



Enhancing Communication Skills: 6 Tips for Effective Communication

Have you ever been frustrated at having not been able to influence a colleague, a boss or even a child or other loved one?

Whether it's expressing ideas, building relationships, or resolving conflicts, effective communication can greatly impact our success and overall well-being.

Here are six essential tips to enhance your ability to get your message received whilst building meaningful connections.

1. Use the STAR method.

The STAR method is a structured approach to answering questions and communicating effectively, especially in high-stakes situations like job interviews or presentations. The acronym stands for Situation, Task, Action, Result.

1.1 Situation:

- Definition: The backdrop or context of your story.
- Tip: Set the scene concisely. What was the challenge or problem you were facing?
- Example: "At my previous job, we were experiencing a 15% drop in new customer sign-ups."

1.2 Task:

- Definition: Your specific role or responsibility in that situation.
- Tip: What was expected of you? What were you aiming to achieve?



- Example: "As the lead marketer, I was tasked with devising a strategy to boost our sign-up rates."

1.3 Action:

- Definition: Steps you took to address the situation.
- Tip: This is the meat of your story. Focus on your particular role and how you approached the task.
- Example: "I initiated a comprehensive market analysis, segmented our target audience, and launched a targeted ad campaign."

1.4 Result:

- Definition: The outcome or effect of your actions.
- Tip: Quantify the results if possible. Show the tangible impact of your efforts.
- Example: "As a result, we saw a 25% increase in sign-ups within three months."

Here are a couple of tips to using the STAR method

- **Scenario:** A job interview where you're asked about a time you led a project.
- **Response using STAR:** "In my last role (Situation), I was tasked with overseeing the annual corporate event (Task). I coordinated with multiple vendors, managed logistics, and led a team of five (Action). The event was executed flawlessly, receiving positive feedback from senior management and attendees (Result)."
- **Networking:** Use STAR to introduce yourself and your experiences concisely.
- **Social Interactions:** Apply STAR to share personal anecdotes or experiences clearly.
- **Scenario & Response:** "Describe a time when you faced conflict in your team." Using STAR, describe the situation, your role in managing the conflict, actions taken to resolve it, and the positive outcome achieved.



- **Sharing an experience:** Next time you're explaining a project at work or sharing a personal experience, try structuring it with STAR.

The STAR method is a versatile tool, useful in professional and personal contexts to communicate effectively and concisely. By framing responses using Situation, Task, Action, and Result, we not only provide clear answers but also demonstrate our analytical and storytelling skills. Practice is key; the more you use STAR, the more natural it becomes!

2. Active Listening

Seek first to understand. Everyone has a deep need to be heard and to be understood. For most people, they aren't able to listen until that need is satisfied. Next time you are in an important conversation, suspend your need to be heard and spend all your effort listening to and understanding the other person. Once they feel understood, they will become far more open to listening to and being influenced by your point of view.

However, at the same time, if you suspend your need to be heard, you will also have become open to being influenced.

This is at the heart of real communication.

3. Listen to (watch) Non-Verbal Communication.

More than 80% of what we communicate, we say non-verbally. Through words may express ideas, non-verbal cues communicate how we feel. Are you leveraging your non-verbal communication effectively? Consider the following:

- Pay close attention to your body language, as it speaks volumes. Align your posture, facial expressions, and gestures with your intended message.
- Your tone of voice can make or break a conversation. Develop awareness of your tone and infuse it with warmth and sincerity to foster connection.



Establish rapport and convey interest through confident and appropriate eye contact.

4. Be prepared and plan ahead.

Don't just stumble into important conversations and then try to wing it.

- If you can anticipate a conversation, then spend 5 mins organizing before you go in. Answer the 3 vital questions. What's my objective, what will be the likely emotional response of the other person (or people), what stories or devices can I use to overcome or harmonise with there emotions.

5. Practice.

Playing the piano, singing, and driving a car, all require at least 20 hours of deliberate practice to become competent. Communications skills are no different. You become good with deliberate practice.

- Take the time to learn the principles of effective communications and then take the time to practice or workshop them (you can even join or form a small group to do practice and role playing).

6. Write before you speak.

Writing is the best-known path to clear thinking and clear thinking is essential to clear communications.

- Develop the habit of organizing your thoughts in writing, using a structured approach such as the Pyramid Principle (Barbara Minto), SCQA (Situation, Complication, Question, Answer) or other similar approach. You need only spend 10 to 15 minutes writing a 'memo to yourself', to demonstrate much more clarity in your speaking.

Enhancing your communication skills is a lifelong journey that requires knowledge, practice, self-reflection, and a genuine willingness to connect with others.



Pick one or more of these tips to try and test. You can also access our comprehensive communications course at SMARTMajority.com. The course is designed to help you transform misunderstandings into clarity, gain confidence in your conversations, build stronger relationships and become more effective at influencing others.