


# Understanding the Basics of Verbal Communication

## Files You Will Need:

A-1.doc  
A-2.doc  
A-3.doc  
A-4.doc  
A-5.doc  
A-6.doc  
A-7.doc

Verbal communication involves using speech to exchange information with others. You usually communicate verbally in face-to-face conversations. Meetings, interviews, conferences, speeches, and phone calls are other forms of verbal communication. In business, you communicate verbally to exchange ideas, understand diverse points of view, and solve problems. Because verbal skills are among those most valued by employers, developing these skills will help you find jobs, advance your career, and improve your professional performance.  You are an administrative assistant in the Human Resources Department of Quest Specialty Travel. Juan Ramirez, the director of Human Resources, is attending a career fair at a local community college. He wants you to attend as his assistant, give a short talk on working in the travel industry, and be available at the Quest table to answer questions. He suggests that you focus on your speaking skills in the weeks before the career fair.


## OBJECTIVES

- Organize your messages
- Use vocal elements effectively
- Understand nonverbal language
- Develop credibility
- Give and receive feedback
- Overcome barriers to communication
- Communicate ethically
- Understand cross-cultural issues



**UNIT  
A**
**Verbal  
Communication**

# Organizing Your Messages

In **verbal communication**, or oral communication, one person sends a message to another person or group using speech. Communication is successful only when the speaker and listener understand each other. Because the average person is exposed to thousands of messages every day, your message must rise above competing information to gain your listener's attention. After receiving the message, your listener must be able to interpret, or **decode**, its meaning. Figure A-1 outlines the communication process. Effective communicators organize their messages so they are clear, logical, and easy for the listener to understand.  As you begin to prepare for the career fair, you meet with Juan Ramirez and discuss how you should organize your talk about the travel industry.

**DETAILS**

Keep the following details in mind to organize your messages and clarify their meaning:

**QUICK TIP**

If your main idea is especially important, also conclude your message with it.

- **Start with what your listener needs to know**

Your listener is most likely to remember the first and last parts of your message. Before you speak with someone, identify the purpose of your discussion, and shape that to be your main idea. Make sure your message is best delivered using spoken rather than written words. See Table A-1. If so, open the conversation with what your listeners needs to know, then move to the supporting information.

- **Limit the amount of information**

People have a limited capacity to listen to and decipher a message, especially if they are distracted by noisy surroundings, interruptions, or other communication obstacles. Packing too much information into a conversation can leave your listeners confused or remembering only part of what you said. Limit the amount of information you convey in a single interaction. In a one-on-one conversation, for example, express one main idea and up to three supporting ideas. If you need to share more information, do so in separate discussions.

**QUICK TIP**

In verbal communication, the average adult can best understand language at a sixth-grade reading level.

- **Eliminate unnecessary words**

It can take more concentration to understand spoken words than written ones. When you use complicated language or unnecessary words, you make it more difficult for your listener to interpret what you are saying. Use simple sentences, and avoid technical language and jargon whenever possible.

- **Make your messages relevant to your listener**

Although it is natural to discuss subjects you consider important, if your listener has different interests or priorities, your message might not be well received. Frame your ideas so they are relevant to the other person. Adopt the point of view of your listeners, and then explain or show how your subject is important to them and how they can benefit.

- **Take a direct approach**

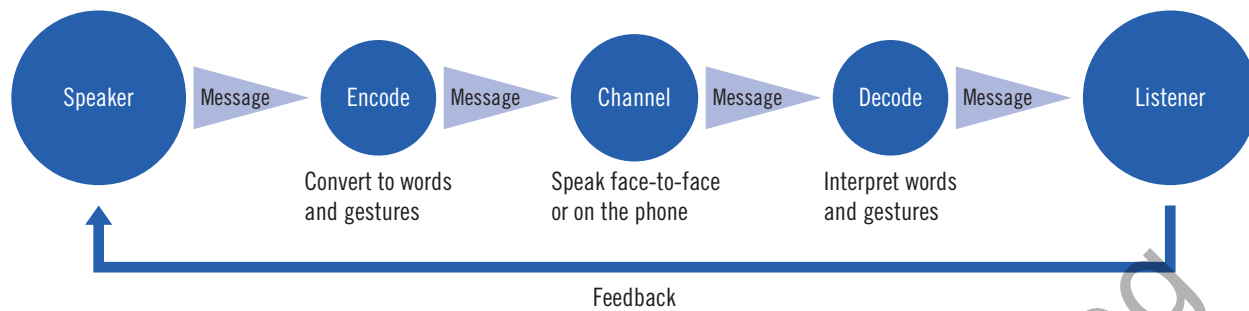
Your listeners have to manage several tasks as they listen to you. They must pay attention to what you are saying, interpret your nonverbal signals, ignore noise and other distractions, and make sense of the incoming information. Listeners can understand your messages if they are clear and consistent with your body language. Use a direct approach by introducing your subject, explaining what you want, and identifying your expectations. Be polite and tactful, but don't make your audience guess what you mean.

**QUICK TIP**

Look and listen for feedback from your listeners to make sure they understand your message.

- **Pause occasionally**

Your listeners need time to process incoming information. As you communicate, include brief pauses so your audience can absorb your message, especially when you've made an important point, requested action, or are preparing to introduce a new subject. Use these short breaks to review their body language and gauge their understanding. However, avoid long pauses, which can make your listener feel uncomfortable.

**FIGURE A-1:** Spoken communication process**TABLE A-1:** Appropriate uses for spoken communication

you want to:	use spoken	use written
Receive an immediate answer	•	
Congratulate a colleague	•	
Be sure your audience interprets your message correctly	•	
Negotiate with others to build a consensus	•	
Minimize misunderstandings when providing information	•	
Allow your audience to ask questions to clarify information	•	
Promote a close or friendly working relationship	•	
Maintain a record of the communication		•
Save time when providing a response		•
Avoid interrupting your colleague		•
Deliver a formal message		•

### Crucial conversations

On her FlatWorld Knowledge Web site ([www.flatworldknowledge.com](http://www.flatworldknowledge.com)), Talya Bauer identifies conversations such as asking for a raise or promoting a project as crucial conversations, where the stakes and emotions are high. She lists 10 recommendations for improving the quality of your conversations, especially crucial ones:

1. *Be the first to say hello:* Introduce yourself to others, clearly pronouncing your name so everyone catches it.
2. *Use names:* Listen for the names of your conversation partners and use them when addressing others.
3. *Think before you speak:* Instead of speaking quickly to fill pauses, take time to think instead of blundering into a mistake.
4. *Be receptive to new ideas:* If you disagree with an idea, learn more about it. Say, "That's interesting," instead of "I don't agree."
5. *Listen:* Listen as much as you speak, if not more.
6. *Ask questions:* Draw others out as necessary by asking thoughtful questions.
7. *Make eye contact:* Show others that you are engaged and focused on what they are saying.
8. *Repeat or paraphrase:* In your own words, repeat what others say to make sure you understand.
9. *Keep it brief:* Instead of monopolizing someone's time, leave them feeling that another conversation with you would be interesting and productive.
10. *Be prepared:* Before a crucial conversation, anticipate what others might say or ask. Prepare questions and facts ahead of time.

Source: Bauer, T., Organizational Behavior. Retrieved March 17, 2009 from [www.flatworldknowledge.com/node/1450](http://www.flatworldknowledge.com/node/1450).

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# Using Vocal Elements Effectively

In a conversation, your voice is the medium, or **channel**, you use to communicate with others. People not only listen to the words you say, but the way you say them—the **vocal elements** of your speech. Vocal elements include voice inflections, rate of speech, volume, and tone, and can add interest and meaning to your messages. Using vocal elements that are appropriate for your purpose and audience can make your words more appealing and powerful, causing others to pay attention to what you say. 🎨 You have a good idea of what you want to say during your short presentation at the career fair. Juan Ramirez suggests you also rehearse how to use vocal techniques effectively.

## ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

### 1. Change the speed of your voice

People who consistently speak at the same pace tend to be dull and ineffective communicators. Those who vary the rate of their spoken words are more interesting. In addition, the rate of your speech signals how listeners should interpret your words. Speak quickly and use an enthusiastic tone to excite your listeners. Speak slowly when you want your audience to absorb your words or anticipate the next idea.

#### QUICK TIP

In professional settings, pitch your voice slightly lower than your casual speaking voice.

### 2. Shift the pitch of your voice

Voice **pitch** is the frequency of speech. Both high and low pitches are useful at times, though you should not take either to an extreme. Raising the pitch of your voice signals uncertainty or suggests a question. Lowering the pitch gives your voice a more authoritative and influential character.

### 3. Control the volume of your voice

The volume of your voice affects your listeners' ability to hear and understand you. Speak loud enough so that your audience can hear you comfortably. If your volume is much louder, your voice might annoy your listener and disturb others. Speaking too softly makes your words hard to hear and communicates timidity and submissiveness. Varying your volume adds character to your speech, so raise the volume when you want to emphasize a particular word or idea. Lower your voice to dramatize an idea or allow your listener to concentrate on what you are saying.

#### QUICK TIP

Catch your breath when you pause to make the silence seem natural.

### 4. Punctuate with pauses

Effective speakers pause occasionally to break up the flow of information and let listeners process and understand what was said. A good time to pause briefly is after you've made an important point or concluded an idea. You can also use pauses to create anticipation. Figure A-2 shows that the most effective combination of vocal elements is low pitch with a varied pace and occasional pauses.

#### QUICK TIP

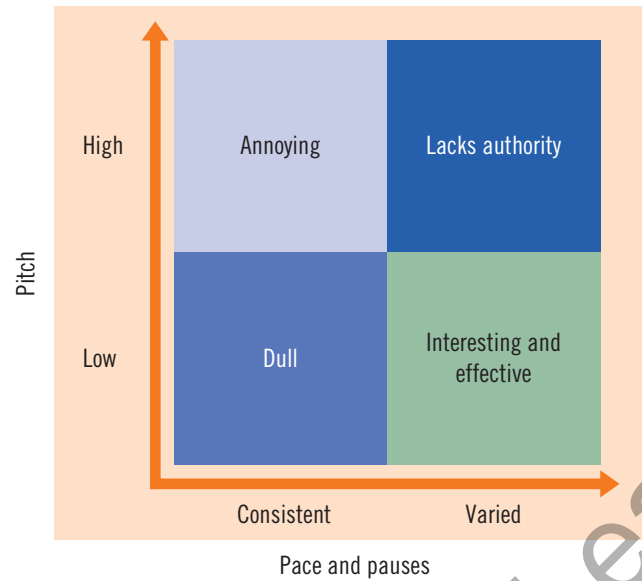
If enunciating is difficult for you, try speaking more slowly than normal.

### 5. Articulate clearly

To improve your listeners' understanding, clearly enunciate each sentence, phrase, and word. You can improve your pronunciation through conscious practice. When you speak clearly, you convey competence, confidence, and intelligence.

## YOU TRY IT

1. Use your e-mail software such as Microsoft Office Outlook to create an e-mail message to your instructor
2. Explain how enhancing your verbal communication skills can contribute to your career goals; identify at least one weakness in your speech and describe how you plan to improve it
3. Send the message to your instructor as requested

**FIGURE A-2: Effective vocal elements**

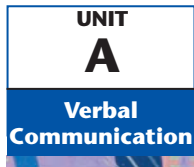
### Building confidence in public speaking

One form of oral communication is public speaking, which is perennially named as a top fear in the American workplace. You can overcome some of this fear and project confidence by tuning your voice. In addition to the three Ps of vocal tuning—pace, pitch, and pauses—Douglas Anderson, president of Your Voice Coach, adds one more: passion. “This all-important quality will be the biggest selling point you have,” he says. “Love your topic.” Anderson recommends eliminating nasality by yawning to open and relax your throat and palate. Your posture also affects your speaking voice. “Stand straight, relax, and let your breath come


in down low,” Anderson suggests. “It should feel like it’s entering your body around your waist, not being pulled down your throat.” Continue to be aware of your breath to relax yourself. If your voice sounds too high, clipped, or nervous, breathe low and loosen your shoulders. Keep your throat open. “An open throat protects your voice and produces a richer sound,” Anderson says. The sound of your calm, confident voice will put you and your audience at ease.

Source: Anderson, Douglas, “10 Tips for a Power Voice: Make your voice one of your best assets,” *Entrepreneur*, August 30, 2007.





# Understanding Nonverbal Language

Besides words and tone, nonverbal cues contribute to the spoken communication process. Body language and nonverbal signals add meaning to your message. Nonverbal language includes hand and arm gestures, eye contact and movement, facial expressions, the position of your body, and your overall appearance. Your audience perceives nonverbal language as part of your message, and uses it to determine how to interpret your words. Being more aware of body language and nonverbal cues will help you be a more effective listener and speaker. Table A-2 summarizes do's and don'ts for using nonverbal language. Figure A-3 shows examples of nonverbal language in the workplace.  As you rehearse your presentation for the career fair, Juan Ramirez gives you a few pointers about your body language and nonverbal communication.

## ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

### QUICK TIP

Prolonged eye contact, however, can make your listener uncomfortable.

### 1. Maintain eye contact

Eye movements send signals that help regulate the flow of information between people. Your eyes can show interest, understanding, happiness, confusion, anxiety, and fear. Make eye contact to establish credibility and show you are engaged with your audience. People trust you when you look directly at them as you speak, and are skeptical if you don't maintain eye contact.

### 2. Present pleasant facial expressions

The human smile is a powerful cue that transmits messages including friendliness, happiness, warmth, and acceptance. If you smile frequently when you are talking with others, they perceive you as approachable, appealing, and friendly. They are also likely to react positively to your message and remember what you say. A frown or grimace also sends a powerful message, though it is usually negative.

### QUICK TIP

Gestures vary from culture to culture. What may be meaningful in one country may not in another.

### 3. Gesture appropriately

People usually move their arms, hands, and fingers when they speak. Effective communicators use physical gestures to emphasize important points. When properly used, gestures can enliven and animate what you say and help to communicate your enthusiasm and sincerity. If you do not move at all when you speak, others might perceive you as boring or tense.

### 4. Maintain good posture

Your posture is your body's position when you are sitting, standing, or walking, and it communicates your mood, attitude, and interest in a topic. When communicating with others, sit or stand with an erect (but not stiff) posture, which sends a message of confidence and competence. Lean slightly towards your listener to show you are receptive and interested in what they have to say. Avoid speaking when your back is turned or you are distracted with another task because this signals disinterest and insincerity.

### QUICK TIP

Signs of discomfort in your listener include looking away, stepping backwards, turning their body at an angle to you, or folding their arms over their chest.

### 5. Keep your distance

In communication, **proximity** is how physically close you are to your audience. Maintaining appropriate proximity is an important part of verbal communication. People expect you to respect their personal space and feel uncomfortable if you intrude on it. Appropriate proximity is affected by the relationship you have with the listener, the type of communication (intimate, friendly, professional, or public speaking), and your cultural norms. If you notice signs of discomfort that suggest you've moved into your listener's space, immediately increase the distance between you and your listener.

## YOU TRY IT

1. Use your e-mail software such as Microsoft Office Outlook to create an e-mail message to your instructor
2. Create a checklist of what you can do to send positive nonverbal cues in the workplace
3. Send the message to your instructor as requested

**FIGURE A-3:** Nonverbal language in the workplace**Hand gesture seems aggressive****Lack of eye contact suggests conflict****Smile invites participation****Posture reinforces competence****TABLE A-2:** Nonverbal language do's and don'ts

element	do	don't
Eye contact	Maintain eye contact to foster trust and engagement	Don't avoid making eye contact with your listener or maintain prolonged contact
Facial expressions	Smile frequently and present a pleasant expression in general	Don't maintain a poker face
Gestures	Punctuate your speech with appropriate and meaningful gestures	Don't exaggerate or lose control of your gestures
Posture	Stand and sit with an erect posture to communicate confidence and competence	Don't turn your back to someone when speaking
Physical distance	Establish a proximity appropriate for your message and audience	Don't ignore signs that your listener is uncomfortable with your proximity

### Learning the body language of success

More than the words you speak, your body language communicates the qualities that contribute to career success: confidence and leadership. In fact, the most successful business professionals use nonverbal communication that conveys authority and calm. Carmine Gallo, author of *10 Simple Secrets of the World's Greatest Business Communicators*, focuses on gestures and movement in body language. Instead of burning energy with nervous mannerisms such as drumming your fingers or rubbing your nose, Gallo recommends that you move with purpose. Videotape yourself for a few minutes as you give a

presentation, and then watch for mannerisms that do not serve a useful purpose—they make you seem distracted or lacking control. However, standing too still as you are speaking makes you appear rigid and uncomfortable, especially if you have your hands in your pockets. If you are giving a presentation, Gallo suggests walking around the room. If you are having a conversation, take your hands out of your pockets so you can gesture naturally.

Source: Gallo, Carmine, "Actions Do Speak Louder Than Words," *BusinessWeek*, November 17, 2005.

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# Developing Credibility

Credibility is a perception that others have of your believability. Credibility is closely associated with trust, a crucial element in personal and professional relationships. Your audience is more attentive and attaches more significance to what you say if they believe you are a credible source of information. Although people do not automatically accept your ideas if they trust you, a lack of trust can undermine what you say. Table A-3 summarizes the do's and don'ts of developing credibility. Although you are fairly new to Quest Specialty Travel and the travel industry, you want to be sure your audience finds you credible at the career fair. You review the essential elements of a credible speaker.

ESSENTIAL  
ELEMENTS**1. Speak objectively and accurately**

In the workplace, others might make decisions based on the information you provide. To minimize the chances of making a bad decision, they consider your track record of accuracy and reliability. You can improve your credibility by speaking objectively, avoiding exaggerations or embellishments, and providing only accurate information. Back up your statements with verifiable facts and evidence, as shown in Figure A-4.

**QUICK TIP**

One way to clarify an explanation is to answer the who, what, when, where, why, and how questions about your topic.

**2. Strive for clarity**

The better your listeners understand your message, the more they accept it. Maximize your credibility by clearly and carefully expressing yourself. Encourage feedback from your audience by asking, "Can I clarify anything?" or "What do you think?" A typical communication error is to rush an explanation of something you clearly understand yourself. However, explaining your message clearly improves everyone's comprehension of the topic. It also builds trust listeners have in you and increases their commitment to the topic.

**3. Be consistent**

Because your decisions, actions, and words send messages to those you work with, be aware of how they work together. To be perceived as credible, the words you say should be consistent with your actions. If people note that your words and actions are inconsistent, they will have less faith in your messages or discount them entirely.

**QUICK TIP**

Empathy can also mean being patient and tolerant, especially when confronting potential conflicts.

**4. Demonstrate empathy and concern**

Credibility involves more than speaking clearly and honestly. People are more inclined to trust others who show concern and empathy—demonstrating that you understand their point of view. If you are trying to resolve a conflict, deliver disappointing news, or respond to a loss, for example, empathizing with your listener enhances your credibility and makes them more receptive to your message.

**5. Remember Aristotle's triangle**

Aristotle analyzed effective speakers in ancient Greece, and diagrammed their effectiveness in a triangle shown in Figure A-5, which he called the **rhetorical triangle**. (*Rhetor* means "speaker" in Greek.) Aristotle taught that your speaking ability depends on how well you make three types of appeal to your audience: logical, ethical, and emotional. As a speaker, this means you should consider three parts of communication to be successful: the subject, or what you have to say; yourself and your credibility; and your ability to empathize with your audience.

## YOU TRY IT

1. Use a word processor such as Microsoft Office Word to open the file **A-1.doc** provided with your Data Files, and save it as **Credibility.doc** in the location where you store your Data Files
2. Read the contents of **Credibility.doc**, and then write an introduction to a speaker
3. Save and close **Credibility.doc**, and submit it to your instructor as requested

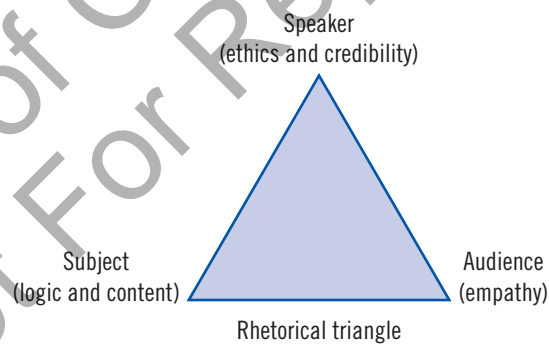


**FIGURE A-4:** Verifying statements with facts



Verbal Communication

**FIGURE A-5:** Credibility and empathy in speaking



**TABLE A-3:** Credibility do's and don'ts

quality	do	don't
Objectivity	Speak objectively and provide factual evidence for your claims	Don't make biased or exaggerated statements
Clarity	Use familiar words and solicit feedback from your listeners	Don't rush an explanation or assume your listener already understands a topic
Consistency	Make your actions consistent with your words	Don't say one thing and do another
Empathy	Demonstrate you recognize your listener's point of view	Don't fail to show understanding, even if you disagree with your audience

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# Giving and Receiving Feedback

Giving and receiving feedback is part of the communication process, and lets speakers know that listeners received and understood the message. As a speaker, you receive feedback about how others perceive you and your message. As a listener, you can improve communication by providing feedback such as nodding if you understand the message, paraphrasing to make sure you are interpreting the message correctly, and asking questions if you need more information. You also give feedback when others ask you to evaluate an idea, event, or document. Feedback in general should be positive, objective, and descriptive. Juan Ramirez has also invited Anna McCloud, a new marketing assistant, to give a presentation to students at the career fair. You and Anna rehearse together and offer feedback to one another.

ESSENTIAL  
ELEMENTS

## QUICK TIP

A good rule of thumb is to make two positive statements before offering a critical comment.

1. **Emphasize the positive**

To minimize defensiveness in your listener, include positive observations with your feedback. This lets the other person know you are being fair and have a balanced opinion of their performance. It also helps them listen to your message more constructively.

2. **Be tactful**

**Tact** is the ability to act or speak in way that maintains good relations with others or avoids giving offense. When you provide feedback, consider the content and how your listener is likely to receive it. Look for common ground, ask questions, and allow your colleague to make suggestions for improvement.

## QUICK TIP

Feedback messages should describe a person's behavior, events, procedures, standards, and expectations.

3. **Depersonalize negative messages**

Instead of communicating a negative or critical message when you are charged with emotion, wait until you are calm and can look at the message more objectively. Avoid making comments your audience might perceive as personal. Your objective is to fix problems and improve performance, not to assign blame. Also avoid you-based messages when offering critical feedback. Instead, use the words *I* or *we* in your sentences, which express how you feel without attacking or blaming. See Figure A-6.

4. **Provide solutions**

Focus on offering solutions rather than identifying problems or weaknesses. Constructive feedback includes recommendations and alternatives that build on your listener's strengths.

5. **Choose your location and timing**

Consider where and when you approach someone to offer feedback—especially if the message is negative. Deliver feedback in a neutral, private location. Do not confront someone in the presence of others, which could be publicly embarrassing. Choose a time that minimizes the interruption to your listener's day.

6. **Give others permission to disagree with you**

After you give feedback, be prepared to receive it. Listen to feedback with an open mind and learn what you can from it. Avoid interpreting disagreement or critical comments as personal attacks. Identify what you have in common, ask questions that seek solutions or alternatives, and look for a fair solution on which you can both agree. Table A-4 lists the do's and don'ts for giving feedback.

## YOU TRY IT

1. Use a word processor such as Microsoft Office Word to open the file **A-2.doc** provided with your Data Files, and save it as **Feedback.doc** in the location where you store your Data Files
2. Read the contents of **Feedback.doc**, and then list your strategy for providing feedback
3. Save and close **Feedback.doc**, and submit it to your instructor as requested

**FIGURE A-6:** Examples of positive and negative feedback


<p><b>Negative:</b> You have a bad habit of fiddling with your hair during your presentation.</p>	<p><b>Positive:</b> Walk around the room as you speak so that everyone can see and hear you.</p>
<p><b>“You” language:</b> You didn’t leave time for questions and never provided the Web address.</p>	<p><b>“I” language:</b> I have a couple of questions and would like to know the Web address.</p>
<p><b>Blame-oriented:</b> You let a potential customer just walk away.</p>	<p><b>Solution-oriented:</b> How can we encourage people to sign up for a tour?</p>

**TABLE A-4:** Feedback do’s and don’ts

element	do	don’t
Tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Express enthusiasm and appreciation</li> <li>Praise efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don’t sound skeptical or demanding</li> <li>Don’t avoid giving feedback at all</li> </ul>
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify your objective criteria</li> <li>Conclude with a positive message</li> <li>Focus on solutions and options, not personal qualities</li> <li>Use “I” language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don’t use too many negative words, such as <i>not</i>, <i>never</i>, and <i>bad</i></li> <li>Don’t assign blame</li> <li>Don’t overlook solutions</li> <li>Don’t use “you” language</li> </ul>
Tact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider how your listener will receive your message</li> <li>Listen actively and completely</li> <li>Show understanding by asking questions and paraphrasing</li> <li>Accept feedback from your listener</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don’t fail to show that you want to make improvements</li> <li>Don’t forget about how your listener interprets your body language</li> </ul>
Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose a private location</li> <li>Look for a convenient time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don’t interrupt your listener</li> <li>Don’t choose a time when the effects of a negative message might linger</li> </ul>

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# Overcoming Barriers to Communication

Recall that communication involves sending information that has meaning from one person or group to another, and that the communication process is only successful when the receiver understands the meaning of the information that the sender intends. Along the way, obstacles can prevent or disrupt the effective communication of meaning. Be aware of these barriers so you can craft a message your audience is more likely to receive and understand. Table A-5 summarizes the do's and don'ts of overcoming barriers to communication.  When you arrive at the career fair, you find that the room for your presentation is in a noisy, overheated location. You work with Juan and Anna to overcome these barriers.

ESSENTIAL  
ELEMENTS

## QUICK TIP

Rehearse a presentation, speech, interview, or other important conversation and practice meaningful gestures instead of distracting habits.

## 1. Use appropriate language

Your choice of words significantly influences the quality of your communication. Using language that your audience can interpret in more than one way can lead to misunderstandings. Choose words that are familiar, unambiguous, and easily understood. Provide concrete examples, if possible. Pay attention to your listener to make certain they understand the language that you are using.

## 2. Make your messages clear

Communicate directly so that your messages are obvious and clear. Don't muddle your message by adding filler words that dilute what you are saying, such as *about*, *maybe*, and *a little bit*. See Figure A-7. As the speaker, choose words that make your messages clear and concise.

## 3. Send consistent signals

Your nonverbal communication should complement what you say. When the two differ, your listener will believe your nonverbal cues and tend to ignore what you are saying. Avoid distracting habits such as crossing your arms, putting your hands in your pockets, handling a cell phone, or turning away from people when you speak. Practice moving purposely instead.

## 4. Use the appropriate medium

Verbal media include face-to-face meetings, telephone calls, voice mail, and video conferences. Choose a medium that is appropriate for the message that you are sending. Consider the complexity of your message, the costs of a potential misunderstanding, your listener's ability to understand you, and the urgency of your message.

## QUICK TIP

Don't use impersonal communication media such as e-mail for sensitive messages

## 5. Reduce physical distractions

Physical distractions block or reduce effective communication. Examples include background noise, interruptions, uncomfortable temperatures, and busy environments. Reduce these physical distractions so you and your listener can concentrate on the conversation. If possible, close the door, turn off a cell phone, or suggest that you and your listener find a quieter place to chat.

## YOU TRY IT

1. Use a word processor such as Microsoft Office Word to open the file **A-3.doc** provided with your Data Files, and save it as **Barriers.doc** in the location where you store your Data Files
2. Read the contents of **Barriers.doc**, and then list the causes and possible solutions to communication barriers
3. Save and close **Barriers.doc**, and submit it to your instructor as requested

**FIGURE A-7:** Language that creates and avoids misunderstandings

Vague:	Clear:
The meeting will start about 10:00 a.m. tomorrow.	The meeting will start at 10:00 a.m. tomorrow.
You might mention a few more details about the meeting.	Do you have an agenda for the meeting?
Maybe you could help with setup beforehand.	Could you arrive ten minutes early to turn on the projector and distribute handouts?

**TABLE A-5:** Overcoming barriers do's and don'ts

element	do	don't
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose words that are familiar, unambiguous, and easy to interpret</li> <li>Ask for feedback to make sure your listener understands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't use filler words that can lead to misunderstandings</li> <li>Don't use language your audience is unlikely to understand</li> </ul>
Nonverbal signals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Match your body language to your verbal language</li> <li>Move with purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't distract your listeners by fidgeting or turning away</li> </ul>
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose the medium that is right for your purpose and audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't choose a medium that reduces the quality of the communication, such as a noisy cell phone</li> </ul>
Physical distractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce physical distractions before you start to communicate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't ignore your listener's discomfort or put up with barriers such as a poor telephone connection</li> </ul>

**Voice mail etiquette**

Voice mail is a medium for professional communication that can cause problems for the caller and the receiver. It is frustrating to leave a message and not receive a return call, or to call a company and get trapped in their voice mail system, unable to find an answer to a question. Following a few voice mail guidelines can help you avoid these problems. Be sure to record a personal greeting on your voice mail; don't rely on the standard mechanical greeting that was pre-recorded on your phone. Include your name and department so callers know they have reached the correct number, and then direct callers


to leave a message. Mention your normal work hours. If you have different hours temporarily, such as when you are on vacation, explain that so callers know they should not expect an immediate call back. Check your messages and return calls within 24 hours. Delete old messages so that your phone system has enough room for new ones. When you leave a voice mail message for someone, speak clearly and slowly. Include your name, phone number, and extension number, if necessary. Keep your message short, specific, and direct, and mention the best time to return your call.



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# Communicating Ethically

**Ethics** deals with principles for acceptable conduct, and usually refers to honest, fair behavior and decisions. It also involves the moral obligations you have to treat others as you want to be treated. Ethical and legal behaviors often overlap, though they are not the same. Figure A-8 shows the relationship between business communication and ethical communication. When communicating in professional and business situations, you need to carefully analyze your objectives, choices, and consequences to make a responsible and ethical decision. Table A-6 summarizes the do's and don'ts for ethical communication.

 After your presentation at the career fair, a friend of your family approaches you and reveals that he recently accepted a job managing Global Travel, Quest's major competitor. He mentions that he will reward you for any information about new tours Quest is developing. You want to maintain a friendly relationship and respond ethically.

ESSENTIAL  
ELEMENTS

## QUICK TIP

Include alternative solutions, consider other perspectives, and identify pros and cons when appropriate.

**1. Be truthful**

You can avoid many ethical dilemmas by speaking honestly. You don't need to divulge confidential information, or speak openly about sensitive or personal topics. However, avoid exaggerating your subjects, speaking in half-truths, or communicating with the intent to deceive your listener in any way. Your reputation is developed through your integrity, and honesty builds trust in business and personal relationships.

**2. Present a balanced viewpoint**

When discussing a topic or responding to a request for a recommendation or analysis, balance the pros and cons in your response to avoid bias. Presenting your listener with a single perspective provides incomplete or inaccurate information. Even effective salespeople acknowledge the competition and overcome objections when persuading customers to try a new product or service. In general, you are perceived as a more trustworthy communicator if you discuss topics objectively and balance your response.

## QUICK TIP

Introduce an opinion with statements such as "I think," "I believe," or "it seems to me."

**3. Differentiate fact from opinion**

In the workplace, colleagues, managers, and customers depend on you to provide factual information they can use to make decisions. Be sure to clearly differentiate fact from opinions. A fact can be observed and independently verified. Your opinion is an idea or belief that you have. You might feel strongly about your opinion, but do not represent it as a fact.

**4. Disclose information clearly**

Some people mistakenly assume that disclosing an important detail briefly or in an inconvenient location, such as at the back of a report or buried in the fine print of a contract, is legally sufficient. However, this is an ethically questionable approach. If your listener has a legitimate need to know something, you should present it in a clear, understandable, and appropriate format.

## QUICK TIP

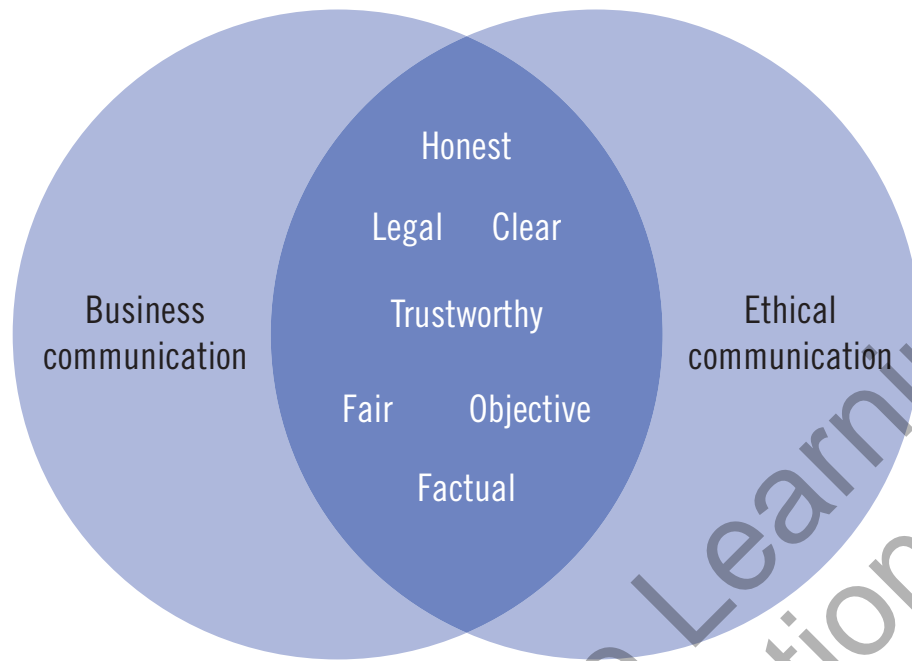
You can vary the amount of information that you disclose based on the other person's need to know.

**5. Be consistent**

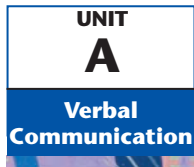
When communicating with others, you might avoid conflict by adopting the popular perspective or saying what you think your listener wants to hear. However, doing so can compromise your integrity. Avoid sending different messages about a topic to different people. Assume that your listeners will compare notes and discover the inconsistencies.

## YOU TRY IT


1. Use a word processor such as Microsoft Office Word to open the file **A-4.doc** provided with your Data Files, and save it as **Ethics.doc** in the location where you store your Data Files
2. Read the contents of **Ethics.doc**, then respond to the ethical dilemma it describes
3. Save and close **Ethics.doc**, and submit it to your instructor as requested

**FIGURE A-8:** Business and ethical communication**TABLE A-6:** Ethical communication do's and don'ts

element	do	don't
Honesty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose words that are familiar, unambiguous, and easy to interpret</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Don't</b> use language intended to deceive</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disclose all the information your listener needs to know to avoid misunderstandings and related problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Don't</b> hide information that an audience has a right to know</li> </ul>
Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledge the pros and cons of more than one point of view</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Don't</b> present a single point of view</li> </ul>
Fact and opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distinguish between verifiable facts and your opinions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Don't</b> represent your opinion, however strong, as a fact</li> </ul>
Consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Send the same basic message about a topic to all your listeners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Don't</b> change your message to conform to what your listener wants to hear</li> </ul>



# Understanding Cross-Cultural Issues

As organizations expand internationally, you are more likely to work with others from different countries and cultures. When you do, be aware of your cultural influences and how they affect your communication. Doing so helps you recognize the cultural influences of your colleagues, customers, and suppliers. Estimates are that over 6,000 languages are spoken in various parts of the world. When you consider differences in citizenship, ethnicity, religion, and education, the challenges associated with effective communication become even more significant. Table A-7 summarizes the do's and don'ts for cross-cultural communication.  The students and employers at the career fair have varied cultural backgrounds. As you meet and talk to people, you want to make sure your communication style is appropriate for your audience.

## ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

### QUICK TIP

Don't speak too loudly or slowly, however, or you risk offending your listener.

### QUICK TIP

Maintain eye contact when conversing with a nonnative speaker.

### QUICK TIP

Concentrate to understand what they are saying and adjust to their pronunciation and accent.

### 1. Keep your messages simple

When speaking with someone whose native language is different from yours, remember that they are managing two tasks at the same time. First, they are listening to and processing the language that you are speaking, which is not their native tongue. Second, they are trying to understand the message that you are communicating. You can help your listener by keeping your messages simple and direct. Discuss one topic at a time and be sure your message is understood before changing topics.

### 2. Speak slowly and clearly

Although many people from other cultures speak and understand English, they might be accustomed to hearing it spoken with an accent different from yours. Help your listener by reducing your rate of speech, interjecting occasional pauses, and articulating clearly. Speak loudly enough to be easily heard.

### 3. Watch for signs of understanding

Many cultures consider it impolite to interrupt a speaker or ask someone to repeat what they've said. Instead, your listener might patiently listen without understanding what you are saying. Look for expressions that indicate a lack of comprehension, such as a blank stare, forced smile, or confused looks. Slow down, simplify your speech, and repeat your message without being asked to do so.

### 4. Listen carefully and uncritically

Show respect for others by listening attentively when they speak. Don't correct the grammar or pronunciation of a nonnative speaker unless they ask for a correction. Avoid completing sentences or suggesting a word when they pause. Instead, provide positive nonverbal feedback such as nodding your head and smiling. If you don't understand what the other person is saying, wait until they are finished, and then ask questions about the topic rather than requesting that they repeat their words.

### 5. Avoid clichés and idioms

A cliché is an expression that has been so overused, it communicates little information. An idiom is an expression that means something other than its literal meaning. People often use clichés and idioms as fillers in daily conversation. Avoid them when talking with a nonnative speaker.

## YOU TRY IT

1. Use a word processor such as Microsoft Office Word to open the file **A-5.doc** provided with your Data Files, and save it as **Cultural.doc** in the location where you store your Data Files
2. Read the contents of **Cultural.doc**, and then respond to the scenario it describes
3. Save and close **Cultural.doc**, and submit it to your instructor as requested

**FIGURE A-9:** Cross-cultural communication

Respect differences in culture




Watch for signs of misunderstanding

**TABLE A-7:** Cross-cultural communication do's and don'ts

element	do	don't
Message	Keep your message simple, clear, and familiar	Don't use clichés, idioms, or obscure language
Speaking pace	Speak slowly and clearly	Don't exaggerate the slow pace; speak naturally
Feedback	Be extra attentive to feedback that signals your listener does not understand your message	Don't wait for your listener to ask for explanations
Listening	Listen patiently; you'll eventually catch on to the rhythms of an accent	Don't correct the grammar or pronunciation of a nonnative speaker

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# Technology @ Work: Web Conferencing

**Web conferencing** tools are software and services that let you use an Internet-connected computer to meet with others and communicate orally. Web conferences are similar to personal meetings because group members can share ideas and view the same material on a computer screen or whiteboard without physically traveling to the same location. Web meeting attendees can use microphones attached to their computers to speak or can use the telephone to connect to a conference call. Web conferences are especially useful for training and demonstrations. Popular Web conferencing software includes WebEx, GoToMeeting, and Microsoft LiveMeeting. Figure A-10 shows Microsoft LiveMeeting and Figure A-11 shows GoToMeeting.  Juan Ramirez is considering holding a Web conference with the Quest Specialty Travel staff in New York. He asks you to investigate Web conferencing technology.

## ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

### QUICK TIP

Web conferencing software includes chatting or instant messaging features so meeting participants can ask questions without interrupting a speaker.

#### 1. Find a conference host

To hold a Web conference, someone serves as the host. This is usually the person who wants to hold the meeting. The host needs a subscription to a Web conference provider, a computer with an Internet connection, a Webcam or digital video camera for video (if necessary), and Web conferencing software to coordinate the meeting. If the host wants to show only software or a presentation on a computer, a video camera is not necessary.

#### 2. Reserve a time and invite participants

Web conference providers offer server space for your meeting, which you need to reserve ahead of time. You typically work with an event manager to register the meeting, reserve the server space, and set up the conference so that participants can connect successfully. The event manager usually provides the Web address and access codes to send to participants.

#### 3. Invite meeting participants

Determine who should attend the Web conference, and then use the conferencing software to invite them. Some software works with e-mail packages to send, schedule, and receive invitations. In the invitation messages, be sure to include the link and access code meeting attendees need to participate.

#### 4. Plan the visuals

Gather material for the meeting, including software, documents, and electronic presentations. Take advantage of the technology to vary talking with video, slides, and application sharing. Create a welcome slide to display when participants first arrive so they know they are in the right place.

#### 5. Record the conference

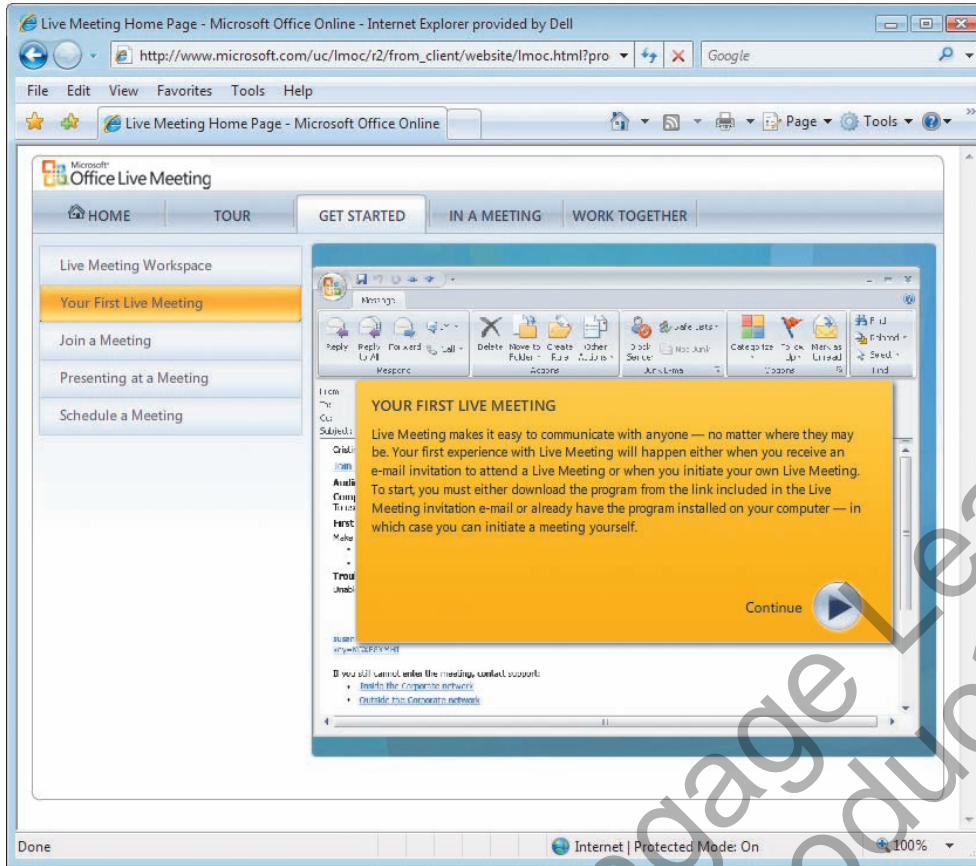
Most Web conferencing software lets you record the conference for people who can't attend. You can send them a digital video to watch at their convenience.

## YOU TRY IT

1. Open a Web browser such as Microsoft Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox, and go to <http://office.microsoft.com>
2. Search for information about LiveMeeting
3. On the LiveMeeting home page, click a link to take a tour
4. Write and send an e-mail to your instructor listing ways a travel business could effectively use Web conferencing software



**FIGURE A-10: Microsoft LiveMeeting**



Verbal Communication

**FIGURE A-11: GoToMeeting**



# Practice

You can complete the Soft Skills Review, Critical Thinking Questions, Be the Critic exercises and more online. Visit [www.cengage.com/ct/illustrated/softskills](http://www.cengage.com/ct/illustrated/softskills), select your book, and then click the **Companion Site** link. Sign in to access these exercises and submit them to your instructor.

## ▼ SOFT SKILLS REVIEW

### Organize your messages.

#### 1. Communication is successful only when:

- a. you identify barriers to understanding
- b. you use a sixth-grade vocabulary
- c. you introduce many ideas
- d. you (as the speaker) and the listener understand each other

#### 2. How should you organize a spoken message?

- a. Start with what your listener needs to know
- b. Use a formal outline
- c. Begin with supporting information
- d. Plan for frequent pauses

### Use vocal elements effectively.

#### 1. Which one of the following is *not* a vocal element?

- a. Gesture
- b. Pitch
- c. Pace
- d. Volume

#### 2. The most effective combination of vocal elements are low pitch with a varied pace and:

- a. no pauses
- b. lots of jokes
- c. monotone
- d. occasional pauses

### Understand nonverbal language.

#### 1. Which one of the following is *not* a type of nonverbal cue?

- a. Hand gestures
- b. Eye contact
- c. Speed of your voice
- d. Smiling

#### 2. What does proximity refer to in spoken communication?

- a. Your listener's ability to interpret your words
- b. Your style of speaking
- c. Approximate meaning
- d. How physically close you are to your audience

### Develop credibility.

#### 1. How can you improve your credibility when speaking?

- a. Exaggerate and embellish
- b. Speak objectively
- c. Base conclusions on your opinions
- d. Vary the pace and pitch of your voice

#### 2. According to Aristotle, when speaking you should consider your subject, yourself, and:

- a. your audience
- b. your *rhetor*
- c. your ethics
- d. your background

### Give and receive feedback.

#### 1. Which one of the following is *not* an effective way to give feedback?

- a. Emphasize the positive
- b. Cross your arms
- c. Provide solutions
- d. Choose a private location

#### 2. When giving feedback, what should you focus on instead of identifying problems?

- a. Assigning blame
- b. Body language
- c. Solutions
- d. Credibility

**Overcome barriers to communication.**

- 1. What types of words should you use to overcome barriers to communication?**
  - a. Foreign words
  - b. Ambiguous words
  - c. Power words
  - d. Familiar words
- 2. Which of the following is *not* an appropriate medium for spoken communication?**
  - a. Busy environment
  - b. Face-to-face meeting
  - c. Phone call
  - d. Presentation

**Communicate ethically.**

- 1. Ethics deals with:**
  - a. complying with the law
  - b. principles for acceptable conduct
  - c. persuading customers
  - d. expressing opinions
- 2. Which of the following is *not* a way to communicate ethically?**
  - a. Be truthful
  - b. Present a balanced point of view
  - c. Say what your listener wants to hear
  - d. Separate fact from opinion.

**Understand cross-cultural issues.**

- 1. When speaking to someone whose native language is different from yours, you should:**
  - a. discuss one topic at a time
  - b. speak with animation and many gestures
  - c. correct grammar and pronunciation errors
  - d. use the same accent as your listener
- 2. An idiom is:**
  - a. an expression that means something other than its literal meaning
  - b. an overused expression
  - c. a dictionary definition
  - d. a type of nonverbal communication

**Technology @ work: Web conferencing.**

- 1. Web conferencing tools are software and services that let you:**
  - a. organize presentations on the Web
  - b. translate your spoken words to another language
  - c. collaborate on the Web
  - d. use an Internet-connected computer to meet with others
- 2. What is the role of the Web conference host?**
  - a. To videotape the meeting
  - b. To coordinate the meeting
  - c. To launch the software
  - d. To set up the Internet connections

**▼ CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS**

- 1. You are interviewing for your dream job and the interviewer says the company is looking for someone with top-notch verbal skills. How do you answer?**
- 2. Suppose you are discussing an important project with a colleague at your desk when a visiting supplier walks by and interrupts you by commenting on the way you are dressed. How do you respond?**
- 3. Speaking and writing each have pros and cons as forms of communication. When should you use forms of oral communication? When should you use forms of written communication?**
- 4. Do you think gossip has its place in the workplace? Should gossip be encouraged or discouraged by managers and other employees?**
- 5. Many people in your company are being laid off, and you and other members of your department fear you might lose your jobs. You see a document on your supervisor's computer labeled "Staffing Plans." What do you do? Should you mention the document to your colleagues?**

## ▼ INDEPENDENT CHALLENGE 1

You work as an administrative assistant at NorthStar, a four-season resort in eastern Maine. Kelly Mortensen is your supervisor, and she asks you to show a small group of businesspeople around the resort. They represent a business in Quebec that is considering whether to hold a conference at NorthStar. Before they arrive, you need to prepare the tour and plan what you will say. Part of the NorthStar resort is shown in Figure A-12.

FIGURE A-12



- Use a word processor such as Microsoft Office Word to open the file **A-6.doc** provided with your Data Files, and save it as **Tour.doc** in the location where you store your Data Files.
- Review the contents of **Tour.doc**, and then write a statement of purpose at the beginning of the document.
- Reorganize the topics of the message into a logical order.
- Outline your tour of NorthStar.
- Proofread the document carefully to fix any grammar or formatting errors.
- Save and close **Tour.doc**, then submit it to your instructor as requested.

## ▼ INDEPENDENT CHALLENGE 2

You work in the Bloomington Health Clinic, a family practice clinic in Bloomington, Indiana. Brad Diego manages the administrative staff, and is planning to hire a new receptionist to greet patients and schedule appointments. Brad organizes a team of interviewers, and asks you to participate.

- Use a word processor such as Microsoft Office Word to open the file **A-7.doc** provided with your Data Files, and save it as **Interview.doc** in the location where you store your Data Files.
- Review the questions in the Interview document, and then add at least three of your own.
- Find a partner to play the part of a job applicant.
- Interview your partner for the position of receptionist at the Bloomington Health Clinic. Pay particular attention to the body language and nonverbal communication of your partner.
- Switch roles and let your partner interview you.
- In **Interview.doc**, describe at least two nonverbal cues your partner used during the interview and the message they communicated.
- Close **Interview.doc** then provide it to your instructor.



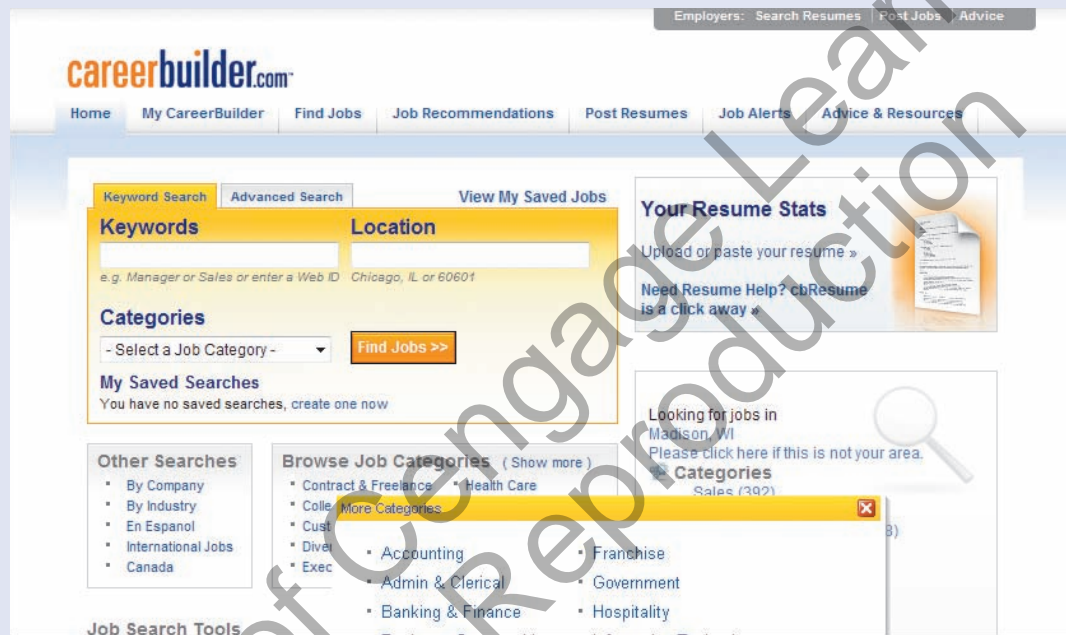
## ▼ REAL LIFE INDEPENDENT CHALLENGE

**This Real Life Independent Challenge requires an Internet connection.**

You have one more year before you need to start applying for a job. You decide to use this time to identify skills that employers want so you can make yourself as attractive as possible to a potential employer. Study the want ads online or in a number of newspapers and identify the skills employers want.

- a. Using your favorite search engine, search for online want ads.
- b. At an online job board, such as the one shown in Figure A-13, complete the following tasks:
  - Find a list of job categories.
  - Select a category that appeals to you.
  - Read the ads for jobs in that category.

FIGURE A-13



- c. In a word-processing document, list the qualities employers are seeking.
- d. Choose three qualities and write about how you can improve your skills to meet their needs.
- e. Proofread the document carefully to fix any grammar or formatting errors.
- f. Submit the document to your instructor as requested.

## ▼ TEAM CHALLENGE

**This Team Challenge requires an Internet connection.**

You work for the Global Village, an import/export company specializing in houseware products made from sustainable materials. You and other members of the Marketing Department are preparing to accompany Louisa Chen, the company buyer, to Mexico and parts of Central America. Before you leave, Louisa asks your group to research nonverbal communication in Mexico, Costa Rica, and Guatemala. She is particularly interested in finding out how to dress appropriately.

- a. Using your favorite search engine, search for information about nonverbal communication in Mexico and Central America. Look for explanations of hand gestures, practices for business meetings, and appropriate dress for professional meetings. Note the addresses of the Web sites that provide the most useful information.
- b. Meet as a team to discuss your findings.
- c. As a team, create a list of recommendations for Louisa about how to act and dress during the buying trip to Mexico and Central America.
- d. Submit the list to your instructor as requested.



## ▼ BE THE CRITIC

Review the photo of a business meeting shown in Figure A-14. These people are members of the Claims Department at an insurance company. The purpose of the meeting is to find ways to cut the budget of the Claims Department. Create an e-mail message that lists the nonverbal communication mistakes the participants might be making and offer specific suggestions for improvement. Send the critique to your instructor.

**FIGURE A-14**

