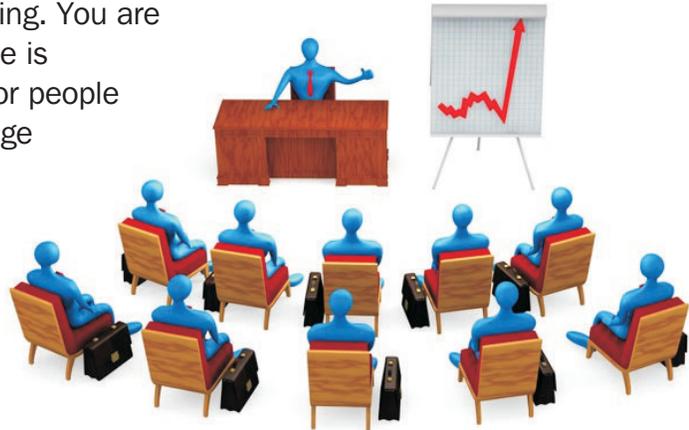


# Nonverbal Communication

**C**OMMUNICATION is not just about talking. You are not communicating unless someone is receiving your message. It is important for people to listen and watch to receive the message sent by other people. These messages are not always sent with words. A gesture or expression may say more than 100 words. In this lesson, you will learn more about communication that does not involve speaking.



## Objective:



Describe nonverbal communication techniques.

## Key Terms:



active listening  
body language  
communication  
concept mapping  
Cornell note-taking  
system

fishbone diagram  
Ishikawa diagram  
KWL  
mind map  
nonverbal  
communication

note-taking  
outline  
SQ3R

## Nonverbal Communication

**Communication** is contact and interaction between people to exchange information. It involves much more than speaking words. Communication includes several nonverbal techniques, including listening, body language, and sometimes taking notes to help remember and understand information being given.

## LISTENING SKILLS

Listening skills are an important part of communication. To be an effective listener, you must give your undivided attention and show understanding with verbal or nonverbal cues.

Check to make sure you understand the speaker by restating what you heard, and request more information from the speaker when necessary.

## Active Listening

**Active listening** is receiving information attentively and asking questions when you are the listener. According to the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, there are five steps to active listening:

- ◆ Acknowledge the thoughts, ideas, and/or feelings.
- ◆ Say it in different words.
- ◆ Ask open-ended questions.
- ◆ Summarize and clarify.
- ◆ Give an opinion.

## Interference

Listening skills can be affected by external and internal factors. External noise may prevent you from hearing what is said. Also, uncomfortable conditions in the environment, such as a very hot or cold room can prevent effective listening. In addition, you may struggle to actively listen if you are uncomfortable with the speaker.

You may be distracted by internal noise or other thoughts, making it difficult for you to remember what the speaker said. Many people find it problematic to give their full attention to the speaker instead of thinking of a response to the speaker's comments.

## BODY LANGUAGE

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**Body language** is a type of nonverbal communication. **Nonverbal communication**, or wordless communication, is facial expressions, the level of eye contact, gestures, and posture. It is often an unconscious expression of one's feelings. In general, men have more difficulty reading body language and other nonverbal signals than women. In *Pragmatics of Human Communication*, the authors explain the importance of body language awareness: "It is impossible not to communicate. Even when you say nothing at all, you still show something through your body language."

## Categories

Body language is expressed and recognizable in several categories. Positive language includes nodding your head "yes," smiling, assuming a small-shaped posture, leaning forward, and making strong eye contact. In contrast, negative language includes shaking your head "no," making a questioning facial expression, crossing your arms at the chest, and avoiding eye contact.

Concern and questioning body language include actions such as shrugging your shoulders, shaking your head hesitantly, looking upward, and darting your eyes. Examples of angry language include wagging a finger or pointing at another person, pounding a table, assuming a large-shaped posture, and forming facial expressions of rage. Examples of affectionate language include patting a person on the back, touching or holding another person's hand, standing close to a person, kissing, and making eye contact for increasingly longer periods.

## Cultures

Body language meanings vary in different cultures, so you should consider the audience when communicating to avoid a misunderstanding. Motioning with your index finger means “come toward me” in the United States, but it is an insulting gesture in some cultures. Sitting



## UNDER INVESTIGATION...

### LAB CONNECTION: Comfortable Distances

Edward Hall divided interpersonal space into four zones of varying distances. At what distance do you feel comfortable speaking to friends or standing near strangers? What circumstances “break the rules?” For example, you may like strangers to stay 12 feet away, but at a crowded concert, you may be much closer. Work with a partner to conduct the following experiment. The objective is to evaluate your own comfortable distances for interpersonal space.

#### Materials:

- partner
- tape measure
- paper
- writing utensil

#### Procedure:

1. Stand in front of your partner at distances you would consider comfortable for the following situations:
  - A private conversation with a parent, significant other, or best friend
  - A casual conversation with friends
  - A conversation with a neighbor you do not know well
  - A conversation with a person you just met
  - A stranger sitting near you in an almost-empty waiting room
  - A stranger sitting next to you on a crowded bus
2. As you role-play each situation, stand at the distance that would make you most comfortable. Use the tape measure to find the distance between you and your partner.
3. Record the distances.
4. Repeat the exercise, letting your partner determine the distances.

with the soles of your shoes showing is a sign that you are relaxed and confident in the United States, but it is a sign of disrespect in France. In the United States, making the “O.K.” sign with your fingers means things are going fine. In Japan, however, it means money. Also, in Japan it is rude to pass an item to someone unless you use both hands. Yet in the Middle East, the left hand is considered “unclean” and is not to be used to pass an item to another person. Nodding the head up and down means “yes” in the United States, but it means “no” in Greece.

## Relationships

Relationships may alter the commonly accepted meanings of body language. A close friend can stand close to you, whereas a stranger who stands close or uses overly friendly gestures may make you feel uncomfortable.

Edward Hall is an American anthropologist—someone who studies human beings and their relationships and culture. He divided interpersonal space into four zones. The intimate zone is 0 to 18 inches of space from your body. The personal zone is 18 inches to 4 feet. The social zone is from 4 to 12 feet, and the public zone is 12 to 24+ feet.

## Handshake

The handshake is nonverbal communication with a variety of positions and meanings. It is especially important to consider and practice handshaking prior to a job interview to ensure you are sending the right message. For instance, a palm-to-palm handshake conveys openness and honesty. However, a limp handshake signals that you are uncomfortable. Having an overly firm handshake, or placing your left hand on top of the shaking hands, is a sign of aggression. Placing your other hand under the handshake is a sign of comfort, while placing your other hand on the arm is a sign of comradeship.

## NOTE-TAKING

**Note-taking** is the process of recording information gleaned from reading, lectures, video, and audio for later review.

### Outline

An **outline** is an arrangement of topics starting with general information and relating specific information to the topic. Outlines can be in two forms: topic or sentence. Topic outlines use only words or phrases, but sentence outlines use full sentences. Each head-



**FIGURE 1.** Note-taking is the process of recording information gleaned from reading, lectures, video, and audio for later review.

ing and subheading must have at least two subparts. Outlines use Roman numerals, capital letters, numbers, and lowercase letters in a prescribed format.

## Concept Mapping

**Concept mapping** is a way of showing the relationship between ideas in words and pictures. It is a logical way to develop a study guide, especially for visual learners. A **fishbone diagram** is a cause and effect diagram; it is also known as an **Ishikawa diagram**. A fishbone diagram places the problem in a box or triangle on the left or right side of the paper. This becomes the head of the fish. The factors or possible solutions are the spines. Kaoru Ishikawa designed the Ishikawa diagram to structure a brainstorming session and to sort ideas into categories.

A mind map is another form of concept mapping. A **mind map** is an organizational tool that uses a picture of the main topic in the center of the blank paper and colored lines for key words and images related to the main topic. Many formats of the mind map (developed by Tony Buzan) exist.

## Cornell Note-Taking System

The **Cornell note-taking system**, developed by Cornell Professor Walter Pauk, is an organizational device that divides notes into three sections: right side, left side, and bottom. Notebook paper is divided into three sections as follows:

- ◆ The right side, or note side, is twice as wide as the left side.
- ◆ The left side is used for key terms, drawings, mind mapping, and questions.
- ◆ The bottom two inches of the pages are for a short summary.

## KWL

The **KWL** (Known, Wants, Learned) is a note-taking process that divides the page lengthwise into three sections. The note-taker makes notes in the three sections, indicating what is known, what he or she wants to know, and what has been learned.

## SQ3R

**SQ3R** is a technique used to read and fully understand information. To use this technique, answer questions when the information is read. The order of the technique is to skim or survey the information and question while scanning the material. Then you read, recite, and review. Read the material to answer the questions. Recite the answers to the questions aloud, and review the material before the test.

## Summary:



Communication is contact and interaction between people to exchange information. It involves speaking and active listening—being attentive to what is said and

asking questions. Body language is a type of nonverbal communication that includes facial expressions, the level of eye contact, gestures, and posture. The handshake is nonverbal communication with a variety of positions and meanings. Practice your handshake before an interview to find a grasp that is firm without seeming aggressive.

Note-taking is the process of recording information gleaned from reading, lectures, video, and audio for later review. Notes may involve methods such as outlines, concept mapping, the Cornell note-taking system, KWL, or SQ3R. These note-taking devices allow you to receive information and review it or use it later.

## Checking Your Knowledge:

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1. What is communication?
2. What is active listening?
3. What external factors can affect listening skills?
4. What are some examples of body language?
5. What are some techniques for taking notes?

## Expanding Your Knowledge:

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When you introduce yourself to someone, your body language and handshake help determine that person's first impression of you. What does your body language and handshake say about you? Practice making a "first impression" on three or four people you already know, and ask them to critique your body language and handshake. You should consider asking classmates, teachers, parents, neighbors, or your supervisor at work to help you with this project. Take advice from each person, and try to improve the impression you make on the next person. For instance, if your classmate says your handshake is weak, try to use a firmer grip on your second try.

## Web Links:

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### Active Listening

<http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/ActiveListening.htm>

### Concept Mapping

<http://www.studygs.net/mapping/>

### Using Body Language

[http://changingminds.org/techniques/body/body\\_language.htm](http://changingminds.org/techniques/body/body_language.htm)