



# Understanding the Sender to Receiver Pathway of Conveying Message

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## Abstract

Communication is sharing information from one person to other person. Communication can take place among persons whether they know each other or not. Inadequate communication is responsible for personal isolation in the community. Most common problem encountered is the lack of understanding in a correct way leading to conflicts and frustrations in the personal and professional life. Three most basic tools of communication are speech, body language and listening. Communication skills can be assessed in real situations and artificial scenario. Assessment in a workplace in addition to observed feedback, provides students a clinical opportunity without any fear. This review highlights communication in health care with emphasis on types, training aspects, communication models.

**Keywords:** Communication; Communication Skills; Doctor-Patient Communication; Assessment; Need for Training

## Introduction

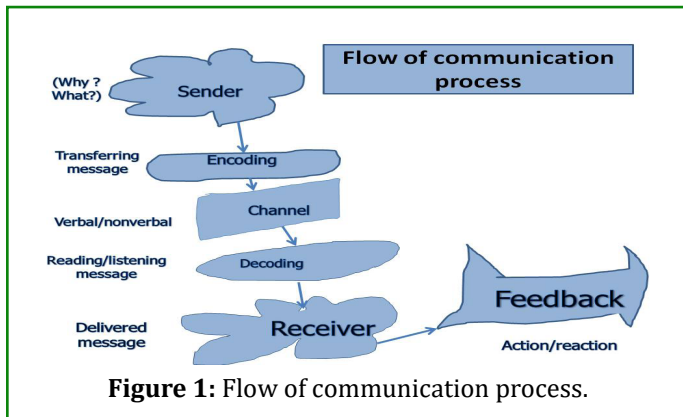
Communication is the exchange of information from one person to other person or from a person to a group/groups and understanding those feelings or emotions behind that communication. Communication can take place among persons whether they know each other or not. Communication has bright side in that it strengthens the bonding/ relationship among people at every place or situation for example home, schools, workplace or society and improves their performance. For survival in society good communication with good command on languages acts as a strengthening tool [1]. Good communication is the one and

the only way to convey positive as well as negative feelings without any conflict or loss of faith among the people. In nutshell communication is conveying our message to others with inclusion of situational and cultural aspects too. Most important point of concern is what our message is, who will listen and how will they perceive it? These points are shown in Table 1 [2].

Communication should be directed from effective to progressive relationships and improve efficiency. Indicators of an effective communication are active listening, asking the right questions to right listeners and positive body language. Communication process flows in way shown in Figure 1 [2].

S no.	Points to be Considered During Communication Process [2]
1.	Avoiding Errors
2.	Information should be useful and Accurate
3.	Make it clear about why to Communicate
4.	What to Communicate
5.	Be careful about cultural issues, any mistakes, any missing information,
6.	Read a message carefully, or listen actively
7.	Avoid Confusion
8.	Aware of the actions or reactions

**Table 1:** Points to be considered during communication process.



**Figure 1:** Flow of communication process.

### Types of Communication

- **Written Communication:** Traditional mode of communication is writing. This mode of communication is routinely used in offices, jobs, sending text by e mail and what's app and in the form of any project reports.
- **Verbal Communication:** Verbal communication is sharing information in home, society, workplace by speaking. This can be formal or informal. Formal communication is in the sense of meeting with senior officials to discuss progress report and informal in the form of talking with colleagues about office work or life style or listening to someone else.
- **Non-Verbal Communication:** A person can communicate non-verbally by eye contact, body language and in the way a person speaks, looks, behaves, dress ups. A strong non-verbal communication can occur only by nodding and facial expressions, while verbal communication and body language must be in synchronisation to convey a message clearly [2].
- **Visual Communication:** This takes place by means of graphs, images, charts, and other non-written means to convey a message. Often visuals may accompany a piece

of writing or stand alone. In either case, it's a good idea to make sure that visuals are clear and strengthen the message being shared.

- **Technical communication:** Knowledge alone is meaningless until there is an effective communication which is a key to success [2]. Technical communication forms the basis for success of an organisation. It is defined as the technique of presenting collated technical information to a targeted audience in a clear, useful, comprehensive, grammatically correct, precise and a logical way [3].

### Communication Skills

Inadequate communication is responsible for personal isolation in the community. Most common problem encountered is the lack of understanding in a correct way leading to conflicts and frustrations in the personal and professional life. This is only by means of communication we can understand situations or circumstances and resolve misconceptions creating friendly environment in workplace [4]. Communication skills help in determining the behaviour of a person [1].

Communication skills are effective when they incorporate the ability to recognize and regulate emotions of self and of the person to whom being communicated. It is a careful and attentive listening strategy and tact to cope stress. Communication skills take time to develop and become effective [5]. Communication skills at workplace are most critical to performance of an employee and adaptation to organizational/institutional culture. Similarly for a teacher good communication skills are special needs of her academic performance, career and success of his/her students. What students learn or perceive from teacher is totally linked to the communication skills of teachers which if effective reduce the negative perceptions among students during their learning from teacher. Educational competence and academic experience are useless without any good communication [6].

### Acquiring Communication Skills

Communication skills revolve around person in a family still birth. Edgar Dale defined communication as a process of sharing of the ideas/thoughts and feelings in a mood of mutuality. Communication is a routine task starting from early morning in family and friends to the continuation in workplace and ending till night. In any field communication skills are a key to success among people since language utilized is full of terminology. Inter personal skills are developed with communication skills subsequently increasing opportunities for employability [7]. Success of an organisation or institution depends on the way a

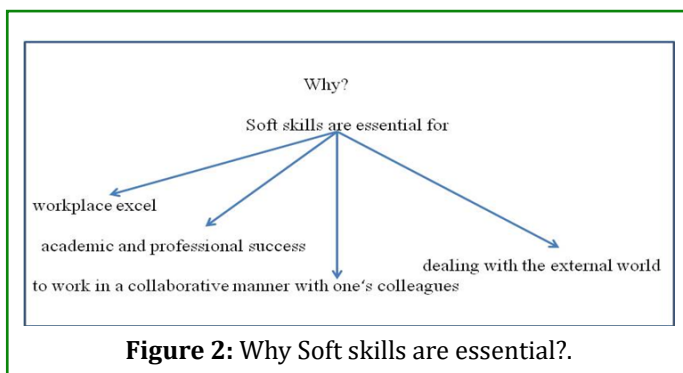
communication is made effective at the internal or external, interpersonal, inter-group level [8].

### Soft Skills

Soft skills are nothing but non-technical skills pertaining to personal values and interpersonal skills which establish capacity in a person to cooperate with others in team work. Effective communication supplemented with soft skills strengthens the relations with others [2]. Soft skills are essential for a person due to several reasons [9] shown in Figure 2. It can be of various types depending on the nature of work/situation shown in Table 2 [2].

S no.	Types of soft skills vary with nature of work/situation [2]
1.	Initiative Skills
2.	Etiquette
3.	Language Skills
4.	Listening Skills
5.	Interpersonal Skills
6.	Motivation Skills
7.	Effective Communication
8.	Presentation Skills
9.	Leadership
10.	Having Problem Solving Abilities
11.	Strong Work Ethics [2]

**Table 2:** Types of soft skills.



**Figure 2:** Why Soft skills are essential?.

Soft skills are not present since birth but are acquired. Book reading don't teach soft skills it needs practice and is a part of continuous learning process. Development of soft skills includes developing attributes and attitudes followed by skills to communicate attitudes, thoughts and feelings. These communication skills may be incorporated in verbal, written, and non-verbal areas for flourishing areas of life like education, job [9].

### Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills Harmonization

Yes, hard skills are easily observable, quantifiable and can be measured. These skills are the field related technical procedures/tools like computer protocols, work place productivity tools etc. These skills are typical skills. Whereas soft skills are difficult to scrutinize, cannot be quantified and measured. Soft skills and hard skills cannot exist separately but harmonize each other [2].

### Communication Tools

Three most basic tools of communication are speech, body language and listening. The capacity of a person to express thoughts, feelings or ideas to others is the key to success path. Speech is one and most important way to allow verbal communication in an effective way with others. The way we speak affects a person to whom communication is carried. Body language is also meaningful measure with tone of our voice during an effective talk [2]. Listening is an essential skill which makes communication more effective. Effective listening gives encouragement to a person to act as a good listener and reply what was communicated to him/her.

### Soft Skills versus Communication Skills versus Hard Skills

Communication skills are the interpersonal skills from partnership to active listening whereas soft skills refer to emotional intelligence and adaptation behaviour of a person. It's an ability to pay attention, indulge in team work, problem solving attitude and thinking creatively. Communication skills are a part of soft skills.

Let us take a simple example of a Swim instructor. Hard skills in his case would be - his knowledge of using Swimming exercise tools, etc. Soft skills include patience listening while training, way of communication and attitude towards beginners at his work place [2].

### Role of Effective Communication among Health Care Professionals

In a healthcare sector effective communication and professionalism should have simultaneous existence. Professionalism is another aspect of significance and involves skills of health care personal to treat patients with full responsibility, excellence in duty, integrity without selfishness. Since it is a shared decision-making process and improves compliance to curative instructions, among patients [10-13].

### Doctor-Patient Communication

A physician training is not complete unless he has learned good communication skills. When there is effective

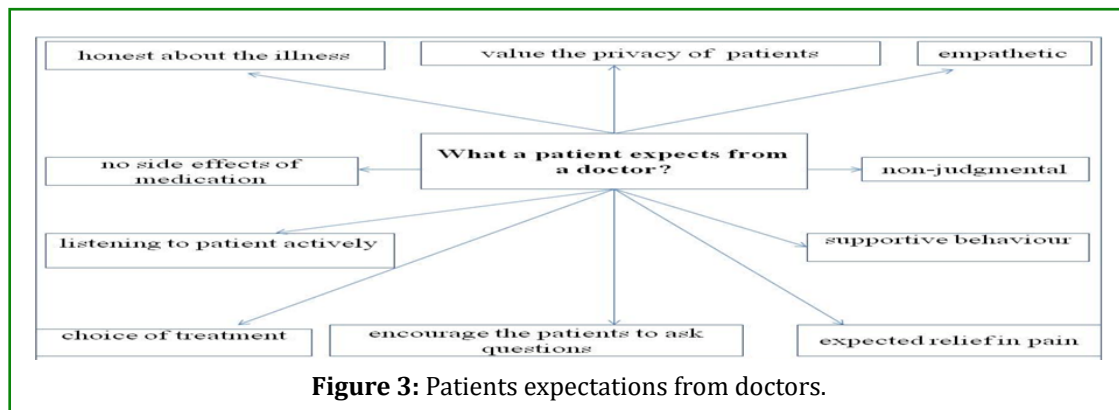
communication between the doctor and the patient compliance is better, with better health outcomes, decreased frequency of court cases, and satisfaction among both [14-

17]. Barriers still exist in the form of certain factors [18-24] shown in Table 3.

S no.	What are the common barriers to good communication between patient and physician?
1.	Lack of training in health communication
2.	medical language
3.	inability to communicate in a simple language
4.	arrogance
5.	lack of enough time dedicated to the doctor-patient encounter
6.	Frequent interruptions while the patient is narrating his problems
7.	work efficiency related stress and inadequate experience
8.	not listening to patient views and emotional response in return
9.	missing a patient-targeted approach including patient-doctor interaction and satisfaction

**Table 3:** Common barriers to good communication between patient and physician.

In a health care sector patients have expectations from doctors shown in Figure 3 [19,25].



**Figure 3:** Patients expectations from doctors.

Communication gap is crucial in measuring the strength of doctor patient rapport. Poor doctor patient rapport justifies communication gap. Such communication gap not only exists among doctor-patient but among doctor- doctor and patient-patient also. Besides verbal communication nonverbal communication in the form of body language, eye to eye contact, touch, gestures, facial expression and interpersonal distance also plays an important role in making all such rappings. In addition a doctor also has to communicate in written for documentation and referrals purpose with medico-legal implications [26].

### Assessment of Communication Skills

Communication skills can be assessed in real situations and artificial scenario. Assessment in a workplace in addition to observed feedback, provides students a clinical opportunity without any fear [27].

Assessment of communication skills requires student behavior vigilance and can be done to conform to the desired level of the Miller's pyramid [27].

- Does (Action)
- Shows how (Performance)
- knows how (Competence)
- know (knowledge)

Assessment Methods available are

- videotaped doctor-patient interactions,
- Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE),
- Mini-clinical Evaluation Exercise (mini-CEX),
- Multisource feedback and observed encounters with simulated patients [26].

### Communication Skills Training Scenario in India

Lack of sufficient training among medical students in India [28] generates a requirement for formal training among them [29-31].

Healthcare system expects team work and effective leadership for successful communication of healthcare professionals with patients, colleagues families and community. Effectiveness of this training is possible in multiple sessions instead of one session as reinforcement and continued education programmes are effective way of learning [26].

### Need for Training in Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Communication skills among professionals serve as the building stone of relationships among patients and their family members, the community. The status of teaching communication skills has changed from 'nice to know' to 'need to know' [32]. In an academic institute communication training and professionalism begins during period of undergraduate [33,34] and postgraduate medical training which is helpful in good quality care for patients. Teaching communication and professionalism in the beginning has shown [35,36] better outcomes of chronic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes in family medicine [37] but in competencies are never hidden inspite of huge efforts. [22,38].

Although training in communication and soft skills may also be provided by peer group and observing seniors but this is not enough professionally but every peer and senior is not expert. In real clinical scenario they observe both positive and negative interpersonal interactions which remain hidden in academic curriculum [26].

Journey don't stop here there is further need to practice and reinforce communication skills in professional and personal life but the real challenge is collating clinical training with communication skills.

Training in communication skills should be weighed equally as clinical training among budding doctors [39,40] this type of training is more useful when imparted by lectures with practical approach like role plays, or interacting with

patients in a real scenario or a simulated approach) [25,41].

### Teaching Methods

**Video recordings:** these are captured interactions of doctor-patient in a real or simulated manner and better utilized by facilitators for discussion and feedback purpose [14,42]. Ethical aspects in the form of informed consent from patients and learners during patient interviews, along with maintaining confidentiality are important to be considered while video recording. These video recordings are meant for teaching and learning purpose not for interruption of actual doctor-patient interaction. These trainings must be a part of regular teaching and learning [26].

**Role-Plays:** Role-plays has its own advantages and disadvantages it provide opportunity for practice, and making difficult problem cases easy to understand and are free of cost to perform without any training. But as a doctor is not a good patient and It is difficult to come out of the 'doctor' personality to a 'patient' character. It is performed as enacting on a given script followed by feedback from [43,44]. The peers and facilitators at the end of session. Repetition of case scenario can be done if needed and role-plays [26].

### Advanced Communication

Training on advanced communication skills is the most crucial aspect of training. In health care organisations training programs also target on training for critical situations like genetic counselling, breaking bad news, handling special situations etc. [45].

### Models of Communication in Clinical Consultation

Several models of communication in clinical consultation suggested in the literature are shown in Figure 4 and salient features of these models are listed in Figure 5 [26].

- the Bayer Institute for Health Care Communication E4 Model
  - the Three Function Model/ Brown Interview Checklist
    - the Calgary-Cambridge Observation Guide
    - the Patient-centered clinical method
  - the SEGUE Framework for teaching and assessing

**Figure 4:** Models of communication.



### Salient features of COMMUNICATION IN CLINICAL CONSULTATION models

Progression of a clinical encounter with component activities that are observable and measurable.

Guides for trainees and trainers and also provide a standardized way of assessing (and giving feedback) for communication during a clinical consultation.

clinical consultation that includes clinical data gathering, rapport building and counseling about treatment.

**Figure 5:** Salient features of communication models.

### Conclusion

Healthcare scenario in our country is experiencing a lacuna in the communication skills. When it comes to academic teaching and real clinical experiences there exists a gap. There is need to fill this gap and strengthen them by induction training, refresher trainings and stringent observation. Team work and effective leadership can help in strengthening the roots of communication skills.

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