

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.



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

- Encoding Drill:** Explain a complex term from your field to a 10-year-old in 50 words. Refine until they can repeat it back.
- 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.
- Decode Audit:** Record a meeting (with permission). Afterward, list three places where participants asked for clarification. What encoding tweak would have prevented each?
- 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.