Chapter 1: How Communication Works

What is communication?

**Communication** is an exchange of information that occurs anytime someone else sees and/or hears you.

Encoding and Decoding Meanings:

**Encoding** is the process of putting words together in phrases and sentences to represent feelings and ideas.

**Decoding** is the process by which listeners interpret your words by sorting out ideas that create in their own minds.

- Other factors in your communication include how loudly and quickly you speak, and how high or low your voice is.

- These factors communicate things that you’re feeling for which you have no specific words.

- Most people communicate their feelings whether they intend to or not.

- Appearance is another important part of how you communicate because your clothes, hair, and personal hygiene tell others who you are.

Encoding and Decoding as Precisely as Possible:

- The best way to bridge the gap between what you say and what the other person hears is to use accurate and specific words.

- Avoid generalizations such as pretty, nice, fast, slow, beautiful, and bad.

- Use correct grammar and pronunciation.
• Remember to articulate clearly.

• And, finally, use as few words as possible.

Considering Your Audience:

• The underlying purpose of ALL public speaking is to communicate with the audience.

• You need to keep your audience in mind through every step of your preparation.

• Communication requires you to send and receive messages.

• When you are speaking, your audience is receiving and sending messages to you by nonverbal means.

**Messages** are thoughts and feelings we express through commonly agreed upon **codes**, or language and behaviors.

Factors of Communication:

1. **Noise** is anything that interferes with communication.
   a. Physical—example: Air conditioning, roaring truck outside
   b. Psychological—example: audience members are bored or distracted
   c. Physiological—example: The room is too hot or too cold

2. Your **field of experience** provides reference points that allow you to decode messages and take meaning from them.
   a. No two communicators have exactly the same field of experience.
   b. You must evaluate the field of experience of the potential audience; anticipate as well as possible what knowledge and attitudes the audience might have about the topic.
   c. Example: Residents of a retirement community might not be familiar with your favorite band.
3. **The context** of a given communication exchange includes the wide range of environmental and chronological factors.
   a. The context of a given transaction includes the historical, seasonal, and temporal setting in which the communication takes place; the geographical location and the culture(s) in which you are speaking; recent news events, and so on.

**Informal and Formal Communication:**

**Informal communication** is communication in which you communicate with many different audiences on any given day.
- This type of communication is spontaneous.
- Examples:
  - Making introductions
  - Talking on the phone
  - Answering a question in class, and
  - Chatting with your friends and family

**Formal Communication** is more structured and takes preparation.
- Examples:
  - Being interviewed for a job
  - Giving a speech
  - Taking part in a debate, and
  - Doing a dramatic reading

**Nonverbal Communication:**

Nonverbal communication adds layers to a speaker’s words.
- Examples:
  - Facial expressions
  - Hand gestures
  - Eye movements
  - Head and body movements
  - Posture
  - Smiling or frowning
Every effective communication takes place on two levels: verbal and nonverbal.

- Sometimes a speaker’s words may contradict his or her nonverbal messages.

- Very often speakers send out unintentional physical messages.
  - Example—confident speaker, but blushing and avoiding eye contact.
  - Example—a speaker who uses exciting and vivid language, but delivers in a flat monotone

- Audience tends to believe the nonverbal more.

- Pay attention to your movements and your vocal rate, volume, and inflection.

Aristotle’s Legacy

In the fourth-century Aristotle had a revolutionary idea! He claimed that all public presentations were a balance of ethics (beliefs about right and wrong), emotion, and logic.

1. The ethical (ethos) part of public speaking is what the communication reveals to the audience about the speaker’s character.
   - Example—telling the truth is ethical, to lie is unethical

2. The emotional (pathos) aspect is the reaction the audience experiences to the communication

3. The logical (logos) aspect of communication is the actual words the audience hears.