



# Module 0

## What is communication



# Introduction to the module

Communication is the everyday action used between people to send and receive information.

The person sending the message is the sender, the person receiving it is the receiver.

The information contained in the message can be a fact, an idea, a concept, an opinion, an instruction, an emotion and so many others.

The main purpose, and also challenge of any communication process is to understand the message and to find a common interpretation from both sides.

Although it's not hard to define what communication is, to think about how to communicate the subject can become more complex: to divide the different messages that we want to communicate can be useful.

Communication methods can be:

- **Spoken or Verbal Communication:** face-to-face, telephone, radio or television and other media
- **Non-Verbal Communication:** body language, gestures, how we dress or act
- **Written Communication:** letters, e-mails, books, magazines, social media
- **Visualizations:** graphs and charts, maps, logos and other images

Two-way communication involves participants negotiating their role in this process - whether it happens consciously or not - , while in one-way communication the sender and receiver are more distinct and it is even possible that the receiver doesn't have the chance to give feedback.

In this module we will go through the different communication types, categorized by communication channels, by style and purpose and by the levels of communication.





# Aims of communication

In a non-profit organisation **communication facilitates the flow of information between people and departments**, helping understanding and collaboration through different media, considering all the channels, tools and networks. In an internal communication strategy those channels, tools and networks have to be accepted by all the members of the organisation, otherwise information can get lost or misinterpreted. Communication thus helps understanding people better, removing misunderstandings and creating clarity of thoughts and expressions.

Another aim of communication is **education**; however it has to be accompanied by a certain set of skills in order to critically analyse information, using logical thinking. Hence communication and the transfer of information can not stop at the reception of the message.





# Types of communication

A message is sent by the sender to a receiver (or to multiple receivers), using a communication channel. The sender encodes the message into a form that is appropriate to the communication channel; then the receiver decodes the message to understand its meaning and significance.

Since misunderstanding can occur at any stage of the communication process, an effective communicator understands its audience, chooses an appropriate communication channel, hones the message to the channel and encodes the message to reduce misunderstanding by the receiver(s).

(You can find indications on how to categorize your audience and which channels and tools to use under Module 3 – Stakeholder analysis, Module 4 – Tools for communication and Module 5 – Communication channels.)

Receivers can use techniques such as clarification and reflection to ensure that the message has been understood correctly. They can ask back, repeat, rephrase, use metaphors in order to link the message to concepts they are similar with. Communication can be categorized into two basic types:

## 1. Based on Communication Channels:

- Verbal communication (oral or written), in which you listen to a person to understand their meaning (or read their meaning)
- Non-verbal communication, in which you observe a person to understand the meaning of the message

## 2. Based on Style and Purpose:

- Formal
- Informal





# Types of communication based on channels

## Verbal Communication

Verbal communication refers to the form of communication in which message is transmitted verbally; communication is done by word of mouth and/or by writing. In verbal communication remember the acronym KISS (Keep It Short and Simple), because generally people lose concentration after 10 minutes which risks to efficiently decode the information transferred.

When we talk to others, we assume that others understand what we are saying because we know what we are saying. But this is not the case.

Usually people bring their own attitude, perception, emotions and thoughts about the topic, creating barriers in delivering the right meaning.

So in order to deliver the right message, it can be useful to think from your receiver's point of view. Would he understand the message?

Verbal Communication is further divided into:

- Oral Communication
- Written Communication





## Oral Communication

In oral communication spoken words are used. It includes face-to-face conversations, speech, telephonic conversation, video, radio, television, voice over internet. Pitch, volume, speed and clarity of speaking can affect oral communication.

Advantages of oral communication are:

- It brings quick feedback
- By reading facial expression and body language people can guess whether they can trust what's being said or not
- Disadvantage of oral communication is:
- In face-to-face discussion, user is unable to deeply think about what he is delivering, unless he takes long pauses while the conversation is going on.





## Written Communication

In written communication, written signs or symbols are used to communicate. A written message may be printed or hand written and the message can be transmitted via email, letter, report, memo, social media post etc. The message is influenced by the vocabulary and grammar used, by writing style, precision and clarity of the language used.

Advantages of written communication are:

- messages can be edited and revised many time before it is actually sent.
- written communication provides record for every message sent and can be saved for later analysis.
- a written message enables receiver to fully understand it and send appropriate feedback.

Disadvantages of written communication are:

- unlike oral communication, written communication doesn't bring instant feedback
- it takes more time in composing a written message as compared to word-of-mouth (and lot of people struggles with writing)





## Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is the sending and receiving of wordless messages. We can say that communication other than oral and written (such as gesture, body language, posture, tone of voice or facial expressions) is called nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal communication helps the receiver understanding the message. Often nonverbal signals reflect the situation more accurately than verbal ones. Sometimes nonverbal response contradicts verbal communication and hence affects the effectiveness of communication.

Nonverbal communication is composed and affected by the following elements:

- Appearance (clothing, hairstyle, neatness, use of cosmetics) and surroundings (room size, lighting, decorations, furnishing)
- Body language (facial expressions, gestures, postures)
- Sounds (voice tone, volume, speech rate)







## Formal Communication

In this kind of communication certain rules, conventions and principles are followed while transferring a message. Formal communication occurs in official situations: in professional settings such as corporate meetings, conferences, interviews etc.

Some principles of formal communication are:

- the use of slang and foul language should be avoided and correct grammar and pronunciation is required
- authority lines and hierarchic relationships must be respected and followed

## Informal Communication

Informal communication can be described as casual communication. It is established for societal affiliations of members in an organisation, and it also happens among friends and family.

Informal communication doesn't follow authority lines. In an organisation, it can help in finding out staff grievances (as people are more expressive in informal settings) and it helps in building relationships.

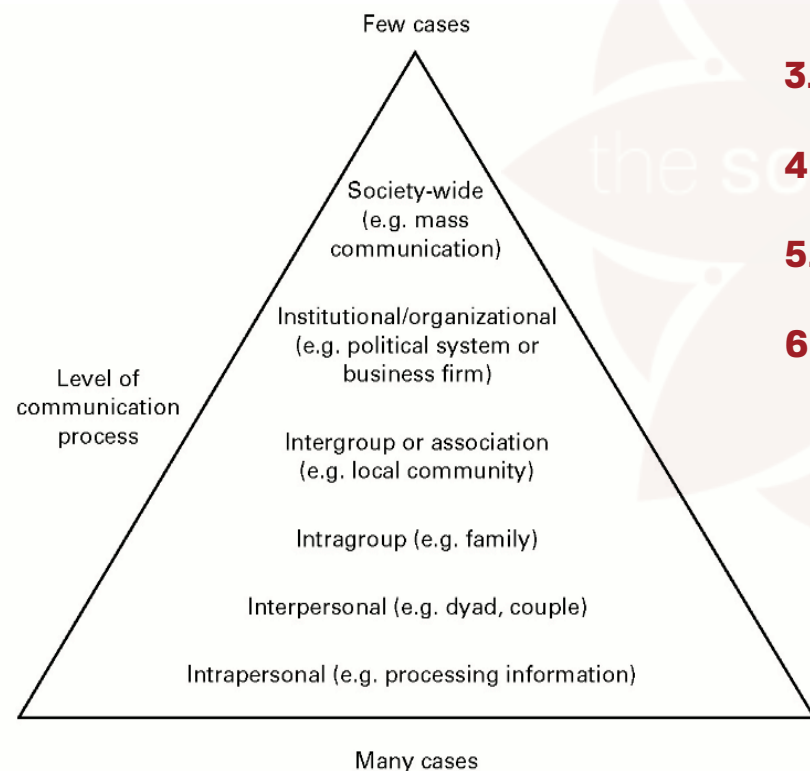
In informal communication slang is often used and foul language is not restricted.

the sound of silence





There are six levels of communication process according to the Pyramid of Communication:



- 1. Intrapersonal**  
(processing information)
- 2. Interpersonal**  
(couple, between two friends)
- 3. Intragroup**  
(family circle, strict group of friends)
- 4. Intergroup or association**  
(local community)
- 5. Institutional / organisational**  
(political system, business firm)
- 6. Society-wide**  
(mass communication which can be transnational and transfrontier)





## 1. Intrapersonal communication

It happens within a single person; it can be considered as self-communication where the individual, through a thinking process, is trying to encode a message. Intrapersonal communication helps personal reflection and organisation of thoughts.

“The intrapersonal level refers to the processing of information on an individual basis (for instance, attention, perception, comprehension, recall and learning). The possible effects are on knowledge, opinion and attitude.” (Denis McQuail)

## 2. Interpersonal communication

- Occur between and among persons
- There is an opportunity for feedback and for the exchange of messages
- May be one to one or can involve groups, both large and small
- Can be formal/informal, personal/impersonal
- It may be used to manage some shared features of daily life
- The nature of the relationship between the communicators is a very important notion, as well as cooperation and norm formation





### 3. Intragroup communication

The features of interpersonal communication are also relevant to the intragroup communication. Facilitating factors for encoding and decoding the right message are:

- similar backgrounds, norms and values
- similar levels of skills in writing, speaking, listening, reading, etc.

### 4. Intergroup communication

It happens when individuals interact with each other; the communication is shaped by their salient social memberships and not by their individual characteristics. Much of our communication is in some way intergroup (where groups include age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and/or political party). Intergroup communication views communication as a dynamic process where each communicator's cognitions, emotions, and motivations influence behaviour in interactions.





## 5. Institutional/organisational communication

It is a process by which actors of a society are collected and coordinated to reach the goals of both individuals and the collective group. It is often a component to effective management in a workplace environment.

## 6. Mass communication

It is a process in which a person, group of people, or an organisation sends a message through a channel of communication to a large group of anonymous and heterogeneous people, such as either the general public or a segment of the general public.

Channels of mass communication usually include broadcast television, radio, social media and print. The sender of the message is usually a professional communicator that often represents an organisation. Mass communication used to be an expensive process but due to social media and global internet connection it now became easy for everyone, everywhere.





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communication



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