# 1 Human Communication: What and Why

## Activities

# Activity 1: Communication Models and Metaphors

## Purpose
**1.** To think creatively about the transactional process of communication
**2.** To construct a model based on a metaphor that illustrates the communication process

## Instructions
Read the example below. Then construct and explain your own metaphor of communication, taking into account the transactional nature and elements of the communication process.

**Example:**

*Draw or explain your metaphor model:* Communication is like the human body.

*Explanation:* The body has many systems: circulatory system, gastrointestinal system, skeletal system, nervous, cardiovascular, etc. Communication has verbal and nonverbal communication, intentional and unintentional. Like the human body, you can break it down and study certain parts, but what counts is that all are happening at once. A doctor who can't understand all the systems functioning together is not good at diagnosing or healing. A communicator who can't analyze the parts (verbal/ non-verbal, content/relational, and intentional/unintentional) and also look at all the parts together is probably not competent either. If I'm injured, I expect a physician to be able to know which part of my body to pay attention to, but also see the relationship of all systems. I may have a broken bone, but be losing blood, too. The doctor needs to prioritize and pay attention. Likewise, the competent communicator needs to see what elements of the transactional process might be causing a problem, and give attention there, while not neglecting other aspects.

*Where does the metaphor break down?* The metaphor isn't entirely accurate because the human body is physical; communication is relational, intangible. Communication may end in a different way than a physical body comes to an end.

# Activity 2: Meeting Needs through Communication

## Purpose
1. To classify communication behaviours with regard to what needs each meets.
2. To identify ways in which behaviours meet certain communication needs.

## Instructions
Using news story examples or your own examples, indicate how people meet different needs through communication. One example is provided.

| Type of need met | Behaviour | How did it meet this need? |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical (health)** | | |
| **Identity** | | |
| **Social** | | |
| Pleasure | | |
| Affection | | |
| Inclusion | Asking a co-worker if I could go with her to an after-work gathering. (Asking a friend in university if I could go to a party with her.) | I'm new, so I wanted to feel part of this group of people at work. (so I want to meet friends) Going with them to a social event may help me feel like part of the group. (might help me find people to hang out with) |
| Escape | | |
| Relaxation | | |
| Control | | |
| **Practical** | | |

**Complete the following:**

Much of my communication is to meet _____ needs.  I think this is because
_____.

Not much of my communication is for the purpose of meeting _____ needs.

I had the most difficulty thinking of an example of how communication meets _____
needs.

Much of my behaviour meets more than one need at once, for example:
- I spend the most time meeting _____ needs because _____
- I spend the least time meeting _____ needs because _____.
- I would like to learn to spend more time meeting _____ needs by (doing)
  _____.

**Your turn:**
If working with others, brainstorm about metaphors for communication.  Choose one metaphor to
explain in detail. Use as many principles and elements of communication as you can in explaining
how your metaphor works and where it breaks down. Here are ideas to start, but don't limit your-
self. Use your imagination! Communication is like a football game, traffic patterns, the solar system,
a gambling machine, the ecosystem.

Draw or insert a picture or drawing of your metaphor model:

**Explanation:**

Where does the metaphor break down?

# Activity 3: Principles of Communication

## Purpose
To identify and apply principles of communication

## Instructions: Part I
Using your own life and examples from current news media and popular media, give an example of each of the following:

- Communication does not always require understanding.

- Communication is not always a good thing.

- No single person or event causes another's reaction.

- Communication will not solve all problems.

- Meanings are in people, not words.

- Communication is not simple.

- More communication is not always better.

For each principle listed below, think of other short examples (scenes from books or films, poetry, song lyrics) that illustrate these principles.

- Meanings are in people, not words.

- Communication is not simple.

- More communication is not always better.

- Communication will not solve all problems.

- Communication is not always a good thing.

For each principle listed below, think of ways that pop culture, current events, and/or society at large imply the **opposite** of these is true. Why do you think it might be appealing to believe the opposite?

**Example:**

*Meanings rest in people, not words.* When lawyers, or others, state that something said was unequivocal, they fail to recognize that individuals attach their own meanings (decode) to messages (words). Lawyers often imply that the meaning is in words, not in people. In fact, the reverse is true. Suggestion: You could refer to comedians and content of their jokes instead. (e.g., "When comedians tell a joke and audiences laugh in response, it is because the audiences are able to share the culturally-attached meanings to the comedian's message (words).")

- Communication does not always require understanding.


- Communication is not simple.


- More communication is not always better.


- Communication will not solve all problems.


- Communication is not always a good thing.


- Communication is not simple.


- No single person or event causes another's reaction.


- Meanings rest in people, not words.

# Activity 4: Characteristics of Competent Communicators

## Purpose
1. To evaluate your own communication behaviours with regard to characteristics of competent communicators.
2. To identify ways in which you can develop greater communication competence.

## Instructions
1. For each of the six items listed below, rate yourself from 1–5 using the scale below. You might want to ask a close friend to rate you also, as their perception may remind you of strengths you have.
2. Then give an example of why you rated yourself as you did or of your thoughts or feelings about your rating. Describe what you think you can do to enhance your competence with regard to that factor.

> 1 = I do not possess this characteristic to any degree.
> 2 = I have seen this characteristic in myself on rare occasions.
> 3 = About half the time, I think I display this characteristic.
> 4 = Most of the time I think I act in accordance with this characteristic.
> 5 = This is so much a part of me that I don't even think about it. I display this characteristic continuously in my interaction with others.

1. Competent communicators own a wide range of behaviours rather than just a few.
   Self-rating: _____          (Optional) Friend's rating: _____

   Comments on, reasons for, or examples of why this rating was given:



   Ways that I might become more competent with regard to this factor:



2. Competent communicators have the ability to choose the most appropriate behaviour.
   Self-rating: _____          (Optional) Friend's rating: _____

   Comments on, reasons for, or examples of why this rating was given:



   Ways that I might become more competent with regard to this factor:

3. Competent communicators have the skill at performing behaviours.
   Self-rating: _____            (Optional) Friend's rating: _____

   Comments on, reasons for, or examples of why this rating was given:


   Ways that I might become more competent with regard to this factor:


4. Competent communicators demonstrate empathy and perspective taking.
   Self-rating: _____            (Optional) Friend's rating: _____

   Comments on, reasons for, or examples of why this rating was given:


   Ways that I might become more competent with regard to this factor:


5. Competent communicators employ cognitive complexity.
   Self-rating: _____            (Optional) Friend's rating: _____

   Comments on, reasons for, or examples of why this rating was given:


   Ways that I might become more competent with regard to this factor:


6. Competent communicators exercise self-monitoring.
   Self-rating: _____            (Optional) Friend's rating: _____

   Comments on, reasons for, or examples of why this rating was given:


   Ways that I might become more competent with regard to this factor:

# Activity 5: Exploring the Web

## Purpose
The study of communication, like the study of any other academic subject, may seem overwhelming to a student who has just enrolled in a class. Five types of communication (intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public, and mass) are described in Chapter 1, yet there are many more facets to the communication discipline. One way to get an overview of the field of communication is to look at the web sites of professional organizations in communication.

Some of the major professional organizations are:
- Communications Research Centre Canada (CRC) http://www.crc.ca
- Canadian Journal of Communication (CJC) http://www.cjc-online.ca/
- The Institute of Communications and Advertising (ICA) http://www.ica-ad.com/
- World Communication Association (WCA) http://facstaff.uww.edu/wca/Home.htm
- International Communication Association (ICA) www.icahdq.org

## Instructions
Go to the CRC website. Explore the "Expertise" page and create a list of eight or more communication categories.

1. If you were to continue your study of communication, which divisions would you want to know more about? Why?

2. Are there any categories of communication that you would expect to find and don't? If so, which ones?

3. How closely are the types of communication discussed in your text reflected in the divisions of the NCA?

4. Which of these web sites (CRC, CJC, ICA, WCA, ICA) is most useful for beginning communication students?  What part of these web sites is of particular help?

5. Can you find the web sites of other professional communication organizations? You might look for some American organizations:  Eastern Communication Association, Southern States Communication Association, Central States Communication Association, and Western States Communication Association. (Hint:  From the Western States site at www.csufresno.edu/speechcomm/wscalink.htm you will be able to find the others, plus many state associations and other US associations.)

# Activity 6: Characteristics of Competent Communicators

## Purpose
1. To think critically about the characteristics of competent communicators, and analyze them
2. To apply this new knowledge to a public situation that you have heard about
3. To apply this new knowledge to a personal situation you remember

## Instructions
1. Think of two situations, one involving a famous person and one involving someone you know personally, and give three examples of why they embody the characteristics of competent communicators in each situation.
2. Does either situation resonate for you differently now that you are applying a theoretical framework to the event? If yes, how?

# Activity 7: Communication Coordination

## Purpose
1. To apply the theoretical concepts to a real-world event
2. To take something from popular culture and give it analytical substance

## Instructions
On page 20, the author likens communication to dancing—there must be two people committed and acting in coordination to be successful. Watch a couple dance together (try watching *Dancing with the Stars* or *So You Think You Can Dance*), analyze how the dancers move together and whether you think they are successful. Pay attention to the judges' feedback and assess whether you were right or wrong. How is the official judgment different from yours?

# Activity 8: Thinking about E-mail Communication

## Purpose
1. To demonstrate and practise appropriate e-mail behaviour
2. To practice critical thinking, reflection, and evaluation skills

## Instructions
Read the "Effective Email" box (pages 30–31), and think about your current professors, your current or former work supervisors, and other figures of authority or expertise in your life (e.g., religious leaders, high school teachers, former camp counsellors, music teachers, etc.). Then think about writing to these people to ask their advice on how you can be successful in this course.

1. Choose one of your current professors, one of your current or former work supervisors, and one other influential person from your life.

2. Compose an e-mail message to each of these three people. In each message, tell the person about the course you're taking and ask the person for advice based on his/her experiences and his/her knowledge of you. (Note: You are *not* required to send these messages; you are simply writing model messages.)

3. Print copies of your messages and exchange them with a member of your study group. In turn, read the messages your study partner has given you.

4. What feedback would you provide to your study partner about the e-mail messages she/he has written? What feedback has your study partner given you about your e-mail messages? What communication issues do you need to focus on in e-mail—formality? Control of your spelling and punctuation? Tone and appropriateness of content? Structure and logic? Keep these ideas in mind as your prepare e-mail for future audiences.

5. If you want to reflect further, consider whether e-mail is always the best communication tool for various purposes. Has e-mail ever been the wrong tool for you? Has another communication tool ever gone wrong for you? Ask members of your study group or members of your class about their experiences with good and bad online and offline communication.

# Activity 9: Intrapersonal Communication and Self-Monitoring

## Purpose
1. To apply intrapersonal communication to improving self-monitoring behaviours
2. To think critically about competent communication

## Instructions
1. Do you keep a journal or a diary? If so, as you write in your journal or diary this week, pay particular attention to your communication with friends, family, and strangers. If not, for one week keep notes on your mobile phone or in your notebook about various communication situations you find yourself in with friends, family, and strangers.

2. At the end of the week, look back at your writing. What have you observed about other people's communication? What have you observed about your own communication? What do you observe now about your thinking about communication? Jot down a few key words, phrases, and categories that reflect your observations (about yourself and about others) over the week and your reflection now as your review your observations.

3. Compare your words and phrases to the descriptors associated with communication competence, described on pages 23 to 28. What do you see in what you've captured? Did you observe communication strengths and weaknesses in others? Did you observe strengths in yourself? Did your communication shift over the week as you became more self-conscious about it? Did you discover that you have more communication resources than you previously thought? If you wish, share your observations with members of your study group or your class, and compare your findings.

4. As the textbook says, too much self-monitoring can be a problem, as can too little. Use this activity as a jumping-off point to ready yourself for other investigations you're going to do in your coursework.

# Activity 10: Meaning and Reflection

## Purpose
1. To explore the many meanings of communication
2. To consider how communication impacts our lives

## Instructions
1. Read the box "The Many Meanings of Communication" on pages 4–5 in the textbook and reflect on the following questions.

2. Now that you've taken a deeper look at the definition of communication, what do you most want to explore? How will communication help you in your academic and professional plans?

3. Imagine you have to introduce yourself to your classmates in a one-minute speech. Write a brief introduction (about 100 to 125 words) introducing yourself to your classmates and relating your reflections on the meaning of communication to your hopes and expectations for the course.

## Activity 11: Recognizing Communication *in Situ*

### Purpose
To evaluate how we communicate throughout the day

### Instructions
Using the notes app on your mobile phone, keep a running list of the communicating you do in the span from getting up to start your day until you arrive at school one day this week. Be sure you don't overlook mundane events like making eye contact with the bus driver or saying hello to the barista at the coffee shop. Are you surprised by what you capture? Why?

## Activity 12: Let's Laugh Together

### Purpose
1. To examine a claim about gender-based humour
2. To recognize gender-based and intersectional communication differences

### Instructions
On page 11 of the textbook, the authors refer to research that suggests women's humour is different from men's humour. Examine this claim by viewing some women's comedy—the *Baroness von Sketch Show*, the stand-up of Sarah Silverman, or sketches by Tina Fey, for instance. If possible, seek out comedy by Indigenous women, women of colour, and women of differing physical abilities. As you watch, pay attention to self-deprecating humour. What do you think might drive women to use this form of humour?