

5 Steps to Clear Communication

By ETR Associates

Clear communication allows you to ask for what you want, explain what you need, and avoid arguments, misunderstandings and hurt feelings.

1. **Focus your thoughts:** Clear communication begins with knowing what you want to say.

Think about what you want to talk about: Take time before you start talking to figure out how to ask for what you need and identify what you want. Then practice your message by writing it down, saying it out loud or thinking about it. Remember to stick to the point.

2. **Listen carefully:** One key to clear communication is being a good listener.

Look at the person who's talking. Nod your head or repeat what the person says. Asking questions also tells the person that you are listening and are interested in what they say. Stay focused on the other person and show respect for their feelings and ideas. Remember to keep an open mind and try to imagine the conversation from the other person's point of view.

3. **Be clear:** Think carefully before you speak, so you can say what you really mean.

Be specific and direct. Help the other person understand what you're trying to say by giving examples or try saying it another way. Be honest and pay attention to your feelings. Choose another time to talk if your feelings are making it hard to say what you mean. Avoid blaming and use "I statements."

4. **Get the facts:** Make sure you have the information you need to understand what the other person means.

Discuss expectations and find out what the other person wants. Seek additional information and don't jump to conclusions. Don't make guesses about what someone means. If you're not sure, ask! Recognize different styles of communicating.

5. **Check your understanding:** Make sure you understand each other during the conversation and before you end it.

Check what you hear by putting what you hear into your own words. Repeat the main points of your conversation and make an agreement on how you will move forward from the conversation. If the conflict is not over, decide if you need to talk again so both parties can leave satisfied. If you cannot move forward, consider finding someone who can help you talk together.