



Unit 2. Interpersonal Communication Chapter 1. Building rapport and trust through empathy, respect, and open communication

PAPER 01 — Communicative Skills

Unit 2 · Interpersonal Communication

Chapter 1 · Building Rapport & Trust

(Empathy · Respect · Open Communication)

1 Why Rapport & Trust Matter

- **Rapport** is the *immediate sense of connection* that makes interaction natural and relaxed.
- **Trust** is the *ongoing confidence* that the other person's words and actions are credible, reliable, and benevolent.
- Together they
 1. **Accelerate understanding** — people share richer information sooner.
 2. **Reduce conflict** — goodwill tempers disagreements.
 3. **Boost collaboration** — teams with high trust outperform by up to 50 % in productivity studies.

Rapport ignites the conversation; trust keeps it burning.

2 The Three Pillars

Pillar	Core Meaning	Observable Behaviours	Immediate Impact
Empathy	Feeling <i>with</i> another, seeing through their eyes	Active listening, reflecting feelings, validating experiences	Person feels understood and safe
Respect	Valuing the other's dignity, rights, and uniqueness	Polite language, punctuality, crediting ideas, honoring boundaries	Person feels valued and equal
Open Communication	Sharing thoughts transparently and inviting the same	Clear language, honest feedback, appropriate self-disclosure	Person feels informed and included

These pillars reinforce one another: empathy without respect can become intrusive, respect without openness remains distant, openness without empathy may feel blunt.

3 Deep Dive: Empathy

3.1 Two Facets

Type	What It Involves	Example Phrase
Cognitive Empathy	Accurately <i>understanding</i> another's perspective	"I see why the deadline feels overwhelming given your workload."
Emotional Empathy	<i>Sharing</i> their feelings at a visceral level	"I can feel how disappointed you are by the rejection."



3.2 Practical Techniques

1. **Mirror & Match** – Subtly align posture or pace of speech.
2. **Paraphrase Plus Feeling** – “You’re frustrated because the process is unclear.”
3. **Empathy Mapping** – Note what the person *says, thinks, does, feels* in a quadrant chart.

4 Deep Dive: Respect

Dimension	Everyday Practice
Autonomy	Offer choices rather than directives (“Would you prefer 2 p.m. or 4 p.m.”?).
Acknowledgement	Use names correctly; reference prior contributions.
Equity	Share airtime in meetings; rotate roles like note-taker.
Civility	Maintain courteous tone even in disagreement; avoid interruptions.

5 Deep Dive: Open Communication

5.1 Ingredients

1. **Transparency** — Explain reasons behind decisions.
2. **Honesty** — State facts without distortion; admit limits.
3. **Assertiveness** — Express needs firmly yet politely.
4. **Receptivity** — Welcome questions; avoid defensiveness.

5.2 Open vs. Closed Style

Feature	Open Style	Closed Style
Information flow	Two-way, free	One-way, controlled
Risk-sharing	Acknowledged	Hidden
Typical phrases	“Here’s what I’m thinking—does it make sense?” “Just do it because I said so.”	

6 Rapport-Building in the First Five Minutes

1. **Positive First Impression** – Warm greeting, eye contact, relaxed smile.
2. **Personal Hook** – Comment on a shared context (“I noticed you also use Sketch-Notes—love them!”).
3. **Open-Ended Starter** – “What sparked your interest in this project?”
4. **Micro-Affirmations** – Small nods, “mm-hmm,” or “I see.”
5. **Small Disclosure** – Share a relevant, low-risk fact about yourself (weather, commute anecdote).

7 Trust-Building Continuum

Credibility → Reliability → Intimacy → Self-Orientation (low)

Stage	Key Question the Other Person Asks	How to Answer Through Behaviour
Credibility	“Do you know what you’re talking about?”	Demonstrate expertise with clear evidence.
Reliability	“Can I count on you?”	Meet deadlines consistently; follow through.
Intimacy	“Is it safe to share with you?”	Keep confidences; respond non-judgmentally.



Stage	Key Question the Other Person Asks	How to Answer Through Behaviour
Low Self-Orientation	"Are you acting for <i>us</i> or for yourself?"	Frame benefits mutually; listen more than speak.

8 Common Barriers & Remedies

Barrier	Example	Remedy
Assumptions	Believing a quiet teammate is disengaged	Ask their viewpoint directly; avoid mind-reading
Status Gaps	Manager dominates talk time	Invite junior voices early; set ground rules
Cultural Misalignment	Direct critique seen as rude in high-context culture	Use indirect feedback methods; learn norms
Virtual Fatigue	Camera-off meetings hinder cues	Use brief check-ins; vary formats; encourage video for key moments

9 Practical Toolkit

Situation	Quick Action
First meeting with a client	Use the "90-second empathy scan": ask one personal, one project question; mirror tone.
Difficult feedback session	Apply SBI + Empathy: describe <i>Situation, Behaviour, Impact</i> , then express understanding of feelings.
Multicultural team update	Send agenda beforehand; during call, summarise and invite written follow-ups to bridge language gaps.
Post-conflict repair	Acknowledge emotion ("Yesterday's debate got heated"); restate shared goal; propose reset.

10 Self-Practice Corner

1. **Empathy Walk:** Spend ten minutes imagining a colleague's workday stresses; jot assumptions, then verify with them.
2. **Respect Journal:** For one week, note moments you felt respected or disrespected; identify patterns to replicate or avoid.
3. **Openness Scale:** Rate upcoming messages 1-5 for transparency; rewrite any below 3 to add reasoning or context.
4. **Role-Play Lab:** Pair up—one plays a frustrated customer, the other practises empathy-respect-openness cycle; switch roles and debrief.

Chapter Takeaways

- **Empathy** shows you *feel with* the other; **respect** shows you *value* the other; **open communication** shows you *include* the other.
- Applying all three creates **rapid rapport and lasting trust**, the bedrock of any productive interpersonal exchange.
- Small, consistent behaviours—names, paraphrases, punctual follow-through—compound over time into powerful relationship capital.

Master these habits now, and you will navigate the remaining units—conflict management, teamwork, leadership—with confidence and authenticity.