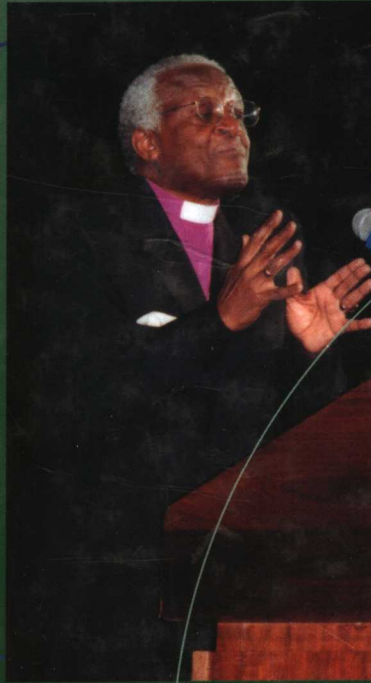


# Applications. Communication

## For Personal and Professional Contexts



James Payne



# **Applications.Communication**

**For Personal and Professional Contexts**

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# Introduction

## Key Concept

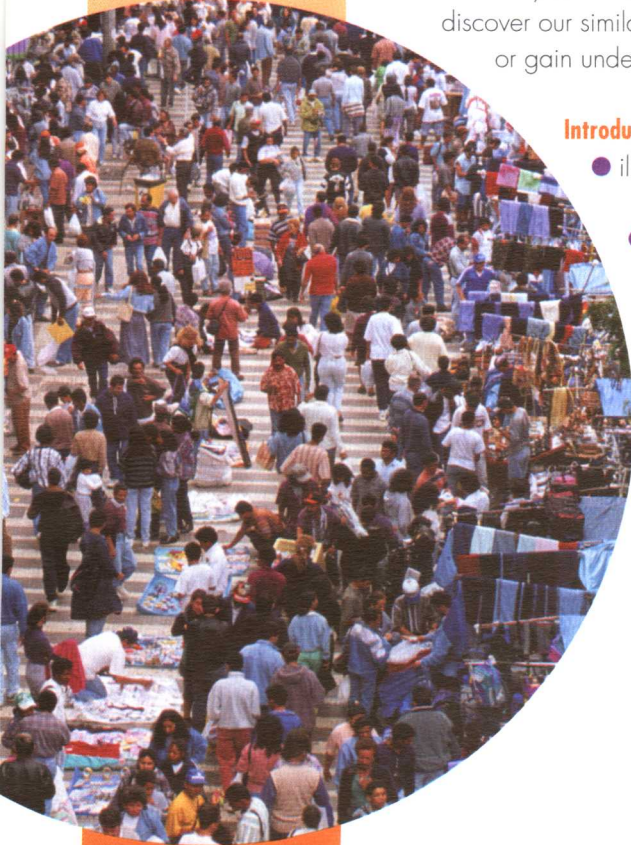
Oral communication is a very important part of everyday life. It is important to you because, as you make communication decisions, you are building your personal and professional future. Whether it is oral, written, or nonverbal, communication is what makes us human. It assists us in building relationships and carrying out daily work. Communication is also important to our society generally because it helps us develop a sense of community even though we are a diverse country with many differences of opinion. Through communication we discover our similarities of interest and purpose and can reach consensus or gain understanding on many issues about which we disagree.

## Introduction Objectives

- illustrate the importance of oral communication in daily life
- discuss social and ethical responsibilities of our communication decisions

## Key Terms

- listener
- occasion
- self
- social/ethical responsibility
- task





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ome things are so much a part of our lives that we don't even notice them. For example, most of us take breathing for granted. But if you study singing, you learn the mechanics of breathing so you can become a better singer. Most of us take eating for granted, until we want to improve our diet.

Like breathing and eating, communicating is part of our daily lives. Like breathing and eating, communication is really a requirement for survival. And like breathing and eating, we take communicating for granted...until we want to get better at it.

This textbook brings together a great deal of information on oral communication. When you read a chapter, you will get suggestions of what works for communicators and why. You'll get lists of ideas, paragraphs of explanation, and pages of suggestions. But everything in the book is designed to accomplish a primary task: We don't want you to take your communication for granted. To become a better communicator in personal and professional situations, you must become aware of your communication. You must reflect on it, talk about it with others, and plan for improvements.

This book is designed to help you with this first goal, and then to give you the kind of information you'll need for personal reflection, interaction with others, and planning for your future communication.

### **The Importance of Oral Communication**

Even though you can all survive with the communication skills you currently possess, the value of effective oral communication—and of improving your skills—is immediately evident when you consider what it can mean to you.

**Personal Importance.** In some societies silence, or isolation, is the worst punishment that an individual can receive. Being a part of the lives of others and having them be a part of ours—can anything be more important? We want good friends. We want entertaining conversations. We want happy, harmonious relationships. How can we get these things we desire? Through communication. Does it sound too extreme to say our personal happiness can depend on our effective communication? What are the foundations for friendship and love, if not communication?

**Professional Importance.** Even if our social lives weren't dependent on effective communication, our professional lives are. In a work environment, we communicate with others to get a job done. When we communicate well, the

job is usually done better. The better the job, the more likely it is to be financially rewarded. In short, communication can help us realize our career and financial goals.

If that seems a little blunt, think about this: Which fast food restaurant do you want to eat in: one in which the manager can communicate effectively the importance of cleanliness or one in which the manager just hopes employees get the message? Many businesses don't exist today because people simply couldn't communicate well. Sadly, many people haven't thrived in their careers because they couldn't communicate well.

**Social Importance.** Think beyond yourself, and you will realize that effective oral communication is part of our drive toward improving our society. In fact, oral communication was so important that the Constitution's First Amendment guaranteed freedom of speech. Throughout the history of the United States, we have cultivated the belief that freedom and democracy depend on the open exchange of ideas.

Now think of yourself. What kind of society do you want to live in? One that promotes effective oral communication so the society can thrive and improve or one that ignores the need for effective oral communication?

**Choices.** Ultimately, improving your personal communication means giving yourself more choices. The more people with whom you can communicate, the more friends and acquaintances you'll have. The more you can take advantage of professional speaking opportunities, the more likely you'll be to receive promotions, raises, and job offers. The more you participate in the political and social discussions of your community, the more you'll understand and the more you can make your opinions known, and the more influence you can have over policies and events that affect you. Choice is another thing we take for granted. Think about how your own personal choices will increase as you improve your communication skills.

### **Social and Ethical Responsibility**

As you can tell, communication is powerful; and with power comes responsibility. If communication can give you the power to make friends, it can give you the power to create enemies. If it can improve your professional and financial life, it can harm someone else's. If you can use communication to improve society, you can also use it to hurt society. And communication can be misused to restrict choices instead of to increase them.

Communication really is about others. Certainly, as we will discuss, you can communicate with yourself, but that will soon give way to a need to be with



and speak with others. Because your communication affects others, you must consider your social and ethical responsibility to others. Here are a few social responsibilities for you to consider as you begin this course of study.

Characteristics of communication	Implications for communicators
Socially and ethically responsible communication is honest.	Socially and ethically responsible communicators tell the truth.
Socially and ethically responsible communication is polite.	Socially and ethically responsible communicators respect the feelings of others.
Socially and ethically responsible communication is mutual.	Socially and ethically responsible communicators listen to and acknowledge the communication of others.
Socially and ethically responsible communication changes the lives of those around them.	Socially and ethically responsible communicators consider the effect of their communication.
Socially and ethically responsible communication is helpful.	Socially and ethically responsible communicators enable others to be better...personally and professionally.

These principles might seem simple to you, but they are anything but. Just think, if socially and ethically responsible communicators respect the feelings of others and tell the truth, what do you do if the truth hurts the feelings of others? That's not so easy. One thing you can do is tell the truth in a kind way, a way that will not hurt someone else. Again, this book asks that you keep your social and ethical responsibilities in mind as you improve your communication.

### Standards for Decision Making

Effective communication means effective decision making. You have the power to choose what you say, how you act, how you affect others. This text will gradually introduce you to many important ways of making those decisions. As you move forward, though, you'll always keep four things in mind: yourself, your listeners, your occasion, and your task.

**Self.** Communication is self-expression. You communicate to build a bridge between yourself and others. To do this, you must be comfortable with your message, with what you want to say. You'll always want to consider yourself in making communication decisions.

Does that seem selfish? Perhaps. But it is also respectful of others. Other people deserve to know the real you. What do you feel? What do you think?

How do you react to them? Your personal message is the motive for most communication. You feel a need to communicate. While you'll always need to consider others, you can't lose sight of yourself as the beginning of your communication.

**Listener.** Since thought and life experience will give you an idea of your personal message, this book focuses a great deal of attention on listeners. In fact, the approach this book takes is to get you to see the communication situation from the listener's point of view, to understand the listener and how he or she thinks. You'll be encouraged to evaluate the success of your communication on how your listener responds. The listener becomes, therefore, a basis for making communication decisions.

**Occasion.** Every communication act occurs somewhere, sometime. Often the best guide you have for knowing how and what to communicate is the occasion. This book will ask you to think about the communication situation, your role in it (self), and the role of your listener in it. As you can see, self and listener come together in the occasion, which forms a third basis for decision making.

**Task.** You'll want your communication to accomplish a goal or task. You'll make your communication decisions, in part, on what task you are trying to accomplish. This text suggests many common tasks that you will undertake. We hope it will give you many examples of the types of personal and professional tasks that most of us undertake every day. We hope it will help you see how those tasks can be managed with better communication.





## Introduction Summary

**T**his text proceeds from the idea that you want to improve your communication. More than that, it is built on the idea that when you improve your own communication, you will improve your life...personally and professionally. By practicing responsible communication, you will meet your own needs while benefiting others. We cannot live our lives taking our communication for granted. It is far too important to forget about. Like eating and breathing, it keeps us alive.

# C Contents

## Introduction

xii

## Unit One

### Applications Communication Basics

#### Chapter 1



<b>Application Communication Process</b>	<b>2</b>
Metacommunication: A Lifelong Skill for a Lifelong Learner	5
Communication Management — Metacommunication	7
Communication Management — Synonyms	9
Communication Management — The Feedback Loop	10
A Communication Model	11
Communication Management —	
Communicating within Organizational Channels	15
Communication Management — Negotiations and Transactions	22
Public Speaking Application: Metacommunication	25
Summary	28

#### Chapter 2



<b>Application Communication Management</b>	<b>31</b>
SPAM	35
S: Metacommunication and Situation	36
Communication Management —	
Checklist for Analyzing the Situation	38
P: Metacommunication and Purpose	39
Interpersonal Insight — Small Talk	40
Communication Management — Apprehension	42
A: Metacommunication and Audience	44
M: Metacommunication and Method	46
Reflecting and Evaluating: The Bases for Evaluation	51
Summary	52
Communication Management —	
Helpful Hints for Practicing Metacommunication	53

### Chapter 3



#### Application. Listening

The Listening Process	57
Levels of Listening	60
Communication Management — Levels of Listening	61
A Specialized Listening Application: The Focus Group	64
Overcoming Barriers to Effective Listening	65
Interpersonal Insight — Listening and the Hearing Impaired	66
Communication Management —	67
Solving Common Listening Problems	69
Improving Listening Skills	70
Interpersonal Insight — Feeling Heard	71
The Business of Listening	71
Summary	72

### Chapter 4



#### Application. Language

Denotation and Connotation	75
Communication Management — Connotation	78
Levels of Usage	79
Comparing Two Uses of Language	80
Language and Style	87
Interpersonal Insight —	92
Choosing Language in Everyday Conversation	94
Summary	95

### Chapter 5



#### Application. Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal Is Important	99
Elements of Nonverbal Communication	103
Mannerisms	105
Space and Nonverbal Communication	107
Interpersonal Insight —	107
Nonverbal Communication and Culture	109
Summary	110

## Unit Two

### Applications. Interpersonal Communication

#### Chapter 6



#### Application. Interpersonal Skills

Repeated Interpersonal Situations	116
Standards for Decision Making	119
Interpersonal Insight—Communicating in a Hierarchy	123
Communication Management—He Said, She Said	124
Making Introductions	125
Making Apologies	126
Giving Directions	127
Making Requests	128
Asking Questions	129
Interpersonal Insight—Strategic Questioning	131
Answering Questions	131
Conversation	132
Summary	134

#### Chapter 7



#### Application. Conducting an Interview

What Is an Interview?	138
Before You Interview	139
Communication Management—Types of Interviews	140
Conducting an Interview	141
Question Types	143
Strategic Questioning	144
Communication Management—Prohibited Questions	146
Making a Record	147
A Good Interviewer	147
Summary	149

#### Chapter 8



#### Application. Interviewing

SPAM and the Interview	151
What Are Interviewers Looking For?	153
Responsive Answers	157
Sincerity	158
Specificity	158
The Process	159
Make Your Letters Memorable	161

The Gatekeeper: Personnel Departments	164
Make Your Application Count	166
Résumés	167
Interpersonal Insight — Phone Etiquette	170
The Formal, Face-to-Face Interview	170
Interpersonal Insight — The Handshake	173
Metacommunication and the Interview	174
The Standard Questions	175
Summary	178

## Chapter 9



<b>Application.Communication Technology</b>	<b>181</b>
Technology — A Double-Edged Sword	183
Communication Management — Communication Tech	184
Telephones	184
Pagers and Cellular Phones	187
E-Mail	188
Summary	191

## Unit Three Applications.Group Communication

### Chapter 10



<b>Application.Group Types and Functions</b>	<b>196</b>
What Is a Group?	198
Formal and Informal Groups	200
Task and Social Groups	203
Public and Private Groups	204
Voluntary and Enforced Membership	204
Communication Management —	
Group Functions and Individual Needs	205
Specialized Groups	206
The Symposium	208
Communication Management —	
Why So Many Committees?	210
Summary	211



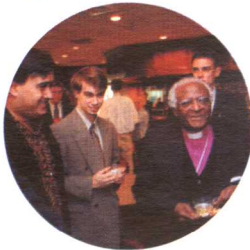
## Chapter 11



### Application.Group Member Roles

Defining Group Member Roles	214
Task Roles	217
Group Maintenance Roles	220
Task and Maintenance Together	221
Communication Management —	
Evaluating Group Performance	221
Self-Centered Roles	223
Interpersonal Insight — Empathy and Group Roles	225
Nonverbal Communication and Group Member Roles	225
Summary	227

## Chapter 12



### Application.Group Leadership

The Importance of Communication to Leadership	231
Formal and Informal Leadership	235
Defining Leadership	236
The Trait Approach	236
The Leadership Style Approach	238
The Situational Approach	238
The Functional Approach	239
Transformational Leadership	240
Communication Management — Facilitating	241
Qualities of Effective Group Leadership	243
Guidelines for Leading a Group	244
Summary	245

## Chapter 13



### Application.Group Maintenance

Skill One: Empathy and Tact	249
Interpersonal Insight — Showing Empathy	251
Skill Two: Creating a Supportive Climate	252
Communication Management — Using “I-Comments”	253
Interpersonal Insight — Giving and Receiving Criticism	258
Skill Three: Team Building	259
Summary	260

## Chapter 14



### Application.Task Skills

Problem Solving	273
Problem-Solving Prompts	276
Decision and Ownership	278
Communication Management — Setting Priorities	280
Brainstorming	281
Communication Management — Strategies for Gathering “Original” Information	283
Summary	284

## Chapter 15



### Application.Group Mechanics

The Value of an Agenda	289
Communication Management — When You’re in Charge	292
Minutes	294
Keeping a Schedule	296
Parliamentary Procedure	296
Communication Management — Chart of Precedence of Motions and Their Rules	301
Summary	302

## Chapter 16



### Application.Managing Conflict

What to Avoid	306
How to “Surface an Elephant”	307
Communication Management — Review Supportive Communication	308
Goals and Compromise	309
Using an “Interest-Based” Approach	309
Communication Management — The Difference Between Interests and Positions	311
Making the Process Work	312
Summary	314

**Unit Four**  
**Applications.Public Communication**

**Chapter 17**



<b>Application.Speech Preparation</b>	<b>318</b>
Communication Decisions Are Interactive	321
Interpersonal Insight—Using Your Support System	322
SPAM and S.O.S.	323
Communication Management—	
Questions for Selecting Speech Methods	325
Achieving Unity—Substance	327
Communication Management—Narrowing a Topic	333
Summary	334

**Chapter 18**



<b>Application.Support Material</b>	<b>343</b>
Defining Support Material	345
Communication Management—	
Visualizing a Well-Developed Speech	347
How Much Support Is Enough?	348
Proof	349
Communication Management—	
Where Do Speakers Get Statistics?	352
Development	353
Combining Types of Supportive Material	358
Sample Speech	358
Summary	365

**Chapter 19**



<b>Application.Visual Aids</b>	<b>367</b>
Defining Visual Aids	369
The Ultimate Visual Aid—Yourself	369
Chalkboards and Marker Boards	370
Posters	371
Objects and Models	371
Handouts	372
Presentation Software	372
Presentation Software (sample speech)	374
Summary	381

## Chapter 20



### Application. Research

The Need for Research	386
Credibility	387
Primary and Secondary Sources	388
Research Efficiency	389
Using the Internet	393
Communication Management — Internet Vocabulary	395
Print Sources	396
Using Quoted Material	403
Summary	405

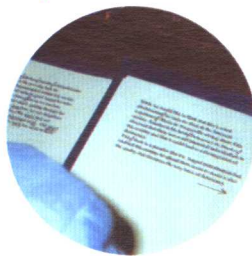
## Chapter 21



### Application. Organization

The Importance of Organization	410
The Introduction	411
The Body	416
Communication Management — Mnemonics and Logical Order	421
Outlining	421
The Conclusion	424
The Transitions	425
Organizational Principles Applied to a Speech	425
Summary	434

## Chapter 22



### Application. Delivery

Qualities of Effective Delivery	439
Four Delivery Formats	439
Communication Management — Written Style vs Oral Style	442
Preparing Notes for Extemporaneous Delivery	443
Q and A	449
Summary	451