CNAs) may be held legally accountable if their actions (or lack thereof) cause harm to a patient.

Liability can lead to lawsuits, financial compensation to the injured party, and professional consequences for the provider.

Standard of Care

The standard of care refers to the level and type of care a competent professional in the same field would provide under similar circumstances. The standard of care is used as a benchmark to measure whether a healthcare provider's actions were appropriate.

When you learn to perform procedures a specific way, you are establishing the standard of care.

Caution

A breach in this standard can result in allegations of negligence or malpractice.

Example: Standard of Care and Breach of Care

A patient has undergone an appendectomy and is recovering in the hospital. The standard of care in this situation requires that nurses regularly monitor the patient's vital signs (e.g., heart rate, blood pressure, temperature) and assess for any signs of complications, such as infection or internal bleeding.

Breach in the Standard of Care

If a nurse fails to check vital signs as frequently as required or overlooks signs of an infection (e.g., *an elevated temperature or swelling at the surgical site*) and this results in harm to the patient, it could be considered a breach of the standard of care.

If the patient develops sepsis due to an unnoticed infection, the hospital and/or the nurse may face liability for negligence or malpractice.

Unintentional Torts

Intentional torts are wrongful acts committed by an individual or entity with the intention of causing harm or injury to another

person.

Unintentional torts in healthcare primarily refer to acts of negligence where a healthcare professional's failure to meet the expected standard of care results in patient harm.

Unlike intentional torts, unintentional torts do not involve deliberate actions. They are caused by carelessness or failure to take necessary precautions.

Four D's of Negligence

- **Duty:** A relationship existed between physician and patient.
- **Dereliction:** A breach in the standard of care occurred.
- **Direct or Proximate Cause:** The breach in the standard of care caused harm to the patient.
- **Damages:** The patient incurred some type of loss – income, health, etc.

Tort of Negligence

- **Malfeasance:** The performance of a totally wrongful and unlawful act. Example: A patient is deliberately given the wrong medication with the intention of causing harm or personal benefit.
- **Misfeasance:** The performance of a lawful act in an illegal or improper manner. Example: CNA transfers a patient from their bed to a wheelchair but fails to follow proper safety protocols, resulting in the patient falling and getting injured.
- **Nonfeasance:** The failure to act when one should. Example: CNA notices that a patient is exhibiting signs of respiratory distress but fails to inform a nurse or take any action, resulting in the patient's condition worsening.

Res Ipsa Loquitur

This means “The thing speaks for itself,” and is also known as the doctrine of common knowledge. Under this doctrine, no expert witness could be called. Example: A patient needs a surgery to remove their right arm and leaves the OR without a left arm. The result of the surgery can not be attributed to anything other than negligence.

Summary

Malpractice is the failure of a professional, such as a healthcare provider, to meet the standard of care expected in their field, resulting in harm or injury to a patient. It typically involves negligence, errors, or omissions in diagnosis, treatment, or follow-up that fall below the accepted level of care in similar circumstances.

- The **standard of care** is the foundation of ethical and legal medical practice.
- Understanding liability, negligence, and malpractice helps providers align with this standard.
- Awareness of torts ensures healthcare professionals minimize risks and uphold patient trust.

Adhering to the standard of care safeguards both patients and providers, ensuring high-quality, lawful care.

7.4: Patient Confidentiality and HIPAA

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

HIPAA is a federal law that protects patient privacy and ensures the confidentiality and security of healthcare information.

HIPAA is meant to improve healthcare efficiency and protect sensitive patient data.

Key Components of HIPAA

- **Privacy:** HIPAA protects the privacy of Patients' Health Information (PHI). HIPAA defines how PHI can be used and disclosed. Limits disclosures to only the minimum information necessary to carry out the medical treatment. The patient must grant written consent or permission to disclose their PHI for treatment, payment, and other health care operations.
- **Security:** HIPAA requires safeguards to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and security of electronic PHI (ePHI).
- **Breach Notification:** HIPAA mandates that healthcare providers notify patients when their health information is breached.

What is Protected Health Information (PHI)

Any information that can be used to identify a patient and relates to their health condition, treatment, or payment.

- Name, Address, Date of birth
- Medical records
- Social Security Number
- Health insurance information

Patient's Rights Under HIPAA

- Patients can view or obtain copies of their health records.
- Patients can request corrections to their medical records.
- Patients can request how and where they are contacted.
- Patients can request that certain information not be shared with others.

How is PHI kept secure?

- Only access patient information when necessary for your job.
- Lock computers and devices when not in use.
- Avoid discussing patient information in public areas.
- Encrypt emails and use secure messaging for sharing PHI.
- Keep paper records in locked areas.
- Shred or securely dispose of documents containing PHI.

Penalties for Noncompliance with HIPAA

Caution

Violations of HIPAA can result in severe fines and penalties.

- Fines range from \$100 to \$50,000 *per violation*, depending on severity
- Federal criminal liability with *sanctions* (fines) and time in prison
- Damage to the healthcare provider's reputation and trust

- Risk of class action suit and public relations damage

Common Ways HIPAA is Violated

- **Unauthorized access to patient records.**
 - You can only look at the medical record of a patient whom you are directly caring for.
 - You can not look at anyone else's record, **including your own.**
 - This applies even if your intentions are good, trying to help, or have true concern for the patient.
- **Lost or stolen devices with unencrypted PHI.**
- **Discussing patient information in public places**
 - Such as the cafeteria, elevator, or any place where someone can overhear.

7.5: The Physician-Patient Relationship

Physicians Rights

Physicians have the right to:

- Determine the patients they are going to treat
- Determine the type of services provided
- Not provide service to patients if it is beyond their scope of practice
- Receive direct payment for services delivered
- Discontinue a patient/physician relationship and treatment

Professional Practice Responsibilities and Duties

A physician cannot abandon a patient. Once a physician agrees to take care of a patient, this contract may not be improperly terminated. Physicians may be charged with **abandonment** if a formal notice of withdrawal is not given. The Physician must allow the patient time to seek the services of another physician.

Patient's Rights

- **Right to confidentiality:** Patients have the right to have their personal health information kept private, and healthcare providers are legally obligated to protect this information unless disclosure is required by law or consented to by the patient.
- **Right to privacy:** Patients have a right to privacy; for example, ensuring doors are closed and curtains are pulled during care.
- **Privileged communication:** Communication between a patient and healthcare provider is considered privileged, meaning it cannot be disclosed in legal proceedings without the patient's consent, fostering trust in the healthcare relationship.
- **Right to give informed consent:** Patients have the right to make decisions about their own healthcare after being provided with all necessary information about the benefits, risks, and alternatives of a proposed treatment, ensuring they can make an educated decision.
- **Right to be informed of advantages and potential risks of treatment:** Patients may ask questions and receive clear explanations about their care

Confidentiality and Privacy

All information and records about treatment will be kept confidential by the physician and staff unless consent to release is obtained.

- **Medical Patients' Rights Act:** All patients are entitled to have their privacy respected and medical records handled confidentially.
- **Privileged communication:** Confidential information told to a physician or attorney by a patient.

The Patient's Responsibilities

Patients must comply with the doctor's orders. They need to make follow-up appointments to monitor treatment and medication use if requested by the doctor and provide truthful information regarding their medical history. Patients must also compensate the medical practice or facility for medical services rendered.

Doctrine of Informed Consent

Informed or Expressed Consent: The patient agrees to the treatment plan after being told the consequences of having or not having certain procedures and treatments. Their signature indicates that the patient understands the limits or risks involved, as explained by the physician.

Informed consent requires the physician to explain everything to the patient in understandable language.

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7.6: Importance of Informed Consent

What is Valid, Informed and Implied Consent?

Prior to providing any care to a patient in the dental setting, you need to obtain formal consent or permission from the patient. This could take various forms, such as asking if you can examine them, or take a radiograph, and they consent verbally, or they open their mouth to allow the non-invasive process to continue. The consent is implied if a patient has specifically booked an appointment for a general oral examination, but it is always good practice to verbally check.

Why obtain consent?

- Adequately informing patients and obtaining consent in regard to treatment is both a **specific legal requirement** and an accepted part of **good medical practice**.
- Failure to obtain consent could result in **legal action** for assault and battery.

Valid informed consent

For more invasive or restorative procedures, written consent is important, and this can be via a consent form. Simply signing the form, however, will not make it “valid”.

The patient should have sufficient information so that they can understand and make an appropriate decision about the proposed treatment or procedure. The patient should also be allowed time to understand what the procedure or treatment involves and what to expect before, during and after a procedure or treatment. Ideally, this is in written format but also explained chairside, along with the risks and benefits and any alternative options available. This assists active involvement in their own health care decision-making.

Remember that consent acquired is only valid if:

- The patient has the capacity to give consent, i.e., the capacity to understand the implications of having the treatment.
- The consent is freely given, with no coercion from staff or other family members.
- The consent is specific, i.e., it is valid only for the treatment or procedure for which the patient has been informed and agreed to.
- The patient must be informed in a way they can understand the procedure that is intended.

It is very important to spend some time educating the patient about the problems identified after an initial examination and diagnostic test results. Careful attention should be paid to the chief complaint. The advantages and disadvantages of the individual options should be discussed. The dentist should clearly describe the short- and long-term prognosis for each type of treatment and what can be expected if no treatment is provided (Stefanac & Fontana, 2017).

The patient must also be able to:

- Ask questions and be satisfied with the responses provided.
- Ask for more time (if needed) to seek the opinion of their family or other advisors, often utilized for larger treatment plans.
- Have all relevant information and be able to comprehend costs and payment plans for treatment.
- Use the information provided so they can decide what they think is in their own best interest, with no influence from the clinician or health care provider.

In special needs situations, the consent may not be valid if the patient cannot legally and voluntarily provide consent. In this case, the legal guardian or the person with a power of attorney that has been assigned is consulted instead.

Zhao (2013) lists the types of information that must be provided to carers or individuals with the capacity to consent:

- The possible or likely nature of the condition.
- The proposed approach to investigation, diagnosis, and treatment.

- Benefits, side effects, and risks.
- Other options for investigation, diagnosis, and treatment.
- The degree of uncertainty of any diagnosis/therapeutic outcome.
- The likely consequence of not choosing the proposed treatment, or of not having any treatment at all.
- The time costs and the financial costs involved.

Duty to warn and material risk

What is the duty to warn?

Consent is not considered 'informed' unless it is made on the **basis of relevant information and advice**.

A medical practitioner has a legal duty (Rogers v Whitaker 1992) to warn a patient of a **material risk** inherent in the proposed treatment.

What is material risk?

A risk is a material risk if, in the circumstances, a reasonable person in the patient's position, if warned of the risk, would be likely to attach significance to it.

Failure to warn a patient may be a **breach of the practitioner's duty of care** to the patient and could give rise to legal action for negligence.

How long is consent valid for?

- Consent is valid until the patient **withdraws consent**, which they may do at any time.
- It is recommended that, even if written consent has been obtained, verbal affirmation is also obtained immediately prior to the procedure.

Plan a script for the informed consent process in the following procedures:

- Comprehensive Examination
- Debridement of teeth
- Restoration
- Root Canal Treatment
- Extraction
- Denture
- Crown.

Caution

Remember to record all communication!

No notes = no defense. Some notes = some defense. Good notes = good defense.

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