

FIFTEENTH EDITION

THE
Interpersonal Communication
BOOK



 Pearson

Joseph A. DeVito



The Interpersonal Communication Book

FIFTEENTH EDITION

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Welcome to *The Interpersonal Communication Book*

FIFTEENTH EDITION

It's a rare privilege for an author to present the fifteenth edition of a book. With each revision, I've been able to update and fine tune the presentation of interpersonal communication so that it is current—accurately reflecting what we currently know about the subject—and as clear, interesting, involving, and relevant to today's college students as it can be.

Like its predecessors, this fifteenth edition provides in-depth coverage of interpersonal communication, blending theory and research on the one hand, and practical skills on the other. The book's philosophical foundation continues to be the concept of *choice*. Choice is central to interpersonal communication, as it is to life in general. As speaker and listener, you're regularly confronted with choice points at every stage of the communication process: What do you say? When do you say it? How do you say it? Through what channel should you say it? And so on. In large part, the choices you make will determine the effectiveness of your messages and your relationships. The role of this text, then, is threefold:

1. to identify and explain the choices you have available to you in a vast array of interpersonal situations;
2. to explain the theory and research evidence that bears on these choices—enabling you to identify your available choices and to select more reasoned, reasonable, and effective communication choices;
3. to provide you with the skills needed to communicate your choices effectively.

The Interpersonal Communication Book is available in both print and digital formats. The flexibility of these options encourages students to make choices about their own learning style preferences in order to become more engaged and involved in the learning process.

What's New in This Fifteenth Edition?

Revel™

Educational technology designed for the way today's students read, think, and learn

Revel is an interactive learning environment that deeply engages students and prepares them for class. Media and assessment integrated directly within the authors' narrative lets students read, explore interactive content, and practice in one continuous learning path. Thanks to the dynamic reading experience in Revel, students come to class prepared to discuss, apply, and learn from instructors and from each other.

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Interpersonal Communication: Easy and Difficult

Interactive

Consider the following twelve situations and rate them on a continuum from "Extremely easy" to "Extremely hard".

1. Impressing a recruiter at a job fair.

Extremely easy
 Easy
 Moderate
 Hard
 Extremely hard

2. Asking a work supervisor to be friends on Facebook.

Extremely easy
 Easy
 Moderate
 Hard
 Extremely hard


Previous Next

Rather than simply offering opportunities to read about and study interpersonal communication, Revel facilitates deep, engaging interactions with the concepts that matter most. For example, when learning about assertiveness in Chapter 4, students are presented with a self-assessment that rates their own communication behaviors, allowing them to examine their level of assertiveness and consider how they could improve on it. By providing opportunities to read about and practice communication at the same time, Revel engages students directly and immediately, which leads to a better understanding of course material. A wealth of student and instructor resources and interactive materials can be found within Revel. Interactive materials include the following:

- **Integrated Experiences** These interactive exercises allow students to analyze their own communication behavior, enabling them to learn and grow over the duration of the course. A variety of question styles are offered, including fill-in-the-blank, True or False, and numerical ratings.
- **Videos and Video Self-Checks** Short video clips showcase interviews with working professionals, examples of face-to-face scenarios, and concept reviews to boost mastery of content. All videos are bundled with correlating self-checks, enabling students to test their understanding immediately after watching the clip.

Video Self-Check: A Rare Sales Skill

Interactive 2 questions



00:04 / 01:23

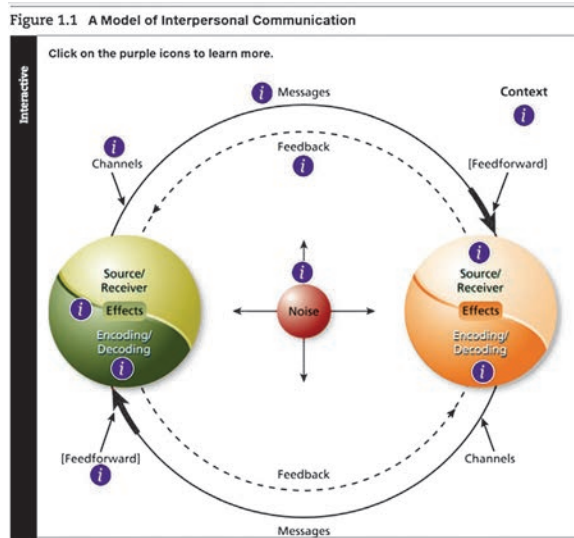
1. Wagner notes the salesman was particularly good because he got _____.

more money in Q1 than any salesmen before
 the customers to talk
 special requests for his service
 effective results

Next

- **Dialogue Examples** Examples of effective and ineffective dialogue are enhanced with audio demonstrations, which add the dimensions of inflection, tone, and volume to enhance the learning experience.

- **Interactive Figures** Interactive figures (such as Figure 1.1: A Model of Interpersonal Communication) allow students to interact with the illustrations, increasing their ability to grasp difficult concepts. By allowing students to examine specific parts of a model, with either additional explanation or real-life examples, broad and theoretical concepts are easier to understand.



- **Interactive Tables** Two-stage interactive tables (such as Table 1.2: In a Nutshell – The Elements of Interpersonal Communication) allow students to first study and review the information in the original presentation, and then, when ready, assess their memory and understanding of the concepts by removing and then dragging content back to the correct position.

Table 1.2 In a Nutshell: The Elements of Interpersonal Communication

Study the elements of interpersonal communication. When you're ready, click "Check Your Understanding" below.

Elements	Meaning
Source-receiver	The sender-receiver, the person who both sends and receives messages during communication.
Messages	The verbal and nonverbal signals that are sent by the source/encoder and received by the receiver/decoder.
Channels	The media through which the signals are sent.
Noise	Disturbances that interfere with the receiver receiving the message sent by the source.
Context	The physical, sociopsychological, temporal, and cultural environment in which the communication takes place.
Effects	Interpersonal communication can have cognitive, affective, and behavioral effects on others and on yourself.
Ethics	The morality, the rightness-wrongness aspect of communication behavior.

Check Your Understanding

- **Interactive Cultural Maps** These maps recall major cultural differences discussed in Chapter 2 (such as ambiguity tolerance, masculine or feminine orientation, and high-or-low context) and describe how these differences may impact communication around the world. In Revel, readers are given the opportunity to manipulate the maps.

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The Cultural Map

Ambiguity Tolerance

Ambiguity tolerance refers to the degree to which members of a culture are accepting of uncertainty; high-ambiguity tolerant cultures are comfortable with not knowing exactly what will happen next, whereas low-ambiguity tolerant cultures resist uncertainty and, in many cases, are stressed out by it.

In these high-ambiguity tolerant cultures (generally, the top 10 countries are highlighted in these cultural maps), uncertainty is considered normal and expected. High ambiguity tolerant people are comfortable in uncertain situations and with unfamiliar tasks and assignments. They are also tolerant of ethnic differences and diversity and are generally positive to foreigners.

In these low-ambiguity tolerant cultures, members try to avoid uncertainty, because uncertainty is typically uncomfortable and anxiety provoking for them. Members of these cultures are also more prejudiced toward other ethnic groups and would not be welcoming to immigrants.

How do you feel when an instructor gives an ambiguous assignment? Do you see the lack of specific direction as stressful or as an opportunity to get creative and think of different ways you might approach the assignment?

- Integrated Writing Opportunities** To help students connect chapter content with personal meaning, each chapter offers two varieties of writing prompts: the journal prompt (structured around the concept of interpersonal choice making), eliciting a free-form, topic-specific response addressing topics at the module level; and the Shared Writing Prompt, eliciting a focused, brief response, addressing topics at the chapter level, which students can share with each other.

Journal 1.3: Interpersonal Choice Point - Reducing Relationship Ambiguity

You've gone out with someone for several months. At this point, you want to reduce ambiguity about the future of the relationship and discover your partner's level of commitment. But you don't want to scare your partner. *What would you do to reduce this ambiguity?*

The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

Submit

To access your own Revel account for *The Interpersonal Communication Book*, Fifteenth Edition, go to www.pearson.com/revel.

Updated Coverage

Here, in brief, are descriptions of each of the 12 chapters along with examples of what's new in this fifteenth edition.

- Chapter 1, Foundations of Interpersonal Communication**, covers the elements and principles of interpersonal communication. *New material in this chapter* includes a reorganization of the chapter into three parts ("The Nature of Interpersonal Communication" and "Principles of Interpersonal Communication" are now combined under "Principles"), and inclusion of a new section on "Effects" in the model of interpersonal communication. The Revel version of this chapter includes a variety

of new interactive tables that offer low-stakes assessment opportunities for review and retention purposes, and a new integrated exercise “Interpersonal Communication: Easy and Difficult” that offers students the opportunity to consider and learn from their own communication experiences. Two new videos with accompanying Self-Checks offer enhanced examples to illustrate this foundational content: one in which a working professional describes the value of good communication skills, and a concept review about ethical communication.

- **Chapter 2, Culture and Interpersonal Communication**, covers the nature of culture, and the major cultural differences that impact interpersonal communication, with some suggestions on how to make intercultural communication more effective. *New material in this chapter* includes additional figures and a new Cultural Map about internet access. The concept of ethnic identity has been clarified and a new nutshell table summarizes important concepts. The Revel version of this chapter also includes two new interactive figures (2.1 Factors Contributing to the Importance of Culture in Interpersonal Communication and 2.3 Some Steps to Effective Intercultural Communication), a variety of new assessment tables, and two videos with accompanying Self-Checks about culture and communication, and diversity and communication.
- **Chapter 3, Perception of the Self and Others**, covers the essential concepts of the self, the stages of perception, and impression formation and management. The Cultural Map in this chapter deals with ambiguity tolerance. *New material in this chapter* includes a brief section on improving accuracy in perception, and two new figures: 3.5 The Stages of Perception and 3.6 Impression Management Goals. The Revel version includes new interactive activities linked to the new figures and integrated exercises that deal with personality theory and consistency, as well as two videos with accompanying Self-Checks. The first video is about perception barriers, and the second is a brief lecture about impression management and networking basics.
- **Chapter 4, Verbal Messages**, covers the principles of verbal messages, confirmation and disconfirmation, and verbal message effectiveness. The Cultural Map in this chapter deals with high- and low-context cultures. *New material in this chapter* includes a revised organization (the chapter is now in three parts instead of two), two integrated exercises created out of text from the fourteenth edition, a slight expansion of coverage on cultural identifiers, and two new figures: 4.1 The Abstraction Ladder and 4.2 Effective Verbal Messaging. The Revel version of this chapter includes new interactive activities linked to the new figures, and two videos with accompanying Self-Checks: the first video is a concept review about assertive communication, and the second is an ABC News clip that shows racist interactions.
- **Chapter 5, Nonverbal Messages**, covers the principles of nonverbal communication, the ten major channels or codes, and nonverbal competence in encoding and decoding. The Cultural Map in this chapter deals with time orientation. *New material in this chapter* includes an expansion of the benefits from studying nonverbal communication, more coverage of nonverbal communication competence (summarized by a new nutshell table), and a new figure 5.1 The Power of Nonverbal Messages. The Revel version of this chapter includes interactivity linked to the new figures and tables, two new interactive exercises “Estimating Heights” and “Facial Management Techniques,” and a multimedia gallery illustrating the five major meaning of touch. There are two videos with accompanying Self-Checks: the first video is an ABC News feature about the body language of politicians, and the second is a concept review of nonverbal messages.
- **Chapter 6, Listening**, covers the stages and styles of listening, as well as cultural and gender differences. The Cultural Map in this chapter deals with politeness. *New material in this chapter* includes a discussion on critical listening, a revision and reconceptualization of the styles of listening, the inclusion of hearing impairment as a potential barrier to listening, a new integrated exercise on empathy, and an

enhanced section on politeness and the mobile phone. The Revel version includes a new interactive figure (6.2 Four Listening Styles), as well as two videos. The first video shows a family dinner in which parents and children fail to listen to one another, and the second features a businesswoman describing how she learned to be a better listener when she transferred from a company based in Ireland to one based in Japan.

- **Chapter 7, Emotional Messages**, covers the principles of emotional communication, some obstacles to communicating emotions, and emotional competence. The Cultural Map in this chapter deals with indulgent and restraint orientation. *New material in this chapter* includes an integrated exercise on expressing emotions effectively, a discussion on “emotional labor” (with display rules), and the inclusion of emotional happiness. The Revel version includes a new interactive exercise and new interactive figure (7.1 The Principles of Emotions and Emotional Expressions), as well as two videos with accompanying Self-Checks. The first video features a British backgammon champion explaining the importance of controlling her emotions under pressure, and the second shows Sheryl Sandberg describing how she dealt with the grief of losing her husband.
- **Chapter 8, Conversational Messages**, covers the principles of conversation, self-disclosure, and some everyday conversational encounters. The Cultural Map in this chapter deals with apologies. *New material in this chapter* includes a discussion on how to ask for a favor, along with three new figures that preview some of the major concepts in this chapter. In addition, the discussion of the conversation process has been reduced in length. The Revel version of this chapter includes activities related to the new figures: 8.1 The Principles of Conversation, 8.3 The Maxims of Conversation, and 8.4 The Maxims of Politeness. There are a host of new interactive tables with low-stakes assessment opportunities, as well as two videos, both of which show examples of face-to-face conversations. In the first video, three counselors try to discuss the best way to help a struggling student, and in the second, a manager tries to draw out an employee at a company party.
- **Chapter 9, Interpersonal Relationship Stages, Communication, and Theories**, covers the stages of relationships, the communication that takes place at these different stages, and some of the major theories that explain how relationships grow and deteriorate. *New material in this chapter* includes a reorganization that places “Relationship Communication” immediately after “Relationship Stages,” and coverage of social penetration with the discussion on intimacy, rather than with the theories. The Revel version of this chapter includes two new interactive exercises on the advantages and disadvantages of interpersonal relationships, a new interactive figure (9.5 Relationship Theories), as well as two videos with accompanying Self-Checks. The first video is about friendship and social media, and the second shows how a student juggles classes, childcare, and work.
- **Chapter 10, Interpersonal Relationship Types**, covers friendship, love, family, and workplace relationships; and two of their dark sides: jealousy and violence. The Cultural Map in this chapter deals with masculine and feminine orientation. *New material in this chapter* includes nutshell tables and a tightening and updating of the narrative. The Revel version of this chapter includes a new multimedia gallery that illustrates relationship types, new preview figure (10.1 Types of Love), and a new interactive exercise on love styles and personality. Two new videos with accompanying Self-Checks include an overview of family relationships, and interviews with students about their own experiences with jealousy.
- **Chapter 11, Interpersonal Conflict and Conflict Management**, covers the nature and principles of conflict and the strategies of effective conflict management. The Cultural Map in this chapter deals with masculine and feminine orientation. The Cultural Map in this chapter deals with success. *New material in this chapter* includes a restructuring of the principles of conflict (the principles of content and

relationship conflict and conflict can occur in all forms are now covered under conflict issues), and a refocused and rewritten section on conflict management is presented as a multistep process. The Revel version includes a new interactive figure (11.3 Conflict Management Strategies), and two videos. The first video is a concept review of conflict and communication, and the second shows students talking about their own relationship conflicts.

- **Chapter 12, Interpersonal Power and Influence**, covers the principles of power and influence; power in the relationship, person, and message; and the misuses of power (sexual harassment, bullying, and power plays). The Cultural Map in this chapter deals with high- and low-power distance. *New material in this chapter* includes a major section on prosocial communication, which now concludes this chapter and the book. The Revel version of this chapter includes an interactive Cultural Map on high- and low-power distance, a new multimedia gallery about the different types of power, and a new interactive figure: 12.1 Six Principles of Power. The two videos are both about communication in the workplace: one in which a professional describes two very different managers and another in which a professional explains how she dealt with bullying from a co-worker.

Features

This text is a complete learning package that will provide students with the opportunity to learn about the theories and research in interpersonal communication, and to acquire and practice the skills necessary for effective interpersonal interaction.

Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are presented in the chapter opener, repeated in the text with each major head, and iterated again in the summary. This feature helps focus attention on the key concepts and principles discussed, and how this learning can be demonstrated.

Preview Figures and Nutshell Summary Tables

Throughout the text, visuals preview the content of the sections, and Nutshell summary tables at the end of the sections help students review the content and fix it more firmly in memory.

Interpersonal Choice Points and ViewPoints

Interpersonal Choice Points—brief scenarios that require you make an interpersonal communication choice—encourage students to apply the material in the chapter to varied specific interactions. They are designed to encourage the application of the research and theory discussed in the text to real-life situations. These appear throughout the text in the margins.

ViewPoints appear as captions to all the interior photos and ask you to consider a wide variety of issues in interpersonal communication. These are designed to encourage students to explore significant communication issues discussed in the chapter from a more personal point of view.

Balance of Theory/Research and Skills

While a great deal of new research is integrated throughout the book, much of it is from the past five years, this text recognizes the practical importance of skill development and so gives considerable attention to mastering interpersonal skills. But it bases these skills on theory and research, which are discussed throughout the text. The boxes on Understanding Interpersonal Theory & Research from the previous edition have been integrated into the text narrative to give them a clearer context and the chapters greater continuity.

Like theory and research, interpersonal skills are discussed throughout this text. In addition, each chapter contains an Understanding Interpersonal Skills box. These boxes are designed to highlight some of the most important skills of interpersonal communication: Mindfulness, Cultural Sensitivity, Other-Orientedness, Openness, Metacommunication, Flexibility, Expressiveness, Empathy, Supportiveness, Equality, and Interaction Management.

Culture and Interpersonal Communication

As our knowledge of culture and its relevance to interpersonal communication grows, so must culture's presence in an interpersonal communication textbook and course. The text stresses the importance of culture to all aspects of interpersonal communication.

An entire chapter devoted to culture (Chapter 2, Culture and Interpersonal Communication) is presented as one of the foundation concepts for understanding interpersonal communication. This chapter covers the relationship of culture and interpersonal communication, the ways in which cultures differ, and the strategies to make intercultural communication more effective. In addition to this separate chapter, here are some of the more important discussions that appear throughout the text:

- the cultural dimension of context; and culture in complementary and symmetrical relationships, in the principle of adjustment, and in ethical questions (Chapter 1)
- the role of culture in the development of self-concept, accurate perception, implicit personality theory, the self-serving bias, and uncertainty (Chapter 3)
- listening, culture, and gender (Chapter 4)
- cultural and gender differences in politeness, directness, and assertiveness; and cultural identifiers, sexism, heterosexism, racism, and ageism in language and in listening (Chapter 5)
- culture and gesture, facial expression, eye communication, color, touch, paralanguage, silence, and time (Chapter 6)
- the influences of culture on emotions, and cultural customs as an obstacle to the communication of emotions (Chapter 7)
- conversational maxims, culture, and gender; culture and expressiveness; and the influence of culture on self-disclosure (Chapter 8)
- the influences of culture on interpersonal relationships and the stages of relationships (Chapter 9)
- cultural differences in friendship and loving, and culture and the family (Chapter 10)
- cultural influences on conflict and conflict management (Chapter 11)
- the cultural dimension of power (Chapter 12)

The Cultural Map feature returns to the basic cultural differences discussed in Chapter 2 and connects these concepts with the content of the various chapters.

People with disabilities may also be viewed from a cultural perspective, and in this edition, three special tables offer suggestions for more effective communication between people with and people without disabilities. These tables provide tips for communication between people with and without visual impairments (Table 5.4 in Chapter 5); with and without hearing difficulties (Table 6.3 in Chapter 6); and between people with and without speech and language disorders (Table 8.1 in Chapter 8).

Politeness

Politeness in interpersonal communication is stressed throughout this text as one of the major features of effective interaction. Some of the major discussions include:

- politeness strategies for increasing attractiveness (Chapter 3)
- message politeness (Chapter 4)

- polite listening (Chapter 6)
- conversational politeness (Chapter 8)
- politeness theory of relationships (Chapter 9)
- politeness in conflict management (Chapter 11)

Social Media

The ways and means of social media are integrated throughout the text. For example, the principle of anonymity in interpersonal communication is included as a basic principle because of its increasing importance due to social media. The ubiquity of the cell phone and texting has changed interpersonal communication forever and is recognized throughout the text. Likewise, dating, keeping in touch with family and friends, making friends, and engaging in conflict—and much more—is viewed in a world dominated by (not simply a world that includes) social media.

In-Text Application

In print as well as in Revel, this text includes a variety of features that encourage interaction and self-exploration.

- *New to this edition*, integrated exercises appear throughout the text in every chapter. These exercises are part of the text narrative but require you to interact with and respond to the text material. Some of these are brand new and some of them have been revised and reconfigured from material in the previous edition.
- Interpersonal Choice Points that appear in the margins encourage you to apply the principles and skills of the text to specific interpersonal situations.
- ViewPoints captions encourage you to explore the implications of a variety of communication theories and research findings.
- Understanding Interpersonal Skills boxes ask for personal involvement that enables you to actively engage with these important skills.
- Ethics in Interpersonal Communication boxes present ethical issues and ask what you would do in each of the presented scenarios.

End of Chapter

Each chapter has a two-part ending: (1) Summary, a numbered propositional summary of the major concepts that are discussed in the chapter, organized by major topic headings. Each topic heading also contains the learning objective. (2) Key Terms, a list of key terms that are used in the chapter (and included in the “Glossary of Interpersonal Communication Concepts” at the end of the text).

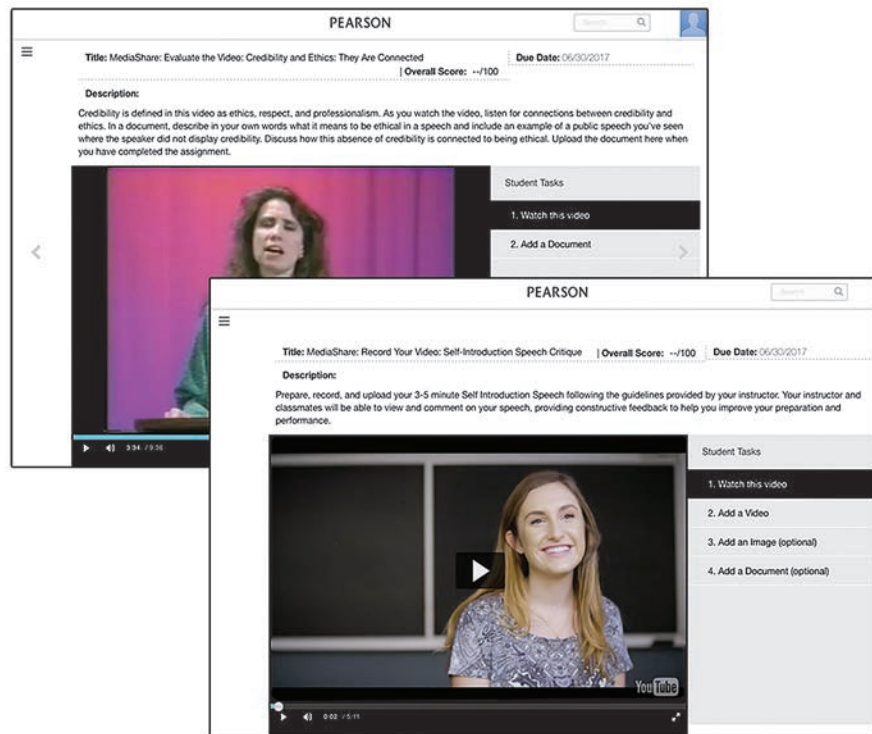
Instructor and Student Resources

Key instructor resources include an Instructor’s Manual (ISBN 0-13-462440-8), TestBank, (ISBN 0-13-462438-6), and PowerPoint Presentation Package (ISBN 0-13-462449-1). These supplements are available on the catalog page for this text on Pearson.com/us (instructor login required). MyTest online test-generating software (ISBN 0-13-462442-4) is available at www.pearsonmytest.com (instructor login required). For a complete list of the instructor and student resources available with the text, please visit the Pearson Communication catalog at www.pearson.com/communication.

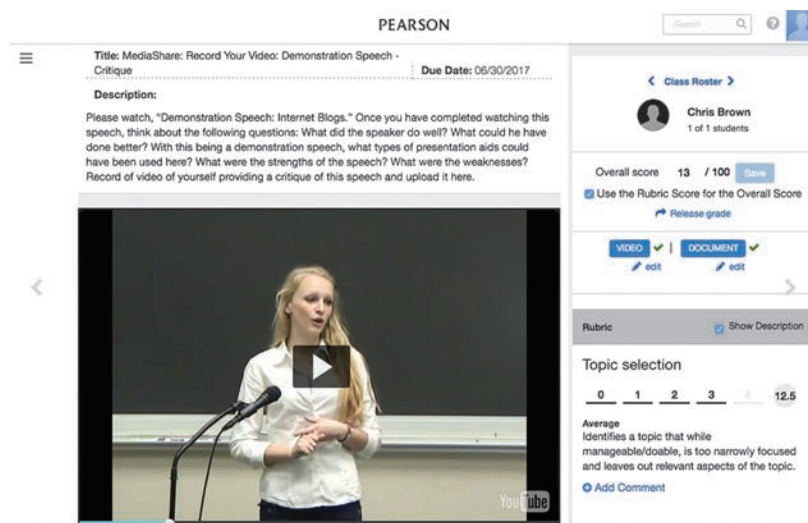
Pearson MediaShare

Pearson’s comprehensive media upload tool allows students to post videos, images, audio, or documents for instructor and peer viewing, time-stamped commenting, and assessment. MediaShare is an easy, mobile way for students and professors to interact

and engage with speeches, presentation aids, and other files. MediaShare gives professors the tools to provide contextual feedback to demonstrate how students can improve their skills.



The best of MediaShare’s functionality, including student video submissions with grading and video quizzes, is now available to use and assign *within Revel*, making Revel an even more complete solution for Communication courses. By placing the key components of MediaShare within Revel, students have an all-inclusive space to practice and have their performance assessed, while actively learning through interactive course content. Revel with MediaShare is an unparalleled immersive learning experience for the Communication curriculum.



- Use MediaShare to assign or view speeches, video-based assignments, role-playing, and more in a variety of formats including video, Word, PowerPoint, and Excel.
- Assess students using customizable, Pearson-provided rubrics, or create your own around classroom goals, learning outcomes, or department initiatives.

PEARSON

Title: MediaShare: Record Your Video: Demonstration Speech - Critique | Overall Score: --/100 | Due Date: 06/30/2017

Description:

Please watch, "Demonstration Speech: Internet Blogs." Once you have completed watching this speech, think about the following questions: What did the speaker do well? What could he have done better? With this being a demonstration speech, what types of presentation aids could have been used here? What were the strengths of the speech? What were the weaknesses? Record a video of yourself providing a critique of this speech and upload it here.

Student Tasks

1. Watch this video
2. Add a Video
3. Add a Document

- Set up assignments for students with options for full-class viewing and commenting, or private comments between you and the student.
- Record video directly from a tablet, phone, or other webcam.
- Embed video from YouTube via assignments to incorporate current events into the classroom experience.

PEARSON Casey

Title: Learning The Keys To Physical Delivery Skills | 15 Points | Due: Oct 18, 2016 - Oct 30, 2016

Learning Objective: To develop knowledge and skills related to the student's understanding of rehearsal techniques, and his/her abilities in the ensemble performance as well as the knowledge of music literature and conducting skills.

Description: As you watch this video, quiz questions below the video will appear below the video. All the questions must be answered before you can submit.

Question 2 of 5

Worth 3 points

Why is it important to have good posture?

Question 2 (1:21)

More impressive looking

You avoid stomach cramping

Easier to see the back of the room

Keeps the body open for other

Return

- Set up quiz questions on video assignments to ensure students master concepts and interact and engage with the media.
- Import grades into most learning management systems.
- Ensure a secure learning environment for instructors and students through robust privacy settings.

Acknowledgments

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Joseph A. DeVito

Foundations of Interpersonal Communication



Effective and satisfying interpersonal communication rests on a solid foundation of knowledge and skills. *Resolve to build a really strong foundation for your own communication.*

Chapter Topics

The Benefits of Studying Interpersonal Communication

The Elements of Interpersonal Communication

The Principles of Interpersonal Communication

Learning Objectives

- 1.1** Identify the personal and professional benefits of studying interpersonal communication.
- 1.2** Define *interpersonal communication* and its essential elements including *source–receiver*, *messages*, *channels*, *noise*, *context*, *effects*, and *ethics*.
- 1.3** Paraphrase the principles of interpersonal communication.

This chapter introduces the study of interpersonal communication and explains why interpersonal communication is so important, examines the essential elements of this unique form of communication, and describes its major principles.

The Benefits of Studying Interpersonal Communication

1.1 Identify the personal and professional benefits of studying interpersonal communication.

Fair questions to ask at the beginning of this text and this course are “What will I get out of this?” and “Why should I study interpersonal communication?” One very clear answer is given by the importance of interpersonal communication: it’s a major part of human existence that every educated person needs to understand. Much as you need to understand history, science, geography, and mathematics, for example, you need to understand how people interact (how people communicate interpersonally) and how people form relationships—both face-to-face and online. On a more practical level, you’ll learn the skills that will yield both personal and professional benefits.

Personal Benefits

Your personal success and happiness depend largely on your effectiveness as an interpersonal communicator. Close friendships and romantic relationships are developed, maintained, and sometimes destroyed largely through your interpersonal interactions. Likewise, the success of your family relationships depends heavily on the interpersonal communication among members. For example, in a survey of 1,001 people over 18 years of age, 53 percent felt that a lack of effective communication was the major cause of marriage failure—significantly greater than money (38 percent) and in-law interference (14 percent) (How Americans Communicate, 1999).

Likewise, your success in interacting with neighbors, acquaintances, and people you meet every day depends on your ability to engage in satisfying conversation—conversation that’s comfortable and enjoyable.

Professional Benefits

The ability to communicate interpersonally is widely recognized as crucial to professional success (Morreale & Pearson, 2008; Satell, 2015; Morreale, Valenzano, & Bauer, 2016). From the initial interview at a college job fair to interning, to participating in and then leading meetings, your skills at interpersonal communication will largely determine your success.

Employers want graduates who can communicate orally and in writing (Berrett, 2013). This ability is even considered more important than job-specific skills, which employers feel could be learned on the job. For example, one study found that among the 23 attributes ranked as “very important” in hiring decisions, “communication and interpersonal skills,” noted by 89 percent of the recruiters, was at the top of the list. This was a far higher percentage of recruiters than the percentage who noted “content of the core curriculum” (34 percent) or “overall value for the money invested in the recruiting effort” (33 percent) (Alsop, 2004). Interpersonal skills offer an important advantage for persons in finance (Messmer, 1999), play a significant role in preventing workplace violence (Parker, 2004), reduce medical mishaps and improve doctor–patient communication (Smith, 2004; Sutcliffe, Lewton, & Rosenthal, 2004), are one of six areas that define the professional competence of physicians and trainees (Epstein & Hundert, 2002), and contribute greatly to maintaining diversity in the workplace, team building, and employee morale (Johnson, 2017). In a survey of employers who were asked what colleges should place more emphasis on, 89 percent identified “the ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing” as the highest of any skill listed (Hart

Research Associates, 2010). And in that same survey, the largest number of employers (84 percent), when asked what would prepare college students for success, identified “communication skills.” In still another survey of women and leadership, the ability to communicate and to build relationships—the essential of interpersonal communication—were noted among the competencies exemplified by top leaders (Goleman, 2013b). The importance of interpersonal communication skills extends over the entire spectrum of professions.

Clearly, interpersonal skills are vital to both personal and professional success. Understanding the theory and research in interpersonal communication and mastering its skills go hand in hand (Greene & Burleson, 2003). The more you know about interpersonal communication, the more insight and knowledge you’ll gain about what works and what doesn’t work. The more skills you have within your arsenal of communication strategies, the greater your choices for communicating in any situation. Put differently, the greater your knowledge and the greater the number of communication choices at your disposal, the greater the likelihood that you’ll be successful in achieving your interpersonal goals. You might look at this text and this course as aiming to enlarge your interpersonal communication choices and give you a greater number of options for communicating effectively than you had before this exposure to the study of interpersonal communication.

Because of the importance of choice—after all, your interpersonal messages and relationships are the result of the choices you make in any given situation—you’ll find boxes labelled *Interpersonal Choice Point* throughout the text. **Choice points** are simply moments when you need to make a choice, a decision, about your interpersonal communication—for example, about whom you communicate with, what you say, what you don’t say, how you phrase what you want to say, the photos you want to post and those you don’t, and so on. Some of the questions about choices will prove easy to answer while others will prove to be more difficult. This variation in difficulty mirrors real-life interpersonal communication; getting your meanings and feelings across is easy sometimes and very difficult at others. Let’s look first at the easy-difficult dimension and then at a choice point.

Consider the following situations and rate them on a continuum from easy to difficult (use 1 for extremely easy and 5 for extremely difficult).

- ___ 1. Impressing a recruiter at a job fair.
- ___ 2. Asking a work supervisor to be friends on Facebook.
- ___ 3. Breaking up a two-year romantic relationship because you’ve fallen out of love with your partner.
- ___ 4. Responding to a compliment about the way you dress.
- ___ 5. Reconnecting with a long-lost friend by phone.
- ___ 6. Voicing an opinion about religion in class that is contrary to the opinions of all others in the class.
- ___ 7. Crying at a movie you’re attending with three or four same-sex friends.
- ___ 8. Asking a relative to lie for you so you can get out of a family gathering.
- ___ 9. Introducing yourself to a group of people who are culturally very different from you.
- ___ 10. Asking an instructor for an extension on your term paper.
- ___ 11. Making small talk with someone you don’t know in an elevator.
- ___ 12. Meeting someone face-to-face with whom you’ve interacted romantically online.

If you have the opportunity to compare your continuum with those of others, you’ll probably find both similarities and differences. Reflecting on the easy-to-difficult interpersonal interactions will help you identify the skills you’d want to acquire or enhance as you make your varied interpersonal choices. Take a look at the first *Interpersonal Choice Point* which also explains the feature’s purpose and format.

INTERPERSONAL CHOICE POINT

Communicating an Image

The *Interpersonal Choice Point* feature is designed to help you apply the text material to real-life situations by first considering your available choices and then making a communication decision. For each choice point, try to identify, as specifically as possible, the advantages and disadvantages of your available choices. Of all your choices, ask yourself which response is likely to work best for you.

You're taking a course in interpersonal communication at a new college and you want to be liked by your fellow students. *What might you do to appear likeable and be accepted as an approachable person? What would you be sure to avoid doing?*

- a. smile and make eye contact
- b. compliment others frequently even for no reason
- c. dress a level above the average student
- d. speak in class—regularly asking and answering questions
- e. other

The Elements of Interpersonal Communication

1.2 Define *interpersonal communication* and its essential elements including *source–receiver*, *messages*, *channels*, *noise*, *context*, *effects*, and *ethics*.

Although this entire text is, in a sense, a definition of interpersonal communication, a working definition is useful at the start.

Interpersonal communication is *the verbal and nonverbal interaction between two (or sometimes more than two) interdependent people*. This relatively simple definition implies a variety of elements which we discuss in this section. But, first, let's look at some of the myths about interpersonal communication that can get in the way of a meaningful understanding and mastery of this area.

Examine your beliefs about interpersonal communication by responding to the following questions with T if you believe the statement is usually true or F if you believe the statement is usually false.

- ___ 1. Good communicators are born, not made.
- ___ 2. The more you communicate, the better you will be at it.
- ___ 3. In your interpersonal communication, a good guide to follow is to be as open, empathic, and supportive as you can be.
- ___ 4. When communicating with people from other cultures, it's best to ignore the differences and treat the other person just as you'd treat members of your own culture.
- ___ 5. Fear of meeting new people is detrimental and must be eliminated.
- ___ 6. When there is conflict, your relationship is in trouble.

As you probably figured out, all six statements are generally false. As you read this text, you'll discover not only why these beliefs are false but also the trouble you can get into when you assume they're true. For now, and in brief, here are some of the reasons each of the statements is generally false:

1. Effective communication is a learned skill; although some people are born brighter or more extroverted, everyone can improve their abilities and become more effective communicators.
2. It's not the amount of communication people engage in but the quality that matters; if you practice bad habits, you're more likely to grow less effective than more effective, so it's important to learn and follow the principles of effectiveness (Greene, 2003; Greene & Burleson, 2003).
3. Each interpersonal situation is unique, and therefore the type of communication appropriate in one situation may not be appropriate in another.
4. This assumption will probably get you into considerable trouble because people from different cultures often attribute different meanings to a message; members of different cultures also follow different rules for what is and is not appropriate in interpersonal communication.
5. Many people are nervous meeting new people, especially if these are people in authority; managing, not eliminating, the fear will enable you to become effective regardless of your current level of fear.
6. All meaningful relationships experience conflict; relationships are not in trouble when there is conflict, though dealing with conflict ineffectively can often damage the relationship.