

Business Etiquette:

Care, Converse, Communicate



Lesson Plan:

- Why Communication Is Important
- Your Habits: How Do You Communicate?
- The Skills You Need to Communicate Successfully
- Small Talk Is a Warm-Up to Conversation
- Smile and the World Smiles with You
- The Eyes Don't Lie
- Good Communication Begins at Home
- Choose Your Words Thoughtfully: The Problem with Gossiping, Slang, Cursing, and Loud Talking
 - ◆ Gossiping Is Not Conversing
 - ◆ Slang Is Not the Language of Business
 - ◆ Cursing Has No Place in Polite Conversation
 - ◆ Not Too Loudly, Please!
- Listen to Communicate

Review

Quiz

Care, Converse, Communicate

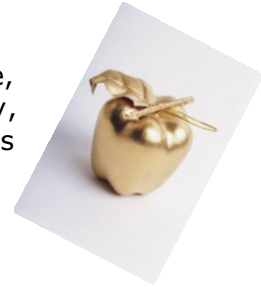
"It was impossible to get a **conversation** going; everybody was talking too much." –Yogi Berra

WHY COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT

Graciousness is all about how we interact with and treat others—and that includes how we communicate with others.

The way we choose to communicate tells others a great deal about how we view ourselves and how we value, or fail to value, them.

Through communication, we get to know other people, what they value, what makes them happy, and what things disturb their peace. Similarly, when we communicate, we share this same information about ourselves through what we say, the way we say it, and our body language as we say it.



Through communication, the entire world opens its door to us. To the extent that we are willing and able to share our thoughts and cares with others, the world rewards this by opening up new avenues for us to explore, grow, and pursue our dreams.

YOUR HABITS: HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE?

When we are younger, our parents and teachers correct what we say and how we say it. But, sometimes, as young adults, we slip into bad habits that can become lifelong and detrimental to how others see and treat us.

For example, do you mumble? Or do you talk too loudly or too much? Do you interrupt when others are talking? Is it hard to get you to talk at all? Do you use a lot of slang or street talk because all your friends do?

Do you show interest in what others have to say? After all, don't you want others to show interest in you?

These are bad habits that even our best friends won't tell us about. And although people may overlook them when we are young, once we move out into the world on our own, these habits begin to work against us.

THE SKILLS YOU NEED TO COMMUNICATE SUCCESSFULLY

As we grow older, one of the most important things we can learn is to care for and respect other people. It's important to know what you like, what you think, and what you need. However, it's at least as important to learn what other people like, think, and need. This is the basis of communicating with other people. One of the ways we do that is by having a conversation.

What is a *conversation*? It's what happens when two or more people exchange ideas. There is a give and take. They talk. You talk. Back and forth. A conversation is not one person doing all the talking while the other person does all the listening!

Conversations don't just happen, "We invite other people to talk with us."

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SMALL TALK IS A WARM-UP TO CONVERSATION

When two people first meet, typically they begin their verbal interactions with “small talk.” They say hello and introduce themselves. They might talk about things like the weather or a recent sports event.

Small talk is really a way to pass the time, in which people make short comments to each other to be polite. But sometimes, through small talk, people find they have interests in common and this leads into deeper exchanges—conversation.

In conversation, people converse on different topics, exchange ideas, share information, and give each other an opportunity to contribute to the conversation.

SMILE, AND THE WORLD SMILES WITH YOU

What are some of the skills you need to have a pleasant conversation with someone?

First, you need to think about other people and care about them. If you’re shy or quiet, you have to be willing to learn how to open up to others and not always wait for them to draw you into a conversation. If you’re an extrovert and extremely outgoing, you may need to learn how to reign in your enthusiasm and let other people share the floor.



You will also need to think about what the other person is asking you and then respond to his or her questions.

In short, you need to be able to start a conversation as well as participate in one. Give and take. You need to learn how to listen and how to be patient and not interrupt. Having a rewarding conversation really isn’t hard. Ask questions. Listen to the answers. Share your thoughts when it’s appropriate. Pay attention!

Before beginning any kind of conversation, smile! This will set the tone of the conversation and open up the other person to talking with you. It also will warm up and add a little expression to your voice. It’s difficult to be negative when you’re smiling! Try it!

Activity:



Have students talk one-on-one while being very negative in their comments. Ask them to smile while they are doing this. Then, have them share how they felt while doing this. What was missing from their communications? Contrast this with the attributes found in more enjoyable conversations.

THE EYES DON'T LIE

To add polish to our speaking habits, we must also learn to look at others when we talk. Making eye contact shows other people that we care about them and what they are saying.

Looking away and surveying the room with our eyes while someone is talking to us is rude and very unkind. It says to the other person, "I don't think you're important enough to stop doing what I'm doing and listen."

Think about it; when someone looks you in the eyes while speaking to you, don't you tend to place more trust in them? Why? Because they make you feel more valued by giving you their complete attention.

So, get into the habit of looking at people when you talk to them; it keeps you both focused and makes the other person feel good about you and view you as a caring and gracious person.

GOOD COMMUNICATION BEGINS AT HOME



Does this sound like a lot of work just to talk with someone? It really isn't. It just seems that way because we're looking especially closely at how it's done. Specifically, we're looking at how we talk to other people while keeping their thoughts and feelings in mind. That's the important part!

Here is a situation to help you put it all into perspective:

When you get home from school, what is the first thing you do? Do you rush into the house, change clothes, and grab the remote control, turn up the volume on your favorite tunes on your iPod, or fire up your computer? Or do you take time to talk to your family or roommates first?

When you're alone and someone comes into the room, do you greet that person and give him or her your full attention by stopping what you're doing? Even if it's your brother or sister, you should do this. It's respectful to acknowledge everyone, even if it's very briefly. After all, don't you like to be acknowledged? Personally, I don't know anyone who enjoys being ignored. Do any of you?

Before you go off into your free time, or your study time, it's important to greet those you live with and include them in your day. Don't take them for granted. Believe me, it's easy to forget, but it's very important to talk with our housemates and family members and not just assume they know we love and care about them.

One of the best ways to show our love and respect is to open a conversation with our family and friends about their interests, their workday, or their day.



A single conversation across the table with a wise person is better than ten years mere study of books."—**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

At first, initiating conversations like this may seem a little awkward because like all polite social skills, you have to practice it to learn how to do it well. So, you may be uncomfortable in the beginning. But soon, you will be learning much about your family and friends that you didn't know, and each new conversation will build on those that went before it. In this way, we build and deepen our bonds with the people we care for.

Having a conversation also requires eye contact, paying attention, and listening to and thinking about what others are saying. Once again, just because you know your friends and family really, really well, doesn't mean it's OK or polite to ignore what they say, to talk back, to whisper to other family members, or to interrupt them.



When you're away from home—whether at school; in a job interview; or at work, church, or anywhere else—having a conversation is a little more formal process. We are always more casual with the people we live with. But all the same guidelines still apply. Ask questions. Listen to the answers. Do pay attention!

Finally, when you care about what other people feel, think, and say, it will show. People will like you because they can tell you respect and like them. This way they'll return the favor and want to know what you think and feel. What could be better than that?

CHOOSE YOUR WORDS THOUGHTFULLY: THE PROBLEM WITH GOSSIPING, SLANG, CURSING, AND LOUD TALKING

Use your voice to your advantage. Make sure you're clear. Speak well, speak quickly, and make your words reflect that you're easy to communicate with and respectful of others. Avoid the killers of clear, powerful communication: gossip, slang, cursing, and loud talking. Don't become someone others dread having in their conversation.



Gossiping Is Not Conversing

There is absolutely no reason to whisper when someone else is speaking, even if you're in the back of the room. It shows a lack of respect just as it does when you gossip or listen to gossip. Change the subject immediately, and remember if this person will talk behind some other person's back, the next time it might be yours!

Slang Is Not the Language of the Work World

Try to weed out slang from your vocabulary or, at the very least, practice not using "buzz" words and phrases such as "like," "you know," and "yeah" all the time. You will quickly see how much of a habit they have become in your communication.

Cursing Has No Place in Polite Conversation

Bad language is never ever acceptable in a social situation or in the workplace.

Not Too Loudly Please!

We are living in a society filled with noise. The best thing we can do for others is to adjust our volume to the other person's comfort level. If you speak too softly, they won't be able to hear you and if you're overly loud, you will irritate their ears (and get on their nerves quickly). Watch the other person's body language; it's a sure sign of how your volume is being received.

Do not talk loudly in public places. This includes movies, restaurants, libraries, cars, buses, museums, theaters, hospitals, and stores. This is just a matter of common courtesy. People did not come to these places to listen to you. Adjust your volume to be just loud enough for the people you're in conversation with to hear you.

And please, please, realize that no one is interested in your cell phone conversation but you. So, don't speak any louder than is necessary for the person on the other end to hear you clearly. Remember, cell phones have a built-in mechanism to amplify your voice. Speak softly.

LISTEN TO COMMUNICATE



How good of a listener are you? Let's do a quick exercise to let you test your own listening skills.

You are driving a bus. You start with 25 people on board. At the first stop, 10 people get off and 5 get on. At the next stop, no one gets off, but 3 get on. At the next stop, 8 get off. Who is driving the bus?

Were you listening or did you merely hear what you expected to hear?

Researchers tell us that we listen four times as fast as we speak; that means that when others are speaking to us, we have a terrible, almost irresistible temptation to let our minds wander.

So, how do we overcome this and focus on listening to the other person's words when we are having a conversation? We need to learn how to do what is referred to as "active listening."

Active listening is listening to the other person with your complete presence and listening not just to the words but to the emotions and feelings behind the words.

First, that means you have to turn the TV off, remove your iPod plugs from your ears, and release your grip on the controls for your GameBoy, because you can't listen actively and give your attention to other things.

To listen actively, you need to face the person you're speaking to, and make and hold eye contact. Let the other person talk, and avoid interrupting. Nod your head to convey that you're listening and you understand.

Ask questions when you need to get more understanding of certain points. The other person will appreciate your attempts to understand what he or she is saying. Wait for the other person to pause before offering your ideas or asking questions.

Interject “door openers.” Door openers are words like “Really?” “Interesting,” and “What did you do then?” that let the other person know you’re listening and interested without interrupting his or her conversation.

Be interested. Ask about the other person’s ideas and opinions. Listen for the central ideas the person is communicating, not just facts. Listen more than you talk.

If you need to, change your body position. This will help you stay focused and alert. When you’re listening to someone for a long time, focus on the person’s key words and ideas to avoid letting your mind wander.

Most important, pay attention to the other person’s body language—facial expressions, posture, and gestures. What do they tell you about what this person might be feeling or thinking?

Think of the other person. Etiquette means “to make others feel comfortable and treat them with courtesy.” That is the goal of active listening.

Activity:



Have students pair up to practice one-on-one conversations. Try to pair students who don’t know each other well or at all. Let them take turns practicing initiating the conversation. Have them practice smiling as they speak, making eye contact, and listening actively. Later, have them discuss what they learned and what, if anything, they did that was different from the way they normally have conversations.

Alternative activity: Team students and have them tell each other their dream job, and why they are perfectly qualified for it. Then have the person who is listening summarize what he or she heard. Then switch.



Review

- Having a conversation is the best way to learn what other people like, think, and need. It's what we do to get to know one another.
- Polite conversation includes good eye contact, active listening, waiting patiently, and not interrupting or talking too much.
- Speaking clearly means proper pronunciation and grammar. It also means not mumbling or speaking too loudly.
- Inappropriate speaking means not talking excessively, interrupting, or using slang.
- When other people talk to you, stop what you're doing, look at them, listen to them, and then respond politely.
- Anytime someone is courteous to you or does you a favor, thank that person.
- When you must interrupt, or when you want to get someone's attention, say, "Excuse me." This sets the tone that you're sorry for the interruption and still gets you the person's attention.
- If you're shy, practice walking up to people and starting a conversation. The more you do it, the easier it will become.
- Good eye contact shows that you're interested in what the other person is saying. It also shows that you're listening.
- Using slang or street talk is a habit you want to try to break. The professional world, the world of work, is based on speaking standard English and industry jargon.
- Bad language is never acceptable in a social situation or in the workplace.
- Do not talk loudly in public places. This includes movies, restaurants, libraries, cars, buses, museums, theaters, hospitals, and stores.
- When you're angry or upset, it's not OK to shout and say unkind things. It's much better to tell the person you're angry and stop the interaction until you can talk it out calmly. Yelling at someone at school, at work, or in a social situation is just not acceptable.
- When you're inside a public building, restaurant, or someone's home, use your "inside voice."
- When speaking outside in public places or on a cell phone, keep your voice low. Others are not interested in hearing your conversations.
- When you speak to another individual or you're listening to someone, make eye contact; this shows you're being sincere and a good listener.
- To have a polite conversation, always think of the other person. Etiquette means "to make others feel comfortable and treat them with courtesy"; that is the goal.

QUIZ



1. What is a conversation?

Conversation occurs when two or more people converse on different topics, exchanging ideas and sharing information, and give each an opportunity to contribute.

2. What is small talk?

Small talk happens usually when you do not know someone. You casually say hello, ask how someone is, talk about the weather, or make other short, non-personal comments to be polite or social. It's normally a way to pass time or briefly introduce yourself.

3. What are a few key elements of a good conversation?

- a. Good eye contact and body language
- b. Active listening
- c. Not interrupting
- d. Asking questions
- e. Not monopolizing the conversation
- f. Responding and contributing to the conversation
- g. Using polite words, please, thank you, excuse me, etc.

4. Why are gossip, slang, cursing, and loud talking not a part of polite conversation?

They are offensive to many people, and they teach people not to trust us or want to communicate with us.

5. What is active listening?

It's being entirely present as another person speaks to us and trying to appreciate the thoughts and feelings behind their words, not just their words.

6. What are some ways to be a better active listener?

- a. Face the person as he or she speaks.
- b. Nod occasionally to let the person know you're listening.
- c. Use door openers that say, "I'm following what you're saying" without really interrupting.
- d. Spend more time listening than talking.
- e. . Try to grasp the key word and the central ideas the other person is expressing.

7. What are some key words that promote conversation?

Who? What? Why? Where? When? How?