

Camosun College

SECOND EDITION

# **Trades Access Common Core**

**Line B: Employability Skills - Competency B-3:**

## **Use Interpersonal Communication Skills**



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# Trades Access Common Core Competency B-3: Use Interpersonal Communication Skills - 2nd Edition



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Line B: Employability Skills

Camosun College

BCCAMPUS  
VICTORIA, B.C.



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## Accessibility Statement

BCcampus Open Education believes that education must be available to everyone. This means supporting the creation of free, open, and accessible educational resources. We are actively committed to increasing the accessibility and usability of the textbooks we produce.

### Accessibility of This Textbook

The web version of this resource (<https://opentextbc.ca/tradescommoncoreb3/>) has been designed to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>), level AA. In addition, it follows all guidelines in Appendix A: Checklist for Accessibility (<https://opentextbc.ca/accessibilitytoolkit/back-matter/appendix-checklist-for-accessibility-toolkit/>) of the *Accessibility Toolkit – 2nd Edition* (<https://opentextbc.ca/accessibilitytoolkit/>). It includes:

- **Easy navigation.** This text has a linked table of contents and uses headings in each chapter to make navigation easy.
- **Accessible images.** All images in this text that convey information have alternative text. Images that are decorative have empty alternative text.
- **Accessible links.** All links use descriptive link text.

### Accessibility Checklist

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<b>Images</b>	Images that convey information include alternative text descriptions. These descriptions are provided in the alt text field, in the surrounding text, or linked to as a long description.	Yes
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This statement was last updated on November 1, 2021.

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- **Online webbook.** You can read this textbook online on a computer or mobile device in one of the following browsers: Chrome, Firefox, Edge, and Safari.
- **PDF.** You can download this book as a PDF to read on a computer (Digital PDF) or print it out (Print PDF).
- **Mobile.** If you want to read this textbook on your phone or tablet, you can use the EPUB (eReader) or MOBI (Kindle) files.
- **HTML.** An HTML file can be opened in a browser. It has very little style so it doesn't look very nice, but some people might find it useful.

For more information about the accessibility of this textbook, see the Accessibility Statement in the back matter.

You can access the online webbook and download any of the formats for free here:*Line B: Employability Skills, Competency B-3: Use Interpersonal Communication Skills – Second Edition* (<https://opentextbc.ca/tradescommoncoreb3/>). To download the book in a different format, look for the “Download this book” drop-down menu and select the file type you want.

**How can I use the different formats?**

<b>Format</b>	<b>Internet required?</b>	<b>Device</b>	<b>Required apps</b>	<b>Accessibility Features</b>	<b>Screen reader compatible</b>
Online webbook	Yes	Computer, tablet, phone	An Internet browser (Chrome, Firefox, Edge, or Safari)	WCAG 2.0 AA compliant, option to enlarge text, and compatible with browser text-to-speech tools, videos with captions	Yes
PDF	No	Computer, print copy	Adobe Reader (for reading on a computer) or a printer	Ability to highlight and annotate the text. If reading on the computer, you can zoom in.	Unsure
EPUB and MOBI	No	Computer, tablet, phone	Kindle app (MOBI) or eReader app (EPUB)	Option to enlarge text, change font style, size, and colour.	Unsure
HTML	No	Computer, tablet, phone	An Internet browser (Chrome, Firefox, Edge, or Safari)	WCAG 2.0 AA compliant and compatible with browser text-to-speech tools.	Yes

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## About BCcampus Open Education

*Line B: Employability Skills, Competency B-3: Use Interpersonal Communication Skills* (<https://opentextbc.ca/tradescommoncoreb3/>) by Camosun College was funded by BCcampus Open Education.

BCcampus Open Education (<https://open.bccampus.ca/>) began in 2012 as the B.C. Open Textbook Project with the goal of making post-secondary education in British Columbia more accessible by reducing students' costs through the use of open textbooks and other OER. BCcampus (<https://bccampus.ca/about-us/>) supports the post-secondary institutions of British Columbia as they adapt and evolve their teaching and learning practices to enable powerful learning opportunities for the students of B.C. BCcampus Open Education is funded by the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/advanced-education-skills-training>) and the Hewlett Foundation (<http://www.hewlett.org/>).

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## About the Book

In an effort to make this book a flexible resource for trainers and learners, the following features are included:

- An introduction outlining the high-level goal of the Competency, and a list of objectives reflecting the skills and knowledge a person would need to achieve to fulfill this goal.
- Discrete Learning Tasks designed to help a person achieve these objectives
- Self-tests at the end of each Learning Task, designed to informally test for understanding.
- A reminder at the end of each Competency to complete a Competency test. Individual trainers are expected to determine the requirements for this test, as required.
- Throughout the textbook, there may also be links and/or references to other resources that learners will need to access, some of which are only available online.
- Notes, cautions, and warnings are identified by special symbols. A list of those symbols is provided below.

## Second Edition Changes

In the Winter of 2020, work was done to revise and add content to this book that aligns both with the advancements in technology and the changing face of the skilled trades industry. These changes are predominantly focused on content in B2 through B4 and reflect the ongoing diversification of the trades, with a focus on the use of inclusive language in the text. In addition, this second edition provides more in-depth resources with regard to harassment, conflict resolution, employment-seeking strategies, mentorship, and effective communication skills. In addition, test material in the book was expanded upon to reflect the incorporation of the updated content.

## History of the Trades Access Common Core Resources

The concept of identifying and creating resources for skills that are common to many trades has a long history in the Province of British Columbia. This collection of Trades Access Common Core (TACC) resources was adapted from the 15 Trades Common Core line modules co-published by the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC) and the Centre for Curriculum Transfer and Technology (C2T2) in 2000-2002. Those modules were revisions of the original Common Core portion of the TRAC modules prepared by the Province of British Columbia Ministry of Post-Secondary Education in 1986. The TACC resources are still in use by a number of trades programs today and, with the permission from the Industry Training Authority (ITA), have been utilized in this project.

These open resources have been updated and realigned to match many of the line and competency titles found in the Province of BC's trades apprenticeship program outlines. A review was carried out to analyze the provincial program outlines of a number of trades, with the intent of finding common

entry-level learning tasks that could be assembled into this package. This analysis provided the template for the outline used to update the existing modules. Many images found in ITA apprentice training modules were also incorporated into these resources to create books that are similar to what students will see when they continue their chosen trades training. The project team has also taken many new photographs for this project, which are available for use in other trades training resources.

The following list of lines and competencies was generated with the goal of creating an entry-level trades training resource, while still offering the flexibility for lines to be used as stand-alone books. This flexibility—in addition to the textbook content being openly licensed—allows these resources to be used within other contexts as well. For example, instructors or institutions may incorporate these resources into foundation-level trades training programming or within an online learning management system (LMS).

- Line A – Safe Work Practices
  - A-1 Control Workplace Hazards
  - A-2 Describe WorkSafeBC Regulations
  - A-3 Handle Hazardous Materials Safely
  - A-4 Describe Personal Safety Practices
  - A-5 Describe Fire Safety
- Line B – Employability Skills
  - B-1 Apply Study and Learning Skills
  - B-2 Describe Expectations and Responsibilities of Employers and Employees
  - B-3 Use Interpersonal Communication Skills
  - B-4 Describe the Apprenticeship System
- Line C –Tools and Equipment
  - C-1 Describe Common Hand Tools and Their Uses
  - C-2 Describe Common Power Tools and Their Uses
  - C-3 Describe Rigging and Hoisting Equipment
  - C-4 Describe Ladders and Platforms
- Line D – Organizational Skills
  - D-1 Solve Trades Mathematical Problems
  - D-2 Apply Science Concepts to Trades Applications
  - D-3 Read Drawings and Specifications
  - D-4 Use Codes, Regulations, and Standards
  - D-5 Use Manufacturer and Supplier Documentation
  - D-6 Plan Projects
- Line E – Electrical Fundamentals

- E-1 Describe the Basic Principles of Electricity
- E-2 Identify Common Circuit Components and Their Symbols
- E-3 Explain Wiring Connections
- E-4 Use Multimeters

## Safety Advisory

Be advised that references to the Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia safety regulations contained within these materials do not/may not reflect the most recent Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. The current Standards and Regulation in BC can be obtained at from the WorkSafeBC website (<https://www.worksafebc.com/en>).

Please note that it is always the responsibility of any person using these materials to inform themselves about the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation pertaining to their area of work.

## Disclaimer

The materials in the Trades Access Common Core open textbook are for use by students and instructional staff and have been compiled from sources believed to be reliable and to represent best current opinions on these subjects. These manuals are intended to serve as a starting point for good practices and may not specify all minimum legal standards. No warranty, guarantee, or representation is made by BCcampus as to the accuracy or sufficiency of the information contained in these publications. These manuals are intended to provide basic guidelines for trade practices. Do not assume, therefore, that all necessary warnings and safety precautionary measures are contained in this module and that other or additional measures may not be required.

## Symbols Legend



**Important:** This icon highlights important information.



**Poisonous:** This icon is a reminder for a potentially toxic/poisonous situation.



**Resources:** The resource icon highlights any required or optional resources.



**Flammable:** This icon is a reminder for a potentially flammable situation.



**Self-test:** This icon reminds you to complete a self-test.



**Explosive:** This icon is a reminder for a possibly explosive situation.



**Safety gear:** The safety gear icon is an important reminder to use protective equipment.



**Electric shock:** This icon is a reminder for potential electric shock.

## Introduction

No matter what your job is, you will need to communicate with other people. Your communication skills determine how successfully you receive and transmit information. Communication is arguably the most important of all life skills and plays a significant role in all aspects of work and home life. Communication is verbal, written, and non-verbal, and every gesture, voice inflection, or facial movement speaks volumes and conveys information to others.

An effective communicator is also an active listener. Employers actively seek out individuals who are good communicators.

### Learning Objectives

When you have completed the Learning Tasks in this Competency, you should be able to:

- describe the principles of communication
- describe effective listening techniques
- describe the procedures for giving and receiving feedback
- describe assertive communication
- describe conflict resolution techniques
- describe effective problem solving and decision making



## Learning Task 1: Describe the Principles of Communication

*Communication* is the act of transferring information from one person or place to another. It can be verbal, written, non-verbal or visual (e.g., photographs, diagrams, symbols). The purpose of communication is to understand and to be understood, and it involves expressing thoughts, ideas, and feelings.

*Interpersonal communication* is a process by which we exchange information, feelings, and meaning with others through verbal and non-verbal messages. It is face-to-face communication.

It is impossible for humans not to communicate. Even when we are not speaking, we are still communicating through our body language. We spend about 75% of our days communicating in some way: about 9% is spent writing, 16% reading, 30% talking, and 45% listening. Effective communication is one of the most important skills that people need in their personal lives and in their work lives.

LISTENING	NON-VERBAL
WRITTEN	VERBAL

*Figure 1.1 All aspects of communication are integral to building good working relationships.*

### Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is how we express ourselves in words, both spoken and written. Spoken language includes enunciation, pauses, stutters, emphasis, and word choice. Spoken language can occur in face-to-face encounters, by telephone, by voice mail, on television, by Web conferencing, or on radio.

Verbal communication is an essential skill for a tradesperson to master, whether it is used to ask questions while an apprentice or explain something as a journeyperson, using verbal communication effectively improves productivity and ability to work well with others among other things. Verbal communication includes an understanding of the use of gender-neutral language and terms, use of respectful language when communicating with someone, and respecting and identifying the differences in communication styles of people.

### Gender neutral

Gender-neutral language use is important in a diverse workplace, assumptions should never be made as

to what a person's preferred pronouns or name are. The simplest way to avoid making a mistake when referring to someone else is to use the name they have introduced themselves to you with to refer to them. This avoids the use of pronouns that they do not identify with. Some examples of gender-neutral pronouns that you can use when referring to others are, they, them, and their. These pronouns do not make assumptions about the gender that a person may identify as. Another way that gender neutral language can be incorporated into our day-to-day communication is by reframing terms that were previously gendered, such as foreman or journeyman. By using the neutral terms foreperson or journeyperson we do not exclude anyone from these titles.

## **Respectful**

Respectful communication is communication that focuses on topics that are appropriate for your audiences, using manners, allowing others the space to speak, and avoiding topics that are inflammatory, insulting or prejudicial. As individuals, we each have our own unique sets of beliefs, opinions and values, however it is not our place to bestow those upon others without their consent, nor to judge others for theirs. When engaging in respectful verbal communication, particularly with those you do not know well, focus on the subject at hand, common interests, and neutral topics. Use manners, say please and thank you when appropriate, be genuine and apologize for miscommunications. Allow the person you are communicating with space to speak, do not interrupt or take over the conversation, wait your turn.

## **Microaggressions**

When engaging in verbal communication you should also be aware of microaggressions, their impact and what can be done to avoid conflict that stems from them. Microaggressions are subtle slights, remarks and actions that occur both consciously and unconsciously and are often linked to our unconscious bias and stereotypes. These remarks are often made based on assumptions and can perpetuate stereotypes of people of other cultures, races, gender identities and sexualities. Sometimes these comments are made in such a way that the person who has made them does not realize they have insulted the other person. These small and seemingly harmless comments and actions are psychologically harmful and have an impact on the overall ability of a work environment to feel inclusive and respectful. It is important to acknowledge our own personal biases and to not allow them to guide our communication with others based on assumptions. Expanding your circles to include a diverse make up of people with whom you interact, being an ally against discrimination and carefully considering your actions and words when interacting with others are keys to avoiding the harm that is created by microaggressions. If you do unknowingly use microaggressions and this is pointed out to you, take the time to listen and acknowledge why this may have been harmful to the other person, do not get defensive about it, and apologize for the comment.

## **Written Communication**

Written communication is another form of verbal communication as it is about language. Written communication can be in the form of letters, handwritten notes, emails, text or instant messages, faxes, books, newspapers, magazines, and signs. Increasingly, daily written communication takes the form of



emails and text messages. While these messages may be brief, the potential for miscommunication is significant.

In general, people are better at communicating and interpreting tone in vocal messages than in text-based messages. In emails and text messages, where there is a tendency to reduce the number of words in a message and use abbreviations or slang, the recipient may miss the full meaning or tone intended.

To reduce miscommunication:

- Determine how the information should best be communicated.
- If the subject of your communication is sensitive, consider talking by phone or meeting in person to convey your message rather than sending an email or text message.
- Take your time to compose your message.
- Think about the words you're writing from the recipient's perspective.
- Use the KISS principle and "keep it super simple." The more simply something is stated, the less opportunity there is for confusion or misunderstanding. In the absence of body language and voice tone, the receiver can only rely on the written word.
- Never use email or social networking tools when you are angry or upset. Always wait until you are calm and composed before addressing an issue.

It is also important to mention the appropriate use of pronouns in written communication. Again, here it is best practice not to make assumptions about others, use the pronouns that a person has identified for themselves. If you don't know, use gender neutral pronouns when referring a person or just refer to them by name. To help others navigate your preferred pronouns you can sign your written communication with pronouns after your name in parenthesis like this: (she/her) (he/him) (they/them), this will help people to communicate with you in the way you wish to be addressed.

## Non-Verbal Communication

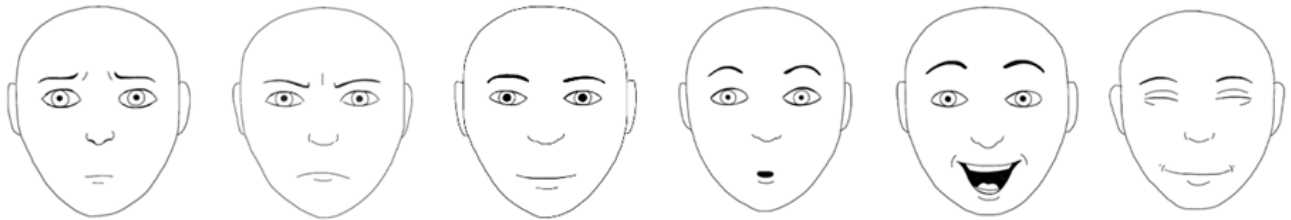
In 1967, a University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) study found that more than 90% of face-to-face communication between people is non-verbal (Mehrabian and Ferris, 1967). Non-verbal communication is communication without words. That's why it's often referred to as "body language." It includes facial expressions, gestures, body movements, posture, and eye contact.

Often a person's body language reveals their thoughts and feelings more directly than spoken words. Generally, when people are feeling confident, their stance is strong, and they easily make contact with others. When people are flirting, they can be seen playing with their hair, arching their bodies, and standing close to another person. How you use body language can attract or detract from the message that you want to communicate.

Some elements of body language are discussed below.

## Facial expressions

The most obvious indicator of emotions is facial expressions. By observing a smile, laughter, tears, a frown, or even the level of eye contact, you can tell much about how a person is feeling. It is important to not jump to conclusions based on appearance alone, although facial expression can guide you as to how to approach an interaction with someone it should not be the only source you rely upon to assess the state of another individual. Resist asking others to change their facial expression to make you feel more comfortable in your interaction, statements like “if you smiled more, you’d look prettier” or “you should be laughing that was funny” are inappropriate. Statements like this are only meeting your own needs, not the needs of the person you are trying to communicate with and harm your ability to engage in meaningful communication with them.



*Figure 1.2 Your facial expressions can often convey more than your words.*

## Appearance

Your personal appearance also communicates an impression. The clothes and accessories you wear, the colours and styles you choose, as well as the piercings and/or tattoos you have can communicate a message about who you are and what you value. When communicating with others we need to be cautious about making judgements about their character based on their appearance. This preconceived notion of what the values or motivations of someone else are based on their appearance is strongly tied to our own unconscious bias.

## Personal space

The distance you maintain between yourself and others can vary with the nature of the activity and the emotion involved. For example, people tend to communicate in close proximity if they are affectionate or angry, but at a distance if they are afraid or have a dislike. When communicating with others it is important to respect their personal space when engaging with them. We cannot make assumptions about a person’s level of comfort with someone else in their personal space and invading their space can impact the outcome of our communication with them.

Culture also plays a role in determining personal space. In North America, people tend to keep each other at arm’s length. In some other cultures, individuals stand very close to one another; in others they put significantly more distance between them. Respecting and understanding the diversity of other cultures methods of communication is important to successful communication.

## Misinterpreting body language

Body language, like verbal communication, can be misinterpreted. You might see someone stomping their foot and think they must be angry. But maybe they're just trying to get mud off their shoe! Or perhaps you think a co-worker you are talking to is upset with you because their arms are crossed, but maybe they're just cold.

You shouldn't focus on just one non-verbal signal and think you're interpreting effectively. You need to look at the whole package of both verbal and non-verbal cues to better understand what's being communicated.

## Cultural differences

Body language also varies from culture to culture and even from region to region in some countries. The smile may be the one and only gesture that can be understood worldwide.

On large job sites or in other countries, you may be working with individuals from several different cultures, and body language displayed by your supervisors and co-workers may differ from your own. As already noted, North Americans usually converse about an arm's length apart, but people from other cultures may keep more or less space between them. As well, while maintaining direct eye contact is considered positive for most North Americans, people from other cultures may view it as being confrontational or a sign of disrespect, and therefore they avoid eye contact, particularly with persons of authority.

An understanding of body language is something you will need to acquire when working with others. If your work or travels take you to other countries, understanding the differences between cultures can greatly improve your working relationships and reduce conflict on the job site.

## Effective Listening

To ensure that you are an effective listener, make sure you provide signals that indicate you're engaged. Make eye contact and use verbal cues or nodding to show that you're following the conversation. To indicate that you understand what's been communicated, ask questions or paraphrase what you've heard. Sometimes effective listening is indicated to others by the listener validating a piece of information or specific emotion that was shared with them, statements like "It makes sense that you feel..." or "How can I help?" are simple ways to reflect that you understand the information that they conveyed and are willing to engage with it further. Validation lets others know that you are listening and that you care about what they have to say and helps to create more meaningful relationships with others. Try to use "open" body language; that is, don't cross your arms or slouch. Good posture is a way of conveying alertness, and it indicates that you're paying attention.

## Working in Groups

Working in the trades usually includes working with others. Whether you are communicating with only one other person or you are in a group setting, effective communication skills are equally important.

### Effective and ineffective communication in groups

As you have learned, effective communication spans a variety of different forms, including spoken, written, and non-verbal communication. When working in groups, respecting the principles of effective communication is especially important, as the possibility of interrupting, misinterpreting, or being interrupted or misinterpreted is even greater when more people are involved.

Effective communication is the cornerstone of strong relationships and is one of the factors that helps people work well in groups, whether at home, in school, or in the workplace. Figure 3 lists some of the factors that constitute both effective and ineffective communication when working with others.

**Figure 1.3 Examples of effective and ineffective communication**

<b>Effective Communication</b>	<b>Ineffective Communication</b>
providing unconditional acceptance	criticizing
treating all persons with respect	using words such as “always”, “never”, or “should”
validating each person’s feelings and experiences using “I” statements	blaming, dismissing, threatening, or exaggerating
being an active listener	being silent as a form of punishment
having reasonable expectations of people according to age and abilities	not validating another person’s feelings or experiences
encouraging	not apologizing
empathizing	entering into power struggles
using open-ended questions	name-calling
not entering into power struggles	having unreasonable expectations
apologizing	trying to change another person
thinking before responding to an emotional situation	conditional acceptance
accepting that each person in a group or workplace environment is different and allowing each person to be who they are	using “you” statements

At times we all communicate effectively, and at other times we fall short of perfection. As with any skill, some people are innately better at communicating than others. As you learn to develop or hone your communication skills, think about those people who have the strongest impact on your ability to

express your thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. These people are generally parents, siblings, teachers, coaches, team members, co-workers, and other role models in your life.

### Formal and informal communication in groups

When working in groups it is also important to use formal or information communication appropriately, depending on the individuals involved.

Formal communication has conventions that govern spoken and written words and body language.

Informal communication is much more relaxed, with fewer rules and conventions. Figure 4 illustrates some of the differences between formal and informal communication.

**Figure 1.4 Informal and formal communication**

<b>Informal Communication</b>	<b>Formal Communication</b>
usually used with friends and family	used in a work or possibly a school setting or a social situation with people you don't know
contains shortened words, expressions, or phrases rather than sentences	proper way of speaking and writing (full words and sentences)
may have more relaxed manners	good manners ("please", "thank you", "excuse me")
contains slang words	no slang
few or no restrictions on tone or volume of speech	more formal tone and moderate volume of speech
informal appearance	uniforms or rules about clothing and jewellery at work or school can be used to communicate standards related to physical appearance
relaxed body language	more formal body language (posture, proximity, gestures)

You may use more than one type of communication with the same individual. For example, you may use formal communication with a family member or friend in a working context when you are both part of a team. Informal communication may be limited to when you are alone with the individual or strictly outside of the office or work site.

### Gender-neutral terms for groups

When working in groups of diverse makeups, remember to employ the use of gender inclusive terms when referring to the group. Referring to a diverse or blended group as "guys" is exclusionary and does not take all members of the group into account. Consider using terms like "everyone," "folks" or "team" to address the group and include all members. When all members of a group feel included, they are more likely to participate and be productive.

Misunderstandings can have a negative impact on the work environment if they are not corrected

quickly and constructively. A negative group environment can affect individuals' motivation, which in turn can affect productivity. When people are not feeling good about what they're doing, their ability to remain on task and do good work is often compromised.

## Additional Tips

Having discussions in a quiet setting without distractions can go a long way toward communicating effectively. While word choice determines factual information, voice quality or tone of voice expresses how a person truly feels. Just by listening to the way words are spoken, you can distinguish between boredom, sarcasm, annoyance, humour, fear, and excitement.

Voice quality includes the rate of speech (how quickly or slowly you speak), pitch (how high or low your voice sounds), and volume (how loud you speak).

When you are listening to someone speak, make sure you are paying careful attention to what is being said. Hearing is just as important as being heard!

Here are some basic guidelines that may prove useful to you when working in groups:

- Avoid interrupting while someone else is talking.
- Before either accepting or rejecting the ideas of others, take some time to reflect on them. Always try to put yourself into others' shoes and understand their point of view.
- If you must disagree with the ideas of others, do so without being condescending or rude.
- When working in a group setting, try to withhold your personal values, opinions, or prejudices if they are not relevant to your work.
- Be aware of your unconscious bias and how it may affect your ability to see other's points of view or consider their ideas.
- Try to build on the ideas of others during meetings. This creates a constructive, collaborative atmosphere. Staying positive is also an important feature of effective communication. Complaining and talking behind people's backs at work (or even when you're not at work) is disrespectful and can lead to a negative working atmosphere.



Now complete the Learning Task Self-Test.

## Self-Test

### Self-Test 1

1. Communication is the act of transferring information from one person to another.

- a. True
  - b. False
2. Which of the following are forms of communication?
- a. Visual and written
  - b. Verbal and non-verbal
  - c. All of the above
  - d. None of the above
3. Interpersonal communication is the exchange of information, feelings, and meanings through verbal and non-verbal messages.
- a. True
  - b. False
4. If you are a good talker, you are a good communicator.
- a. True
  - b. False
5. Approximately what percentage of our day is spent communicating?
- a. 25%
  - b. 50%
  - c. 75%
  - d. 90%
6. What is the most widely used form of communication?
- a. Talking
  - b. Writing
  - c. Reading
  - d. Listening
7. Verbal communication is how we express ourselves in words and includes enunciation, pauses, and stutters.
- a. True
  - b. False
8. The potential for miscommunication through short communication by email or text is insignificant.
- a. True
  - b. False

9. In what format do people best communicate and interpret tone?
  - a. Texts
  - b. Letters
  - c. Emails
  - d. Vocal messages
10. Why is the KISS principle used for written and verbal communication?
  - a. People are simple.
  - b. Not everyone is able to understand complex communications.
  - c. The more simply something is stated, the less opportunity there is for confusion.
  - d. The more complexly something is stated, the less opportunity there is for confusion.
11. Which of the following is considered non-verbal communication?
  - a. Facial expressions and body language
  - b. Personal space and personal appearance.
  - c. All of the above
  - d. None of the above
12. Body language is the same regardless of where you come from or what your culture is.
  - a. True
  - b. False
13. There are cultural differences in how people communicate and what is considered acceptable.
  - a. True
  - b. False
14. Which of the following is not an example of open body language?
  - a. Staying alert
  - b. Sitting and facing the speaker
  - c. Closing your eyes while an individual is speaking
  - d. Nodding to acknowledge you've heard what was said
15. A negative group environment can harmfully impact the motivation of co-workers and reduce productivity.
  - a. True
  - b. False
16. Which of the following does not constitute effective communication?



- a. Being an active listener
  - b. Accepting people's differences
  - c. Treating all people with respect
  - d. Providing conditional acceptance
17. Effective communication promotes understanding.
- a. True
  - b. False
18. In general, with whom is a more formal communication style used?
- a. Suppliers
  - b. Friends and colleagues
  - c. Employers, supervisors, and clients
  - d. Colleagues, friends, suppliers, and clients
19. An informal communication style is used more with employers than with friends.
- a. True
  - b. False
20. Which of the following is a gender-neutral job title?
- a. Journeyman
  - b. Tradeswoman
  - c. Journeyperson
  - d. Tradesmen
21. Respectful communication is communication that focuses on:
- a. Using manners
  - b. Allowing others the space to speak
  - c. Avoiding topics that are inflammatory, insulting, or prejudicial
  - d. All of the above
22. What are subtle slights, remarks and actions that occur both consciously and unconsciously and are often linked to our unconscious bias and stereotypes?
- a. Aggressions
  - b. Microaggressions
  - c. Macroaggressions
  - d. None of the above
23. If you have a clearly feminine or masculine name, it is redundant to include your preferred

pronouns in written communication.

- a. True
- b. False

24. Different cultures often have different comfort levels when it comes to personal space during an interaction.

- a. True
- b. False

25. Which of the following is an exclusionary term when referring to a group of colleagues?

- a. Guys
- b. Team
- c. Folks
- d. Everyone

See the Answer Key in the back matter of the textbook for self-test answers.

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## Learning Task 2: Describe Effective Listening Techniques

Listening is critical to learning and an important part of the communication process. In a training institution some of the course material may be delivered through lectures, through audio, and through verbal instructions. Even with practical demonstrations and instructional videos, much of the content is delivered through the spoken word. If you are not fully involved in listening, you will miss some important information and can easily be distracted. On a job site, effective listening can be critical in ensuring the safety of you and your co-workers and ensuring that a job is completed accurately and on time.

Active listening is a way of listening and responding to another person so that the message is fully understood. The following are several techniques that you can use to demonstrate active listening. The techniques you use will vary depending on the situation. For example, active listening during a lecture will require different techniques than active listening about a personnel matter at the job.

### Concentrate

Eliminate distractions. Shut off shop equipment, radios, or other competing sounds. Be aware that on a job site you may not be able to eliminate all distraction, so you may have to put additional effort into concentrating on the information you are receiving. Try to put personal problems aside. Limit engagement in other activities such as texting or working on other assignments. If you are having difficulty concentrating, use techniques to keep your mind from wandering. This may include taking very brief notes or jotting down questions you might want to ask at the appropriate time.

### Empathize

Put yourself inside the speaker's thoughts and feelings to better understand what they are saying to you. Be aware of your unconscious biases and how they may inform your conclusions about what the speaker is saying. Suspend your own judgment and position until you clearly understand the other person's perspective.

### Listen for Feelings

Try to "listen between the lines" to understand the attitudes, needs, and motives behind the words. Changes in volume and tone, as well as non-verbal clues such as facial expressions and gestures, can help you determine how the speaker is feeling.

## Connect

Use “listener-friendly” body language: make eye contact with the speaker or focus on the audio or visual presentation at hand. Try to connect the information you are hearing with what you may have previously learned or already know. Pay attention to any visuals that may accompany the audio, such as, an instructor writing on a board or asking you to look at a visual in your textbook or online while they continue speaking.

## Validate

Even if you don’t agree with what the speaker is saying, it is important that the person knows you are listening and that you understand what they have said. Use nods and acknowledge that you hear what they are saying and make respectful comments that show you have heard what was said. These comments do not need to be in agreeance with what the speaker has said, but rather allow them to know that you have heard what they had to say. Validation is important in building strong interpersonal relationships with others.

## Paraphrase

When the speaker has finished talking, repeat in your own words what the speaker said so they know they have been understood. This is an important skill for a tradesperson, as it helps to lessen confusion when specific directions for tasks or materials have been given. Paraphrasing back instructions or material lists helps to prevent mistakes that can create costly delays on jobs and financial losses.

## Clarify

Ask questions to get more information, especially if you’re not clear on what was said. Do not be afraid to ask a question, especially if not asking has dangerous or costly repercussions. It is important to take your cues from the presenter on when to ask questions. While some instructors may ask you to interrupt and ask questions at any time, others may ask you to hold questions until the appropriate time.

## Participate

Participate in discussions and respond to questions. Be present, not just of body but of mind as well, take your time to reflect on what the speaker has said and provide thoughtful questions or feedback to further explore the topic of conversation. Participation shows that you are interested, engaged, and are processing the information, while not participating leaves the speaker wondering whether or not you are connecting with the information.



Now complete the Learning Task Self-Test.

## Self-Test

### Self-Test 2

1. Listening is not part of the communication process.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. Active listening is a way of listening and responding to another person so that the message is fully understood.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. You are in a meeting with your colleagues. What is required in order to send effective messages?
  - a. Listening and non-verbal communication
  - b. Both verbal and non-verbal communication
  - c. Verbal communication and facial expressions
  - d. Listening, non-verbal, and verbal communication
4. Being aware of your unconscious biases can help you empathize with the speaker.
  - a. True
  - b. False
5. Making eye contact and focusing on the presentation is an example of what kind of body language?
  - a. Speaker-engaging
  - b. Listener-friendly
  - c. User-friendly
  - d. All of the above
6. It is important to agree with everything the speaker says in order to validate their presentation.
  - a. True
  - b. False
7. You should avoid asking questions unless it's absolutely necessary.
  - a. True
  - b. False

8. Paraphrasing back instructions or material lists helps to prevent mistakes that can create costly delays on jobs and financial losses.
  - a. True
  - b. False
9. Be present means taking time to reflect on what the speaker has said and provide thoughtful questions or feedback to further explore the topic of conversation.
  - a. True
  - b. False
10. Participating leaves the speaker wondering whether or not you are connecting with the information.
  - a. True
  - b. False

See the Answer Key in the back matter of the textbook for self-test answers.

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## Learning Task 3: Describe the Procedures for Giving and Receiving Feedback

The ability to give and receive feedback is integral to a healthy working relationship. Feedback is intended to provide information and observations about an individual's work behaviour or performance and can be positive and/or negative. All too often feedback is perceived as negative and associated with criticism. However, if given in the right way and at the right time, feedback can be highly beneficial for both the giver and the receiver.

### Sending Messages

If half of communication is listening, the other half is speaking and expressing thoughts and feelings in a clear way. Sending effective messages includes both verbal communication (the words you use) and non-verbal communication (body language).



*Figure 3.1 Giving and receiving feedback includes being aware of body language and facial expressions.*

Effective feedback should let the receiver know which behaviour or performance is desired, and which is not. It should allow both the giver and the receiver the opportunity to ask questions and get further clarification, and it can result in discussions that can benefit both parties.

Effective feedback can also lead to advice or recommendations on how to handle an issue or situation better in the future.

As an apprentice, you should receive a lot of feedback from your employer, supervisor, co-workers, and even clients. You'll get feedback on the job site, and if you work for a larger company, you may also have a performance review that will provide you with feedback. Feedback on your work will allow you to assess your strengths and weaknesses and make adjustments as necessary to improve where needed. Feedback, when provided correctly, is an invaluable tool to your growth as an apprentice. Should you not be receiving any feedback, take the initiative to ask your employer or co-workers to comment on your performance.

## **Constructive Criticism**

Constructive criticism is feedback aimed at collaboratively improving the overall performance of an individual or quality of a service. It often includes suggestions for positive change or improvement.

## **Guidelines for Giving Feedback**

The following are general guidelines on how to give feedback:

- Relax and take a few deep breaths if you are anxious.
- Remain respectful and calm at all times. If you are angry or unable to control your emotions, wait until you have calmed down.
- Remember that feedback is both positive and negative. Make sure the information you convey does not focus only on only one or the other.
- Provide the feedback in an appropriate location. Negative feedback should be given in private space without interruption. Providing negative feedback in front of others is inappropriate.
- Put your feedback into context, particularly if it is negative. This will help the receiver understand the points you are making.
- If you notice that the receiver is distressed, slow down, take a short break, or reschedule the discussion if necessary.
- Allow the receiver the opportunity to answer or ask questions and provide their own input. This will require active listening on the part of the giver.
- Focus on the issues and not the person. Giving constructive criticism is important but should never be made to feel personal. It is important to recognize that even though you are not intending on making the feedback personal that some people will still take it that way. You should be prepared to address this, as conflict may arise from this miscommunication.
- Provide feedback at the appropriate time so that an employee or co-worker can address the issues. Don't stockpile the feedback or criticism and unload it void of context. It is far better to address issues as they occur so that frustrations cannot build, and memories are fresh.
- Make sure that it is within your purview to provide the feedback.
- Ensure that you are not only giving negative feedback. While it is necessary to give constructive criticism, it is also important to recognize the positive accomplishments of



others. If you are consistently giving negative feedback and never give positive feedback it can be hard for others to know whether you believe they are successful. Acknowledging the accomplishments of others when appropriate lets them know they are a valuable member of the team.

## Guidelines for Receiving Feedback

The following are general guidelines on how to receive feedback:

- Relax and take a few deep breaths if you are anxious.
- Actively listen to what is being said. Ask questions or for clarification if required at the appropriate time.
- Remain respectful at all times. If you are angry or unable to control your emotions, wait until you are calm to respond or ask questions.
- Remember that feedback is both positive and negative. Acknowledge the feedback by paraphrasing it and asking for clarification on any points if necessary.
- Take responsibility for your role. Acknowledge any errors you have made or situations that could have been handled better. Ask for advice on how to handle these situations better in the future.
- If you disagree with the assessment, be assertive, not aggressive. Clearly address the issues.



Now complete the Learning Task Self-Test.

## Self-Test

### Self-Test 3

1. Which of the following is essential for giving and receiving feedback?
  - a. Effective listening
  - b. Healthy working and personal relationships
  - c. All of the above
  - d. None of the above
2. What does effective feedback help the receiver of the information do?
  - a. Know what behaviour or performance is acceptable or not acceptable.
  - b. Know about their work performance and have the ability to ask questions for further clarification

- c. All of the above
  - d. None of the above
- 3. As an apprentice, from whom will you receive feedback?
  - a. Your direct supervisor only
  - b. Your employer, supervisor, and co-workers
  - c. Your employer, supervisor, co-workers, and clients
  - d. Your direct supervisor and their superior or human resources
- 4. What is the purpose of constructive criticism?
  - a. To let you down easily when you make a mistake
  - b. To improve your performance or the quality of service
  - c. To keep track of what you have done well and advise your supervisor
  - d. To keep track of the problems you've had and go through them with you at a meeting
- 5. Most people find it easy to give and receive effective feedback or constructive criticism.
  - a. True
  - b. False
- 6. Which of the following is not a step used in giving effective feedback?
  - a. Remain calm at all times.
  - b. Put the feedback into context.
  - c. Focus on the person and not the issue.
  - d. Remember to give both positive and negative feedback.
- 7. Which of the following is not a step used for receiving feedback or constructive criticism?
  - a. Listen to what is being said.
  - b. Keep your emotions in check and remain respectful at all times.
  - c. Ask questions or for advice on how the issue can be handled better in the future.
  - d. Be prepared and challenge the speaker on everything that you do not believe is correct.
- 8. Feedback on your work will allow you to:
  - a. Understand that this is the wrong career path for you
  - b. Make adjustments as necessary to improve
  - c. Make your foreperson feel superior
  - d. None of the above
- 9. Constructive criticism should be:

- a. Personal
  - b. Confrontational
  - c. Passive
  - d. None of the above
10. It is important to give constructive criticism in a timely manner to prevent frustration from building.
- a. True
  - b. False

See the Answer Key in the back matter of the textbook for self-test answers.

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## Learning Task 4: Describe Assertive Communication

Different people communicate in different ways, and it is important to be able to ascertain what style of communication they are using to convey information. This prevents people from jumping to conclusions and allows us to understand things from other's perspectives. Understanding communication styles and using assertive communication goes a long way in preventing conflict before it begins. Non-assertive communication is viewed as emotionally dishonest, indirect, and inhibiting. It can lead to hurt and anger on the part of the individual, and pity and irritation by others.

### Communication Styles

There are four basic styles of communication: passive, aggressive, passive aggressive, and assertive. We will look at some of the key characteristics of each of these to help you identify them when engaging with others.

#### Passive communicators

Passive communicators may be very agreeable to other people's ideas, or indifferent. They may resist expressing their ideas or feelings to others and may not make eye contact during conversation. Passive communicators fail to stand up for themselves and do not express personal feelings, needs, ideas, or opinions in the workplace. Individuals who use this form of communication can easily be ignored or have their rights violated. Overall, they come across as less engaged than others involved in the conversation. Passive communication is generally considered ineffective as while it minimizes conflict, it does not allow for sharing of information and can create anxiety and resentment in the passive communicator.

#### Aggressive communicators

Aggressive communicators are typically commanding and forceful with their communication. They may take over the conversation and communicate in a way which is rude, intimidating, hostile, and destructive. Aggressive communication may include shouting, threatening behaviour, and humiliating others. An individual who is acting aggressively has little respect for the rights and needs of others and achieves a goal at the expense of others. They may believe that they are the only ones with valid or useful ideas. Aggressive communication is also considered to be ineffective as it generally causes conflict and makes it challenging to hear the perspectives and ideas of others. It is inappropriate for the workplace and can lead to negative consequences with both supervisors and colleagues.

#### Passive aggressive communicators

Passive aggressive communicators combine the passive and aggressive communication styles. Often this style of communication is confused as passive only communication. They may seem to agree with

an idea outwardly while being covertly aggressive. This aggression could manifest itself as muttering comments to themselves, withholding communication or suggesting that others would disagree with the idea rather than themselves. This is also an ineffective communication style as it is indirect and leads to confusion and misplaced conflict. This type of communication is often hard to identify and creates a toxic work environment.

## Assertive communicators

Assertive communicators are direct, firm, honest, and clear about their ideas and wants while not discounting the ideas of others. They typically express ideas in a thoughtful and polite way, while respecting the values and opinions of others. If there are disagreements regarding views, the assertive communicator will typically use “I feel” statements rather than accusatory or “you” statements to resolve the disagreement. Assertive communication is respectful—even when you are expressing negative emotions, you don’t hurt others. When you communicate assertively, you express your needs, wants, thoughts, and feelings without guilt. When you communicate assertively, you take responsibility for your thoughts and feelings and state your position with confidence. This is widely considered to be the most effective style of communication as it does not create unnecessary conflict and allows for all ideas and views to be shared.



*Figure 4.1 Being assertive does not mean being aggressive*

One of the best tools for ensuring that you use assertive communication is to use “I” statements. “You” statements in general create defensiveness and emotional resistance and shut down communication. They can promote conflict. “I” statements, on the other hand, avoid destructive blaming, criticizing, ridiculing, and name-calling. The speaker just makes a statement expressing their feelings. “I” statements can help prevent conflict.

## Effective Communication

Figure 4.2 shows examples of assertive behaviour and aggressive or passive behaviour.

**Figure 4.2 Examples of assertive and aggressive or passive behaviours**

<b>Effective Communication – Assertive Behaviour</b>	<b>Ineffective Communication – Aggressive or Passive Behaviour</b>
I have completed my assigned tasks.	You didn't do your work.
I feel angry when you interrupt me because it makes me feel what I have to say isn't important.	Would you just listen to me and stop interrupting?  Whatever – it's not like you'd listen to what I was saying anyway.
I need more clarification to complete the task.	You are not being fair. You didn't give me the information I needed in order to complete the job.

Remember that you can only accurately speak about your own intentions. In addition to offering accurate information, the use of “I” statements allows the other person to be receptive rather than defensive. Effective communication needs a sender of accurate information and a willing, open receiver.

Remember, too, that you communicate in ways other than words. For example, assertive communication includes the following non-verbal behaviours:

- making eye contact and looking directly at a person when you are speaking. This shows that you are sincere, interested in the conversation, and confident about what you are saying.
- standing or sitting in an erect posture and maintaining an appropriate personal distance
- leaving your hands by your sides and making appropriate non-threatening gestures
- keeping your voice pleasant, steady, and strong and accompanied by appropriate facial expressions



Now complete the Learning Task Self-Test.

## Self-Test

### Self-Test 4

1. What are the four basic styles of communication?
  - a. Passive, passive aggressive, aggressive, assertive
  - b. Aggressive, non-aggressive, passive, non-passive
  - c. Passive-passive, aggressive-passive, assertive-passive, passive
  - d. None of the above

2. Which of the following is an example of assertive communication?
  - a. Expressing yourself clearly and firmly
  - b. Conveying your feelings and ideas honestly
  - c. All of the above
  - d. None of the above
3. Which of the following is an example of passive communication?
  - a. Standing up for yourself
  - b. Failing to stand up for yourself
  - c. Speaking through body language
  - d. Being easygoing and not taking offence
4. Which of the following applies to people who don't speak up in the workplace?
  - a. They aren't good employees.
  - b. They aren't good team members.
  - c. They deserve what happens to them.
  - d. They are easily ignored and can have their rights violated.
5. Which of the following most applies to aggressive behaviour?
  - a. It shows a lack of respect for supervisors and co-workers.
  - b. It should not be tolerated in the workplace and is considered rude, hostile, and/or destructive.
  - c. All of the above
  - d. None of the above
6. Only you can speak accurately about your own intentions.
  - a. True
  - b. False
7. Assertive communication also includes non-verbal behaviors.
  - a. True
  - b. False
8. Using "you" at the beginning of each sentence is key to assertive communication.
  - a. True
  - b. False
9. Seeming to agree with an idea outwardly while being covertly aggressive is an example of which type of communication?



- a. Passive
  - b. Passive aggressive
  - c. Assertive
  - d. Aggressive
10. Communicators that are direct, firm, honest, and clear about their ideas and wants while not discounting the ideas of others are:
- a. Passive
  - b. Passive aggressive
  - c. Assertive
  - d. Aggressive

See the Answer Key in the back matter of the textbook for self-test answers.

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## Learning Task 5: Describe Conflict Resolution Techniques

Conflict can be defined as disagreement between two or more individuals or groups arising from differences of opinions, beliefs, or actions. It is a normal part of everyday life, given that individuals have different experiences, values, and beliefs that shape their perception of the world.

Conflict in the workplace can usually be associated with resource allocation, perceptions, and/or values. In general, conflicts over resource allocation are the easiest to solve, since they can be looked at objectively and separated from personal opinions. Both parties may decide on an equitable solution or agree to let a superior make a decision and live with the consequences.

Conflicts that involve perceptions and values are often personal, and if left to fester it can take significant time and effort to determine the actual source of the problem and come to a decision that is satisfactory to both parties. They can also spread and create a toxic work environment for individuals on all sides of the conflict. It is important to deal with conflict in a responsive and thoughtful way, that allows for calm communication and amicable resolutions, this helps to maintain a cooperative and respectful workplace.

It is important to recognize that while most conflicts are able to be mutually resolved, some conflicts may require the help of a third party to mediate if the conflict is unresolvable or either party feels unsafe in engaging in the resolution process. Feeling safe when entering into conflict is essential, if the conflict stems from harassment or bullying it may be difficult to feel as though there is a safe space for resolution. Each situation will be different but assessing your personal safety and whether or not the other party is receptive to dialogue about the conflict is a good way to determine if you need to involve someone else from the beginning.

The following are some simple steps you can take to reduce and resolve conflict in the workplace:

- Remember that conflict is inevitable and does not reflect badly on you and that there are no winners and losers. The goal of conflict resolution is to come to an agreement that is of mutual benefit to both parties.
- Be proactive. If you feel that you have annoyed or made someone angry, ask to discuss it with them at the onset. Likewise, if you feel that you have been unfairly treated, use an assertive communication style and discuss it with your colleagues to resolve the issue. In this way, simple misunderstandings can be cleared up.
- It is better to deal with conflict face to face. Communication regarding conflict over phone, text message or email conversations can be misconstrued, which can lead to even more conflict and misunderstanding.
- Take the time to consider your emotions about the conflict. Are you feeling angry? Hurt? Scared? Recognizing how the conflict makes you feel allows you to respond better to the situation.
- Check your unconscious bias. Is there something that might cloud your judgement or make

you react in a way that is biased because of your lived experiences?

- Ensure that you have all of the facts. Don't speculate on the motivation of others or things that you do not have knowledge of. You can only speak to how you feel and what you know.
- Do you feel safe to engage in a conversation about this conflict? Most of the time, while these conversations are challenging and not necessarily ones we want to have, they are safe to engage in. Sometimes however there are conflicts that stem from issues such as harassment, which may not feel safe to engage in. If you do not feel safe engaging in a discussion regarding the conflict, find someone you trust, like an ally to discuss the situation with.
- The sooner you handle the conflict, the better. The longer a conflict goes unresolved, the larger it becomes and the more difficult it is to find the root of the problem. But it should be noted that a heated dispute or conflict should also be given enough time for each party to calm down prior to attempting to resolve it. Once both parties have calmed down it will be much easier to have a meaningful discussion and come to a resolution.
- Take the time to listen and reflect on the other speaker's point of view. Put yourself in their shoes. It is important that they know you are listening, and it can help you see the situation from the other person's point of view. Echo their feelings back to them so that they feel heard.
- Don't interrupt. Give each person their time to speak, this ensures you don't miss any important information or make the other person feel that their voice isn't as valid as yours. You will have the time to reflect and respond when they are done speaking.
- Consider your body language. Give the other person adequate space, so they feel comfortable in the conversation and model calm and responsive body language. This means standing straight, hands at your sides and not clenched, and maintaining eye contact with the other person.
- Watch your vocal tone and volume. Keep things calm by using an even steady tone of voice and not raising your voice.
- Don't make it personal. It's hard sometimes to separate our emotions from facts, stick to what the conflict is about and how you feel about it rather than focusing on the other person.
- Avoid communication behaviours that could potentially inflame the situation. Do not engage in aggressive communication, try to assign blame, raise your voice, or use physically intimidating body language. These types of behaviour only serve to escalate conflict and do not lead to resolution.
- Take responsibility for your part in the conflict. If you've intentionally or unintentionally offended someone through your actions, acknowledge your part and move on.
- Once the conflict has been resolved, agree to move forward with a positive working relationship.
- If the conflict cannot be mutually resolved, know what your next steps are. Do you have a plan in place if you cannot resolve things between yourselves? What options are available to resolve this issue? Do you need assistance from a co-worker or supervisor to resolve the conflict?

Ineffective ways to reduce conflict at work include being passive and thinking that a problem will go

away if it is left unchecked. This only leads to resentment and further issues. A workplace that uses effective conflict resolution practices tends to be more respectful and productive, where all people's voices are heard.



Now complete the Learning Task Self-Test.

## Self-Test

### Self-Test 5

1. Conflict is a disagreement between two or more people based on differences concerning which of the following?
  - a. Beliefs
  - b. Actions
  - c. Opinions
  - d. All of the above
2. What do the most common workplace conflicts result from?
  - a. Personal problems between staff members
  - b. Jealousy and mistrust of other staff members
  - c. Problems between employers and employees
  - d. Resource allocations (e.g., differences in department budgets), perceptions, and values
3. What is the best way for two individuals to settle a resource allocation-related conflict?
  - a. Limit interactions with the other individual.
  - b. Complain formally in writing to their superior.
  - c. Agree to disagree and let someone else come up with the solution.
  - d. Remove personal opinions, be objective, look at the issue, and try and find a solution that works.
4. Conflict is inevitable and does not reflect badly on you.
  - a. True
  - b. False
5. There is always a winner and a loser in a workplace conflict.
  - a. True
  - b. False

6. It is always best to wait until you are calm before discussing a workplace conflict.
  - a. True
  - b. False
7. The longer a conflict goes unresolved, the more difficult it becomes to find the source of the problem.
  - a. True
  - b. False
8. Being passive or non-assertive is a good strategy when dealing with a conflict.
  - a. True
  - b. False
9. Emotional and physical safety of all parties is very important when resolving conflict.
  - a. True
  - b. False
10. A workplace with an effective conflict resolution strategy is:
  - a. More fun
  - b. Less fun
  - c. More productive
  - d. Less productive

See the Answer Key in the back matter of the textbook for self-test answers.

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## Learning Task 6: Describe Effective Problem Solving and Decision Making

Development of skills related to problem solving and decision making is key to communicating effectively. These skills are highly regarded by employers and required if you aspire to move into a position of management or intend on starting your own business. These skills are also extremely valuable when it comes to navigating customer service relations and problems that occur on job sites related to installations and materials in the trades.

In the trades issues often arise regarding interpersonal relationships between coworkers, communications with customers, conflicting methods for installation of materials, negotiating material substitutions with suppliers, and code interpretations with inspectors. It is crucial that you employ critical thinking, good communication and listening skills to solve these problems. Once you have attained these skills you will find it easier to solve problems and negotiate tricky situations.

Miscommunication is one of the primary causes of potential problems on the job. When you are communicating with others, particularly those less experienced such as customers or new apprentices, use language which is easy for them to understand, be clear about the situation, use visuals when required to help illustrate potential solutions, and be open to questions to ensure they understand. Ensure that you take all perspectives into consideration and put yourself into the other parties' shoes, understanding where others are coming from and why will allow for a greater understanding on your part. If we consistently practice clear communication, it leads to fewer problems requiring solving and less conflict that requires resolution.

When asked to make decisions, be confident in your choice but also humble and accepting of any mistakes that you may make. Making an incorrect decision sometimes is inevitable, and the best action when mistakes are made are to be honest about them. You may need to engage in a degree of negotiation and compromise to come to a resolution that is amicable to both parties involved.

The following are steps to consider when solving problems related to communication:

- Approach the issue from a neutral or objective position.
- Do not let your biases influence your decision making.
- Model effective listening skills and validate each parties' concerns.
- Treat all individuals involved with respect.
- Let the individuals involved provide their information without interruption.
- Consider other people's views and thoughtfully reflect on what they have said.
- Make sure that you understand the problem. If you need more information or clarification, ask questions in a non-threatening manner.
- Be open and willing to explain how and why you came to your decision.



Now complete the Learning Task Self-Test.

## Self-Test

### Self-Test 6

1. Who uses effective problem solving and decision making?
  - a. Your client
  - b. The project manager
  - c. Your immediate supervisor
  - d. Everyone. It is part of everyday life whether you are at home or at work.
2. The key to effective communication is the development of problem-solving and decision-making skills.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. Problem-solving and decision-making skills are extremely valuable for navigating problems that occur on job sites related to installations and materials in the trades.
  - a. True
  - b. False
4. Which of the following skills are useful in problem-solving?
  - a. Critical thinking
  - b. Good communication
  - c. Active listening
  - d. All of the above
5. It is important to be confident in your decision and stick to your guns even if you are wrong.
  - a. True
  - b. False
6. Which of the following is NOT an example of steps to consider when solving communication problems?
  - a. Consider other people's views and thoughtfully reflect on what they have said
  - b. Do not disclose how or why you came to your decision
  - c. Model effective listening skills and validate each parties' concerns



d. Do not let your biases influence your decision making

See the Answer Key in the back matter of the textbook for self-test answers.

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## Summary

Success in finding and maintaining a job is primarily about communication, since work involves being in relationships with other people. The principles of effective communication apply equally to all relationships throughout a person's life. You and the people around you all stand to benefit from practicing attentive and engaged listening, providing constructive feedback, communicating assertively as required, applying effective communication skills to conflict management, and using strong problem-solving and decision-making skills in your interactions with others.



## References

Mehrabian, A., & Ferris S. R. (1967). Inference of attitudes from nonverbal communication in two channels. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 31, 248.



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## Answer Key

### Self-Test 1

1. a. True
2. c. All of the above
3. a. True
4. b. False
5. c. 75%
6. d. Listening
7. a. True
8. b. False
9. d. Vocal messages
10. c. The more simply something is stated, the less opportunity there is for confusion.
11. c. All of the above
12. b. False
13. a. True
14. c. Closing your eyes while an individual is speaking
15. a. True
16. d. Providing conditional acceptance
17. a. True
18. c. Employers, supervisors, and clients
19. b. False
20. c. Journeyperson
21. d. All of the above
22. b. Microaggressions
23. b. False
24. a. True
25. a. Guys

## Self-Test 2

1. b. False
2. a. True
3. d. Listening, non-verbal, and verbal
4. a. True
5. b. Listener-friendly
6. b. False
7. b. False
8. a. True
9. a. True
10. a. False

## Self-Test 3

1. c. All of the above
2. c. All of the above
3. c. Your employer, supervisor, co-workers, and
4. b. To improve your performance or the quality of service
5. b. False
6. c. Focus on the person and not the issue.
7. d. Be prepared and challenge the speaker on everything that you do not believe is
8. b. Make adjustments as necessary to improve
9. d. None of the above
10. a. True

## Self-Test 4

1. a. Passive, passive aggressive, aggressive, assertive
2. c. All of the above
3. b. Failing to stand up for yourself
4. d. They are easily ignored and can have their rights violated.
5. c. All of the above
6. b. False



7. a. True
8. a. True
9. b. Passive aggressive
10. c. Assertive

## Self-Test 5

1. d. All of the above
2. d. Resource allocations (e.g., differences in department budgets), perceptions, and
3. d. Remove personal opinions, be objective, look at the issue, and try and find a solution that works.
4. a. True
5. b. False
6. a. True
7. a. True
8. b. False
9. a. True
10. c. More productive

## Self-Test 6

1. d. Everyone.
2. a. True
3. a. True
4. d. All of the above
5. b. False
6. b. Do not disclose how or why you came to your decision



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This page provides a record of edits and changes made to this book since its initial publication. Whenever edits or updates are made in the text, we provide a record and description of those changes here. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.01. If the edits involve substantial updates, the version number increases to the next full number.

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