

Communication Skills

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Definition of Communication Skills

- Communication Skills refer to the ability to convey or share ideas, feelings, thoughts, and information effectively, clearly, and efficiently with others.
- It is the cornerstone of successful human interaction and is essential across all fields—especially in healthcare, education, business, and public services.
- **Key Aspects:**
 - **Sender:** The person who initiates the communication.
 - **Message:** The information or content being conveyed.
 - **Medium/Channel:** The method used to convey the message (e.g., spoken words, written text, gestures).
 - **Receiver:** The person or group for whom the message is intended.
 - **Feedback:** The receiver's response, which helps the sender know the message was understood.
 - **Noise/Barrier:** Anything that disrupts or distorts the message (physical noise, emotional distractions, cultural differences, etc.)

Types of Communication Skills

- Communication can be categorized based on different criteria.

The primary types include:

A. Verbal Communication

- Involves spoken words. It includes both face-to-face interactions and other forms like phone conversations, video calls, etc.

B. Non-verbal Communication

- Uses body language, facial expressions, gestures, posture, and eye contact to communicate.

C. Written Communication

- Involves written symbols such as letters, emails, reports, or digital text to convey messages. Clarity, grammar, and tone are vital here.

D. Visual Communication

- Uses visual elements like images, diagrams, charts, signs, and symbols to communicate information.

E. Listening Skills

- Often overlooked, but listening is a critical part of communication. It includes active listening, where the listener fully engages with what's being said.

Interactions with Professionals and Patients

A. Interactions with Professionals (Colleagues, Supervisors, Team Members)

- **Purpose:** Collaborate, coordinate tasks, solve problems, ensure safety, and maintain professionalism.
 - Use professional and respectful language.
 - Practice assertiveness, not aggressiveness.
 - Be open to feedback and differing viewpoints.
 - Clarify tasks, expectations, and responsibilities.
 - Manage conflicts diplomatically and constructively.
 - Maintain confidentiality and ethics.

B. Interactions with Patients

- **Purpose:** Establish trust, gather accurate health information, educate the patient, and provide emotional support.
 - Use empathetic language.
 - Speak clearly and avoid medical jargon unless explaining it.
 - Use open-ended questions to encourage sharing.
 - Maintain eye contact and a calm tone.
 - Be patient, especially with elderly, anxious, or distressed individuals.
 - Respect cultural, emotional, and social backgrounds.

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Verbal Communication Skills

A. One-to-One Communication

Occurs between two people, such as doctor-patient, nurse-family, pharmacist-patient.

Skills Needed:

- Clarity and simplicity in speech.
- Avoid slang or complex medical terms unless explained.
- Use a polite, respectful tone.
- Encourage two-way dialogue.
- Use active listening (nodding, summarizing).

B. Over the Telephone

Lacks visual cues, so tone and clarity become even more crucial.

Key Points:

- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Confirm understanding (“Let me repeat that to be sure I’ve understood…”).
- Be brief but complete.
- Avoid background noise and distractions.
- Always end with a summary and confirm next steps.

Written Communication Skills

Used for record-keeping, emails, reports, patient instructions, prescriptions, academic writing, etc.

Principles of Effective Written Communication:

- **Clarity:** Use simple, straightforward language.
- **Conciseness:** Avoid unnecessary words.
- **Correctness:** Ensure spelling, grammar, and punctuation are accurate.
- **Completeness:** Include all relevant information.
- **Professionalism:** Use appropriate tone and format.

Examples in Healthcare:

- Writing patient history or discharge summaries.
- Documenting case notes.
- Writing referral letters.
- Communicating via official email.

Body Language

- Non-verbal cues that significantly influence how messages are received.
- Body language often reveals emotions, attitudes, and intentions.

Key Components:

- **Facial Expressions:** Smile, eye contact, frown—convey emotions.
- **Posture:** An open posture is welcoming; a closed one (arms crossed) can signal disinterest or defensiveness.
- **Gestures:** Nods, hand movements, and other gestures can emphasize or replace verbal messages.
- **Proxemics (Use of Space):** Standing too close or too far affects comfort and perception.
- **Eye Contact:** Indicates attentiveness, sincerity, and confidence—but too much can feel intimidating.
- **Touch:** Used carefully in healthcare to comfort or reassure.

Cultural Considerations:

- Body language interpretation varies by culture.
- Eye contact, for instance, may be seen as respectful in one culture and aggressive in another.

Patient Interview Techniques

- Patient interviews are essential for diagnosis, treatment, and building rapport.
- They should be systematic yet empathetic.

Objectives:

- Gather comprehensive, accurate patient information.
- Understand patient concerns, expectations, and social context.
- Develop therapeutic rapport.

Steps in Patient Interview:

1. Preparation:

- Review patient history if available.
- Ensure privacy and minimize interruptions.
- Arrange seating for comfortable communication.

2. Introduction and Rapport Building:

- Greet the patient warmly.
- Introduce yourself and explain your role.
- Use the patient's name.



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