

3. Types of Communication

BVPT-104: English & Communication

Unit 1: Understanding the Communication Process

Chapter: Types of Communication

□ Introduction

Communication is not just about speaking—it includes **what we say**, **how we say it**, and even **what we show or express without words**.

Understanding the **types of communication** helps physiotherapy students interact more effectively with patients, caregivers, and medical teams.

□ 1. Verbal Communication

Verbal communication uses **words** to convey a message.

It includes:

- **Oral (spoken)** communication
- **Written** communication

□ A. Oral Communication

This refers to **spoken words**, either face-to-face or over the phone/video.

Examples

Talking to patients	Giving exercise instructions clearly
Team meetings or case handovers	Discussing progress with doctors or therapists
Patient education	Explaining the cause of pain or treatment plan

Clinical Relevance

□ Tips for Effective Oral Communication

- Speak clearly and slowly
- Use simple, non-technical language
- Ask the patient to repeat or demonstrate understanding
- Maintain eye contact and positive tone

□ B. Written Communication

This involves **recording information using text**—typed or handwritten.

Examples

Patient reports and SOAP notes	Documenting treatments and outcomes
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Clinical Relevance

Examples

Prescription of home exercises Giving written instructions to patients
Emails, letters, referral forms Communicating with other professionals

Clinical Relevance

□ Tips for Effective Written Communication

- Use clear and concise language
- Avoid spelling and grammar errors
- Be factual and objective
- Maintain confidentiality (use patient initials if needed)

□ 2. Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication means **sending messages without using words**.

This includes:

- **Facial expressions**
- **Body posture**
- **Gestures**
- **Eye contact**
- **Tone and pitch of voice (paralanguage)**

It's said that more than **70% of communication is non-verbal**.

Non-Verbal Type

Facial expressions	A grimace may indicate pain, even if the patient says "I'm fine"
Posture and body movement	Slouching = low energy; active movement = engagement
Gestures	Thumbs-up for encouragement
Eye contact	Builds trust and shows attentiveness
Touch	Gentle hand on shoulder for reassurance during treatment

Physiotherapy Example

□ Why It Matters

- Helps you **read unspoken cues** (pain, discomfort, confusion)
- Patients may **hide emotions verbally** but show them non-verbally
- Your own non-verbal signals affect **how confident and caring** you appear

□ 3. Visual Communication

Visual communication is the **use of images, symbols, videos, or other visual aids** to support understanding.

Example

Exercise charts	Help patients remember their home program
Anatomical diagrams	Explain joint, muscle, or nerve-related pain
Videos of therapy techniques	Reinforce patient learning
Colour-coded charts or graphs	Show patient progress visually

Clinical Use

□ Tips for Using Visual Aids

- Keep them simple and clear
- Use them to **support**, not replace, verbal communication
- Adjust based on the patient's age, language, or cognitive ability

□ Self-Check Questions

1. What is the difference between oral and written communication?
2. Give two examples of non-verbal communication seen in a clinic.
3. Why is visual communication important in patient education?
4. How can non-verbal cues affect a physiotherapist-patient relationship?
5. What precautions should you take when writing clinical notes?

1. Oral is spoken (face-to-face or on call); written is recorded (paper or digital).
2. Facial expressions, hand gestures, body posture.
3. It simplifies complex topics and helps visual learners understand better.
4. They can build trust or create discomfort—depending on tone, posture, eye contact.
5. Be objective, clear, and maintain patient confidentiality.

□ Key Take-Home Points

- Communication is not just what we **say**, but also how we **show and document** information.
- Combine **verbal, non-verbal, and visual** techniques to make your message more effective.
- In physiotherapy, strong communication leads to **better outcomes and stronger patient relationships**.