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Annoyance

Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication is communicating without speaking or sounds. Nonverbal communication is using your body, facial expressions and gestures to express your feelings, thoughts and ideas.

For example, sometimes when you are bored, you use your body to let people know how you are feeling. Crossing your arms and looking uninterested is one way.

Other ways people use body language to show their feelings include:

- frowning to show confusion or annoyance
- smiling to let people know they are happy
- waving their hand as a way of saying 'Hello'
- shaking their head as a way of saying 'No'.

Your appearance

Another way you can communicate without talking is through your appearance. Your personal hygiene and your clothing tell people a lot about the type of person you are.

Also, different cultures have different body language. What is acceptable in one culture may not be acceptable in another.

Example: communication responsibilities of an administration assistant

Angie has just started working at Red Dress Clothing. Red Dress Clothing is a very busy workplace that makes and sells clothing. In her role as the administration assistant, Angie speaks with many people. She has to communicate in many different ways with the staff and customers. To do her job well, Angie must have good communication skills.

She is required to provide information to her fellow workers and to answer customer inquiries. Sometimes when she does not know the answer, she needs to seek advice from her supervisors or fellow workers.

Angie is also required to attend meetings and present information. She must prepare this information by reading reports and talking to managers.

In Angie's role, she talks with customers and fellow workers either face to face or over the telephone. Talking face to face or via the phone enables her to exchange and share information immediately. She uses a lot of verbal communication in her role.

Angie uses verbal communication to:

- answer the telephone
- make phone calls
- greet visitors
- repeat a message
- speak to her supervisor
- ask questions to be sure about what she needs to do
- present information at meetings.

Procedures for verbal communication

It is important to communicate well verbally. This means you need to speak clearly and also listen carefully. People need to understand you and you need to understand what people are saying to you.

If you do not understand something, ask the person to repeat it or to explain what they mean. Speaking clearly and slowly is important. No-one will understand you if you mumble or talk too quickly. It is also a good idea to repeat the message to be sure you have it right.

Pass on messages as soon as you can, especially if they are urgent. The person you have to pass the message to may be talking to someone else. If they are, you could stand nearby and look at them. They should notice you are waiting to speak.

If the message is very urgent, you may have to say politely, 'Excuse me, I have an important message for you'.

Procedures for written communication

Most workplaces have standard ways of writing their communications. They have special forms or layouts to use. These are sometimes called 'templates'. Using these is part of the office procedure. All staff members must use them.

Examples of these forms and templates are usually kept in a policies and procedures book. This kind of book is called a 'manual'. A policies and procedures manual contains instructions and examples of how to do many office tasks.

Some workplaces don't have a policies and procedures manual. However, they may have examples of the way written communications should be done.

1B Identify appropriate lines of communication in the workplace

How you ask for help or pass on messages may be different for different people in the organisation. These different ways are called 'lines of communication'.

You may not be able to go directly to some people. You need to know the correct way to communicate with colleagues, supervisors and people such as the boss or a manager.

Example: pass on verbal messages

Every day, Angie passes on verbal messages to her colleagues and supervisor. She passes these messages either in person or via the phone. Sometimes Angie needs to pass on messages to Jane Harrison. Jane is the general manager of Red Dress Clothing. Angie often goes to her colleagues at their desks and gives them the message face to face. However, she knows that it is not right to go straight into Jane's office and speak to her, because she is always busy with visitors or in meetings with other staff. To see Jane, people need to have an appointment. Angie is not sure how to pass on Jane's messages.

Angie asks her supervisor, Simon, for advice on the correct way to pass on messages to the general manager. Simon tells her that all telephone calls and messages for Jane should be passed on to Amanda, who is the general manager's personal assistant or PA.



Special messages

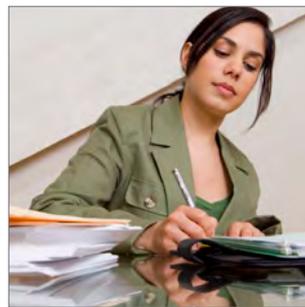
Sometimes messages are special or different for some reason. Perhaps the message is urgent and needs to be delivered without delay or you may have been asked to keep a record of the message.

Some different features of special messages are shown below.



Urgent messages

If the message is urgent or you need a quick response, talking to someone face to face or over the phone is the fastest way of getting a reply. It is immediate. A written communication takes longer to get a response.



Written messages

If you need a permanent record of the communication, you need to use written communication. This record can be referred back to if there are any questions later. Verbal communication is not usually recorded, so it can be difficult to remember what people said last week, last month or a year ago.

Learning checkpoint 1

Identify workplace communication procedures

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in identifying workplace communication procedures.

Part A

All methods of communication in the workplace are either written, verbal (spoken) or nonverbal (body language). They are also either formal or informal.

In the second column of the table, write W for written, V for verbal or NV for nonverbal communication.

In the third column, write F for formal or INF for informal.

The first one has been done for you.

Communication	Is it written, verbal or nonverbal?	Is it formal or informal?
Talking face to face with a colleague	V	INF
Talking face to face with a customer		
Shaking hands with someone		
Talking to a customer on the telephone		
Writing a fax to a customer		
Sending an email to a customer		
Pointing at someone		
Pointing at a shelf		

Use listening skills to take a message

When taking a message, it is essential that you listen to the message carefully. You also need to listen carefully to any instructions.

Listening carefully means you will pass on the message accurately and complete any tasks correctly.

Here is more about listening carefully.

Useful tips to help you listen carefully

- Look at the speaker while they are talking.
- Watch their body language.
- Let the person finish talking without interrupting.
- Don't be distracted by things going on around you.
- Think about what they are saying. Don't be thinking about what they are wearing!
- Try to work out the most important part of what they are saying.
- Don't be thinking about what you are going to say next.

Use speaking skills

Good speaking skills include being concise. This means not using more words than you need and not repeating yourself unnecessarily.

Speaking skills are especially important when you are talking on the telephone. When you cannot see the person you are speaking with, there is always a chance you may misunderstand each other. In addition, the quality of the sound on the phone line may make listening difficult.

Confidential information

Personal information about staff, such as their home phone number or address, should never be given out to callers.

If you are in a situation where someone is pressuring you to give them this kind of confidential information, refer the call to your supervisor.

Take messages

At times, you may need to take a message for someone who is not available. They may be out of the office or in a meeting and cannot be disturbed. Taking telephone messages is a common and important task in an office.

When taking a message, you need to use a combination of listening, speaking and writing skills. It is important that you find out who the message is for and who it is from, and that you understand the key points of the message. If you do not understand any of the message or you are unsure if you have heard correctly, ask the caller to repeat the information.

It is always good practice to repeat the message back to the caller so they can confirm that you have heard and understood everything correctly.

The main points to write down and include in the message are:

- the date and time of the call
- the caller's name and organisation
- who the caller wants to speak to
- the key points of the message
- whether the call is urgent
- your name and signature.

2B

Use suitable nonverbal communication

When you are using verbal communication, whether face to face or via the telephone, you are also communicating with nonverbal signals.

Everyone uses nonverbal communication signals. Because people use nonverbal communication (or body language) all the time, they often forget they are using it.



These body language signals are like messages. The messages people send with their bodies can be positive (good). However, sometimes they can be negative (bad).

Positive and negative body language

It is important that you understand body language signals. Understanding these signals ensures nobody gets offended or gets the wrong idea about you. When you are talking with someone face to face, always use positive nonverbal communication.

In the table are examples of positive and negative body language, or nonverbal communication. Look at the message that each one is sending. The next time you are speaking with someone, look at their body language and look at your own. What are you both saying nonverbally?

Communicate with people from diverse backgrounds

Nonverbal communication can have different meanings in different cultures. You need to be aware that you can offend others without meaning to do so.

A gesture is a movement of part of the body to emphasise a message or signal. A common gesture is waving your hand to say hello or goodbye.

Another common gesture, which shows sadness, is to wipe your eye to signal you are crying or wiping away tears.

In Australia, people nod their head to say 'yes' and shake it side to side when they mean 'no'. Other cultures have the opposite meaning for this gesture.

In many cultures, it is rude to point your finger at someone.

In other cultures, crossing your legs and pointing your foot at someone is a sign of rudeness.



Learning checkpoint 2 Communicate in the workplace

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in communicating in the workplace.

Part A

You receive the following telephone calls in your office. These callers are not giving very clear messages. Fill in the questions you would need to ask before you could pass each message on.

Message number	Message	Possible questions
1.	'It's Mr Jones here. The books won't be delivered until next week.'	
2.	'I've just called to say I'll be late to the meeting today.'	
3.	'I'm calling from the warehouse. I need someone to come over immediately.'	

3A Follow written communication procedures in the workplace

When you work in an organisation, you are required to write and send letters, emails, messages, memos and faxes. You also need to complete various forms.

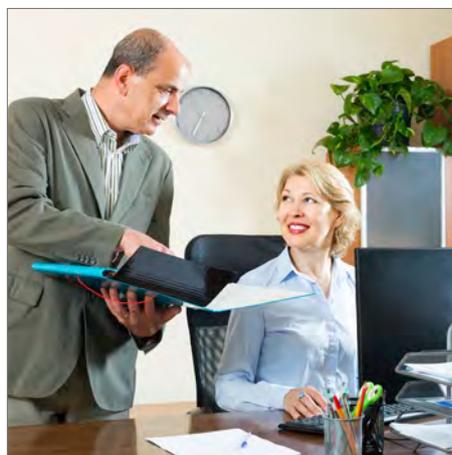
These are written communications and they are likely to be an important part of the day-to-day tasks required of your role.

When you first start your job, you will be shown some of the many letters, email templates, forms and so on that you are expected to use. You will also be shown how you should use these and where they are kept.



Find out what is needed

When you need to complete a written document or some other type of written communication, you may be told exactly what is needed. For example, your supervisor may say, 'Send Mary an email and tell her I'm running late for the meeting' or 'Type this letter'.



Sometimes, you may have to decide yourself what is the best way to send the information. Your supervisor may just say to you, 'Tell Mary I'm running late for the meeting'. How will you tell her? This could be done by email, telephone or going to Mary's desk and telling her face to face.

3B

Write a draft document

Writing clearly is not just about writing neatly. It is about writing so that your information is easy to read and easy to understand.

Writing clearly is one of the most important things about writing letters and emails and completing forms. It also takes a lot of practice.



Sometimes your supervisor will give you the information already written down – you may just have to type it.

At other times, you may have to write the information down yourself. It is important that you write the information as clearly as possible. When people read what you have written, they should not get confused and should not misunderstand what you are saying.

Improve your writing

Your supervisor will always check your written work. However, you should always try to make it as correct as possible.

Refer to these ideas to help you write more clearly.

Example: a memo to all staff

Here is an example of a memo with an explanation of each part.

Red Dress Clothing 

MEMORANDUM

To: All staff

From: Simone Ferraro

Date: 17 March 2016

Subject: Urgent staff meeting

Would all staff please meet in the Conference Room at 11.30 this morning.

Jane will speak to us about the recent changes that have taken place and outline plans for the future of the company.

Who the memo is to

Who the memo is from

Date of the memo message

Memo message

Additional information in a fax

Sometimes you may send some additional information with the fax cover sheet. You might send a picture or a report.

In this case, you write a brief message on the fax cover sheet saying what you are sending. For example, 'Here is the information you asked for' or 'Here is the order form. Please check it and let me know if there is anything you need'.



After you have completed the details and written the message, check your work. Be sure there are no errors. Your supervisor will also read it.

Draft letters

Most organisations use letterhead paper for writing letters. This has their name, address, telephone and fax numbers, email and website addresses, and logo already printed on it.

Most organisations also have a standard layout for letters. This means that the information on the page is organised in exactly the same way for each letter. This is part of office procedure. It helps make sure the standard is the same for each letter sent from the organisation.

The standard layout for letters is probably in a template on your computer.

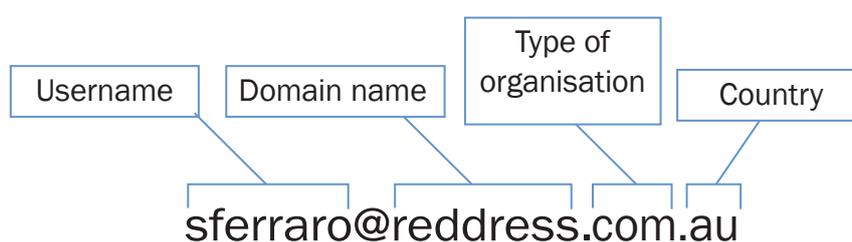
Always ask your supervisor if you are unsure how to find the template you need.

Email addresses

Make sure you type the email address correctly. Otherwise it will not reach the person you are sending it to.

All email addresses have the same features. This is what an email address looks like: sferraro@readdress.com.au

Each part has a meaning, as shown below.



Understand email addresses

The following table provides details of each part of an email address.

Part	Example	Definition
Username	sferraro @readdress.com.au	The username is the name of the person the email is going to. In this example, it is 'sferraro'.
@ symbol	sferraro @ readdress.com.au	The @ symbol means 'at'.
Domain name	sferraro@ readdress .com.au	The domain name is the computer address and is usually the name of the organisation where the user works. In this example, 'readdress' stands for Red Dress Clothing.

3D Get help and feedback on communication skills

Asking for feedback in the workplace is very important. Some of that feedback will be informal, such as comments you get about how you speak to customers or about your emails or other written work. Some feedback will be formal, such as meetings where your supervisor tells you what you are doing well and what you could do better.



It is important to know how well you are doing with your communication. Your supervisor and other staff will tell you how well you listen to their instructions and pass on messages.

Improve through getting feedback

Help and advice from others, and observation on your part will all assist you to improve your communication skills.



- 2. Simone asks you to prepare a memo and send it to all staff. Use the following memo form and make up a date. The message is: ‘Stuart, the computer specialist from IT Services, will be coming in at 2.00 pm today to check everyone’s computers. Please make sure that you are not working on your computer at this time’.

Red Dress Clothing 

MEMORANDUM

To:

From:.....

Date:.....

Subject:

If you have access to an email program, draft the message in it. Then print it out. If you do not have access to an email program, use the picture of a screen below.

