## U1Ch4. Learning the steps of communication

**PAPER 01 — Communicative Skills**

**Unit 1 · Fundamentals of Communication**

**Chapter 4 · Learning the Steps of Communication**

*(Encoding · Transmission · Decoding · Feedback)*

# 1 The Four-Step Flow at a Glance

1. **Encoding** – Turning ideas or feelings into recognizable symbols.
2. **Transmission** – Moving those symbols through a chosen channel.
3. **Decoding** – Converting received symbols back into meaning.
4. **Feedback** – Responding to confirm, adjust, or extend meaning.

Visualise the process as a **clockwise loop**:
Idea → **Encode** → **Transmit** → **Decode** → **Feedback** → New Idea … and so on.
Each turn of the loop either deepens shared understanding or exposes gaps that need repair.

# 2 Step 1: Encoding — Shaping Raw Thought into Clear Signals

| Focus Area | What It Involves | Common Pitfalls | Improvement Tactics |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Word Choice** | Selecting vocabulary your audience knows | Jargon overload, ambiguity | Swap technical terms for plain words; define essentials |
| **Structure** | Ordering ideas logically | Rambling, missing context | Use outlines, headlines, story arcs |
| **Tone & Emotion** | Infusing appropriate feeling | Unintentional sarcasm, mixed signals | Match tone to purpose; read aloud for consistency |
| **Non-Verbal Cues** | Gestures, facial expressions, visuals | Incongruent body language | Practise in a mirror; align visuals with words |

### Mini-Guide: Encoding in Three Moves

1. **Clarify** your purpose in one sentence.
2. **Chunk** content into 3–5 key points.
3. **Match** symbols (words, images, gestures) to audience literacy, culture, and emotion.

# 3 Step 2: Transmission — Carrying the Message Safely

## 3.1 Choosing the Channel

| Channel | Strengths | Limitations | Best Use-Cases |
|---|---|---|---|
| Face-to-face | Rich cues, instant feedback | Requires co-location, time | Negotiations, sensitive issues |
| Video Call | Visual & vocal cues, global reach | Tech glitches, fatigue | Team briefings, remote coaching |
| Phone | Quick, personal | No visuals, note-taking needed | Urgent clarifications |
| Email / Letter | Permanent record, asynchronous | Slow responses, tone misread | Detailed instructions, formal notices |

| Channel | Strengths | Limitations | Best Use-Cases |
|---|---|---|---|
| Text / Chat | Immediate, informal | Fragmented context | Quick updates, scheduling |

## 3.2 Signal Integrity Checklist

1. **Clarity** – Is text legible, audio crisp, visuals high-contrast?
2. **Redundancy** – Are vital details repeated in at least two forms?
3. **Timing** – Will the receiver be attentive when the message arrives?
4. **Security** – Is the channel private enough for the content?

## 3.3 Mitigating Transmission Noise

- Use headsets or microphones in noisy spaces.
- Share downloadable slides before a webinar.
- Confirm key data points in writing after a call.

# 4 Step 3: Decoding — Making Sense of Incoming Signals

| Decoder's Task | Cognitive Action | Possible Obstacle | Support Strategy |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Perceive** | Notice symbols (hear, read, see) | Distractions, poor eyesight | Clear fonts, readable pace, captions |
| **Interpret** | Match symbols to stored meanings | Cultural mismatch, idioms | Use universal examples, avoid slang |
| **Evaluate** | Judge accuracy & relevance | Bias, emotions | Provide evidence, maintain respectful tone |
| **Store / Act** | Remember or execute instructions | Overload, complexity | Summaries, step-wise instructions, visuals |

Encourage receivers to **paraphrase**: "So you need the draft by Friday?" Misunderstandings surface immediately.

# 5 Step 4: Feedback — Closing (and Re-opening) the Loop

## 5.1 Forms of Feedback

| Form | Speed | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| **Immediate Verbal** | Instant | "Got it," questions, paraphrasing |
| **Immediate Non-Verbal** | Instant | Nods, puzzled looks, smiles |
| **Delayed Written** | Hours–Days | Email replies, survey comments |
| **Outcome-Based** | Days–Months | Sales figures, test scores |

## 5.2 Designing Effective Feedback

1. **Invite It** – Ask open questions: "What concerns do you see?"
2. **Observe It** – Watch for non-verbal cues during delivery.
3. **Acknowledge It** – Thank receivers, even for critical input.
4. **Act on It** – Adapt content, channel, or timing and cycle again.

**Golden Rule:** Feedback is useful only when it informs **next action**. Log insights immediately while they are fresh.

PDF generated on 27 Jan 2026, 07:16 am IST

# 6 Putting the Steps Together — An End-to-End Example

**Scenario:** A healthcare supervisor must introduce a new hand-hygiene protocol to 40 nurses.

| Step | Supervisor Action | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| Encoding | Creates a three-point poster with icons + records a two-minute explainer video. | Information packaged in verbal, written, and visual symbols. |
| Transmission | Posts video link in staff WhatsApp, displays poster in wards, holds a brief live demo. | Nurses access content through multiple channels. |
| Decoding | Nurses watch video, read poster, observe demo; they interpret steps. | Some terms ("chlorhexidine") confuse interns. |
| Feedback | Live Q&A reveals confusion; supervisor simplifies terminology and updates poster. | Loop completes; protocol understood and adopted. |

# 7 Practical Toolkit — One High-Impact Habit per Step

| Step | Habit |
|---|---|
| Encoding | Write a **one-sentence objective** before creating content. |
| Transmission | Run a **tech & environment check** 15 minutes before delivery. |
| Decoding | Insert a **pause-for-paraphrase** moment ("Tell me what you'll do next"). |
| Feedback | Close with a **'Next steps' recap** and invite confirmation. |

# 8 Self-Practice Corner

1. **Encoding Drill**: Explain a complex term from your field to a 10-year-old in 50 words. Refine until they can repeat it back.
2. **Channel Swap**: Take a 30-second voice note; convert it into an emoji-only message that still conveys the core idea. Discuss loss or gain of meaning.
3. **Decode Audit**: Record a meeting (with permission). Afterward, list three places where participants asked for clarification. What encoding tweak would have prevented each?
4. **Feedback Loop Game**: In pairs, Person A gives a set of directions to build a simple paper origami. Person B follows silently, then shows the result. Compare to original; discuss which step broke down and why.

## Chapter Takeaways

- **Encoding** packages thought; **transmission** moves the package; **decoding** unpacks it; **feedback** verifies success and primes the next loop.
- Each step demands distinct skills, yet all rely on the same foundation: empathy, clarity, and continuous adjustment.
- Mastering these steps turns everyday exchanges into purposeful, high-impact conversations—whether you are briefing a team, counselling a patient, or teaching a class.

PDF generated on 27 Jan 2026, 07:16 am IST