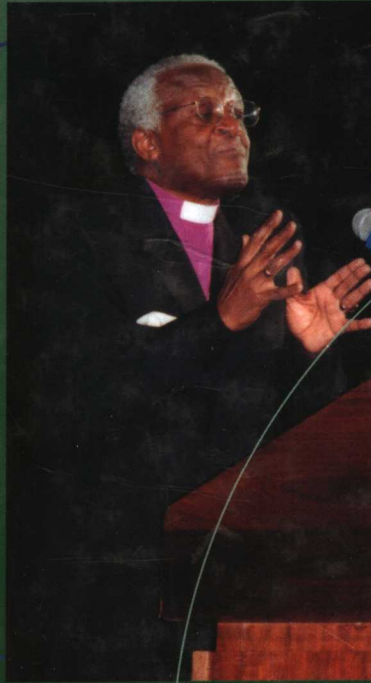# Applications.Communication
## For Personal and Professional Contexts

**James Payne**

# Applications.Communication

## For Personal and Professional Contexts

**James Payne**
Blue Valley Schools

**Diana Carlin**
Consulting Editor
University of Kansas

**Clark**
*Publishing*
Since 1948

About the Author
James Payne is Executive Director of Human Resource Services for Blue Valley Schools in Overland Park, Kansas. He has co-authored *Public Speaking Today* (with Diana Carlin), *Getting Started in Public Speaking* (with Diana Carlin), and *More Than Talking* (with Diana Carlin). He taught English, speech, debate, and forensics for eighteen years before working in educational administration and human resources.

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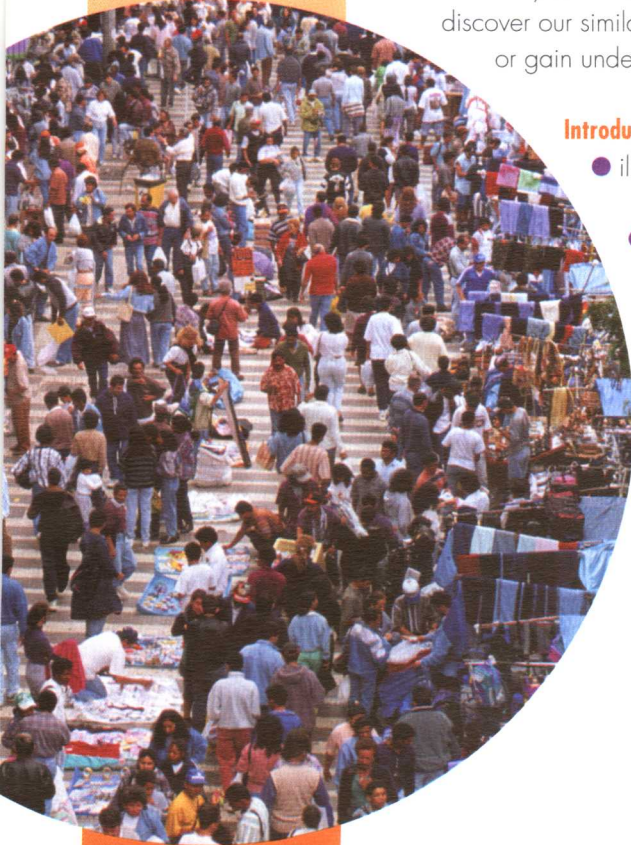
**S**ome things are so much a part of our lives that we don't even notice them. For example, most of us take breathing for granted. But if you study singing, you learn the mechanics of breathing so you can become a better singer. Most of us take eating for granted, until we want to improve our diet.

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

This 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**ontents

**Unit Two**
**Applications.Interpersonal Communication**

**Chapter 9**

**Unit Three**
**Applications.Group Communication**

**Chapter 10**

# Unit Four
## Applications.Public Communication