

# What are the 4 different types of communication?

Effective communication is an essential part of work and of life. Answering calls, posting on social media, messaging friends, smiling at someone you pass in the street – they're all examples of communication. Good communication is important in most job roles, so let's take a look at different communication types that can help you be more productive and effective in the workplace.

In this article, we talk about the four types of communication and how to hone skills in each of them. You'll learn about verbal communication, non-verbal communication, the written word and visual communication. By the end of this post, you'll have the keys to mastering every type of message.

## Verbal communication

Verbal communication is the use of spoken words to share your thoughts and emotions. It's a broad category and includes things like everyday conversations, phone calls, meetings and presentations. Technically, written words are also considered one of the verbal forms of communication, but we'll cover that separately later on.

In workplace settings, verbal communication has both benefits and drawbacks. For example, [verbal communication](#) forms like presentations and meetings can be used to provide clear information, build personal connections and allow for immediate feedback. On the other hand, verbal communication can leave room for misunderstandings or lack of clarity, with challenges like language barriers and information overload. This is why it's important to learn how to verbally communicate effectively.

## Tips for effective verbal communication

Effective verbal communication can enhance both your personal and professional relationships. Here are some tips to improve your verbal communication in and out of

the workplace:

- Use accessible language to [effectively communicate your message](#). Avoid jargon and long, complex sentences.
- Speak clearly, at an appropriate volume and at a relaxed pace.
- Don't speak over others or interrupt.
- Keep your hands away from your mouth when speaking.
- Keep a pleasant tone.
- Be mindful of cultural difference and non-native-language listeners.
- Ask open-ended questions to see if your audience has understood.

As an [active listener](#) you can:

- Ask questions if you need clarification.
- Avoid interrupting the speaker.
- Look at the speaker and pay close attention to their words.

Implementing the above can help increase the effectiveness of your [communication skills](#), both as a speaker and a listener. If you're not sure how you're doing, it doesn't hurt to seek [constructive criticism](#) on how you communicate – practice makes perfect.

## **Non-verbal communication**

Non-verbal communication is how you convey information, thoughts and emotions without speaking. Basically it means body language: facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, eye contact, posture, touch and other non-verbal signals.

As with verbal communication, how you communicate non-verbally impacts the tone and impact of your conversation or presentation. Non-verbal cues should enhance what you're trying to say – but can be open to interpretation. Your body language may contradict what you're saying, or there could be cultural differences in what you're communicating. Ineffective non-verbal communication can cause distrust, so it's important to work on these skills.

## **Tips for effective non-verbal communication**

[Effective non-verbal communication](#) can enhance your ability to connect with others, especially in [collaborative settings](#). Here's how you can practise your non-verbal cues:

- Establish and maintain appropriate eye contact to keep your audience engaged, being mindful of when this could be seen as intimidating.

- Use open and welcoming gestures to complement your speech.
- Maintain good posture to convey self-confidence.
- Be mindful of your tone.
- If appropriate to the situation, use touch to express support, empathy and connection while respecting personal boundaries.

Always try to be aware of your non-verbal cues and how they impact your communication with others. If you're speaking positively, but the person is reacting negatively, there may be a non-verbal cue getting in the way.

## **Visual communication**

Visual communication entails conveying information, ideas or messages through visual elements, such as images, graphics, charts, diagrams, videos, blueprints and the like. Visual communication has a role in practically every industry and job role: teaching, engineering, advertising, construction, law, film and so on. Having a good baseline of visual communication skills will help you in just about any position.

Visual communication can be one of the most effective forms of communication for keeping people engaged and helping them retain new information. Visual aids like photography and infographics can be used to enhance any presentation or report.

## **Tips for effective visual communication**

Here are some tips to help ensure your visual communications are effective:

- Know your audience and which visuals work best for them
- Keep your visuals simple and uncluttered
- Use visual hierarchy to highlight the most important information
- Use colours that are appropriate for your message and evoke the desired emotions from your audience
- Ensure your visuals are accessible: consider people with colorblindness, for instance.
- Seek feedback to ensure you're always working on improving your visual communication.

You don't have to be a [graphic designer](#) or an [illustrator](#) to be able to create effective visual communications. Most office-related software includes tools to create data visualisation, while stock photography and AI generative software can be used as resources for imagery.

## **Written communication**

Written communication covers all types of messaging using the written word: emails, signs, white papers, blog posts, internal newsletters etc. It is one of the more nuanced types of communication to master, since it involves the intricacies of grammar, vocabulary and tone.

How you should write for your job depends on your role and the context. Are you writing for business, creative or academic purposes? Here are some written communication skills you can learn to ensure you're being as effective as you can in getting your message across.

### **Tips for effective written communication**

Learning how to write effectively is important for communicating in almost all aspects of life. If you work in an office, written communication mainly takes the form of emails to colleagues and clients. When writing an email, keep these tips in mind.

- Know your audience and tailor your language and message to them.
- Be concise. Make sure the important details stand out.
- Use an appropriate tone: more professional for a corporate setting, more formal for legal or academic audiences.
- Be specific about what you are saying/asking for and provide the appropriate context for your recipients.
- Break longer text up into bullets or action items.

Another important element of effective written communication is proofreading. Always read your message back to yourself to make sure it's saying what you want it to say. Check for any spelling and grammatical errors – and get someone else to sense check if you're unsure. Remove any unnecessary or repeated information.

Understanding the main 4 types of communication and how to use them is important for success at work. As is the case with any ability, practising the different types of communication will help you become more effective and confident in the workplace.

Communication skills can be refined over time, and evolve as you meet new people and learn to communicate in new settings. The great thing about communication skills is that they should naturally improve the older and wiser you become.

## **FAQs**

### **What is the most effective type of communication?**

The most effective type of communication depends on the context. Generally, verbal communication is the most effective: it's fast, easy, it conveys emotion and people can ask questions on the spot. However, written communication provides a 'paper trail' or digital record. You might need this in the workplace, to follow up on requests or to refer to throughout a project.

To help motivate or educate an audience, non-verbal forms of communication and [active listening](#) can be effective – body language is helpful for your audience to understand mood and emotion. Visual communication – charts, diagrams, site maps, photos, illustrations, floorplans – are also integral to the modern workplace. The most effective communication is likely a combination of these methods, so it's worth working on all four of them.

### **How can I improve my communication skills?**

Some of the best ways to improve your overall communication skills are: use clear, concise language when speaking, brush up on your grammar and spelling and practise active listening. When trying to improve any type of communication skill, seek feedback from your audience, find out what you need to work on and go from there.

### **What are some common barriers to effective communication?**

Some of the most [common barriers to effective communication](#) include:

- Poor listening
- Language barriers
- Noise and distractions
- Emotional barriers (like anxiety)
- Lack of clarity in the message
- Personal biases
- Physical barriers, like distance

Overcoming these barriers takes effort from all parties, but is essential for successful and effective communication.

## **How can technology affect communication?**

Technology has made a huge impact on the way we communicate. We're able to send off thoughts immediately through instant messaging, video calls, social media and more. However, relying on digital communication can lead to misunderstandings and threats to security and privacy. When using technology like email, IM and text to communicate, remember to take time to read and respond, don't share sensitive information and don't send anything you wouldn't want your manager to read.

## **What is the role of non-verbal communication?**

The role of non-verbal communication is to show the intent behind our words through body language and tone of voice. It complements verbal communication by providing emotional context.