

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Communicating at Work

In today's business environment, effective communication skills are critical to success. The ability to communicate effectively was ranked one of the top personal characteristics that employers seek. This isn't surprising, given that the success of any organization today is largely dependent upon how effective communication is among its employees and the larger community that it serves.

Nevertheless, one of the most common complaints that employees have about their organization continues to be the lack of effective communication. Learning accurate, comprehensive and coherent communication skills can be a major factor in creating a smooth running workplace and can greatly enhance your relationships and potential for success.

Tips and Tools You Can Use

Words make up only about 20 per cent of what you communicate. Understanding the importance of your body language and vocal tone is key to improving your communication skills. Here are some great tips to consider:

Non-Verbal Messages

- Think about the messages you are sending. Make sure your body and words are giving the same message.
- If you don't mean what you are saying, your body may give you away. For example, if you protest "I'm not angry" with your face flaming red and your teeth clenched, no one is likely to believe you.
- Consider whether your body language suggests you're not interested, even when you are.
- Relax your body and lean slightly forward to show interest in what you are listening to.
- Nod and verbally acknowledge your listening by using words such as "Yes" and "Oh?"
- Look people in the eye when you are speaking or to express interest while listening to someone else.
- Avoid fidgeting, but use appropriate hand gestures to communicate positive involvement.
- Build trust so that you can communicate openly and fairly with others.
- Show that you're listening.
- Demonstrate that people are important to you by listening to what they are saying, not just hearing.
- Instead of thinking about how to respond to what is being said, concentrate on what the person is really saying.
- It can be helpful to restate what you have heard to clarify that you heard and understood what was said.
- Ask questions if you are not sure you understand what the other person is saying or asking you to do.

© 2026 LifeWorks (US) Ltd.

Improve Delivery

- Record your voice and review how you sound.
- Your voice may sound weak if you speak with short breaths.
- Lack of energy can suggest lack of authority or conviction.
- Sentences that go up in tone at the end can sound like questions and make you appear unsure of yourself or your arguments.
- Use the right language.
- Communicate concisely to avoid misunderstandings.
- When expressing feelings, use "I" rather than "you". For example, "I am upset about…" is more effective and more likely to be listened to than "You make me mad…."
- When asking for help, "Could you help me?" is more effective a directive such as "Help me to…."
- When assigning work, request instead of ordering. For example, "Would you please…." is more effective than "Go do…."

Whether you're interacting with your supervisor, colleague, supplier or customer; making your communication clear, direct and positive is key to making it effective. The more effective you are at communicating, the less likely it is that you will have to deal with any unnecessary miscommunications or errors—improving your ability to enhance your relationships and communication success.