

U1Ch5. Applying principles of effective communication

PAPER 01 — Communicative Skills

Unit 1 · Fundamentals of Communication

Chapter 5 · Applying Principles of Effective Communication

(Clarity · Conciseness · Active Listening · Constructive Feedback)

1 Why These Principles Matter

Even the best ideas can falter if delivered vaguely, verbosely, half-heard, or harshly. The four principles in this chapter—**clarity, conciseness, active listening, and constructive feedback**—act like quality filters: they refine outgoing messages and polish incoming ones, ensuring understanding, efficiency, and positive relationships.

2 Clarity — Making Meaning Crystal-Clear

Aspect	What to Do	Practical Method	Common Pitfall
Purpose	State the main intent in one sentence up front.	“Our goal today is to agree on the budget.”	Burying the purpose deep in the message
Organization	Follow a logical structure (intro-body-close or problem-solution-action).	Use headings or verbal signposts (“First... second... finally”).	Jumping randomly between points
Language	Choose familiar words and define any essential jargon.	Replace <i>utilise</i> with <i>use</i> ; define “ROI” once.	Assuming everyone knows industry acronyms
Examples & Visuals	Support abstract ideas with concrete cases, numbers, or graphics.	“Think of clarity like cleaning foggy glasses.”	Overloading slides with data that distracts

Quick Test: If a listener can summarise your point in a sentence after one pass, you’re clear.

3 Conciseness — Delivering Maximum Meaning in Minimum Words

3.1 Guidelines for Brevity

- Front-Load Essentials** Put the most important fact in the first 25 % of the message.
- Cull Redundancies** “End result” → “result” · “Future plan” → “plan.”
- Prefer Active Voice** “Marketing approved the design” is shorter and stronger than passive forms.
- Use Lists** Bullets or numbered steps condense complex material.
- Limit One Idea per Sentence** Prevents comma sprawl and mental fatigue.

3.2 Example — Before vs. After

Version	Text	Word Count
Before	“I am writing this email in order to inform you that our scheduled meeting, which was originally supposed to be held tomorrow, has unfortunately had to be postponed due to some unforeseen circumstances.”	40



Version	Text	Word Count
After	"Tomorrow's meeting is postponed due to unforeseen circumstances."	11

Words saved: 29 (↓ 73 %)

4 Active Listening – Turning Hearing into Understanding

Component	Observable Behaviours	Benefit
Attention	Eye contact, open posture, minimal distractions	Signals respect and keeps you present
Reflection	Paraphrase: "So you're concerned about timelines."	Confirms accuracy; shows empathy
Clarifying Questions	"When you say urgent, do you mean this week?"	Reduces ambiguity; uncovers details
Minimal Encouragers	Nods, "I see," "Go on."	Keeps speaker flowing; gathers full story
Summarising	"Let me recap the key points..."	Aligns understanding before action

4.1 Barriers & Fixes

Barrier	Fix
Internal chatter / multitasking	Pause tasks; take notes by hand
Premature judgment	Adopt "curious mindset"; delay evaluation
Distractions (phone, noise)	Silence devices; choose quiet space
Emotional triggers	Breathe; name emotion silently, then refocus

5 Constructive Feedback – Guiding Improvement Without Damage

5.1 Characteristics of Good Feedback

Feature	Explanation	Example
Specific	Targets a concrete behaviour or outcome	"The report lacks data sources on page 3"
Balanced	Combines positives with areas to improve	"Strong intro; the conclusion could link back to KPIs."
Actionable	Offers a clear next step	"Add two peer-reviewed citations before Friday."
Timely	Delivered close to the event	Give feedback the same day, not next month

5.2 SBI Model (Situation-Behaviour-Impact)

- Situation** "When we met with the client yesterday..."
- Behaviour** "...you spoke over Sam three times..."
- Impact** "...which made it hard for her to clarify the budget."

Finish with an **open question**: "How can we ensure everyone's voice is heard in future meetings?"

5.3 Feedforward Option

Instead of dwelling on past faults, offer future-focused suggestions:
"Next time, pause after each slide and invite Sam's input."



6 Principles in Concert — A Short Dialogue Example

Manager (Clarity + Conciseness):

“Team, our goal is to cut project delays by 15 % this quarter. We’ll do three things: tighten scope, add weekly checkpoints, and automate the report.”

Engineer (Active Listening):

“To confirm, you want a 15 % reduction, mainly via scope control, more checkpoints, and reporting automation. Correct?”

Manager (Constructive Feedback):

“Exactly. Your last sprint update was clear—keep that brevity in weekly checkpoints, and we’ll hit the target.”

Notice how each speaker models the principles in real time.

7 Toolkit — One-Page Checklist

Stage	Questions to Ask Yourself
Before Speaking/Writing	<i>Is my purpose clear to me? Can I say it in one sentence?</i>
During Delivery	<i>Am I using simple words? Can any phrase be cut?</i>
While Listening	<i>What is the speaker’s core message? Have I paraphrased it?</i>
After Receiving Feedback	<i>Did I thank the giver? What one action will I take next?</i>

8 Self-Practice Corner

- Clarity Slam:** Write a 20-second elevator pitch. Test on a peer; if they can’t summarise, refine.
- Conciseness Challenge:** Take a 100-word social-media post and trim it to 50 words without losing meaning.
- Active-Listening Log:** For one day, record every time you paraphrase in conversation. Note resulting clarity.
- Feedback Role-Play:** Partner A gives Partner B SBI feedback on a mock scenario; swap roles. Debrief feelings and effectiveness.

Chapter Takeaways

- **Clarity** replaces fog with focused light.
- **Conciseness** respects time and amplifies impact.
- **Active listening** transforms one-way monologues into two-way understanding.
- **Constructive feedback** fuels growth and maintains goodwill.

Master these principles now, and every subsequent skill—from persuasive presentations to conflict resolution—will rest on a solid communicative foundation.