

Support Guide Effective Communication





Effective Communication

Effective Communication

This self-help sheet outlines some tips for effective communication as well as some barriers that may hinder your ability to communicate effectively

Communication skills allow you to both understand and be understood by others. Effective communication is relaying information to clearly convey meaning. Effective communication skills involve listening, speaking, observing and empathising. It is also helpful to understand the differences in how to communicate effectively through different mediums.

Tips for effective communication

There are different attributes of communication skills you can learn and practice to help you communicate more effectively. Many of these communication skills are interconnected, making it important to practice different skills in different contexts to maximise effectiveness

✓ Active Listening

Active Listening means that you pay close attention to the person who is speaking to you and that you, as an 'active listener', are also 'seen' to be listening. If you are not giving someone your full attention the speaker may conclude that what they are talking about is uninteresting to you. Interest can be conveyed to the speaker by using both verbal reinforcement, such as questioning, clarifying and summing up and non-verbal reinforcement such as maintaining eye contact, nodding your head and smiling or simply agreeing by saying 'Yes' to encourage them to continue.

✓ Adapting your communication style to your audience

Different styles of communication are appropriate in different situations and for different audiences. If you are communicating with a potential employer for example, it's almost certainly better to send a formal email than it would be to contact them via social media. Remember that different audiences will respond differently to different types of communication.

✓ Friendliness

When you're communicating with others approach interactions with a positive attitude and keep an open mind. Small gestures such as asking someone how they're doing, smiling as they speak or offering praise can help you foster productive relationships and communicate more effectively. People tend to share more when they are in an environment where they feel relaxed or welcome.

✓ Confidence

There are many ways to appear confident; making eye contact when you're addressing someone, sitting up straight with your shoulders back, speaking clearly and at an even pace, and planning ahead of time so your thoughts are refined are all ways to project confidence. If you can project confidence, without being overbearing or threatening, then you will find that people will listen when you communicate.



✓ Giving and receiving feedback

Good communicators can accept constructive criticism in the manner intended and not become offended or respond defensively. You should also be able to provide constructive input to others in a manner that reflects that input as being well intentioned. Feedback should have a purpose in terms of addressing or raising unanswered questions, providing solutions or helping to strengthen the subject of the topic.

✓ Volume and clarity

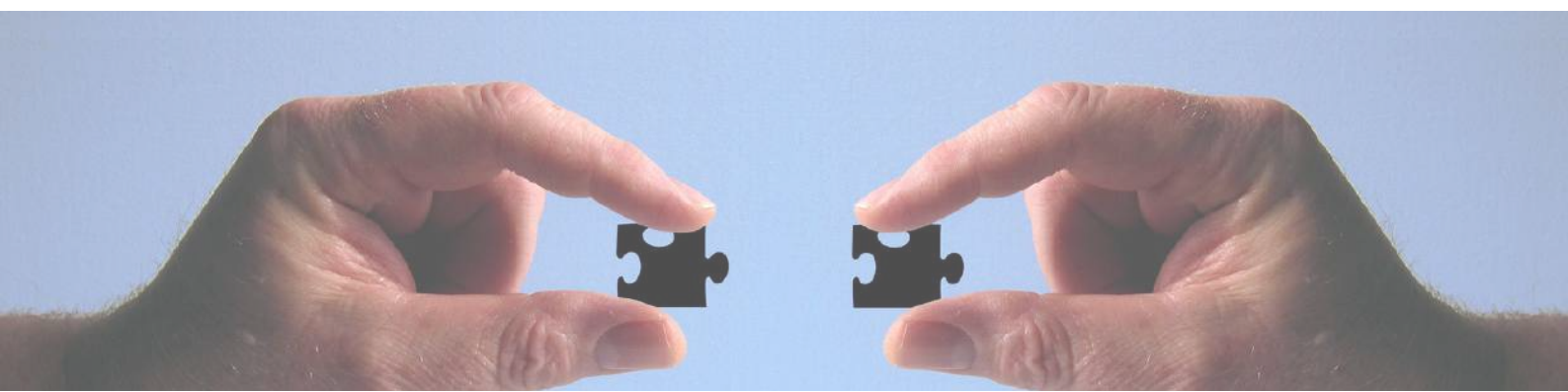
When you're speaking, it's important to be clear and audible. Adjusting your speaking voice so you can be heard in a variety of settings is a skill. Speaking too loudly may be perceived as disrespectful or awkward in certain situations. If you're unsure, 'read the room' to see how your peers are communicating.

✓ Respect

A key aspect of knowing when to initiate and respond to communication is respect. In a team or group setting, allowing others to speak without interruption is seen as a necessary communication skill tied to respectfulness. A good rule of thumb is always to treat others the same way you would wish to be treated yourself.

✓ Responsiveness

Whether you're returning a phone call or replying to an email, fast communicators are generally viewed as more effective than those who are slow to respond. One method is to consider how long your response will take: is this a request or question you can answer in the next five minutes? If so, it may be a good idea to address it as soon as you are able to. If it's a more complex request or question, you can still acknowledge that you've received the message and let the other person know you will respond in due course.



Barriers to effective communication:

- Use of jargon or technical language
- Emotional barriers, taboos and touching on sensitive subjects
- Lack of attention or interest towards the communicator
- Differences in perception and viewpoint. Also an unwillingness to consider different approaches, cultural differences
- Physical disabilities such as hearing problems or speech difficulties. Physical barriers to non-verbal communication (i.e. missing physical communication signs when communication doesn't take place in person) Language differences and the difficulty in understanding unfamiliar accents
- Expectations and prejudices which may lead to false assumptions or stereotyping.

You should be aware of obstacles in everyday communication. Try to make communication and interaction easier by sending clear messages and keeping in mind that both verbal communication and body language count.

Think about what you want to say and how it may be perceived. What is heard is 50% fact and 50% perception or feeling so try to be clear on both levels. The same applies when you are listening. Check that you have communicated what you intended by asking questions to confirm understanding. Don't be afraid to follow up or seek clarification if you think parts of what you were trying to communicate remain unclear.

Remember

Remember that being able to communicate effectively can help develop more positive relationships. Also remember that, like all skills, your ability to communicate will increase and improve the more you practice. Be mindful that one approach or style of communication is unlikely to fit all circumstances, if an approach isn't working for you then try something different.

Speak to someone at **the BUE Student Hub Counselling Service** where advisors can help you with the techniques above.

You can pass by our offices at the BUE Library Lower Floor.

Not on campus and want more information? You can contact us anytime via our email address **thestudenthub@bue.edu.eg**

The student Hub is a safe, friendly and free space for you. We are here to help you. We are listening.

