

# **MASTERING THE ART OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN ACADEMIA**



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Let's eat, Grandma  
Let's eat Grandma

**Communication is tricky, unpredictable,  
and sometimes hilarious; but mastering  
it makes life much easier.**

# Introduction

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

WHAT IS EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION?

I think communication should be defined as:

- ❖ The Art of Making Sure People Hear What You Meant, Not Just What You Said.
- ❖ The Skill of Talking Without Saying Too Much and Listening Without Planning Your Next Response.
- ❖ · "The One Thing That Can Start and Solve Every Problem at Work"

# Why is Communication Important in Academia?

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- Facilitates clear knowledge transmission.
- Supports collaboration and research dissemination.
- Prevents miscommunication and misunderstanding in academic settings.
- Enhances student engagement and learning
- Improves academic writing and publishing success
- Promotes interdisciplinary research
- Strengthens mentorship and academic guidance
- Encourages constructive feedback and critique
- Develops public speaking and presentation skills
- Advances institutional and global networking

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# Key Communication Channels in Academia

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**A. Verbal Communication:** Lectures, academic presentations, student interactions.

**B. Written Communication:** Research papers, academic journals, grant proposals. Formal emails, course syllabi, and administrative writing.

**C. Non-Verbal Communication:** Body language, eye contact, tone of voice.

Classroom engagement cues, physical gestures.

**D. Digital Communication:** Virtual learning, research collaborations, online discussions.

**E. Persuasive Communication:** Defending research findings in conferences and publications.

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# Misconceptions About Communication in Academia

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**Myth 1:** Communication is only about speaking (Truth: Listening and writing matter too).

**Myth 2:** Complex language is better (Truth: Simplicity enhances understanding).

**Myth 3:** Emails are always understood as intended (Truth: Tone can be misinterpreted).

**Myth 4:** Students automatically understand instructions (Truth: Clarity and repetition are key)

**Myth 5:** Written communication is less important than verbal communication.

**Myth 6:** Silence means understanding

**Myth 7:** Academic communication is only for scholars

**Myth 8:** Digital communication is always efficient

**Myth 9:** Good research speaks for itself

**Myth 10:** Feedback must point out only negatives

# Theories of Communication

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## Speech Act Theory (Austin & Searle, 1962-1969)

Language performs actions (requesting, apologizing, commanding).

- **Assignment instructions clarity:** Use direct commands instead of vague statements.
- **Constructive feedback:** Rephrase criticism to encourage improvement.
- **Encouraging participation:** Frame questions clearly to promote engagement.

## B. Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975)

Effective communication follows four maxims—Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner.

- **Lecture clarity:** Avoid unnecessary jargon.
- **Email communication:** Ensure emails are direct and relevant.
- **Exam instructions:** Provide specific guidelines for students.

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### C. Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986)

Different communication channels have varying levels of effectiveness.

- **Lecture delivery:** Use in-person teaching for complex topics, email for brief updates.
- **Office hours:** Use video calls for detailed discussions, emails for minor inquiries.
- **Online learning:** Incorporate videos and live discussions for better engagement.

### D. Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

People use politeness strategies to maintain social harmony.

- **Email etiquette:** Use polite phrasing in requests to colleagues.
- **Classroom feedback:** Provide constructive criticism respectfully.
- **Peer review comments:** Offer suggestions without sounding dismissive.

### E. Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (Linguistic Relativity, 1929, 1956)

Language shapes thought and perception.

- **Multilingual students:** Provide translation support when needed.
- **Cultural differences:** Recognize diverse academic argumentation styles.
- **Research language:** Preserve native language meanings in academic translations.

# Barriers to Effective Communication in Academia

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- ❖ **Lack of Engagement:** Passive students, unresponsive colleagues.
- ❖ **Language Complexity:** Overuse of jargon, overly technical terminology.
- ❖ **Poor Feedback Mechanisms:** Vague instructions, unclear grading criteria.
- ❖ **Digital Miscommunication:** Emails or online messages misinterpreted.
- ❖ **Cultural and Linguistic Differences:** Diverse backgrounds can lead to misinterpretation of tone, phrasing, or meaning.
- ❖ **Power Dynamics and Hierarchical Barriers:**

Students may feel intimidated to express themselves,  
Junior researchers might hesitate to challenge senior academics.

- ❖ **Lack of Active Listening**
- ❖ **Inconsistent or Poorly Structured Communication Channels**
- ❖ **Time Constraints and Workload Pressures**
- ❖ **Resistance to Feedback or Criticism**

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# Wrong Communication Styles in Academia (TEACHING PRACTICE)

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- ❖ **Overuse of Jargon:** Makes content inaccessible to students and non-experts.
- ❖ **Monotonous Lecturing:** Leads to disengagement and lack of comprehension.
- ❖ **Overly Formal or Aggressive Emails:** Causes misunderstandings and conflicts.
- ❖ **Ignoring Non-Verbal Cues:** Misses signs of confusion or disengagement.
- ❖ **Lack of Active Listening:** Results in misinterpretation and frustration.
- ❖ **Overloaded Powerpoint slides**
- ❖ **One-way communication**
- ❖ **Failure to Adapt Communication for Different Audiences**
- ❖ **Dismissing Questions or Criticism**
- ❖ **Over-Reliance on Written Instructions**
- ❖ **Destructive Feedback (Commend Recommend and Commend) Instead**

# Miscommunication in official communications in the academia

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- Use of vague or overly technical language.
- Multiple, uncoordinated communication channels.
- Delays in sharing important updates.
- Assuming everyone has the same background knowledge.
- Rigid hierarchies that block open dialogue.
- Too much information shared at once.
- Poor listening during meetings or discussions.
- Cultural and language differences among staff and students.
- Misuse or failure of digital communication tools.

# Strategies for Enhancing Communication Skills

## Taking Note of the (7cs)

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**Clarity:** Use simple and precise language, avoid ambiguity.

**Conciseness:** Remove redundant words, stay on point.

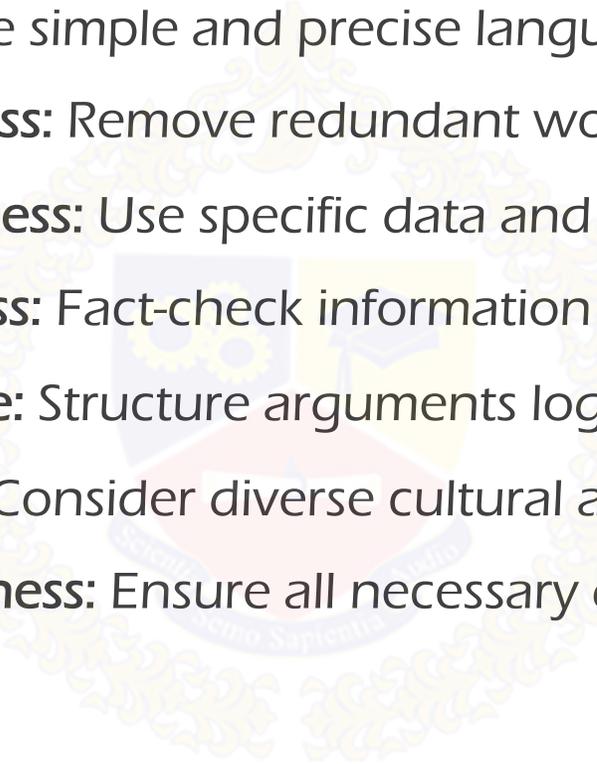
**Concreteness:** Use specific data and real-world examples.

**Correctness:** Fact-check information and proofread documents.

**Coherence:** Structure arguments logically, use transitions effectively.

**Courtesy:** Consider diverse cultural and academic backgrounds.

**Completeness:** Ensure all necessary details are included.



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# Body Language in Communication

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- ❖ **Facial Expressions:** Indicate emotions like engagement or confusion.
- ❖ **Eye Contact:** Shows confidence and attentiveness.
- ❖ **Posture & Gestures:** Supports message clarity and engagement.
- ❖ **Tone of Voice:** Controls emphasis and authority in speech.
- ❖ **Hand Movements:** Reinforces key points and makes explanations more dynamic and engaging.
- ❖ **Proximity and Spatial Awareness:** Appropriate distance fosters inclusivity and approachability in discussions
- ❖ **Head Nods and Leaning In:** Signals agreement, interest, and attentiveness.
- ❖ **Pauses and Breath Control:** Manages pacing in speech, ensuring clarity and gives audience time to absorb information.

# Essential Netiquettes of Communication

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## A. Professional and Respectful Communication

Maintain a professional and courteous tone in emails and online discussions.

## B. Concise and Direct Messaging

Keep messages clear, well-structured, and to the point.

## C. Proper Formatting and Grammar

Proofread messages before sending to ensure professionalism.

## D. Respecting Response Time and Boundaries

Do not expect immediate responses, especially outside working hours.

Allow reasonable time for responses before sending follow-ups.

## E. Avoiding Miscommunication and Emotional Responses

Be mindful of tone; avoid all caps (aggressive) or overly emotional language.

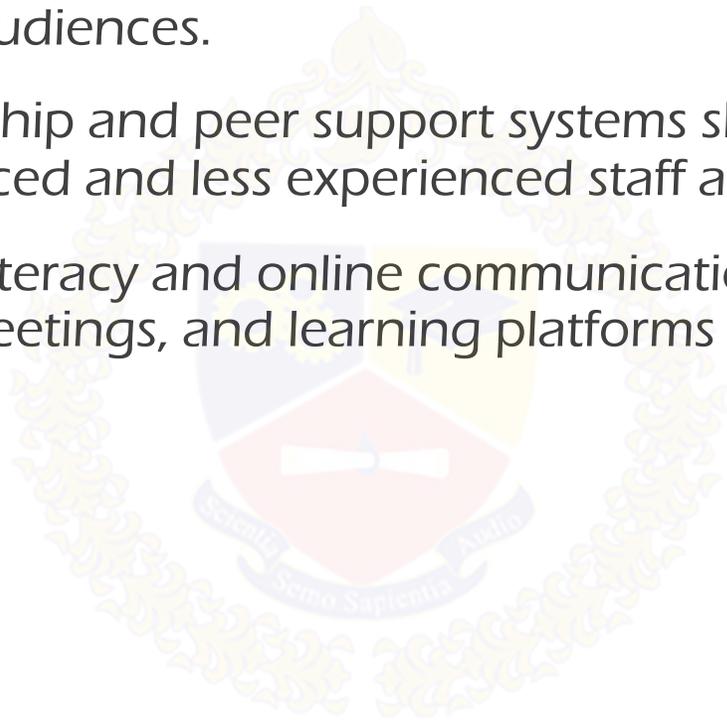
Clarify intent when necessary to prevent misunderstandings.

# Conclusion & Key Takeaways

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- Communication is crucial for success in academia.
- Adapt communication styles based on audience, culture, and medium.
- Mastering verbal, written, and digital communication improves engagement and professionalism.
- Institutions should establish clear and centralized communication channels that are easily accessible to staff, students, and management.
- Faculty and staff should adopt an open-door policy to foster approachability and reduce hierarchical barriers.
- Regular forums should be organized to give students a voice and create structured spaces for engagement with faculty and management.
- Feedback mechanisms such as anonymous surveys and suggestion boxes should be implemented to gather input from all academic stakeholders.
- Communication skills training should be offered to academic and administrative staff to improve interpersonal interactions and reduce misunderstandings.

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- Interdepartmental collaboration should be encouraged to build cross-disciplinary dialogue
  - All institutional communication should use clear, inclusive, and jargon-free language that is accessible to diverse audiences.
  - Mentorship and peer support systems should be established to strengthen communication between experienced and less experienced staff and students.
  - Digital literacy and online communication etiquette should be prioritized through training in email usage, virtual meetings, and learning platforms



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# My top 6 quotes about the essence of communication

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"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." – George Bernard Shaw

"Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools, because they have to say something." – Plato

"We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak." – Epictetus

"Speak clearly, if you speak at all; carve every word before you let it fall." – Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.

"Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." – Mother Teresa

"The most important aspect of communication is what was left unsaid"- Adelokun Adetunji Oluwapelumi

