



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Academic, Industry & Digital Skills

Week 14

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Learning Objectives

■ Industry Competencies and Key Transferable Skills (Part 2): Effective Communication

By the end of this lecture, you will be able to:

- Define effective communication
- Identify barriers to communication
- Apply key verbal and nonverbal techniques
- Use active listening skills



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Transferable Skills – An Introduction

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**How is the workplace
changing in the 21st
century?**

**What are the key
capabilities
employers look for in
today's workforce?**

The 21st Century Workplace

The 21st-century workplace is changing rapidly due to technology, demographics, globalisation and shifting expectations about work-life balance.

Remote and hybrid work

- ✓ Remote work expanded dramatically during the pandemic and remains common. Many organisations now also use hybrid models.
- ✓ This allows companies to hire globally and workers to prioritise flexibility and commuting time

Digital transformation and automation

- ✓ AI, robotics and automation are taking over routine tasks in many industries
- ✓ Work is becoming more data-driven and tech-focused, even in non-technical roles
- ✓ Employees increasingly need digital literacy and continuous upskilling



The 21st Century Workplace (contd.)



Rise of the gig and freelance economy

- ✓ More people work as freelancers, contractors or platform workers (e.g. ride-sharing, remote freelancing)
- ✓ Careers are less linear; many workers change roles or industries more often
- ✓ Job security is sometimes lower, but flexibility and autonomy are higher

Emphasis on skills over credentials

- ✓ Employers are increasingly hiring based on skills and portfolios rather than just degrees
- ✓ Lifelong learning, micro-credentials and online courses are becoming essential
- ✓ Workers must adapt continuously as industries evolve

The 21st Century Workplace (contd.)

Changing workplace culture and values

- ✓ Greater focus on wellbeing, mental health and work-life balance
- ✓ Employees expect purpose, inclusivity and flexibility from employers
- ✓ Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives are more common (though evolving)

Globalisation and distributed teams

- ✓ Teams often span multiple countries and time zones
- ✓ Collaboration relies heavily on digital tools (video conferencing, messaging apps, project platforms)
- ✓ English and cross-cultural communication skills are increasingly important



The 21st Century Workplace (contd.)



Flatter structures and new leadership styles

- ✓ Organisations are becoming less hierarchical and more collaborative and project-based
- ✓ Leadership is shifting toward coaching, facilitation and adaptability rather than top-down control

Focus on sustainability and ethics

- ✓ Companies face pressure to act on environmental/social issues
- ✓ Employees (especially younger generations) often want to work for organisations aligned with their values

The 21st Century Skill Set

The world of work is changing. Technology is reducing the need for manual and routine labour, leading to increasing unemployment in many sectors. Companies today expect young people to have a range of skills, including:

- **Strong interpersonal skills**
- **Skilled communication**
- **Critical thinking**
- **Creative problem solving**

Today's young people also need to be able to solve complex, multidisciplinary and open-ended problems, which require active and continuous learning throughout their careers.

What are Transferable Skills?

Transferable Skills

- **Transferable skills** are abilities and qualities that can be applied across different roles and industries. As the name suggests, they are skills you can carry from one job to another.
- They include both **hard** and **soft skills**. Hard skills are measurable and often technical, such as using specialist software, speaking multiple languages or having media expertise. Soft skills are less measurable but equally important.
- Transferable skills are especially valuable when changing roles or industries, as they show employers you can succeed even without direct experience. Highlighting them on your CV can demonstrate your adaptability and reduce the amount of training you may need.



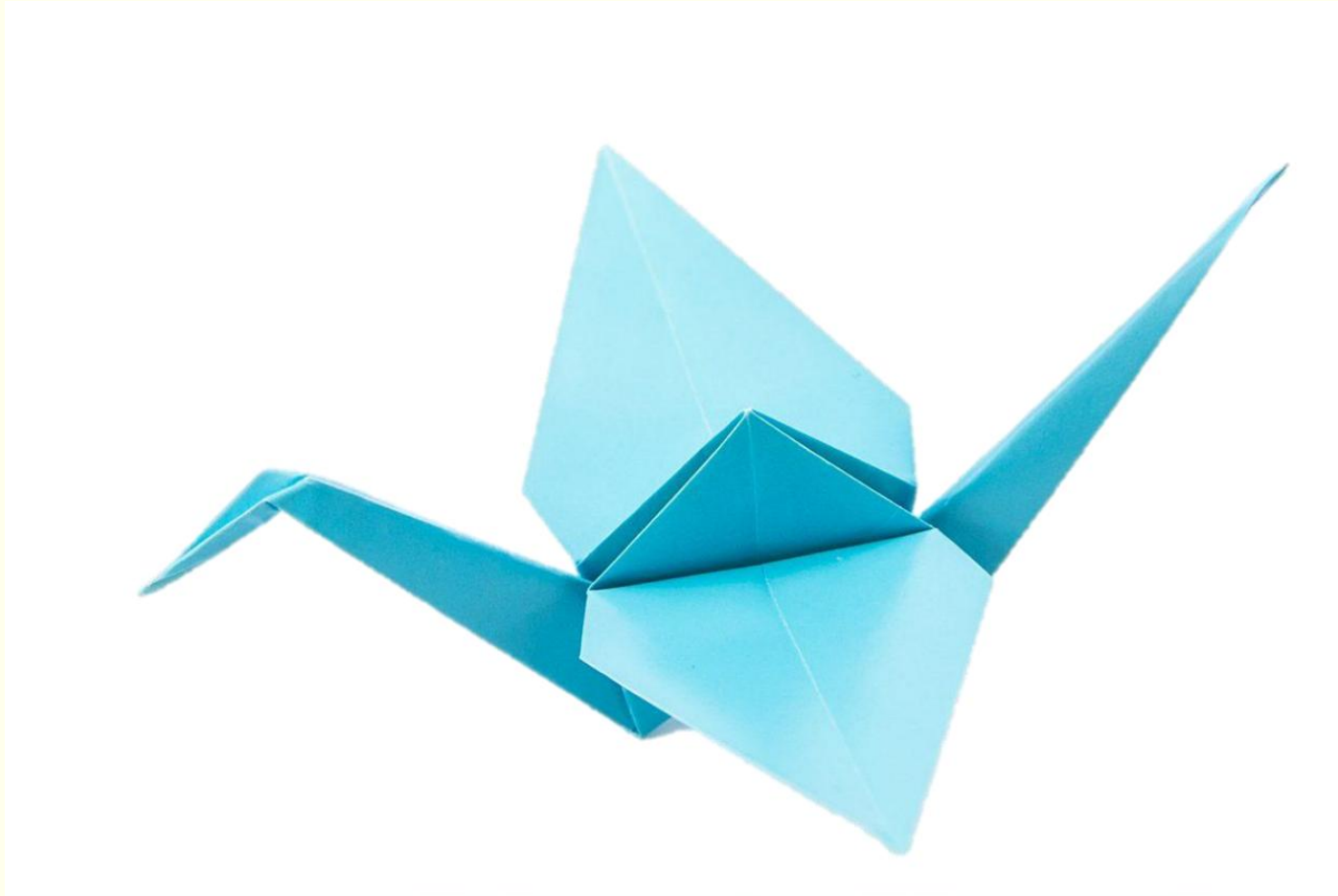
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Effective Communication

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Last Week's Activity – Origami



Discussion

- What happened?
- Did everyone's paper look the same?
- If everyone was given the same directions, why were everyone's products different?
- How did it feel to not get feedback because you couldn't ask questions?
- How can we all get on the same page and communicate more effectively?

Reflecting & Connecting

- Effective communication skills help build strong relationships
- Communication is not just about what is being said, but how well we listen.
- We need to be able to actively listen **AND** create a clear message.
- Sometimes, when you communicate with others, they may not receive the message you sent.

Reflecting & Connecting (contd.)

- A lot of times, asking for clarity is important in effective communication. Because you couldn't ask questions, this may have impacted how you listened to instructions.
- Individual perceptions vary and it's important to try to remember that others may not think the same way that you do.

Communication Skills

During your lectures, you are expected to participate by responding to questions, putting your views across and taking time to listen to what other students in your class have to say as well as your lecturer.

Think about how you have communicated with students and lecturers so far. Has the way you communicate changed since Week 1 – do you feel more/less confident? Are you able to discuss topics or issues tactfully?



Communication & Interpersonal Skills

- Your working life involves being able to communicate and interact effectively, whether with colleagues, managers or guests/customers/clients. This involves taking time to listen to others and understanding their needs, while putting your own views across clearly.

**What is effective
communication?**

**Where might we
need effective
communication in
T&E?**

Effective Communication

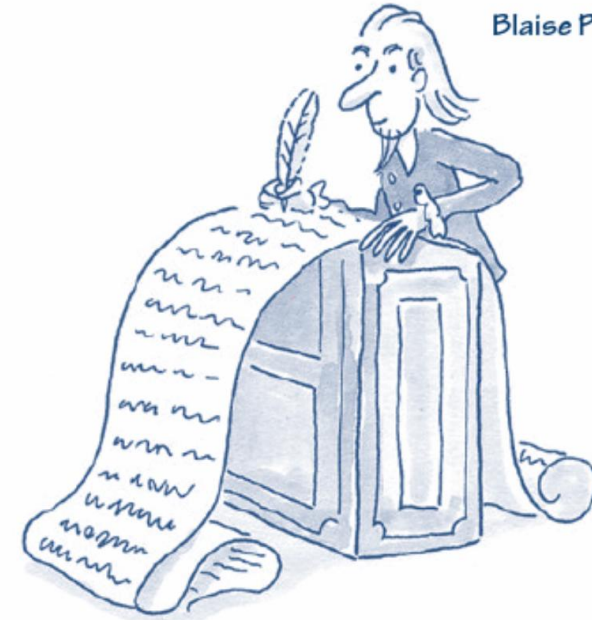
Definition: Effective communication is the clear and accurate exchange of information that ensures mutual understanding between sender and receiver.

However, it's not just about exchanging information...

...it is about understanding the intentions behind the information, paying attention to non-verbal signals such as body language, and also engaging by listening as well as speaking.

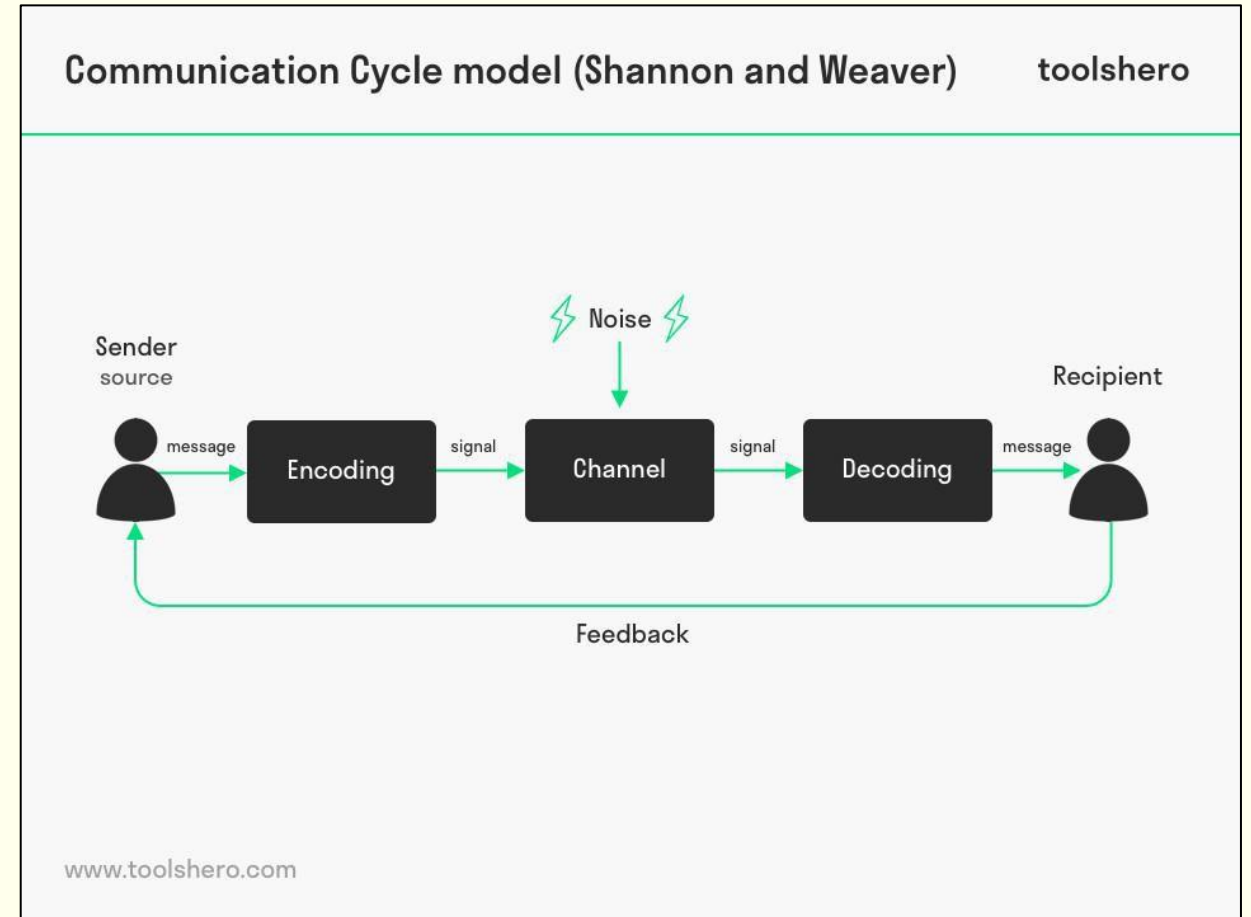
I have made this letter longer only because
I have not had time to make it shorter.

Blaise Pascal (1655)



The Communication Process

- One of the most common models used to understand what happens when people communicate is the model developed by *Shannon and Weaver* in the 1940s.
- As you can see from the model, communication consists of a number of elements.



Activity (20 min)

The class will be split into two groups.

Group A

Research *Shannon & Weaver's Transmission Model* and prepare a brief explanation to share with the class.

Group B

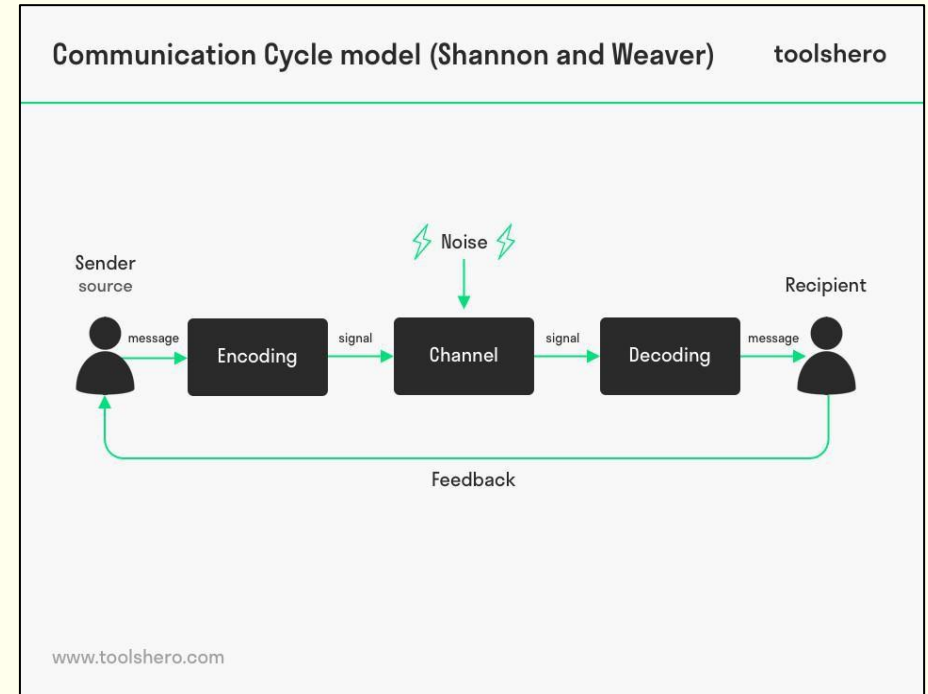
Your task will be to listen carefully when another group presents the model. While Group A prepares, you will complete an *Active Listening Checklist* and practice becoming expert listeners.

Activity (20 min)

Group A:

Research the model. You may use generative AI to assist you in research, but must use only the following prompt:

“Please provide a clear and concise explanation of the Shannon and Weaver Transmission Model, including its key components, how it works, and its significance in communication theory. Include two or three examples of how this model is applied in modern communication systems. Please provide all sources used, and ensure they are academic references only.”



Activity (20 min)

Group B:

Individual and group discussion. Answer the following questions:

- What does good listening look like?
- What does bad listening look like?
- What makes listening difficult?

Create a **Top 5 Active Listening Behaviours** list. Learn and apply them when listening to Group A.

Transmission Model of Communication: Shannon and Weaver

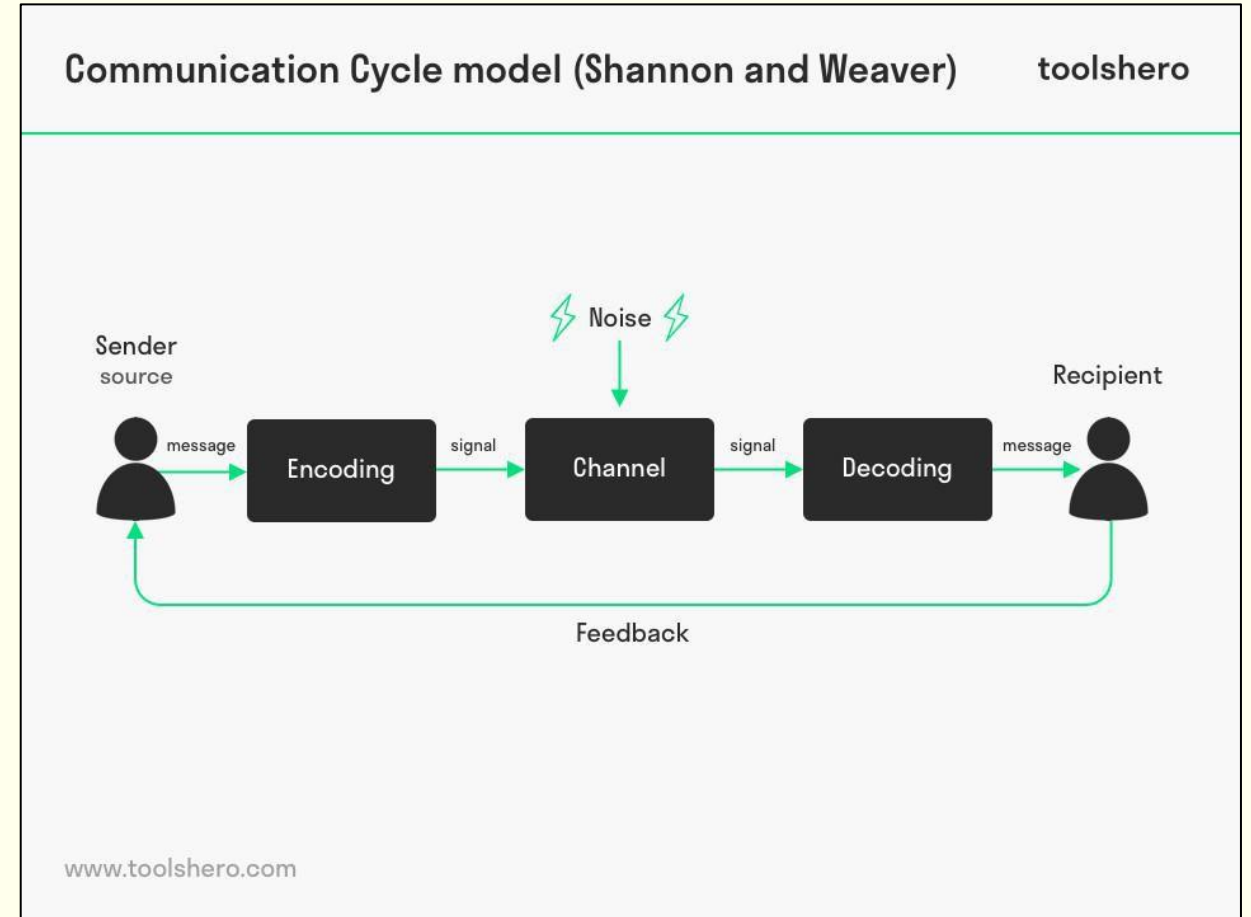


Access:

[Transmission Model of Communication: Shannon and Weaver](#)

Recap: Limitations of the Model

- It doesn't account for **non-verbal communication**
- It doesn't account for **feedback**
- The model is simple, but **people are complicated**



Effective Communication: What's it all about?

Words

- Effective communication is, in part, about choosing the right words. It's important in your studies that you understand the key terminology and how to use it in conversation and in writing. But there is more to effective communication than just the words we use.

Tone

- Think about the phrase 'I'm fine'. Depending on how you say it, you could convey very different meanings.

Body Language

- In the video, Alex Lyon mentions that the Shannon and Weaver model doesn't include 'non-verbal communication'. This term includes all the signals that you're giving off while you're talking or listening to someone. Are you smiling? Are you looking distracted? Do the words you use match your body language?



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Barriers to Effective Communication

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**What are barriers to
effective
communication?**

Barriers to Communication

Communication barriers are obstacles that disrupt the effective exchange of information between people. These barriers can occur at any stage of the communication process – sending, receiving, interpreting, or responding.

- The use of jargon
- Differences in perception and viewpoint
- Hearing problems or speech difficulties
- Language differences and the difficulty in understanding unfamiliar accents
- Expectations and prejudices which may lead to false assumptions or stereotyping
- Cultural differences



How to Overcome these Barriers



- ✓ Use clear, simple language
- ✓ Encourage questions and feedback
- ✓ Adapt communication style to your audience
- ✓ Create an inclusive and open environment
- ✓ Use appropriate technology
- ✓ Clarify and confirm understanding
- ✓ Practice active listening
- ✓ Be aware of non-verbal cues



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Non-Verbal Communication Techniques

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Body Language

- **Body language** forms an essential part of communication, with the accurate interpretation of non-verbal signals as important as understanding what's being said.
- This includes posture, gestures, touch, hand signals, the level of eye contact, tone of voice, facial expressions, or the use of personal space (*proxemics*).

For example, in the confined space of an aircraft, cabin crew often rely on facial expressions and silent/discreet hand signals to communicate effectively with one another and with passengers.



The Power of Body Language

- **Body language** can be an invaluable form of feedback; you can pick up on unspoken emotions and intentions in others. Also, paying attention to your body language can help you influence how you come across to others.
- Interpreting body language is challenging due to ambiguities and the risk of misreading signals. Focusing on clusters of cues within context, rather than individual gestures, can improve reliability.

The Mehrabian model (7%-38%-55% rule) states that in face-to-face communication of feelings, 55% is conveyed by body language, 38% by tone of voice, and 7% by words.



Case Study

- Alex has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It means, among other things, that he struggles with interpreting and using nonverbal cues common to neurotypical people. Last week, Alex attended a job interview at a local company.
- During the interview, he noticed that the interviewer was making direct eye contact and leaning forward. This made Alex feel uncomfortable and anxious, so he avoided eye contact and leaned back in his chair.
- As the interview progressed, the interviewer asked Alex several questions that required him to describe his past experiences and skills. Alex avoided eye contact, which made it hard for him to know when to respond or when the interviewer finished speaking.
- Knowing Alex has ASD, the interviewer realised her body language affected Alex. To make Alex feel more comfortable, the interviewer mirrored his body language. Because of this, Alex was able to answer the interviewer's questions effectively. And he got this job.



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Active Listening

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What is Active Listening?

Active Listening

- Listening is essential to effective communication.
- **Active listening** means: concentrating, understanding, responding and remembering what is said.
- Active listeners understand more perspectives and focus on what matters most, improving work quality, productivity and innovation.
- Active listeners should show attentiveness and interest by:
 - Encouraging the speaker
 - Using small verbal cues (e.g. “uhuh”)
 - Avoiding fidgeting or distractions

Active Listening (contd.)

- To help the speaker expand, **repeat key words/phrases** as prompts.
- **Empathy is important:** understand the speaker's viewpoint and acknowledge feelings, especially during emotional discussions.
- Empathetic listening helps the speaker feel valued and understood, making it easier to resolve issues.

Active Listening (contd.)

- Pay attention to both **verbal and non-verbal signals**, including **body language**.
- Confirm understanding by **restating** and **summarising key points** in your own words.
- Strong active listening also involves considering **context** (time, location, people involved) and always giving the speaker **full attention**.

The 5 Levels of Listening

Level 1: Ignoring

This is the lowest level – not listening at all. If you are distracted by anything while talking to someone, they will get the impression that you are ignoring them.

Level 2: Pretend listening

This is most easily explained during face-to-face conversations. You're talking to the other person, and they have that “backpacking in Brazil” look in their eyes. On the phone, it happens when you say things like “I see” and “OK” while working on an unrelated email or playing a computer game. People can tell you're distracted.

The 5 Levels of Listening

Level 3: Selective listening

During selective listening, we pay attention to the speaker if they are talking about things we like or agree with. If they move on to other things, we slope down to pretend to be listening or ignore them altogether.

Level 4: Attentive listening

Attentive listening occurs when we carefully listen to the other person, but whilst they speak, we are deciding whether we agree or disagree, determining whether they are right or wrong. Instead of paying close attention to the other person, we're formulating our response to what they are saying.

At all four of these levels, it should be clear that we are listening to our own perspective, and in most cases with the intention to respond from our own experience rather than the person we are speaking with.

The 5 Levels of Listening

Level 5: Active listening

- ✓ This is the highest level of listening, also known as empathic listening.
- ✓ It involves seeing and hearing the conversation from the point of view of the person speaking to you.
- ✓ It is the hardest level of listening to achieve, but you can achieve empathic listening by slowing down, being patient, talking less and listening more, repeating back what was said to ensure you don't overlook anything.



Mirroring

Posture & facial expressions

- If an interaction is going well those involved will, unconsciously, start to mirror each other's posture and facial expressions.
- Posture refers to the positioning of the whole body and as it's easy to control it can reveal how attentive the listener is.
- Facial expressions when unconsciously mirrored are also a sign of attentive listening, and tend to show sympathy or empathy in emotional situations.

Verbal Signals

Verbal signals can be used to show that you are actively listening.

- **Summarise:** restate main points in your own words, in logical order; let the speaker correct you.
- **Ask:** use relevant questions to show interest
- **Reinforce:** use positive reinforcement to encourage, but don't overuse (can distract/irritate).
- **Remember:** retain key points (including from past interactions); take brief notes if needed.

The SOLER Technique

A key part of **active listening** is showing the speaker you are **listening and interested**.

One method to demonstrate this is the **SOLER technique**:

- ✓ **Squarely**: face the speaker (sitting or standing), but turn slightly at an angle - direct face-to-face can feel intimidating.
- ✓ **Open**: keep body language open to show receptiveness; avoid hunched shoulders (signals tension) or crossed arms (can appear defensive/closed off)
- ✓ **Lean**: lean slightly forward toward the speaker to show interest; leaning back can be seen as disinterest.
- ✓ **Eye contact**: should be maintained
- ✓ **Relax**: stay calm and focused, remove distractions, and avoid fidgeting so the speaker feels valued and understood.

SOLER

stands for:

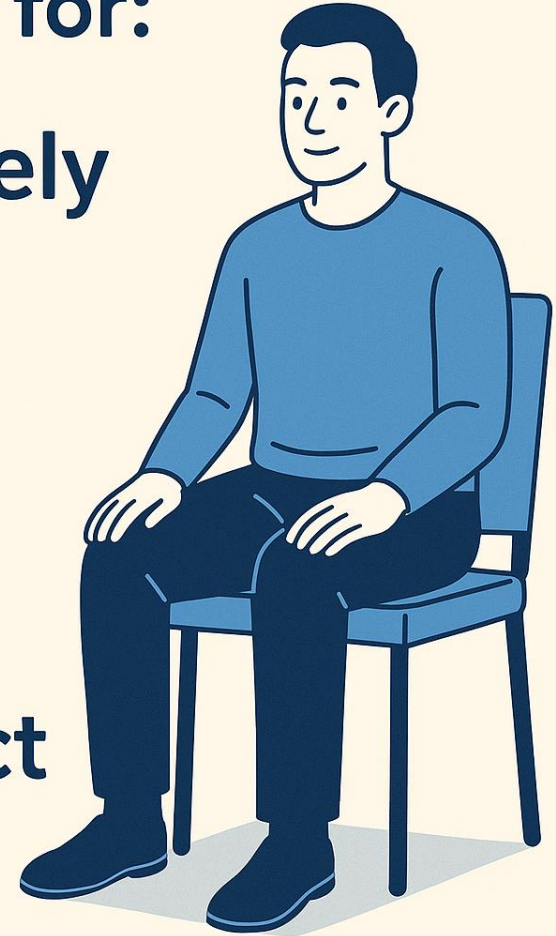
Squarely

Open

Lean

**Eye
contact**

Relax



Moments of Silence

- Silence is a normal part of interactions
- As the listener, you don't always need to fill silence with questions or comments
- Let silence give the speaker space to reflect and express ideas more clearly





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LinkedIn Learning: Effective Communication

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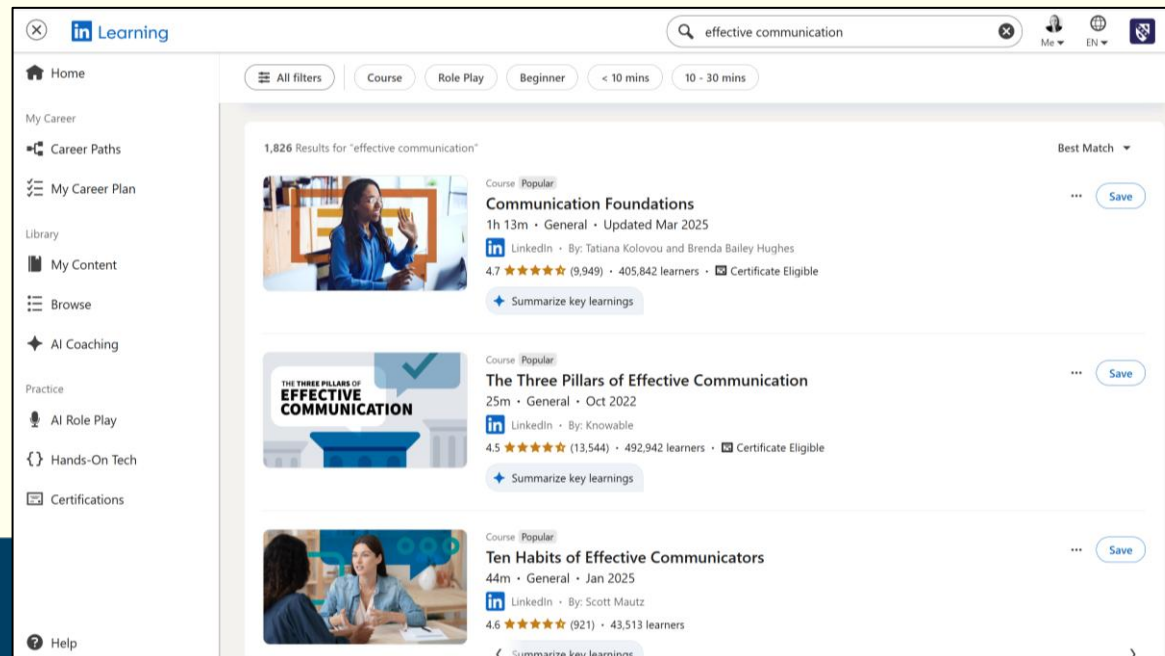
LinkedIn Learning

LinkedIn LEARNING



Remember that you can use LinkedIn Learning for self-paced (asynchronous) learning.

There are lots of courses and workshops on effective communication – just search for “effective communication” (or similar keywords) in the search bar as demonstrated below:



How to use LinkedIn Learning (register)

Use your university login credentials to access thousands of resources.

Don't have a LinkedIn account? No problem.

You can still sign into LinkedIn Learning! Of course, having a LinkedIn account opens up the possibility of adding and showcasing certificates to your LinkedIn profile, which can boost employability.

Connecting the two can give extra kudos in terms of your future career and continued professional development.

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