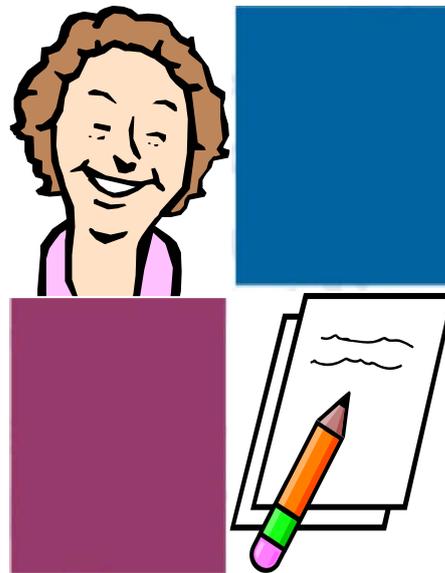


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# **Apply Basic Communication Skills BSBCMM101A**



**by  
Simon Thompson**



**Software Publications**

Apply Basic Communication Skills

This book supports BSBCMM101A Apply Basic Communication Skills in the Business Services Training Package.

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Simon Thompson

LLB (Hons)

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## BSBCMM101A Apply basic communication skills

### Unit descriptor

This unit describes the performance outcomes, skills and knowledge required to develop communication skills in the workplace. It covers gathering, conveying and receiving information, along with completing assigned written information under direct supervision.

No licensing, legislative, regulatory or certification requirements apply to this unit at the time of endorsement.

### Employability skills

This unit contains employability skills.

### Application of the unit

This unit applies to individuals developing basic skills and knowledge of workplace communication in preparation for working in a broad range of settings.

### Competency field

Communication - Interpersonal Communication

## ELEMENT

Elements describe the essential outcomes of a unit of competency.

## PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

Performance criteria describe the performance needed to demonstrate achievement of the element. Where bold italicised text is used, further information is detailed in the required skills and knowledge section and the range statement. Assessment of performance is to be consistent with the evidence guide.

1. Identify workplace communication procedures

- 1.1. Identify organisational communication requirements and ***workplace procedures*** with assistance from ***appropriate people***
- 1.2. Identify appropriate ***lines of communication*** with supervisors and colleagues
- 1.3. Seek advice on the ***communication method/equipment*** most appropriate for the task

2. Communicate in the workplace

- 2.1. Use effective questioning, and active listening and speaking skills to gather and convey information
- 2.2. Use appropriate non-verbal behaviour at all times
- 2.3. Encourage, acknowledge and act upon constructive feedback

3. Draft written information
  - 3.1. Identify relevant procedures and formats for written information
  - 3.2. Draft and present assigned **written information** for approval, ensuring it is written clearly, concisely and within designated timeframes
  - 3.3. Ensure written information meets required **standards** of style, format and detail
  - 3.4. Seek assistance and/or feedback to aid communication skills development

## REQUIRED SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

This section describes the skills and knowledge required for this unit.

### Required skills

- communication skills to identify lines of communication, to request advice, to effectively question, to follow instructions, to receive feedback, and to convey messages clearly and concisely
- culturally appropriate communication skills to relate to people from diverse backgrounds and to people with diverse abilities
- literacy skills to identify work requirements, to draft written information and to process basic, relevant workplace documentation
- problem-solving skills to solve routine problems related to the workplace, under direct supervision.
- 

### Required knowledge

- key provisions of relevant legislation from all forms of government that may affect aspects of business operations, such as privacy laws
- organisational policies, plans and procedures.

## RANGE STATEMENT

The range statement relates to the unit of competency as a whole. It allows for different work environments and situations that may affect performance. Bold italicised wording, if used in the performance criteria, is detailed below. Essential operating conditions that may be present with training and assessment (depending on the work situation, needs of the candidate, accessibility of the item, and local industry and regional contexts) may also be included.

**Workplace procedures** may include:

- answering telephone calls
- following instructions
- informal discussions
- requests from colleagues
- using internet and email
- using voice mail
- workplace procedures related to specific tasks

- Appropriate people*** may include:
- colleagues
  - other staff members
  - supervisors, mentors, trainers or assessors
- Lines of communication*** may include:
- formal and informal means
  - verbal or written
- Communication method/equipment*** may include:
- computer network systems
  - facsimile machines
  - personal computer equipment including hardware, keyboards, software and communication packages
  - telephones
- Written information*** may include:
- electronic mail
  - facsimiles
  - general correspondence or standard/form letters and memos
  - handwritten and printed materials
  - telephone messages or general messages
- Standards*** may include:
- organisational policies
  - standards set by workgroup

## **EVIDENCE GUIDE**

The Evidence Guide provides advice on assessment and must be read in conjunction with the performance criteria, required skills and knowledge, range statement and the Assessment Guidelines for the Training Package.

### **Critical aspects for assessment and evidence required to demonstrate competency in this unit**

Evidence of the following is essential:

- clear, concise and correct verbal and written communication
- promptly and appropriately following instructions
- knowledge of relevant legislation.

### **Context of and specific resources for assessment**

Assessment must ensure:

- access to an actual workplace or simulated environment
- access to office equipment and resources
- access to examples of documents relating to workplace communication policies and procedures.

## **Method of assessment**

A range of assessment methods should be used to assess practical skills and knowledge. The following examples are appropriate for this unit:

- direct questioning combined with review of portfolios of evidence and third party workplace reports of on-the-job performance by the candidate
- analysis of responses to case studies and scenarios
- demonstration of techniques
- observation of presentations
- oral or written questioning to assess knowledge of organisational policies, plans and procedures
- review of written information.

## **Guidance information for assessment**

Holistic assessment with other units relevant to the industry sector, workplace and job role is recommended, for example:

- general administration units.

## Elements of Competency and Performance Criteria

Competency Element	Performance Criteria	Page
Identify workplace communication procedures	▪ Identify organisational communication requirements and <i>workplace procedures</i> with assistance from appropriate people	8–16
	▪ Identify appropriate <i>lines of communication</i> with supervisors and colleagues	17–23
	▪ Seek advice on the <i>communication method/equipment</i> most appropriate for the task	24–30
Communicate in the workplace	▪ Use effective questioning, and active listening and speaking skills to gather and convey information	34–45
	▪ Use appropriate non-verbal behaviour at all times	31–33
	▪ Encourage, acknowledge and act upon constructive feedback	46–47
Draft written information	▪ Identify relevant procedures and formats for written information	48–59
	▪ Draft and present assigned <i>written information</i> for approval, ensuring it is written clearly, concisely and within designated timeframes	60–61
	▪ Ensure written information meets required <i>standards</i> of style, format and detail	62–63
	▪ Seek assistance and/or feedback to aid communication skills development	64

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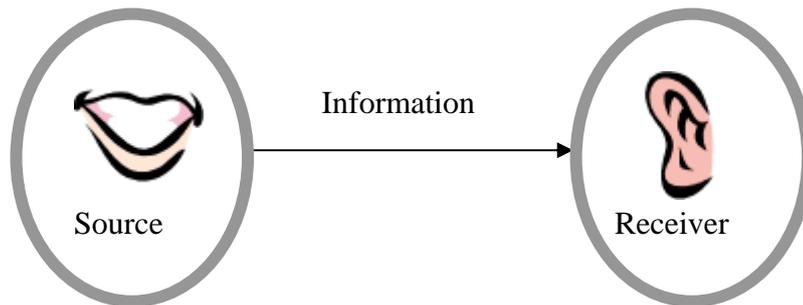
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# What is Communication?

## Basic definition

Communication is a method by which information travels from a *source*, such as a mouth, to a *receiver*, such as an ear, and is *understood as intended*. This last part is important. After all, if the information is not understood, it has not been communicated properly.



Sources and receivers can be individuals or groups. They do not need to be people either. When a dog barks and brings you its lead, you understand that it wants to go for a walk. In that case, the source is the dog, and the receiver is you.

**Information** can be a message or a collection of facts. It might include, for instance, statements of opinion, instructions, questions, requests, demands, ideas, declarations or codes.

Communication can take many forms:

- Cats communicate by meowing and purring.
- Computers communicate with each other by sending coded signals over telephone lines.
- Native Americans used to communicate with each other by sending and observing smoke signals, i.e. balls of smoke rising into the sky.
- Ships' captains sometimes communicate with each other using Morse code—a series of short and long beeps that are transferred over radio waves.
- Writers communicate with their readers by putting words on paper.
- Deaf people sometimes communicate using sign language.
- Football supporters communicate with their teams by chanting.

### Exercise 1

In each of the following cases, write down who or what, is the *source* of information and who or what is the *receiver* of information?

1 The teacher bangs on a desk to let the people in her class know she requires their attention.

Source \_\_\_\_\_ Receiver \_\_\_\_\_

2 The alarm clock rings to let its owner know it is time to get out of bed.

Source \_\_\_\_\_ Receiver \_\_\_\_\_

3 The doctor knows from her patient's moans that he is in pain.

Source \_\_\_\_\_ Receiver \_\_\_\_\_



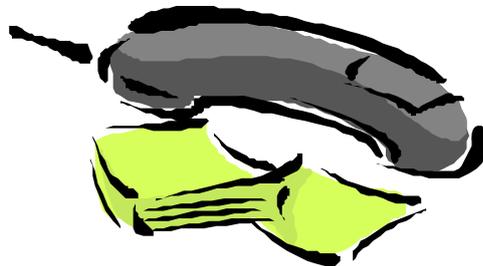
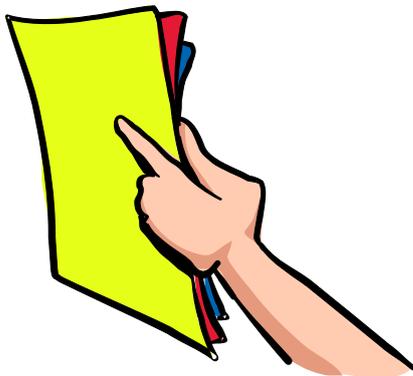
# Communication in the Workplace

At work, communication falls broadly into two main categories: *external* communication and *internal* communication.

External communication involves communicating *outside* the organisation with customers, clients, suppliers, competitors and other organisations.

Internal communication involves communicating *inside* the organisation with your colleagues and supervisors, that is, the people you work with.

This book describes how internal communication can work effectively. It does not attempt to deal with external communication, which is a big subject in its own right.



# Types of Communication

## Verbal communication

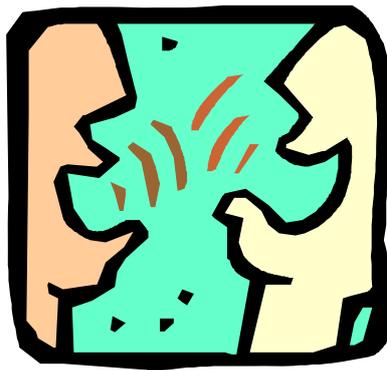
You are using verbal communication whenever you use words to get a message, idea, thought, argument or piece of information across.

Verbal communication can be either *oral* or *written*.

## Oral communication

Oral communication uses the mouth. Most oral communication involves people speaking to each other, either directly on the telephone or over the internet via Skype.

In some cases, oral communication will not involve words. For instance, when a child shrieks with delight, she is communicating orally and when a shepherd whistles for his dog, he is also communicating orally.



## Written communication

Written communication also uses words. These words might be:

- written on paper, using a pen or pencil
- printed on paper or other surface
- typed into a computer and sent via email, short messaging service or via social media such as Facebook or Twitter
- copied onto a CD, DVD or USB flash drive.

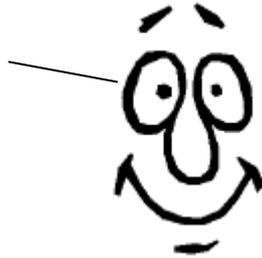
## Non-verbal communication

Communication can be non-verbal, which means that it does not use words to transfer information. Here are some examples:

### Facial expressions

We use facial expressions to show how we feel about something.

A smiling face tells us that the person is happy.



A frowning face sends the opposite message.



### Gestures

We can use gestures to show how we feel and also to communicate a specific message. For instance, a police officer might hold up the palm of her hand to tell drivers to stop their cars or wave her hand to tell them to keep moving.



Giving the 'thumb's up' sign shows that you feel good about the situation.

### Body language

We use body language to show our attitudes and emotions. Often we are not even aware that we are doing it. For example, if you are discussing a project with someone and you begin to lean back in your chair, it creates distance between you and the other person. This silently communicates that you are not all that happy with the direction the discussion is going.



## Symbols

Non-verbal communication might also involve symbols such as road signs.



## Signals

Signals, such as traffic lights, are also used to communicate messages and instructions.



### Exercise 2

For each of the situations below, select the appropriate type of communication.

- 1 You work at a depot where trucks are parked. Your job is to direct truck drivers into the right parking spots and make sure they do not hit anything when they are parking.

Which type of communication would you use mostly?

- a. verbal communication
- b. gestures
- c. facial expressions
- d. written communication

- 2 You work in a lawyers office, and need to pass on long and complicated instructions from one lawyer to another.

Which type of communication would you use?

- a. verbal communication
- b. gestures
- c. written communication
- d. body language

- 3 You work on a construction site and you need to ask the person who looks after supplies for a hammer, a bag of nails, and a length of pipe.  
Which type of communication would you use?
- a. verbal communication
  - b. signals
  - c. gestures
  - d. written communication

**Exercise 3**

Answer the following questions.

- 1 What is verbal communication?  
.....
- 2 What is non-verbal communication?  
.....
- 3 List five types of non-verbal communication.  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....
- 4 Is written communication verbal or non-verbal?  
.....



# Identify Workplace Communication Procedures

This section concentrates on what you need to do to communicate effectively in your workplace. Each workplace has its own procedures that are designed to help you communicate effectively and efficiently with your colleagues. By the end of this section, you should be able to do the following:

- understand what communication procedures are
- describe the communication requirements in your workplace
- describe some communication methods
- describe the most appropriate communication methods in your workplace
- identify lines of communication in your workplace
- follow instructions promptly and appropriately
- request advice and feedback
- listen effectively
- ask effective questions
- use appropriate body language.

## **Keyword: Procedure**

A procedure is an established method or a series of steps for accomplishing something. Organisations often create procedures to help their staff work efficiently and effectively. Procedures are like recipes. Somebody else has taken the time to find out what works best. All you need to do is follow a simple set of instructions.



# What Rules exist in your Workplace Regarding Communication?

Each place of work is different and each has different rules, requirements and expectations. You will not learn them all from this book.

When you enter a new workplace you will need to find out:

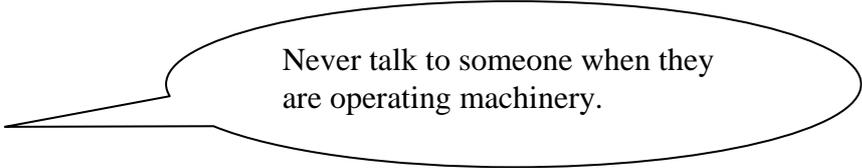
- what systems are used to help people communicate
- how they relate to you and your job.

## Informal rules

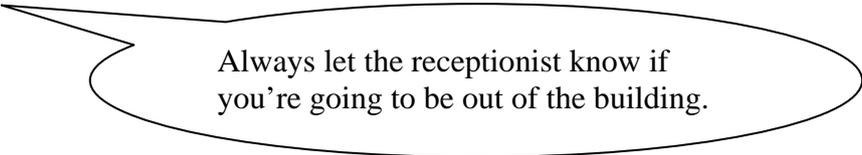
Some organisations will have informal rules. These rules might not be written down anywhere, but everybody knows them. This is most common in smaller organisations where everybody knows each other and rules can easily be communicated by talking to one another.

Just because requirements are not written down, it does not mean that they do not exist.

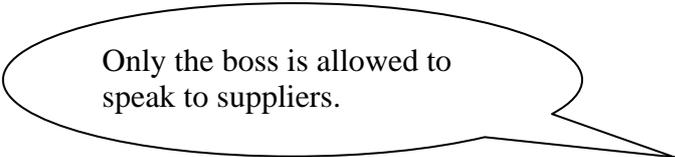
## Some examples:



Never talk to someone when they are operating machinery.



Always let the receptionist know if you're going to be out of the building.



Only the boss is allowed to speak to suppliers.

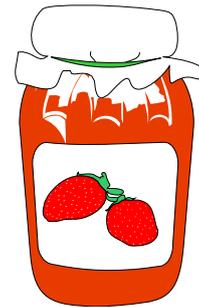
People learn the 'unwritten rules' by watching each other and asking questions. You will need to learn these rules if you want to do your job well and avoid making mistakes.

#### Exercise 4

### Uncle Luther's Jam Company

Barney works for his Uncle Luther at their family jam making business. There are only five employees at Uncle Luther's Jam Company and they know each other well.

Uncle Luther has strict rules for answering the telephone because he insists that customers must be dealt with professionally. The rules are pinned to the wall next to the telephone.



Apart from the telephone rules, communication at Uncle Luther's Jam Company is relaxed and informal. People speak directly to each other or leave notes on a noticeboard. Also on the noticeboard is a calendar showing days of the week. This is for employees to let each other know where they are. If anyone expects to be out of the office, they must let everyone know by writing details on the calendar explaining where they will be and when they will be back.

List two communication requirements at Uncle Luther's Jam Company

.....  
.....

## Formal rules

Some workplaces can be very strict with elaborate rules. These are likely to be places where:

- there are lots of people who might need access to information. In such cases information will probably have to be written down, stored or otherwise organised so that everyone knows how to get hold of it when they need it
- work is dangerous, expensive or critically important. If lack of information could cause a disaster, it is safer to create systems so that everyone who needs information receives it fully and on time.
- information is complex and precise. It might be forgotten or misinterpreted if not written down and stored for future reading.
- efficiency is important. Information needs to be quickly passed to all the right people.

Organisations with formal rules for communication include:

- hospitals where it is essential that exactly the right information is received by the right people and that information is stored properly for future use
- armed forces where there is a strict hierarchy and instructions must be obeyed to the letter
- power stations and other places where there are serious safety hazards
- lawyers offices where client confidentiality and accuracy is important
- parcel delivery companies where there is a need to be very quick and efficient. They need to ensure everyone along the route knows immediately how each parcel should be dealt with so that there are no delays.

**Keyword: Complex**  
Complex means complicated.



**Keyword: Document**  
A document is a piece of writing that provides information.

**Exercise 5**

Select one type of workplace where communication requirements are likely to be strict and formal. Explain why.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Organisational procedures**

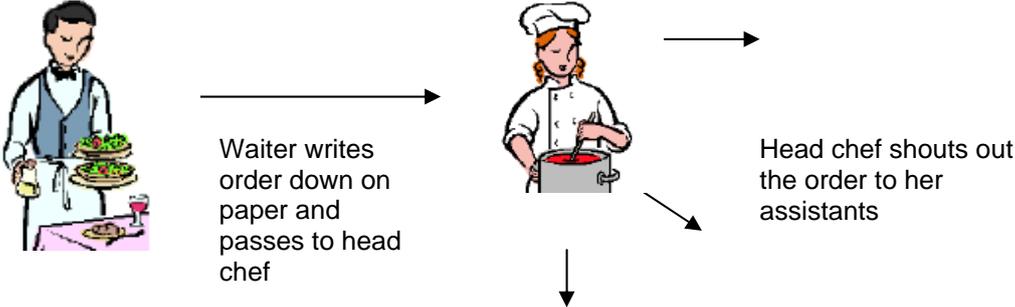
Organisational procedures for communication are rules that are put in place by the workplace to ensure everyone does their job properly. Procedures might relate to:

- **specific tasks**—how to ensure specific tasks are performed effectively, efficiently and safely.
- **following instructions**—how instructions should be given, received and acted upon.
- **requests from colleagues**—how to respond when other people need your assistance.
- **answering telephone calls**—how to treat callers and deal with their requests.
- **using voicemail**—how to ensure voicemail is used professionally and effectively.
- **using internet and email**—how to get the best from internet technologies, avoid the pitfalls and protect against viruses.
- **formal and informal discussions**—how meetings should be structured as well as who should be included, consulted or informed when discussions take place.

**Example procedure for communicating food orders in a restaurant**

Danny has just started a job as a waiter in a restaurant. The system for communicating food orders to the kitchen staff is as follows:

A waiter takes an order from a customer and writes it down on a piece of paper. He also writes down the table number so that the order gets to the right table later on. The piece of paper is passed to the head chef, who then shouts out the order to her kitchen assistants. Once the food is ready, the assistants pass the plates of food to the head chef, who passes them to the waiter, who takes them to the appropriate table.



**Exercise 6**

Explain the following words:

*Document*

.....

*Procedure*

.....

**Exercise 7**

List seven activities that organisational procedures might relate to.

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

# Identify your Workplace Communication Rules

## Organisations with informal communication rules and requirements

In a small, informal organisation there is a good chance that none of the rules will be written down.

In such cases, you will need to rely heavily on **asking questions** and **making notes**.

## Organisations with formal communication rules and requirements

In larger organisations and workplaces with formal rules, communication requirements might be written down in a variety of places. These might include:

- a general employee handbook or manual
- a quality assurance or procedures manual
- rules relating to ethical standards and anti-discrimination
- business plans and performance plans
- workplace health and safety guidelines
- environmental protection guidelines
- instructions for the use of equipment
- customer service guidelines
- style guide, setting out rules for written communication
- data protection guidelines.

Any information about people that is stored on paper, computer or elsewhere is subject to *data protection* rules. If you break these rules, your organisation could be subject to legal action. If you need to use information about people from a database, for whatever reason, check first that you will not be breaking any data protection rules.

These rules and guidelines might be in the form of printed manuals or held on the computer network or *intranet*.

### Keyword: Intranet

An *intranet* is a computer network that can be accessed only by authorised personnel. It is similar to the internet, but the information on it cannot be viewed by the general public.



You may not need to read every document on communication procedures immediately. You will read some as and when you need to perform a specific task. But, you should make sure you ask your supervisor which ones are essential and familiarise yourself with them.

## Asking about an organisation's communication requirements

Whether you work in a formal or informal environment, you will rely on people you work with to explain the rules or show you where you can find them. It is up to you to ensure you get the help you need. Do not just wait to be told.

Firstly, make sure you **ask** as early as possible. When you start a job people are normally willing to help you out if you are polite and friendly.



Secondly, get yourself a notebook and **write the rules down**. Do not try and keep everything in your head. When you learn lots of new things, it is easy to forget some of them. So take notes and re-read the notes later to help you remember.

Thirdly, **keep talking to people** about requirements until you feel familiar with them. People will give you more and more detail as time goes by.



# Who should you ask?

## 1 Supervisors

Your supervisor is the person responsible for you at work. This person gives you regular instructions and feedback. He or she might be referred to as your *manager*, your *line manager* or simply your *boss*.



If your supervisor shows you around on your first day and spends time explaining how things work, be sure to listen hard and ask plenty of questions to ensure you completely understand what is being said.

Your supervisor may not remember to tell you everything. If you think something has not been explained, now is your chance to ask politely for more detail.

As time goes by it is perfectly appropriate to go back to your supervisor and ask him or her to explain something over again. It is better to ask for the same information twice than to make mistakes because you lack the information. It is also likely that you will need to ask more detailed questions once you know the job better.

## 2 Mentors

In some organisations you will be given a *mentor*. A mentor is simply a more experienced person who acts as your guide and advisor. This person might not actually be called your mentor. He or she might simply be told to look after you for a while.

It is up to you to make the most of this relationship. Ask your mentor lots of relevant questions and take notes as you go along. Make sure you give him or her lots of positive feedback too. Thank your mentor regularly, praise him or her for the help he or she is giving you. You are creating extra work for this person, so it is important to give something back even if it is just a cheerful 'thank you'.

## 3 Trainers

Some organisations in which communication procedures are of particular importance will employ trainers to help you learn about the company, its processes and procedures.

## 4 Colleagues

Watch and learn from colleagues. Get to know them so that you can ask questions in a relaxed and easy way.

Colleagues will often be happy to help you, but you should be careful not to annoy them by taking up too much of their time. Again, it is important to **take notes** when they explain things. This reduces your need to ask the same questions over and over, and signals to them that you are taking them seriously and not wasting their time.

You must make sure you thank colleagues who spend time explaining things to you. They are taking time away from their own work to do so and deserve recognition for that. If you are cheerful and polite and thank them for their efforts, they will be more willing to help you in future.

### 5 Staff members with special knowledge

Some staff members will have roles that give them special knowledge about certain communication procedures. For example:

- safety officers know the procedures for avoiding damage to people and property
- fire officers know the procedures for avoiding and dealing with fire
- environmental protection representatives know the procedures for reducing environmental damage and waste
- personnel or human resources managers know the procedures for communicating with members of staff about salary, terms and conditions, job performance and dismissal
- sales and marketing managers know about the procedures for informing colleagues and customers about products and services or about publicity for the company.
- database controllers know how information should be stored in and retrieved from computer files
- administrators and filing clerks know how information should be stored in and retrieved from office files
- librarians or information officers know where information is stored.

**Exercise 8**

Give four examples of places where communication requirements might be written down.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Exercise 9**

Who might help you to identify communication requirements? Give four examples.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

# Lines of Communication

*Lines of communication* are the channels through which people communicate.

A line of communication may include people, things and/or events.

For example:

- If the best way to get a message to your boss is to speak to her chauffeur, then the chauffeur is a line of communication to your boss.
- If the best way to let your department know the latest news is through the department newsletter, then the newsletter is a line of communication to people in your department.
- If the best way to find out what the sales people think about your new product is through the six-monthly sales conference, then the conference is your line of communication to the sales people.

Lines of communication can be:

- oral or written
- informal or formal
- direct or indirect.

Take a look at the examples below.

## **Line of communication between you and a close colleague**

Your line of communication to a colleague who sits ten metres away will probably be:

- **oral** (you will speak to him)
- **informal** (because you will probably know him quite well)
- **direct** (without using any other person or equipment).

## **Line of communication between you and the Prime Minister**

If you wanted to contact the Prime Minister (assuming you are not great pals), you would probably need to communicate in writing, because you would not be able to get close enough to speak to him. You would communicate formally, because he is somebody you do not know personally. Your line of communication would also be indirect, because your letter would be dealt with by a secretary or personal assistant acting as a *go-between*.

In summary, your line of communication with the prime minister would be:

- written
- formal
- indirect.

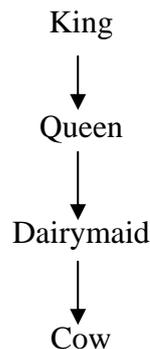
## Using go-betweens as lines of communication

In large organisations you might not be able to communicate with everyone directly. You might need to use other people as go-betweens.

The children's poem *The King's Breakfast* by AA Milne, describes lines of communication at the King's court:

The King asked  
The Queen, and  
The Queen asked  
The Dairymaid  
'Could we have some butter for  
The Royal slice of bread?'  
The Queen asked the Dairymaid,  
The Dairymaid  
Said: 'Certainly,  
I'll go and tell  
The cow  
Now  
Before she goes to bed.'

Here, the lines of communication can be represented by the diagram below:



Clearly, the lines of communication at the court are well established. The King is too grand to talk to either the dairymaid or the cow directly and uses his wife as a go-between.

## Asking about lines of communication

Lines of communication will differ from one organisation to another. If you are finding it difficult to reach people that you need to communicate with, it is a good idea to ask a supervisor or colleague to suggest alternative lines of communication.

## Factors influencing lines of communication

Lines of communication will depend on a number of factors including the following:

### Authority

*Who has authority within the organisation to make announcements, tell people what to do or enforce rules?*

#### Exercise 10

#### Danny's kitchen hygiene rules

Danny works in a restaurant and his supervisor, the restaurant manager, asked him to come up with a set of rules for all the kitchen staff to ensure they keep their food and equipment clean, and observe health and hygiene regulations.

Danny has produced a set of rules and knows that it is very important that his colleagues understand and follow them. However, Danny also knows that he does not have the authority to tell the kitchen staff what to do. Should he:

- Pin the rules to a noticeboard and hope that the kitchen staff will notice them?
- Strut around the kitchen, waving his new rulebook around and loudly explaining how important it is?
- Ask the restaurant manager to inform the kitchen staff of the new rules and explain their importance?

Your answer: .....

Explain the reason for your answer.

.....  
.....  
.....

### Seniority

*The role and status of the person or people you wish to communicate with.*

Some organisations are strict about who you can or cannot communicate directly with. For instance, if you are a corporal in the army, you cannot just march up to a brigadier general to complain that your helmet is the wrong size.



If you need to communicate with someone senior within an organisation and/or someone who tends to be very busy:

- Find out whether there is someone you should use as a go-between. This could be their secretary or personal assistant or someone else who works for them.
- If they do not have a go-between, try emailing them to ask for an appointment to speak to them at a convenient time.

### Exercise 11

#### Horace's chat with the big boss

Horace works for a big company and his boss is a very busy man. The boss's personal assistant handles his diary, arranges meetings for him and generally helps him organise his work.

Horace wants to discuss a great idea with his boss and needs to speak with him directly for half an hour or so. Which of the following lines of communication should he use?

- a. Go straight into his boss's office, smiling and winking at his boss's personal assistant as he enters.
- b. Pick up the telephone, dial his boss's direct line and explain the idea immediately, while he has his boss's attention.
- c. Ask his boss's personal assistant for an appointment so that he can explain the idea at a time that is convenient for his boss.

Your answer: .....

Explain the reason for your answer.

.....  
.....  
.....

### Proximity

*How close are you to the person you need to communicate with?*

**Proximity** is another word for physical closeness.

If somebody sits opposite you, or spends the whole day following you around, you should not have too much trouble communicating with them.

Sometimes you need to communicate with people who are not immediately available to you. You might not even know who they are.

If you need to communicate with people in other locations, you might need to use indirect lines of communication. This might involve:

- writing to them either by post or email
- telephoning them
- using somebody else as a go-between. For instance, if you need to communicate with people in another building, you might speak first to the receptionist in that building.

### People in go-between roles

Some people are specifically responsible for communicating and acting as go-betweens. For instance, in the example above Horace's boss has a personal assistant. Part of the personal assistant's job is to communicate on behalf of her boss and to act as a go-between so that the boss's time is used effectively.

If people have specific responsibilities for acting as go-betweens, make sure you go to them when you need to pass on or receive information for which they are responsible. Otherwise, they might find that they are missing information they need. They might also feel that you are being disrespectful of their role and this could upset them.

**Exercise 12**

**Debbie and the Sales Manager**

Debbie's company has changed its prices for a number of products and her supervisor has asked her to let the sales people know. There are 15 of them. They all work from home, in different parts of the country. Their supervisor, the sales manager, works in the same office as Debbie. The sales manager produces a daily bulletin that is emailed to each sales person to keep them informed of new developments.

Should Debbie:

- a. Hire a car and visit each sales person at home to ensure they get the message?
- b. Call a meeting for all the sales people so that she can read out the new prices to them?
- c. Speak to the sales manager and ask what she thinks is the best way to let the sales people know?

Your answer: .....

Explain the reason for your answer.

.....  
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.....  
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**The number of people you need to communicate with**

*Is it impractical or inappropriate for you to communicate with many people at once?*

In Debbie's case there were several reasons why it was appropriate to approach the sales manager. One reason was that it was impractical for her to approach so many people individually.

If you need to communicate with a large number of people, you could:

- write a memorandum and post it to each person
- send an email
- post a notice on the organisation's intranet
- put a notice up on the organisation's noticeboard
- hold a meeting
- make an announcement over a public address system
- use a go-between who has direct or regular contact with the people you need to communicate with.

**Exercise 13**

**Minnie and the new helmets**

Minnie works at a police station. She needs to let all the police cyclists know that new helmets have arrived to replace their current ones.

Minnie does not know the names of all the police cyclists, but she knows they should all be wearing their new helmets by the end of the week.

She also knows that Sergeant Smith holds a daily morning meeting.

Should Minnie:

- a. Stand at the gates of the police station, rattling a box of helmets, shouting ‘Get your new helmets here’?
- b. Leave a box of helmets at reception and hope that all the police cyclists notice?
- c. Ask Sergeant Smith to act as a go-between and announce that the new helmets are ready for collection at his daily meeting?

Your answer: .....

Explain the reason for your answer.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....



**Sensitive information**

Sometimes information is sensitive or confidential.

For instance, if you worked as a filing clerk in a hospital and discovered that a patient’s test results were back and they showed that he had a serious illness, you would be in possession of sensitive and confidential information. You would not talk to the patient about his test results directly. You would pass the information on to the appropriate doctor or nurse, and that person would deal with the patient.

Certain information between colleagues at other workplaces is similarly confidential. For instance, information relating to a person’s salary, terms and conditions of employment, and career prospects are generally regarded as sensitive subjects and are often confidential.

In the case of sensitive or confidential information, there are often strict rules governing what you can and cannot do, and what the lines of communication should be.