



Mastering

COMMUNICATION

Gouran · Miller · Wiethoff

MASTERING COMMUNICATION

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Preface

The twentieth century has been a time of remarkable achievement, but also a period in which we have experienced a substantial number of economic, political, and social problems that deny us full access to the benefits of our expanding knowledge. To bring people's well-being into greater harmony with the possibilities our advances have created will require increasing numbers of well-educated citizens. It will also require that they be able to use their intellectual skills and personal resources in ways that enable them to manage their relationships with others effectively, address significant issues, make important decisions, and influence the thinking and behavior of others. *Mastering Communication* is designed to assist you in understanding and developing the communicative skills necessary for performing these functions.

Themes of the Book

Several distinct but related themes informed the writing of this book. Our hope is that each of them, working together, will contribute materially to the goals outlined above.

Communication Skill Building. One of the principal goals of the Introduction to Speech Communication course, and, indeed, one of the principal motivations for you in taking the course, is the acquisition of basic skills across the spectrum of communication settings. *Mastering Communication* introduces and reiterates skill assessment and skill building continually throughout the book so that you finish a particular chapter with a strong sense of your own competencies in a specific area of communication.

Leadership and Social Responsibility. Throughout the text you will see repeated emphasis on the dual themes of leadership and social responsibility. Much of your education focuses on career preparation, but other important aspects of it involve equipping you for broader concerns of social and professional life. The quality of our personal and collective lives depends on our ability to bring leadership to the tasks and situations we continually confront, and to do so in a socially responsible manner. We exercise such leadership through communication.

Cross-cultural Differences in Communication. While communication is a universal fact of life, the forms it takes vary from one society to another, and, within societies, from one group to another. Ethnocentrism—the automatic belief that one's own culture and patterns of behavior are superior to other cultures and patterns of behavior—is a worldview that few of us can, or would wish to maintain. Thus in this text you will discover some interesting surprises about ways in which communication both varies and remains stable throughout cultures.

Features and Pedagogy

In carrying out our goals and the themes of the book, we have created several special features and pedagogical devices which, we hope, will significantly reinforce and enhance your understanding of the material.

Self-Assessment Boxes. Each chapter includes a special boxed feature designed to test your skills in a particular area of communication competence by identifying strengths and weaknesses, and testing comprehension of chapter material. For example, chapter 4's "Testing your doublespeak detection skill," or chapter 5's "Nonverbal skills assessment."

Mastering Communication Skills Boxes. As a follow up to the self-assessment box, Mastering Communication Skills boxes focus on a key aspect of the communication process presented in the chapter and provide a skill-building exercise designed to give you greater confidence as a communicator. For example, chapter 7's "Utilizing conflict management skills," and chapter 16's "Building speech confidence through preparation."

Focus on Leadership Boxes. Most of us know that an effective leader must be an adept communicator. But how important is listening to leadership? What kinds of verbal and nonverbal communication skills are crucial to successful leadership? How can you best exercise leadership in group settings? It is to these, and related questions that the *Focus on Leadership* feature is addressed. Found in each chapter, this special boxed feature explores such issues as the need for leaders to be sensitive to sex differences when sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal communication; the role of perception in leadership; and the role of ethics and social responsibility in leadership.

Mastering Communication has a number of other features that will help you in studying, understanding, and applying the material presented.

Chapter Objectives identify goals you should master by carefully reading the chapter and completing the exercises. These objectives give you a roadmap to what in the chapter you should understand and be able to do upon completion, as well as another basis for self-assessment.

Key Terms and Concepts are identified at the beginning of each chapter to give you a preview of vocabulary that is likely to be new to you. Each of these terms is **boldfaced** in the text where it first appears.

Chapter Summaries restate the major ideas presented in the chapter. In some cases you may find it valuable to read the summaries first in order to focus attention on the central ideas and enable you to think ahead as they read the full text of the chapter.

Chapter Exercises provide yet another opportunity for basic skill building. Each chapter concludes with four to six exercises that you may carry out by yourself, or in groups.

Related Readings are a valuable resource for you in exploring a given topic further. All entries are annotated to give you a brief description of the work cited.

The **Glossary**, found at the end of the text, pulls together all the key terms from every chapter of the book and provides succinct definitions for study and review.

Plan of the Book

Mastering Communication is divided into four major parts. Part I focuses on general principles of communication and the critical elements involved. The five chapters comprising this part of the volume address matters related to the nature of communication and its connection to leadership (Chapter 1), perception and communication (Chapter 2), listening (Chapter 3), verbal aspects of communication (Chapter 4), and nonverbal communication (Chapter 5).

In Part II, you will begin to learn how the principles of communication to which you have been introduced in Part I apply in the context of interpersonal interaction. Interpersonal communication, interpersonal relationships, and interviewing are the topics examined in Chapters 6, 7, and 8, respectively.

Part III moves to the arena of group communication, with special attention to problem-solving and decision-making discussion. Chapter 9 introduces you to the subject of group process and then relates it specifically to problem solving and decision making. In Chapter 10, you will learn about the role of leadership in problem-solving and decision-making groups and how you can influence these processes.

The final 8 chapters of the book constitute Part IV and focus on communicating formally in public situations. In studying the materials included, you will learn about audience analysis (Chapter 11), how to choose a subject, purpose, and theme for a speech (Chapter 12), about locating material useful for developing your ideas (Chapter 13), how best to organize your thoughts (Chapter 14), how to use language to your advantage (Chapter 15), how to become more skillful in presenting a speech confidently (Chapter 16), what are the best ways of preparing a speech to inform (Chapter 17), and how to approach the speaking situation when your purpose is to persuade (Chapter 18).

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Contents

Part I	MASTERING COMMUNICATION ESSENTIALS	2		
Chapter 1	Leadership Through Communication	3		
	The Importance of Being Able to Communicate Well	4		
	The Nature of Communication	6		
	<i>A Definition of Communication</i>	<i>Objectives of Communication</i>		
	<i>How Communication Works</i>	<i>Factors Affecting Communication</i>		
	<i>Generalizations About Communication</i>			
	Testing Your Communication Skill	7		
	The Relationship of Communication to Leadership	12		
	<i>Ethical Communication</i>			
	What You Will Learn	14		
	SELF-ASSESSMENT: Assessing Your Communication Knowledge and Skills	15		
Chapter 2	Perception and Communication	21		
	The Nature of Perception	22		
	FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Perception and Leadership	23		
	The Stages of Perception	25		
	<i>Sensation</i>	<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Categorization</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
	Characteristics of Perception	26		
	<i>Perceptions Are Tentative</i>	<i>Perceptions Are Learned</i>	<i>Perceptions Are Selective</i>	
	MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Combating Cultural Stereotypes and Other Misperceptions	29		
	Factors Affecting Perception	30		
	<i>Beliefs</i>	<i>Motives</i>	<i>Attitudes</i>	
	How Perception Influences Communication	32		
	<i>Influences on Message Production</i>	<i>Influences on Message Reception</i>		
	How Communication Can Influence Perception	38		
	<i>Focusing Attention</i>	<i>Providing Categories for the Interpretation of Experience</i>	<i>Creating Associations Among Categories</i>	
	SELF-ASSESSMENT: Self-Test of Key Concepts	43		

Chapter 3	Listening	47		
	The Importance of Listening	49		
	FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Listening and Leadership	51		
	The Listening Process	51		
	Hearing Versus Listening	52		
	Steps in the Listening Process	52		
	<i>Step 1: Hearing</i>	<i>Step 2: Attending to the Message</i>	<i>Step 3:</i>	
		<i>Interpreting</i>		
	Types of Listening	58		
	<i>Listening for Enjoyment</i>	<i>Listening for Information</i>	<i>Evaluative</i>	
		<i>Listening</i>	<i>Reflective Listening</i>	
	SELF-ASSESSMENT: Adapting Your Listening Approach	60		
	Recognizing Common Listening Problems	61		
	<i>Letting "Thought Speed" Outrace Listening Speed</i>	<i>Faking</i>		
		<i>Attention</i>	<i>Allowing Distractions to Interfere</i>	<i>Listening Only to</i>
		<i>Easy Material</i>	<i>Becoming Overstimulated</i>	<i>Selective</i>
		<i>Listening</i>	<i>Egocentric Listening</i>	
	Positive Listening Behaviors	64		
	<i>A Checklist of Positive Listening Behaviors</i>			
	Reflective Listening Skills	67		
	<i>Defining Reflective Listening</i>	<i>Reflective Listening Problems and</i>		
		<i>Correctives</i>	<i>Additional Reflective Listening Skills</i>	
	MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Recognizing Effective Reflective			
	Listeners	70		
Chapter 4	Verbal Communication	75		
	What Is Verbal Communication?	76		
	Why Study Verbal Communication?	78		
	Language and Experience	79		
	<i>Language and Perception</i>			
	The Functions of Verbal Communication	80		
	<i>Language Is Used to Clarify and Obscure</i>	82		
	SELF-ASSESSMENT: Testing Your Doublespeak Detection Skill	83		
	The Relationship Between Language and Meaning	84		
	<i>Meaning Is Tied to People</i>	<i>Denotative and Connotative</i>		
		<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Language Is Dynamic</i>	<i>Meaning Is Tied to Context</i>
		<i>Meaning Is Tied to Intent</i>	<i>Meaning Is Tied to Sequencing</i>	
	The Social Effects of Language Use	89		
	<i>Language Use Defines Membership</i>	<i>Language Use Defines Rights and</i>		
		<i>Responsibilities</i>	<i>Language Use Reveals How Others See the World</i>	

	MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: The Dominant Culture Strikes Back: Co-Optation of Language and Symbols	93
	Problems Caused By Language Use	94
	<i>Polarization Intensional Orientation Bypassing The Fact-Inference Confusion Static Evaluation Sexist and Racist Language</i>	
	FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Sex Differences in Language Use	101
Chapter 5	Nonverbal Communication	105
	Defining Nonverbal Communication	106
	<i>Vocal Versus Nonvocal Arbitrary Symbol Use Intentionality The Ability to Manipulate</i>	
	The Importance of Nonverbal Communication	109
	<i>Nonverbal Communication and Leadership</i>	
	Comparing Nonverbal to Verbal Communication	110
	<i>Nonverbal Communication Is More Ambiguous A Less Arbitrary Connection Between Symbol and Referent Nonverbal Communication Is More Biologically Determined Less Overt Control in the Nonverbal Domain</i>	
	The Interaction Between Nonverbal and Verbal Communication	114
	<i>Repeat Complement Accent Substitute Contradict Regulate</i>	
	The Social Functions of Nonverbal Communication	115
	<i>Communicating Identity Communicating Relationship Status Communicating Emotions Exerting Influence Achieving Understanding Managing Interaction</i>	
	FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Managing the Flow of Group Discussions with Nonverbal Cues	116
	Dimensions of Nonverbal Behavior	120
	<i>Kinesics Cross-Cultural Differences in Kinesic Use Proxemics Cultural Differences in Proxemic Use Haptics Cultural Differences in the Use of Haptics Paralanguage Physical Appearance Chronemics</i>	
	SELF-ASSESSMENT: Nonverbal Skills Assessment	125
	MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Gender Differences in Nonverbal Behavior	128

Part II	MASTERING INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION	136
Chapter 6	Interpersonal Communication	137
	Defining Interpersonal Communication	138
	<i>The Contextual Definition The Developmental View</i>	

The Functions of Interpersonal Communication	142	
<i>Social Knowledge Acquisition</i>	<i>Building a Context of Understanding</i>	<i>Establishing and Negotiating Identity</i>
MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: When Information Increases Uncertainty	147	
Interpersonal Communication Competence	157	
<i>Defining Interpersonal Communication Competence</i>	<i>Competence in Conversation</i>	
FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Leadership and Competent Communication	159	
SELF-ASSESSMENT: Evaluating Your Interpersonal Communication Competence	164	
Chapter 7 Communication in Relationships	171	
Exploring the Features of Interpersonal Relationships	172	
<i>The Key Features of Interpersonal Relationships</i>	<i>Classifying Interpersonal Relationships</i>	
FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: The Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship	176	
The Dynamics of Relational Change	177	
<i>Relationship Initiation</i>	<i>Relationship Maintenance</i>	<i>Relationship Termination</i>
A Theory of Relational Change	182	
<i>Stages of Relationship Escalation</i>	<i>Stages of Relationship Termination</i>	<i>Movement Through Knapp's Relational Stages</i>
SELF-ASSESSMENT: Personal Idioms in Close Relationships	183	
Managing Conflict in Interpersonal Relationships	187	
<i>The Nature of Conflict</i>	<i>Common Problems in Our Approaches to Conflict</i>	
MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Utilizing Conflict Management Skills	194	
Chapter 8 Interviewing	199	
The Nature of the Interview Process	200	
<i>Defining the Interview</i>	<i>Roles of Interviewer and Interviewee</i>	<i>Types of Interviews</i>
<i>Questions in the Interview</i>		
MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Building Your Secondary Question Repertoire	207	
Conducting an Information-Gathering Interview	211	
<i>Steps Prior to the Interview</i>	<i>Communicating Your Way Through the Interview</i>	<i>Maintaining Control in the Interview</i>

FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Structuring Questions to Gain Accurate
Information 211

Participating in an Employment Interview 215
Preparing Yourself for the Interview Performing During the Interview

SELF-ASSESSMENT: Nonverbal Behavior in the Interview 217

Part III MASTERING GROUP COMMUNICATION 222

Chapter 9 Group Problem Solving and Decision Making 223

The Nature of Groups 224
What Groups Are Characteristics of Groups

FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: The Leadership Role 228

The Value of Group Problem Solving and Decision Making 229
*Problem Solving Versus Decision Making Reasons for Group Problem
Solving and Decision Making*

SELF-ASSESSMENT: Distinguishing Problem-Solving from Decision-Making
Tasks 230

Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Discussions 232
*Group Problem Solving Group Decision Making The Relationship
of Decision Making to Problem Solving*

MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Increasing Your Creative Problem-Solving
Skill 236

Recognizing Differences in Decision-Making Tasks 239

Preparing for Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Discussions 241

Chapter 10 Leadership in Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Groups 247

The Nature of Leadership 248
*A Definition of Leadership Perspectives on Leadership Designated
Versus Emergent Leadership*

SELF-ASSESSMENT: Evaluating Your Leadership Style 251

MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Solving Group Problems 254

The Role of Leadership in Problem-Solving and Decision-Making
Groups 256

Responsibilities of Leadership 257

FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Recognizing the Requirements of Group
Leadership 258

*Prediscussion Responsibilities In-Process
Responsibilities Postdiscussion Responsibilities*

Qualities that Promote Effective Leadership	261
<i>Commitment to Group Goals</i>	<i>Sense of Responsibility</i>
<i>Understanding of Task Requirements</i>	<i>Interpersonal Sensitivity</i>
<i>Ability to Manage Conflicts</i>	<i>Verbal Ability</i>
<i>Listening</i>	<i>Openness</i>
<i>Adaptability</i>	<i>Fairness</i>

Part IV MASTERING PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

268**Chapter 11 Analyzing Audiences 269**

FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Gorbachev and Yeltsin—Flawed Audience Analysis? 271

Effective Speakers Analyze Their Audiences 272

Historical Perspectives *Contemporary Perspectives*

Investigating Your Audience 275

Size *Age* *Gender* *Education* *Income* *Occupation*
 Memberships *Culture* *Time* *Place* *Intermember*
 Relationships *Belief System*

MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Building Skills in Audience Analysis 283

SELF-ASSESSMENT: Assessing the Effects of Time, Place, Intermember Relationships, and Belief Systems on a Speech 284

Chapter 12 Choosing Subject, Purpose, and Theme 291

Choosing an Appropriate Subject 293

Targeting Subject Matter *Limiting Subject Matter*

MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Targeting Subject Matter 297

Choosing an Appropriate Purpose 299

Speaking to Inform *Speaking to Persuade* *Speaking on a Special*
 Occasion *Speaking with Multiple Purposes*

Speaking on Special Occasions—A Bonanza 300

Choosing an Appropriate Theme 301

Themes Express Special Perspectives *Themes Call for a Precise*
 Response *Themes Maintain a Clear Focus* *Themes Become*
 Memorable

SELF-ASSESSMENT: Have I Selected an Appropriate Purpose? 302

FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Lincoln's Masterful Second Inaugural Address 305

Chapter 13 Discovering Speech Material 311

Discovering Material Through Other People 313

Conversation *Interviews*

Discovering Material Through Library Research 317
General Reference Works *Specific or Detailed Resources* *Note Taking*

MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Discovering Library Resources 324

FOCUS ON ETHICS: A Senator and Plagiarism 325

Chapter 14 Developing Speech Organization 329

Recognizing the Principles of Organization 330
Unity *Coordination* *Subordination*

Using Organizational Patterns 337
The Conventional Pattern *The Spatial Pattern* *The Temporal Pattern* *The Problem-Solving Pattern* *The Causal Pattern*

MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Recognizing the Principles of Organization 337

Using Introductions and Conclusions 344
Introducing Your Speech *Concluding Your Speech*

SELF ASSESSMENT: Recognizing Patterns of Organization 345

Using Outlines 351
Symbols *Spacing* *Phrasing* *Sample Outline*

FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Women Leaders and Organizational Skills 352

Chapter 15 Using Language Skillfully 363

Using Oral Language 364
Simple Diction *Personal References* *Flexible Grammar* *Active Voice* *Relatively Short, Simple Statements*

Developing and Evaluating Four Features of Oral Language 367
Clarity *Emphasis* *Schemes* *Vividness* *Appropriateness* *Self-Evaluation*

MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Adapting Language for Oral Delivery 368

FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Jesse Jackson—A Master Orator 374

SELF-ASSESSMENT: Identifying Figures of Speech 378

Chapter 16 Developing Skillful Delivery and Speech Confidence 385

Using the Four Types of Delivery 386
Impromptu Delivery *Extemporaneous Delivery*
Manuscript Delivery *Memorized Delivery*

The Ancient Art of Delivery 391

Contents

Using Vocal and Physical Delivery	391
<i>Vocal Delivery</i> <i>Physical Delivery</i>	
FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Delivery in Speeches about the Gulf War	399
Developing Speech Confidence	401
<i>Before the Speech</i> <i>During the Speech</i> <i>After the Speech</i>	
SELF-ASSESSMENT: Using Video to Improve Physical Delivery	402
MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Building Speech Confidence Through Preparation	403
Chapter 17 Speaking to Inform	411
FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: Teaching the American People about AIDS	413
Understanding the Process of Information	414
<i>Recognition</i> <i>Understanding</i> <i>Retention</i>	
Reaching Informative Goals	417
<i>Interpretation</i> <i>Description</i> <i>Demonstration</i>	
Building the Speech with Supporting Materials	418
<i>Definition / Explanation</i> <i>Quotation / Paraphrase</i> <i>Comparison / Analogy</i> <i>Example / Illustration</i> <i>Number / Statistic</i>	
MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Identifying Support Material	425
Using Audio-Visual Aids	427
<i>Types of Audio-Visual Aids</i> <i>Guidelines on the Use of Audio-Visual Aids</i>	
SELF-ASSESSMENT: Using Audio-Visual Aids	433
Chapter 18 Speaking to Persuade	437
Understanding the Process of Persuasion	438
<i>Change</i> <i>The Relationship Between Attitudes and Behavior</i>	
FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP: The National Speaker's Association	439
Planning Your Persuasive Goals	440
<i>Persuasive Direction</i> <i>Persuasive Degree</i>	
Themes of Persuasion	443
<i>Fact</i> <i>Conjecture</i> <i>Value</i> <i>Policy</i>	
Using Persuasive Appeals	446
<i>Credibility Appeal</i> <i>Emotional Appeal</i> <i>Rational Appeal</i>	
SELF-ASSESSMENT: Credibility and Leadership—How Strong Is the Link?	447
MASTERING COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Spotting Fallacies in Your Evidence	458
Glossary	462
References	469
Index	476

MASTERING COMMUNICATION

PART

I

MASTERING COMMUNICATION ESSENTIALS

