

# Inter-Act

USING INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

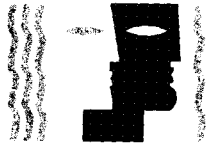
RUDOLPH F. VERDERBER / KATHLEEN S. VERDERBER



7<sup>TH</sup>

EDITION

# Inter-Act



## Using Interpersonal Communication Skills

SEVENTH EDITION

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## Preface

Although we had hoped that over the last several years we would see progress in former President Bush's goal for a "kinder, gentler nation," we have seen just the opposite. Part of our failure to achieve this goal is the continued deterioration in effective interpersonal communication. Increased instances of prejudice, racism, sexism, spouse and child abuse, and the use of aggression and even firearms to solve conflict are all related in some ways to our general inability to relate to others in interpersonally appropriate ways. Unfortunately, television characters—primary role models for many children and teenagers—seem to glorify the behaviors of those who are often the worst role models of appropriate interpersonal interaction.

As a result, it is easy to despair. But despairing does nothing to solve the problem. As never before, our society needs to focus attention on our interpersonal communication, especially between men and women and across cultures. For those who don't have the necessary interpersonal skills, it is time to learn them; for those who know the kind of behavior that is appropriate, it is time to practice that behavior. In this new edition, we have tried to clear a path toward civility.

## Philosophy of the Text

Instructors bring different approaches to teaching communication. Some tend to emphasize theory and research, while others focus on skills acquisition and practice. In this text we try to incorporate relevant theory and research, but we firmly believe that theory and research are only important if they help students become more competent interpersonal communicators. Further, achieving interpersonal competence is a goal that students of all ages and backgrounds can relate to and aspire to, something we try to acknowledge by treating readers with respect and using a diversity of examples.

We believe that with a combination of theory, skills practice, and competency evaluation, students (1) learn to *understand* the major concepts from communication theory and research, (2) become able to *recognize* those concepts in their own experience, and (3) have access to a range of choices concerning their communication behavior, thus *increasing their communication behavioral flexibility*. In addition, students can *export* what they learn in

this class and begin a process of *lifelong development of communication competence*. These goals have guided the development of the learning model that is at the foundation of *Inter-Act*.

## Goals of This Edition

This seventh edition of *Inter-Act* has been carefully revised with the following goals in mind: (1) preserve the strengths that have sustained it through six successful editions; (2) clarify and enhance the learning model, making the book even more pedagogically effective; (3) freshen and update the text in both content and style; and (4) emphasize cultural and gender diversity in the effective use of interpersonal skills.

Focusing on communication between men and women and across cultures is so important that throughout the first two parts of the book we have called special attention to gender and cross-cultural issues. The text focuses on skills that are applicable across most common communication situations in the United States. We are also aware, however, that how we use these skills and how well they will be received may be dependent on whether the communication is male to male, female to female, or male to female. Likewise, we are aware that much of the research that has been done to validate the effectiveness of the skills forming the core of this book have been conducted in Western European and white middle class North American contexts. Since we know that behaviors considered appropriate in one cultural context may be considered inappropriate in another, we have included examples of the ways other cultures may view interpersonally competent communication.

## STRENGTHS

This edition preserves and enhances the strengths that have made *Inter-Act* successful. Among them are:

- *Competency-based orientation.* The text does not stop with theory, but shows students concretely how to translate theory and research into communications behaviors.
- *A clear, concise, down-to-earth writing style.* Writing style is a key part of the learning model, because it makes the material comprehensible and relevant.
- *Ample examples provided throughout.*
- *Numerous in-chapter practice exercises.*

- *Glossaries of communication skills and problems*, which conveniently survey and review a wealth of information for students.

## **T H E L E A R N I N G M O D E L**

The learning model employed in *Inter-Act* uses seven integrated steps. Students use these steps in the *communication improvement goal statement exercises* that are introduced in Chapter 1 and revisited in each subsequent chapter. The goal statement exercises invite students to analyze their specific communication strengths and weaknesses, and commit themselves to improving their interpersonal competence in self-selected, but well-defined, ways. The seven steps in the learning model are:

1. Theoretical base of research-supporting skills
2. Steps involved in skill performance
3. Examples of skill usage
4. Self-assessment leading to commitment to change
5. Practice in using skills
6. Reflection on experiences in real-life situations
7. Review of what you have learned

Several features of the model are unique or unusual. First, the model emphasizes explicit self-assessment. Second, it provides for concrete ways of extending learning outside the classroom. Third, it is the basis for communication improvement goal statements that are both specific and flexible. Finally, it is iterative and developmental because students repeat the process as they are exposed to new material.

## **C O N T E N T A N D S T Y L I S T I C C H A N G E S**

- ● **Content Changes** In this edition we have made numerous content changes that contribute to the pedagogical strength of the text.
  1. Issues of gender and cross-cultural communication are introduced in Chapter 1 and subsequently integrated throughout the text. New emphasis has been given to how gender and cultural diversity relate to specific theories and skills.

**P R E F A C E**

2. Intimate and family communication issues have been integrated into the main body of the text, especially in Chapter 5 (on relationships) and Chapter 10 (on conflict).
3. The text draws on current research. As would be expected, the research has been updated throughout the text. In each chapter more attention is given to describing the theoretical basis for the skills.

For those who are familiar with or have used the last edition of *Inter-Act*, here is a brief chapter by chapter summary of the most significant changes:

*Chapter 1:* We have revised the introductory chapter to emphasize the role that cultural and gender diversity play in effective communication. The revised chapter also stresses writing communication goal statements rather than learning contracts.

*Chapter 2:* We have completely revised this chapter to sharpen understanding of the role of perception in defining self-concept and relating to others. The section on self-concept has been revised to differentiate among self-concept, self-image, and self-esteem. The section on perception of others has greater discussion of prejudice, racism, and sexism. The book now discusses how culture and gender affect both self-concept and perception of others.

*Chapter 3:* We have made minor revisions of the first parts of the chapter and have added a significant amount of material concerning gender and cultural issues in verbal communication.

*Chapter 4:* We have revised our discussion of nonverbal communication to reflect gender and cultural differences.

*Chapter 5:* We have completely revised this chapter to integrate information that was formerly in modules on intimate and family communication. In addition, we have included more information on friendship and a much stronger section on stabilizing relationships.

*Chapter 6:* We have revised the section on communicating feelings to include a section in self-disclosure that considers cultural differences.

*Chapter 7:* We have revised this chapter significantly to help unify the elements of effective listening. We have simplified analysis of reasoning in the section on critical listening.

*Chapters 8 and 9:* We have revised examples in both of these chapters.

*Chapter 10:* We have revised and reorganized this chapter to include material from former modules on intimate and family communication.

*Chapter 11:* We have expanded the module in the last edition to build a chapter that proved a firm foundation for Part III of the book: Communication in Professional Relationships.

*Chapters 12 and 13:* We have expanded these former modules to chapter length.

*Chapter 14:* We have combined former modules on interviewing for information and job interviewing to form a single, stronger chapter on interviewing.

- ● **Stylistic Changes** In this edition we have made stylistic changes that contribute to readability.
  1. The organization has been streamlined wherever possible. The tendency is for textbooks to lengthen in each edition; we have made a special effort to not lengthen the book by eliminating duplication of ideas and integrating former modules on family and intimate communication.
  2. New and more diverse examples are provided, with special attention given to the diverse student population.
  3. Although much of the text is prescriptive in nature, special care has been taken to speak directly to the student without seeming to preach.

## **Pedagogical Features**

The following features support the learning model described above, enabling readers to translate theory and research into communication behaviors, recognize and practice their communication skills, and extend their learning outside the classroom.

*Chapter objectives:* Each chapter begins with student objectives.

*In-chapter practice sections:* Each chapter contains numerous exercises designed to help students reinforce information they have learned. In addition, many practice sections now include journal entries, suggestions for analysis that allow students to reflect on some of their experiences with the material that has been covered in that section and to analyze whether and how they have used the skills they have learned.

*Communication skills summary charts:* Each skill presented in the text is summarized in a communication skills summary chart with a definition of the skill, a brief description of its use, steps for using the skill, and an example to illustrate the skill in practice. The communication skills glossary in



## P R E F A C E

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Appendix A collects the summaries of all thirty major skills discussed in the book.

*Chapter summaries:* Each chapter includes a summary of the key ideas in the chapter.

*Communication improvement goals statements:* At the end of each chapter in Parts I and II, students are encouraged to write communication improvement goals statements to help them with their mastery of a key skill within the chapter.

*Featured readings:* At the end of each chapter we feature a book that is related to the material in the chapter. In some cases these are popular books that have reached best-seller status, such as John Gray's *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* and Richard Nelson Bolles's *What Color Is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers*. In other cases the recommended readings are particularly provocative books that encourage the student to think about one or more of the concepts presented in the chapter. Examples include Richard C. Huseman and John D. Hatfield's *Managing the Equity Factor: Or "After All I've Done for You . . ."* and Robert E. Alberti and Michael L. Emmons's *Your Perfect Right: A Guide to Assertive Living*. In all cases, the detailed annotations show how these books can help students extend their learning.

*Skills and problems glossaries:* Appendix A provides a complete glossary of the more than thirty skills covered in the text and Appendix B contains a glossary of sixteen communication problems that students are likely to encounter. The glossaries capture the spirit of *Inter-Act* in that they show concise definitions with concrete applications, guidelines, and examples.

In sum, we have tried to create a book instructors and students will see as not merely a textbook, but a set of resources for understanding and dealing effectively with real-life issues in interpersonal communication.

## S U P P L E M E N T A R Y M A T E R I A L S

As a user of this text you also have access to supplementary materials developed at Wadsworth.

*Voices: A Selection of Multicultural Readings:* A booklet of readings that highlight gender and cultural diversity in communication. These have been chosen to stimulate student thinking and discussion. The readings are drawn from various resources and perspectives. All focus on how certain aspects of communication are experienced by members of particular cultural or gender

groups or comment on how communication is used to define relationships within or between groups. Our hope is that the readings in the booklet might serve as a catalyst to further students' understanding of diversity.

*Instructor's Manual:* Includes pre- and post-test competency surveys, role-playing exercises, experiential learning exercises, discussion questions, written assignments, possible course schedules, suggested midterm and final exam questions (multiple choice and essay) with page references and answer keys, and transparency masters.

*Computerized Testing:* All test questions in the Instructor's Manual are available on disk for the IBM PC and compatibles, the Apple II series, and the Macintosh.

*Videotapes:* On adoption, the instructor may choose from Wadsworth's highly acclaimed Skills on Tape videoseries, including the Interpersonal Competence tapes developed at Golden West College by Sharon Ratliffe and Dave Hudson.

## **Acknowledgments**

We would like to thank the following instructors for providing helpful reviews of our manuscript: Dale Bluman, Shippensburg University; Joseph Coppolino, Nassau Community College; Sharon Ratliffe, Golden West Community College; Georgia Swanson, Baldwin Wallace College; Mike Wallace, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis; and Dianna Wynn, Prince George's Community College.

Take this short walk through

# Inter-Act

SEVENTH EDITION

... and see how active learning  
will help you  
communicate effectively —  
*step by step by step.*

Interpersonal communication isn't a spectator sport. Right from the start, this action-oriented text guides you step by step in understanding and mastering communication skills.

Through **INTER-  
ACT**'s seven-step learning model — applied systematically throughout — you'll learn concepts and theories, then see them at work in realistic examples. You'll learn and practice the steps in each skill, perform self-assessment exercises, and

then apply what you've learned in and out of the classroom.

Here's a walk-through of just what you'll find as you study **INTER-ACT**. You're just a step away from beginning to communicate successfully in your own relationships.



**CHAPTER OBJECTIVES** help you focus on the key ideas you'll be learning.



**OBJECTIVES**

After you have read this chapter, you should be able to define and/or explain:

- Contrasts between verbal and nonverbal communication
- Types of body motions
- Five functions of nonverbal communication
- Paralanguage and its major elements
- How clothing, touching behavior, and use of time affect self-presentation
- How the use of space communicates
- Ways that temperature, lighting, and color affect communication
- Ways of implementing your understanding of nonverbal communication
- Cultural and gender considerations



**PRACTICE SECTIONS** throughout each chapter reinforce important information while giving you the chance to put communications concepts to work. By doing the exercises and practicing skills as you study, you'll be better prepared to use your new skills where they count the most — outside of the classroom.



**Empathizing**

**BY YOURSELF**

Consider the following three comments you might hear from a friend:

1. Tyrell sent me flowers for no apparent reason.
2. I got a C on the test.
3. I banged my head on the door frame.

In each of these cases, the speaker could have any of at least three states of mind: The speaker could look at the event as positive or humorous, as negative or troublesome, or as neither. List the nonverbal cues that you would expect to see to explain each of the possible frames of mind; then phrase statements that would show your recognition of each perceived state.

**IN GROUPS**

Have each person in the group relate a recent experience to which they had an emotional response without labeling the response. The response need not be a dramatic one. After the speaker has related an episode, have the group discuss what emotional states they perceive the speaker to have experienced as well as describe the verbal and nonverbal cues that led them to their conclusions. Then group members should indicate whether they were

able to empathize based on experiences or based on fantasy. Finally, the group should solicit comments from the speaker concerning the accuracy of their perceptions.

**JOURNAL ENTRY**

Recall the last time you effectively empathized with another person. Write a short analysis of the episode. Be sure to cover the following: What type of relationship do you have with this person? How long have you known the person? What was the person's emotional state? How did you recognize it?

2. Suppose that you and a close friend (or fiancé or spouse) were involved in the conflicts above. Select two of them and prepare a procedure that you believe would be most likely to manage the conflicts.

**WITH A GROUP**

Discuss your conflict management plans to determine the likelihood of success of each.

**JOURNAL ENTRY**

Recount in your journal a recent conflict situation in which you believe you "won" or "lost." What contributed to the outcome? Did you have any control? What skills mentioned in this chapter might have improved the means of resolving the conflict? Reflect on a time when you won a battle but lost the war; that is, you appeared to come out ahead at the moment but the long-term quality of the relationship was damaged. What behaviors were responsible for the damage? What might you have done to salvage the relationship?

◆ ◆ **Summary**

Conflict is often defined as interaction between persons expressing opposing interests, views, or opinions. We cope with conflicts in a variety of ways. Negative behaviors include withdrawal, surrender, and aggression. Positive behaviors include discussion and persuasion.

Conflict management begins with a mutual desire to manage conflict successfully. Those in conflict may begin by trying to identify the true subject of the conflict. Although pseudoconflicts are not real conflicts at all, there are many sources of genuine conflict. They may be content conflicts over facts, interpretations of facts, definitions, or choices; they may be value conflicts

**JOURNAL**

**ENTRIES** are often included in the Practice Sections. They ask you to analyze *how* you have used the skills under discussion. By reflecting on your own experiences, you'll internalize the material — a key step in incorporating behavioral skills into your daily interactions.

**Basic Communication Skills**

SKILL	USE	PROCEDURE	EXAMPLE
<b>Paraphrasing</b> Putting into words your understanding of the meaning you get from another's statement.	To increase listening efficiency; to avoid message confusion; to discover the speaker's motivation.	1. Listen carefully. 2. Determine what the message means to you. 3. Restate the message using your own words to show the meaning you received from the message.	Grace says, "At two minutes to five, the boss gave me three letters that had to be in the mail that evening!" Bonita replies, "If I understand you correctly, you were really resentful that the boss would dump important work on you right before closing time."
<b>Supporting</b> Saying something that soothes, reduces tension, or pacifies.	To help people feel better about themselves or what they have said or done.	1. Listen to what the person is saying. 2. Try to empathize with the person's feelings. 3. Phrase a reply that is in harmony with these feelings. 4. Supplement your verbal response with appropriate nonverbal responses. 5. Indicate your willingness to be of help if possible.	In response to Tony's statement, "I'm really frosted that I didn't get the promotion," Alex replies, "I can understand your disappointment; you've really worked hard for it."

- (4) supplement your verbal response with appropriate nonverbal responses, and (5) if it seems appropriate, indicate your willingness to help.

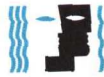
**INTERPRETING**

When a person sees only one possible explanation for a given event, the most helpful response may provide an interpretation. *Interpreting* consists of attempting to point out an alternative or hidden meaning of an event.

**SKILLS**

**SUMMARY CHARTS** give you a quick overview of each skill presented in the text. They include a definition of the skill, a description of its use, steps involved, and an example of the skill in practice. They will be helpful in reviewing and reinforcing what you've learned.

**CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS and GENDER CONSIDERATIONS** sections, marked throughout the text with icons, help you become more conscious of how diversity in gender and culture can affect interpersonal communication.



## Cultural and Gender Considerations

In this chapter we have tried to focus on nonverbal analysis that will provide you with the greatest chance of improving your communication competence in the use of nonverbal communication. Although the conclusions drawn are valid in general, specific cultural and gender differences need to be considered.

- **Cultural Differences** Major cultural differences occur in eye contact, body motions, touch, and perceptions of time and space.

While a majority of people in the United States and other Western cultures expect those with whom they are communicating to “look them in the eye,” Larry Samovar and Richard Porter conclude from their review of research that direct eye contact is not a custom throughout the world.<sup>17</sup> In Japan, for example, people are taught not to look another in the eye but to look at a position around the Adam’s apple. Chinese, Indonesians, and rural Mexicans also lower their eyes as a sign of deference—to them, too much eye contact is a sign of bad manners. Arabs, in contrast, look directly into the eyes of the person with whom they are talking for long periods—to them direct eye contact shows interest. There are also differences in use of eye contact in the subcultures of the United States. For instance, African-Americans use more continuous eye contact than whites when they are speaking but less when they are listening.<sup>18</sup>

People of other cultures also show considerable differences in use of gestures, movements, and facial expression. Gestures in particular can assume completely different meanings. For instance, the forming of a circle with the thumb and forefinger—the OK sign in the United States—means zero or worthless in France, a symbol for money in Japan, a curse in some Arab countries, and an obscene gesture in Germany, Brazil, and Australia.<sup>19</sup> In addition, displays of emotion vary. For instance, in some Eastern cultures, people have been socialized to deintensify emotional behavior cues, whereas members of other cultures have been socialized to amplify their displays of

ness of B’s perception checks. The exercise continues until each person in the group has a chance to be A, B, and C. After completing the exercise, the participants discuss how the skill of perception checking affected the accuracy of the communication.

## Summary

Perception is the process of gathering sensory information and assigning meaning to it. Our perceptions are a result of our selection, organization, and interpretation of sensory information. Inaccurate perceptions cause us to see the world not as it is but as we would like it to be.

The self-concept is the total of a person’s generalizations about self; it is presented publicly through the roles we enact. Our self-image, our perception of our self-concept, is formed through self-appraisal and is influenced by our reactions to our experiences and the reactions and responses of others. Our self-image affects communication by creating self-fulfilling prophecies and by filtering messages we receive. Our self-esteem is our evaluation of ourselves in either positive or negative ways. Our self-esteem and communication relate to influence communication style, to moderate competing internal messages, and to influence our perception of others.

Perception also plays an important role in forming impressions of others. Factors likely to influence our social perceptions are physical characteristics and social behaviors, stereotyping, and emotional states. Because research shows that the accuracy of people’s perceptions and judgments varies considerably, your communication will be most successful if you do not rely entirely on your impressions to determine how another person feels or what that person is really like. You will improve (or at least better understand) your perceptions of others if you take into account physical characteristics and social behaviors, stereotyping, and emotional states.

You can learn to improve perception if you actively question the accuracy of your perceptions, seek more information to verify perceptions, talk with

**CHAPTER SUMMARIES** provide you with yet another chance to reinforce what you’ve learned by summarizing key ideas presented in the chapter.

### ◆◆■ Summary

Responding appropriately is the final phase of listening. Responding well involves a complete set of skills.

Appropriate responses show a person's empathy. Empathy relates to determining the emotional state of another person and responding in an appropriate manner. Empathic responses recognize the person's right to his or her feelings and show that we can share in those feelings.

Clarifying responses help to ensure that people are sharing the same meanings. Questioning and paraphrasing are two skills that you can use to ensure understanding. Well-phrased questions are specific and sensitive. Paraphrases can check understanding of message content, feelings, or both.

Helping responses give people information about themselves or their behavior. These responses include supporting, interpreting, praising, and giving constructive criticism. Both praise and criticism should be specific and timely. In addition, several guidelines can ensure that criticism is beneficial: Make sure the person is interested in hearing criticism, describe the behavior on which the criticism is based, precede negative statements with positive ones if possible, be specific, criticize only recent behavior, direct criticism at behavior the person can do something about, and show what a person can do to correct a problem.

Problem responses hinder communication by planting the seeds of discontent within people about themselves or about the relationship. Furthermore, inappropriate responses can scuttle efforts at understanding meaning. Irrelevant, tangential, incongruous, and interrupting responses are some of the most common types of problem responses.

### ◆◆■ Communication Improvement Goal Statement

Select one of the response skills that you would most like to improve: empathy, questioning, paraphrasing, supporting, interpreting, praising, asking for criticism, or giving criticism. Write a communication improvement goal statement following the guidelines on page 33 of Chapter 1.

### ◆◆■ Featured Reading

"I Don't Know What to Say . . .": How to Help and Support Someone Who Is Dying  
Robert Buckman

(Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989)

Undoubtedly one of the most difficult challenges for a person is learning how to respond to those who are seriously ill and who are dying. Dr. Robert

pend great amounts of time together, and in a special way. Intimate relationships can be discussed in terms of family relationships, male relationships, female relationships, and male-female relationships.

Relationships go through a life cycle that includes starting or building, stabilizing, and ending. In the starting or building stage, people are attracted to each other, strike up a conversation, keep conversations going, and move to more intimate levels. People nurture good relationships through the skills of describing, equality, openness, and provisionalism. Many of our relationships end. We may terminate them in interpersonally sound ways or in ways that destroy any chance of continuing the relationship on any meaningful level.

### ◆◆■ Communication Improvement Goal Statement

Select a skill from among speaking descriptively, equally, openly, and provisionally and that you would most like to improve. Write a communication improvement goal statement following the guidelines on page 33 of Chapter 1.

**COMMUNICATION IMPROVEMENT GOAL STATEMENTS** (at the end of each chapter in Parts I and II) help you analyze your specific strengths and weaknesses and commit to improving your interpersonal skills in concrete ways. You'll use the steps in the Verderbers' seven-step learning model in these exercises.



**A FEATURED READING** at the end of each chapter offers a synopsis of a popular and/or provocative book that you might want to read to supplement the chapter material. For instance, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* is a best-selling book that will tell you more about the differences in communication styles between men and women. It's just one example of the Verderbers' many suggestions.



**A SKILLS GLOSSARY** at the back of the book combines all the Skills Summary Charts presented throughout the text. **A PROBLEMS GLOSSARY** pinpoints 16 common communication obstacles and suggests how to overcome them. Together they provide a helpful reference for you to use whenever you want to brush up on your skills.



That's all there is to it. Now it's time to start your own step-by-step journey toward more effective interpersonal communication — with **INTER-ACT!**





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