

Course02

What Is Interpersonal Communication?

Interpersonal communication involves the information, ideas, and feelings being exchanged verbally or non-verbally between two or more people. Face-to-face communication often involves hearing, seeing, and feeling body language, facial expressions, and gestures.

In other terms, Interpersonal communication is exchanging information, meaning, feelings, and opinions between two or more people via verbal and non-verbal means. Although we mentioned “face-to-face” communication previously, today's technology compels us to expand its definition to include media such as phone calls and online messaging.

Types of Interpersonal Communication

The first step in answering “what is interpersonal communication?” is breaking it down into four distinct types.

- **Verbal:** In other words, speaking. This term covers the words you use, how persuasively you speak, the language you use, which words you emphasize, and even the use of affirmative sounds and short phrases like “Yup” or “Uh-huh.”
- **Listening:** You can make a good case for listening as the most important interpersonal **communication skill**. It covers the ability to listen attentively, whether you're using your ears to listen “in-person” or some other means, say, over the Internet. Listening also includes special techniques like reflection and clarification. The best listeners are people who can focus their attention on the speaker to make the latter feel like they're the sole and most important person in the room.
- **The Written Word:** Thanks to the Internet age and situations requiring isolation (e.g., the pandemic), good written communication skills have become an asset. Whether you're on social media, in the workplace, or even texting on your phone, you must know how to get your point across in writing. This type includes emojis, grammar, clarity, tone, and even punctuation. After all, there's a vast difference between "Let's eat, Grandma!" and "Let's eat Grandma!"
- **Non-Verbal:** This final type covers body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and gestures. Again, it's essential that the listener picks up and correctly interprets non-verbal cues.

How to Build Interpersonal Communication Skills

Building interpersonal communication skills can help you improve your relationships, increase your ability to collaborate effectively with others, and enhance your overall success in life. Here are some tips to help you develop them:

1. Practice active listening: One of the most important aspects of interpersonal communication is active listening. This involves fully concentrating on what the other person is saying, without interrupting or judging them. You can practice active listening by maintaining eye contact, nodding, and asking questions to clarify their message.
2. Use clear and concise language: Communication is most effective when it is clear and concise. Use simple language and avoid jargon or technical terms that others may not understand.
3. Be aware of nonverbal communication: Nonverbal communication, such as body language and facial expressions, can also convey messages. Be aware of your own nonverbal cues and try to read others' body language to better understand their message.
4. Show empathy: Empathy involves understanding and sharing the feelings of others. When communicating with others, try to put yourself in their shoes and show understanding and compassion for their perspective.
5. Build rapport: Building rapport involves finding common ground and establishing a connection with others. This can help to build trust and enhance communication. Look for common interests or experiences, and use humor or other forms of positive reinforcement to build a positive relationship.
6. Be open to feedback: Be open to constructive criticism and feedback from others, and use it as an opportunity to learn and grow.

Interpersonal Communication Tips for Remote Workers

As more people are working remotely, developing interpersonal communication skills becomes even more important to maintain relationships and collaboration. Here are some tips for remote workers to enhance their interpersonal communication skills:

1. Use video conferencing: Use video conferencing as much as possible instead of just relying on phone calls or emails. This will help to establish a better connection with your colleagues by seeing their facial expressions and body language.
2. Schedule regular check-ins: Make an effort to schedule regular check-ins with your colleagues to stay connected and up-to-date on projects. This can be a quick call or a virtual coffee break to chat about work and life.
3. Practice active listening: When on a call or video conference, practice active listening by giving your full attention to the speaker, asking questions, and clarifying their message. This will help to build better communication and understanding.

4. Use appropriate tone and language: When communicating in writing, use an appropriate tone and language to convey your message clearly.
5. Use collaboration tools: Use collaboration tools like shared documents or [project management tools](#) to keep everyone on the same page and avoid misunderstandings.
6. Be flexible: As remote work can be more fluid than a traditional office environment, be flexible with communication methods and schedules to accommodate different time zones or work styles.