



Office of Student Leadership & Service



“Leadership Lifesavers To-Go” Series

Leadership Lifesavers To-Go is an ongoing outreach effort to students at Emory University from the Office of Student Leadership & Service and is a supplement to our ongoing leadership development series. These brief & informative “tid-bits” are intended to serve as guides and are not intended to be all-inclusive.

“Did you really mean to say that?” Improving Your Communication Skills

Communications skills are important because they relate directly to your success and help you grow by making discoveries about yourself, helps your practice problem solving, and helps you develop new skills. Communication is complex. Look at all the pieces of the puzzle:

- A message
- The way you send the message
- Language
- Context of message



Communication includes...

- Words - Delivery - Listening - Gestures - Symbols

Delivery

- Expressions play a part
- Timing and pacing (speaking quickly or slowly, interrupting, talk too long)
- Body language
- Word choice (formal or informal, public or private, serious or relaxed)
- Tone of voice

Effective Listening and Skillful Response

- Pay close attention
- Never interrupt
- Ask questions
- Show you understand
- Give positive feedback
- Do not be afraid to give negative feedback if necessary

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<http://osls.emory.edu>

Communication Roadblocks

- Lack of face-to-face encounters can confuse messages
- Use eye contact if face-to-face
- Watch your posture if face-to-face
- Avoid habits such as: making fun of others, lecturing, giving orders, thinking of a response while the other person is talking, giving too much advice
- Make sure to talk in terms of yourself and don't use the word "you"
- Show the speaker that you care

Communication at Meetings and Other Gatherings

- Share your agenda in advance
- Invite only people necessary so that others do not feel neglected
- Choose an appropriate place
- Consider comfort, i.e. good lighting, comfortable seating, etc.
- Take minutes at meeting
- Research and organize meeting beforehand
- Learn about your audience

Written Communication, Telephone, and Email

Communicating face to face is generally the most preferable form of communication, especially when sharing difficult feedback or communicating an important message. If face to face communication is not possible, the second best option is usually the telephone, with the last option being email.

- Organize Thoughts Before Beginning...
 - o How is the tone...Formal or Informal
 - o Did you use a new paragraph for each new idea?
 - o Did you proofread? Did someone else proofread as well?
- Telephone Use...
 - o Pick up after 2 or 3 rings
 - o Identify yourself and your Organization
 - o Take notes to avoid confusion and repetition
 - o Ask permission to place person on hold
 - o Voicemail requires clarity, stating your full name, leaving a concise message, and clearly stating a number where you can be reached
- Email Use...
 - o Read email to make sure that your tone is polite
 - o Write clearly and concisely so that message is not confused
 - o Remember that there are other methods of communication
 - o Follow-up with person to assure they have received the email
 - o If intense emotions are involved, wait a day to send the message, or choose to express yourself in person to avoid misunderstandings

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