

Lesson D2–2

Understanding Effective Communication Techniques

Unit D. Employability in the Agriculture Industry

Problem Area 2. Developing Communication Skills

Lesson 2. Understanding Effective Communication Techniques

New Mexico Content Standard:

Pathway Strand: Communications

Standard: II: Use oral and written communication skills in creating, expressing and interpreting information and ideas including technical terminology and information within AFNR.

Benchmark: II-D. Develop speaking skills to present information orally in formal and informal situations.

Performance Standard: 1. Access a broad range of technical concepts, knowledge and vocabulary to develop and deliver formal presentations and to use in informal discussions. 2. Apply human relations' skills to contribute effectively to group discussions and meetings.

Student Learning Objectives. Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

1. Identify the techniques of effective communication.
2. Discuss effective feedback.
3. Examine ways to improve communication.
4. Explain the types of nonverbal cues.

List of Resources. The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

Recommended Resources. One of the following resources should be selected to accompany this lesson:

Hunter, Sharon, et al. *Developing Leadership and Personal Skills*. Danville, Illinois: Interstate Publishers, Inc., 1997. (Textbook, Chapter 3)

Ricketts, Cliff. *Leadership: Personal Development and Career Success*. Albany, New York: Delmar Publishers, 1997. (Textbook, Chapters 9 and 10)

Other Resources. The following resources will be useful to students and teachers:

Agriculture Sale Communication (U6030); *Steps in Preparing for the Agricultural Sales Call*. (U6033). University of Illinois, Vocational Agriculture Service, 1401 S. Maryland, Urbana, IL 61801.

Applied Communication. 1988. Agency for Instructional Technology, P.O. Box A, Bloomington, IN 47402.

Cheek, Jimmy G., et al. *Effective Oral Communication*. Danville, Illinois: Interstate Publishers, Inc., 1995.

Understanding the Importance of Effective Communications Through the Spoken Word (#8369); *Understanding the Importance of Effective Communication Through the Written Word* (#8370); *Improving Communications Skills Through Organized Activities* (#8371); *Utilizing the Media for Effective Communication—Public Relations* (#8372). Instructional Material Service, Texas A&M University, F.E. Box 2588, College Station, TX 77843.

List of Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities

Writing surface
Overhead projector
Transparencies from attached masters
Copies of Student Lab Sheets

Terms. The following terms are presented in the lesson (shown in bold italics):

Action language
Context
Decoding
Feedback
Filtering
Interference
Nonverbal communication
Nonverbal cues

Object language
Paralanguage
Scanning
Sign language
Skimming
Summarizing
Total communication

Interest Approach. Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches based on their unique class and student situations. A possible approach is included here.

Read the “Active Communication” section to the class. When finished, ask students to explain why they have two ears.

Active Communication

We have two ears and one mouth because we should listen twice as much as we speak. Only when we listen do we have anything worthwhile to say.

As a leader you will be judged by the words you speak. Lincoln said, “It is better to be silent and be thought a fool than to speak and leave no doubt.”

If you want your words to have influence, talk with economy. Use the minimum words necessary to convey a thought. Don’t be so vain as to think others will always be interested in your words.

All of us have had our ears worn out by babbling, mile-a-minute talkers. They barely have time to catch their breath, much less listen.

Learn the art of asking open-ended questions, “What do you like best about your job?” “What are your future plans?” This way the other person can answer with more than a simple “yes” or “no.”

Leaders are most interested in asking questions about others than they are talking about themselves. If you find yourself more interesting than other people, then soon you will be the only person who will listen to you.

Listening is the key to wisdom and the secret of understanding others. You can only lead others if you understand them. So if you want to be a leader, listen to others and you’ll be twice as effective.

Summary of Content and Teaching Strategies

Objective 1: Identify the techniques of effective communication.

Anticipated Problem: What can be done to become a more effective communicator?

- I. Effective skills in listening, speaking, writing, and reading enhance your communication abilities.
 - A. Effective listening skills are important in communication.
 1. Listen with a purpose or interest. Know why you are listening and what you are listening for.
 2. Identify listening cues—introduction, main idea, examples, details, and conclusion.
 3. Recognize common patterns of organizing information.
 4. Concentrate on the message rather than the speaker.
 - B. There are three important steps to follow in effective speaking.
 1. Select the message to match the receiver.
 2. Organize the message in a pattern the receiver will recognize.
 3. Use proper technique in delivering the message.
 - C. Effective reading skills will improve your ability to communicate.
 1. **Scanning** is the process of locating specific detail mixed with other material in text.
 2. **Skimming** is reading to determine only the main idea.
 3. **Summarizing** is putting all the writer’s ideas into your own words.
 - D. Developing good writing skills is the foundation of effective communication.
 1. Plan your writing by asking yourself the following:
 - Who is the audience?
 - What is the purpose?
 - What do I want to say?
 - How should I organize the information?
 - What examples will help my audience remember the main points?
 - What is the most effective format?
 2. When writing remember the five w’s—who, what, when, where, and why.

Many techniques can be used for the students to master this objective. Students need text materials to help understand the techniques of effective communication. Chapter 9 in Developing Leadership and Personal Skills is recommended. Use TM: D2–2A to help explain listening cues. Use TM: D2–2B to demonstrate to students the various patterns of organizing information. Show TM: D2–2C to help explain some simple reading techniques. Have students complete LS: D2–2A to inventory their own communication skills, LS: D2–2B as a writing activity, and LS: D2–2C as a reading activity.

Objective 2: Discuss effective feedback.

Anticipated Problem: Why is effective feedback important?

- II. An important tool for maintaining total communication is the proper use of feedback.
 - A. During feedback there is reversal in the direction of the communication process.
 - 1. **Feedback** is the way the receiver responds to the message the sender is expressing.
 - 2. **Filtering** is the group of perceptions that a message passes through when it is being exchanged.
 - 3. **Total communication** exists when the exact information the sender intends to convey is understood completely by the receiver.
 - 4. Individuals interpret messages using their perceptions, including their values, needs, feelings, and experiences.
 - B. The object of feedback is to report to the sender what the receiver sees, hears, and feels toward the transmission.
 - 1. The receiver must give feedback as soon as transmission of the message takes place.
 - 2. The receiver should use the same channel for feedback as the source used.
 - 3. **Decoding** is when the receiver takes the message and converts it into a form that can be understood.

*Providing text materials will enhance student mastery of this objective. Chapter 9 in *Developing Leadership and Personal Skills* and Chapter 3 in *Leadership: Personal Development and Career Success* are recommended. Have the students practice giving messages and providing instant feedback in a simulated telephone setting where they cannot see each other. Have students explain a difficult process to a friend or family member, who will then attempt to repeat the explanation. Assess how well they communicated. Have the students complete LS: D2–2D to describe a communication problem.*

Objective 3: Examine ways to improve communication.

Anticipated Problem: How can communication be improved?

- III. **Interference** is anything that is or could be a blockage in the communication process.
 - A. Interference may come from sources outside the receiver (e.g., noise in the classroom), or it may come from the receiver (e.g., not paying attention or doing another activity).
 - B. There are three major ways to improve communication.
 - 1. Improve perception—put yourself in the other person’s position and assume his or her emotions and separate the facts from opinions.
 - 2. Improve the physical process of communication by providing feedback, improving listening and speaking skills, and simplifying language.
 - 3. Improve relationships by building trust and confidence.

Use a range of teaching strategies to enhance student mastery of this objective. Use TM: D2–2D to explain the three ways to improve communication. Student-oriented learning materials include Chapter 9 in *Developing Leadership and Personal Skills* and Chapter 3 in *Leadership: Personal Development and Career Success*.

Objective 4: Explain the types of nonverbal cues.

Anticipated Problem: What are examples of nonverbal cues in communication?

IV. **Nonverbal communication** is exchanging information without the use of words.

- A. Nonverbal communication requires a sender, a receiver, a message, and a medium.
- B. In nonverbal communication the sender may not be aware the message is being sent.
- C. **Nonverbal cues** are the signals we use to tell others about our emotional state, our attitudes, and information about ourselves.
 - 1. There are four major forms of nonverbal cues.
 - a. **Sign language** includes forms of communication that take the place of spoken words (head movements, shoulder shrugs, etc.).
 - b. **Action language** includes action or body movements that transmit a specific meaning.
 - c. **Paralanguage** is vocal sounds that influence the expression of spoken words.
 - d. **Object language** includes physical items that convey messages.
- D. Nonverbal cues can send several messages.
 - 1. Cultural and contextual factors affect the way messages are interpreted.
 - a. Research should be done to understand cultural differences and similarities.
 - b. **Context** refers to all the things in the experiment that help to determine the meaning of the cue.
 - 2. There are six commonly used nonverbal cues: eye contact, facial expressions, distance, tone of voice, appearance, and body movements.

Several techniques can be used to help students understand this objective. Providing text materials will enhance their learning. Chapter 10 in *Developing Leadership and Personal Skills* is recommended. Show students TM: D2–2E and have them identify the message in each facial expression. Use TM: D2–2F to help explain the various cultural differences in nonverbal cues.

Review/Summary. Focus the review and summary of the lesson around the student learning objectives. Call on students to explain the content associated with each objective. Use their responses as the basis for determining any areas that need to be covered again. Questions at the ends of the chapters in the recommended textbooks may also be used in the review process. Use the lab activities in reviewing and reinforcing student learning.

Application. Application can involve one or more of the following student activities using the attached lab sheets:

Communication Skills Inventory—LS: D2–2A

Writing Activity—LS: D2–2B

Reading Activity—LS: D2–2C

Describing a Communication Problem—LS: D2–2D

Evaluation. Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is attached.

Answers to Sample Test:

Part One: Matching

1=d, 2=a, 3=g, 4=h, 5=f, 6=b, 7=c, 8=e

Part Two: Completion

1. skim
2. Total communication
3. Summarizing
4. who, what, when, where, why

Part Three: Short Answer

Select the message to match the receiver, organize the message in a pattern the receiver will recognize, and use proper technique in delivering the message.

Test

Lesson D2–2: Understanding Effective Communication Techniques

Part One: Matching

Instructions. Match the term with the correct response. Write the letter of the term by the definition.

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| a. scanning | d. filtering | g. decoding |
| b. paralanguage | e. feedback | h. interference |
| c. object language | f. sign language | |

- _____ 1. The group of perceptions that a message passes through when it is being exchanged.
- _____ 2. The process of locating specific detail mixed with other material in text.
- _____ 3. When the receiver takes the message and converts into an understandable form.
- _____ 4. Anything that could be a blockage in the communication process.
- _____ 5. Includes forms of communication that take the place of spoken words.
- _____ 6. Vocal sounds that influence the expression of spoken words.
- _____ 7. Includes physical items that convey messages.
- _____ 8. The way the receiver responds to the message the sender is expressing.

Part Two: Completion

Instructions. Provide the word or words to complete the following statements.

1. When you _____, you are only determining the main ideas.
2. _____ exists when the exact information the sender intends to convey is understood completely by the receiver.
3. _____ is putting all the writer's ideas into your own words.
4. When writing, remember the five w's—_____, _____, _____, _____, and _____.

Part Three: Short Answer

What are the three steps to follow in effective speaking?

LISTENING CUES

Words or phrases that tell you what to expect.

- 1. Introduction—let me begin**
- 2. Main idea—one main point, a central idea**
- 3. Examples—for instance, for example, like, such as**
- 4. Details—specifically, an important part of**
- 5. Conclusion—in summary, finally**

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZING INFORMATION

- 1. Chronological order—first, next, then**
- 2. Order of importance—most important, least significant, priority**
- 3. Comparison and contrast—similar, like, different, in contrast**
- 4. Cause and effect—because, so, therefore**

STEPS TO FOLLOW IN SCANNING

- 1. Read down the page (rather than across).**
- 2. Read section and column headings.**
- 3. Use a reading aid such as a bookmark.**

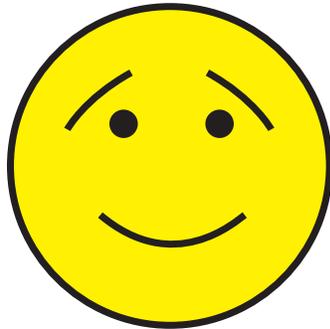
Steps to Follow in Skimming

- 1. Note the titles and subtitles.**
- 2. Read the introduction and the conclusion.**
- 3. Read boldface and/or italic type.**
- 4. Look at illustrations.**

THREE MAJOR WAYS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

- 1. Improve perception—trade places with the receiver.**
- 2. Improve the physical process of communication.**
- 3. Develop a relationship of trust and confidence.**

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE MESSAGES IN THESE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS?



CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN NONVERBAL CUES

EYE CONTACT	
European American	generally prefer direct eye contact; seen as a sign of confidence and respect
African American	adults usually use a direct gaze; children may not out of respect for the adult; often interpreted as a desire to ask a question; looking away is seen as a “thinking” response, not one of disinterest
Native American	direct eye contact is seen as intrusive and often not made out of respect for the party with whom they are speaking; maintaining direct eye contact may be seen as rude or even hostile
Asian American	inappropriate, or even shameful, especially in formal settings between individuals who do not know each other well; gaze is often cast downward, especially by children, as a sign of respect
Hispanic American	contact is acceptable for most; however, prolonged contact may be disrespectful; interrupted gaze is very common
DISTANCE	
European American	personal space distance is usually about 20 to 36 inches; closer if conversation is intimate; distance is a sign of respect and, possibly, power
African American	often sends contradictory message; on one hand, prefer closeness to transmit emotions, on the other hand, need more space because of tendency to use body movements when speaking; acceptable personal space is usually about 6 to 12 inches
Native American	do not need to be face-to-face when conversing; often do so side by side; personal space of 2 to 3 feet; individual wishing to speak may just enter a person’s line of vision and wait to be recognized

Asian American	prefer a more formal distance; personal space greater than that of European Americans; closeness of family members at home is acceptable
Hispanic American	conversation distance 6 to 8 inches less than that of European Americans, closer distance reserved for family or others of the culture; conversation commonly takes place side-by-side instead of face-to-face
TOUCH	
European American	handshake is acceptable formal form of touching; familiarity may be shown as a hug, maybe a kiss on the cheek, among women; hugs between men becoming more acceptable, more often a slap on the back is the greeting; older children and adults do not touch unless they are family or close friends
African American	reciprocity is the key; if one touches another, it then becomes okay for the touch to be returned; touching of the hair, or other subservient-type touches, are unacceptable; touching on the shoulder, back, arms, and hands usually reserved for adult, intimate relationships; however, among school-aged children it is also accepted
Native American	public displays of affection are rare; handshakes are done by gently clasping hands; more intense handshakes may be seen as disrespectful; children are encouraged by gentle hugs and touches
Asian American	prefer not to shake hands; touching of strangers is inappropriate; friends of the same sex can hold hands, but men and women do not in public; a slight bow or clasping of hands in front of the chest is an appropriate greeting; pats on the head are very offensive as the head is considered sacred by many
Hispanic American	embracing and kissing on the cheek is a common greeting, especially among those within the culture; usually touch friends and relatives with who they are talking

Note: These are general nonverbal differences that tend to be present.

Lab Sheet

Communication Skills Inventory

Purpose:

1. To inventory personal communication skills.
2. To identify strengths and weaknesses in communication skills.

Materials:

Lab sheet
Writing utensil

Procedure:

1. Review the list of communication skills and circle the appropriate letter which applies.
2. Use the following key: A=Always, S=Sometimes, R=Rarely, N=Never, U=Unsure.

Communication Skills Inventory

1. I use natural facial expressions and gestures to convey ideas and feeling.
A S R N U
2. I am aware of the barriers that affect communication (deadlines and interference).
A S R N U
3. I try to reduce factors that negatively affect communication (prejudices, environmental noise, message errors).
A S R N U
4. I am able to switch easily from sender to receiver when I communicate.
A S R N U
5. I am able to select the best mode (speaking, writing, visual, or nonverbal signals) for communicating.
A S R N U

6. I use standard patterns of organization (chronological order, comparison and contrast, cause and effect) to present information orally or in writing.

A S R N U

7. I listen with a purpose so I can concentrate on the message.

A S R N U

8. I adjust my spoken or written message to the needs of the people listening to or reading the message.

A S R N U

9. I use reading techniques like scanning, skimming, and summarizing to assist me in my work.

A S R N U

10. I write with attention to conventions—accurate content, grammatical and mechanical correctness, and proper layout and design.

A S R N U

Lab Sheet

Writing Activity

Purpose:

To practice writing a memo that provides requested information.

Materials:

Lab sheet
Writing utensil

Procedure:

1. Read the facts given in the following scenario.
2. Respond with a short memo.

You work as a farm manager. Cindy Cooper, another farm manager, has received an inquiry from a landowner who wants to use 20 acres of pasture to graze livestock. Cindy has asked for your advice. Using the facts presented below, write a memo to Cindy.

- A. A saddle horse will eat 30 to 40 pounds of forage per day.
- B. An acre of average non-irrigated pasture will produce between 500 and 1,000 pounds of usable forage per year.
- C. Beef cows should have at least 2 acres of pasture per head.
- D. Pasture carrying capacities can be increased by irrigation, rotation grazing, a balanced fertilization program, superior grass species, and supplemental feed.
- E. Overgrazed pastures can become barren or weed infested and can erode more easily.
- F. New landowners typically overestimate the carrying capacity of land for livestock.
- G. The landowner has 20 acres available for pasture land.

Lab Sheet Key

Writing Activity

To: Cindy Cooper, Farm Manager

From: (Student's name)

Subject: Use of Pasture for Livestock

Date:

In response to your request for information, the following guidelines should help you answer the landowner who wants to use 20 acres as pasture land.

A common mistake of new landowners is overestimating the carrying capacity of land. When this occurs, the land can become barren or weed infested and can erode more easily. This reduces the land's value. A safe recommendation would be to graze no more than 10 beef cows or one horse, if no supplemental feed is provided.

The grazing capacity of a pasture can be increased through irrigation, rotation grazing, balanced fertilization, seeding of superior forage grasses, and the provision of supplemental feed to the livestock.

Lab Sheet

Reading Activity

Purpose:

1. To learn how to skim and scan when reading material.
2. To enhance the ability to skim and scan reading material.

Materials:

Lab sheet
Writing utensil

Procedure:

1. Skim or scan the information on the “100 Series Lawn Tractors” and answer the questions which follow.

100 Series Lawn Tractors

Features

Eight sleek models—the 9-hp 130 with gear drive and high-performance 30-inch mower; the 12½-hp 160 and 165 with 38-inch mower and gear and hydrostatic drive, respectively; the 14-hp 175 with hydrostatic drive and 38-inch mower; and the 17-hp 180 and 185 with gear and hydrostatic drive, respectively, each available with 38- or 46-inch mower.

Aluminum engine block with cast-iron cylinder liner for lightweight strength. Overhead valves on 130, 175, 180, and 185 engines provide more torque, better fuel economy, and greater productivity.

Full-pressure lubrication on the 160, 165, 175, 180, and 185 delivers oil to bearings and other vital engine parts.

Rustproof fiberglass hood fully encloses engine for quieter operation.

Fully regulated electrical system and 13- or 15-amp charging system for quick, reliable starts.

Hinged seat tilts forward to protect it against the elements and allow easier refueling when rear bagger is attached.

Black dash with low-fuel indicator on 160, 165, 175, 180, and 185, in-tank fuel gauge on 130; battery and oil indicators on 175, 180, and 185.

Full-length steel frame for durability.

Replaceable dry-type air filter with foam precleaner.

Color-coded controls, sturdy footrests, and beadlock rims for comfort and convenience.

Sector and pinion steering and tight turning radius for superb handling and maneuverability.

Triple-safety starting—shift lever must be in neutral (gear drive models) or brake pedal depressed (hydrostatic models), PTO disengaged, and ignition key used before tractor will start.

Seat switch automatically shuts off engine if you inadvertently leave seat with PTO engaged.

Mechanical lift lever lowers mower to any of seven preset cutting heights, 1 to 4 inches.

Optional 6½-bushel rear bagger for tractors with 30- or 38-inch mower, optional 6½-bushel Power Flow system for tractors with 46-inch mower. All can be lined with trash bags for added convenience.

Built-in headlights on 175, 180, and 185.

Add versatility with

- 42-inch front blade
- 38-inch snow thrower
- 30 or 50 Dumpcart
- 31T or 38T Lawn Sweeper
- 5-B Sprayer
- Thatcher
- Spiker

Adapted from *Grounds Care Equipment Purchasing Guide* (Moline, Illinois: Deere & Company, 1987), p. 76.

1. Skim: What is the purpose of this selection?
2. Scan: What accessories are available?
3. Scan: Do all of the mowers have gauges to indicate oil pressure and battery charge?
4. Scan: Why have they started using overhead valve engines?
5. Write a brief summary of the advantages of these lawn tractors.

Lab Sheet Key

Reading Activity

Possible Answers:

1. It provides a description of the features of 100 series lawn tractors.
2. Optional rear bagger, Power Flow system, 42-inch front blade, 38-inch snow thrower, 30 or 50 Dumpcart, 31T or 38T Lawn Sweeper, 5-B Sprayer, Thatcher, Spiker.
3. No, only models 175, 180, and 185.
4. Overhead valve engines provide more torque, better fuel economy, and greater productivity.
5. The 100 series of lawn tractors offers eight models to choose from. They are all light-weight and durable with fully regulated electrical systems. Other features include triple safety starting and sector and pinion steering. Several types of baggers are provided as optional equipment.

Lab Sheet

Describing a Communication Problem

Purpose:

1. To identify problems that cause poor communication.
2. To identify skills that will improve communication.

Materials:

Lab sheet
Writing utensil

Procedure:

Read the following section and fill in your answers below.

Describe a recent communication problem you believe was the result of poor listening skills—yours or someone else’s. Who was the sender? What was the message? Who was the receiver? What were the specific barriers that prevented effective listening? How could the communication problem have been solved?

Sender:

Receiver:

Message:

Barriers that prevented effective listening:

Problems resulting from barriers:

Possible solutions: