

6 expert tips for being an effective communicator

Want to be ahead at any game – from [interviewing](#) to prospering in your current job role? Polish your communication skills and reap the rewards.

If you've ever observed the folk that do well at work, can work a party and leave with a stack of new friends, or perhaps get top shelf service wherever they go, you'll notice many have one thing in common – expert communication skills.

Effective communication is about two things, imparting your message in a way that gets you what you want and listening in a way that you truly 'hear' what the other person is saying, explains executive coach [Shane Warren](#).

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Here's his top six tips to help sharpen your communication skills.

1. Be succinct

Whether you're communicating in person or over [email](#), keep your request or message simple and to the point. Avoid information not relevant to the discussion that can confuse the person listening, or bore them to the point they lose concentration and stop hearing you.

It's important to not mistake being succinct for being blunt or abrupt, while your communication should be concise but it should also always be friendly. A great way to pressure test whether you're being succinct is to ask yourself if what you are about to say is useful to the conversation at hand.

2. Be specific

While waffle stands in the way of making your point, do ensure you put across all the information a person needs. If, for example, you have a deadline in mind, state it. If you have ideas you'd like to see in the final product, don't assume the other person will guess. Always articulate all of the relevant information if you want to ensure that your message is clear and correctly heard.

3. Be pleasant and approachable

Take care to [maintain eye contact](#), [a relaxed body](#) and [a smile](#) – and ensure your tone conveys approachability (if you're not sure, practice with friends, or note how people you consider conversational wizards sound). These things not only make the person you are talking to more likely to want to help you, it also makes them more likely to ask questions if they need to clarify any part of your request – so you'll get their best work first up!

4. Listen actively

Effective communicators know conversation is a two-way street. Active listening means giving the person you are talking to your undivided attention. It also means giving cues you are paying attention, such as nodding as they make a point. When you have heard what they are saying, you can clarify and consolidate what they are saying by paraphrasing back to them, or asking questions to clarify anything you may not understand.

5. Observe others who are good at communication - then copy them

Feel like you're on the back foot when it comes to effective communication? Warren recommends watching TED Talks – their speakers are highly skilled at engaging an audience on any topic. “While watching, ask yourself ‘what do I like about the way they are speaking or presenting?’ Then start to include such strategies in how you speak,” he says. In contrast, if you find yourself conversing with someone who is not particularly engaging, observe what doesn't work – nothing shows you just how ineffective mumbling, looking around the room, repeating yourself or sharing too much irrelevant information is quite like experiencing it yourself!

6. Always enter a conversation with two things clear in your mind

Before you even open your mouth, or put finger to keyboard, ensure you know what it is you wish to say; and secondly, that you're [expressing it in an appropriate manner](#). This means using words, tones, and asking questions that will not rattle you and will not make the other person feel awkward.

Effective communication skills are often the difference between hovering on the ground floor and stepping your career up to a [leadership level](#). Use every conversation as an opportunity to sharpen your skills – and try these out one at a time if you're nervous about changing your style.